

**Indian Politics and
the 1998 Election**



Indian Politics and the 1998 Election

Regionalism, Hindutva and State Politics

Edited by

Ramashray Roy and Paul Wallace



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Party Competition and Fragmentation in Indian National Elections: 1957–1998

Pradeep Chhibber and Irfan Nooruddin

Introduction

India's party system has undergone a transformation over the last decade. The Congress Party, a catch-all party that brought independence in 1947 and governed India for much of the period since then, no longer dominates the electoral scene. From the first election in independent India in 1952 until the 4th General Election in 1967, the Congress Party dominated not only the Lok Sabha but also all state assemblies (Vidhan Sabhas). Since 1967, however, the Indian party system has seen changes, as the Congress's electoral fortunes have fluctuated. By 1998, the proportion of seats held by the Congress in the Lok Sabha declined to just over 25 percent. The Congress's vote share also dropped to 25.8 percent in 1998, as compared to an average of over 40 percent in elections over the four previous decades. The Congress Party's electoral decline has been accompanied by the electoral success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The 1990s have been marked by the emergence of the BJP as a powerful electoral force. In 1998, the BJP emerged as the largest vote-getter in national elections for the first time, getting 35.5 percent of the vote in the seats it contested (with 25.6 percent of the overall vote) and the party with the most number of seats in parliament.

In addition to the much commented upon and discussed rise of the BJP, the 1990s have also been a watershed for Indian party politics for a number of other reasons. First, there was the emergence of powerful state-based parties. For the very first time in Indian politics, in 1996, a post-electoral coalition of minor state-based parties constituted the government at the center. The United Front government, which came to govern India in 1996, was constituted primarily by parties which are based in and limited to particular states, including the Telugu Desam Party (Andhra Pradesh), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Tamil Nadu), the Tamil Maanila Congress (Tamil Nadu), and the Assam Gana Parishad (Assam). The BJP government formed in 1998 too depended upon an electoral alliance with state-based parties such as the Akali Dal, the Telugu Desam Party, and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. Party competition in the various states too in 1998 is between different sets of parties. These developments stand in sharp contrast to much of the period after independence, when the Congress was either the dominant party or one of two major parties in all of the states. While the Congress is still in power in some states, it is no longer in power in a majority of states, and in some states, such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Congress is not even the third largest party. The emergence of state parties has a second consequence for Indian electoral politics—an increase in the number of parties that are represented in parliament. The effective number of parties in the Lok Sabha has increased from less than two during the 1950s and 1960s—the period of one-party dominance—to more than five in 1996 (see Figure 2.1).¹

This chapter claims that a key feature of party politics in India in the 1990s is the emergence of two party competition. It is this two party competition that accounts both for the increasing competitiveness of Indian electoral politics and the fragmentation of the party system. While the degree of party competition has increased in all the regions of India, greater fragmentation is, however, most noticeable in the Hindi speaking belt. The first part of the chapter provides evidence of the increase in party competition in the 1990s and then attributes this competitiveness to two party competition. This section also discusses whether the increased competitiveness can be attributed to the mobilization of new voters and whether two party competition has an effect on competitiveness independent of the number of voters who turnout to vote. The next segment turns to an examination of the fragmentation of the party system and notes that the fragmentation is most prevalent in the Hindi speaking region and, more importantly, that it too is a function of the

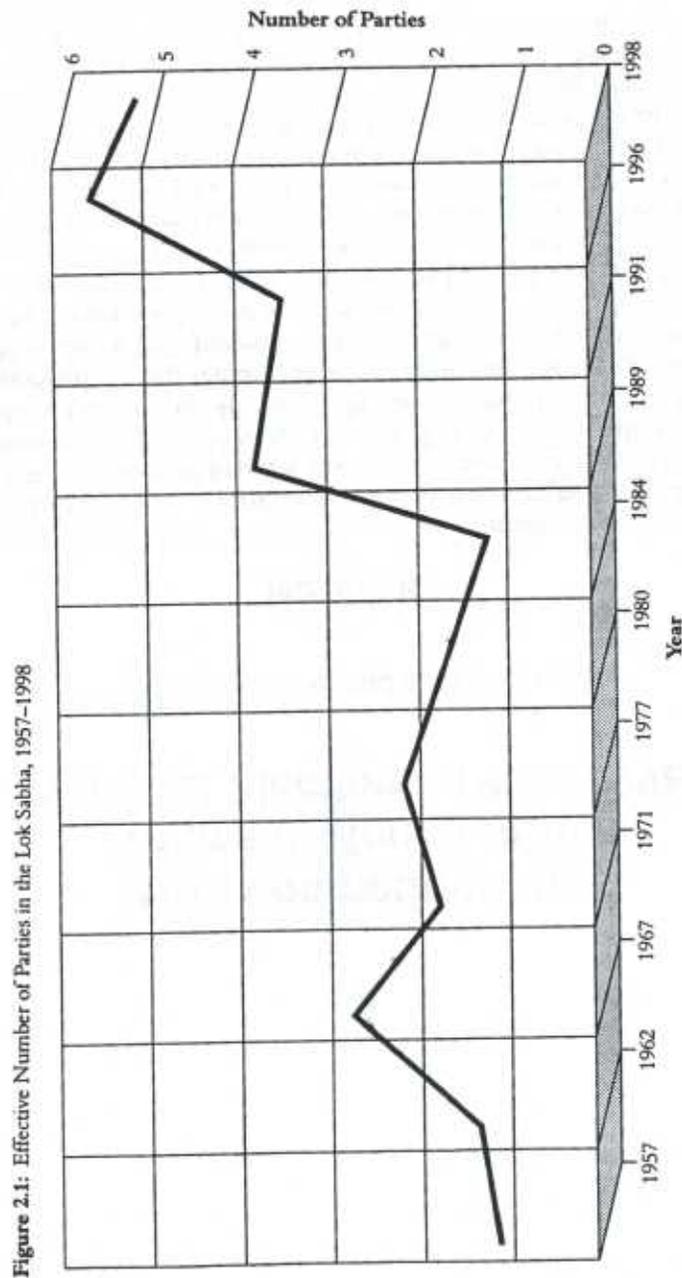


Figure 2.1: Effective Number of Parties in the Lok Sabha, 1957-1998

Sources: 1. David Butler, A. Lahiri and P. Roy, *India Decides: Elections 1952-1995* (New Delhi: Living Media Books, 1996).

2. Election Commission.

Note: See text for details on the calculation of the effective number of parties.

emergence of a more competitive two party system in the constituencies. The final part of the chapter examines whether the BJP, regional parties, and the Congress trade votes. In other words, do these parties mobilize votes at each other's expense nationally or does that continue to be only a significant regional component to the mobilizational efforts of the political parties in India and that parties rarely lose or gain votes to each other nationally.

Increase in Party Competition

The most distinguishing characteristic of elections in the 1990s in India is the increase in party competition. The competitiveness of the party system was measured through the *winning differential*—the difference between the vote share of the first and second parties in Lok Sabha elections. This is an appropriate measure for the competitiveness of a system since a constituency is more competitive in which the margin of victory between the first and second placed parties is narrower than in other constituencies where the margin of victory is larger. In the general elections since 1957, the winning differential has dropped from an average of 20 percent for all constituencies through 1989 to about 10 percent in 1998. The drop in the winning differential is, however, not due to changes in the percent of votes received by the largest party. The share of votes received by the winning party has indeed dropped (from 50 percent for elections till 1967 to 47 percent in the 1990s), but this change is not as large as the drop in the winning differential (Table 2.1). In other words, the drop in the winning differential is due to the larger vote share received by the second placed party in the constituencies. Further evidence that two parties are competing more actively now comes from an examination of the vote share of the other parties, which even though it fluctuates over time, has remained pretty much the same since 1957 (Table 2.2).

Table 2.1: Increase in Competitiveness of the Party System Over Time, 1957-1998

	1957-1967	1967-1989	1991	1996	1998
Winning percentage	50.40	55.19	47.43	45.06	47.11
Winning differential	20.26	21.16	13.47	11.84	10.51
Fragmentation 'n'	2.63	2.27	2.73	3.04	2.63

Note: Average across all constituencies.

Table 2.2: Average Vote Share of Parties Other than the Two Main Parties

Year	Vote Share (% of Votes Cast)
1957	14
1962	19
1967	20
1971	13
1977	04
1980	15
1984	09
1989	11
1991	18
1996	23
1998	17

Note: Average across all constituencies.

A second feature of contemporary Indian electoral politics is fragmentation of the party system. The extent of fragmentation was measured by calculating the average effective number of parties in the various constituencies for all Lok Sabha elections. The effective number of parties has increased from 2.27 in the 1970s and 1980s to almost 3 in the 1990s (Table 2.1). Changes in the extent of fragmentation do not, however, parallel changes in competitiveness. Party fragmentation in 1998 looked similar to that during the period of Congress dominance (1957 to 1967) but, as noted earlier, the difference in the vote share of the top two parties dropped in the 1990s, especially when compared to earlier periods. Hence, there is an increase in party competition in the 1990s but not in party fragmentation which looks similar to the period of Congress dominance, i.e., 1957 to 1967.²

Explaining Electoral Competitiveness

What explains this increase in competitiveness? Is it the vote share of the second party that drives competitiveness or is it, as contemporary scholars of electoral politics have noted, due to the mobilization of hitherto unmobilized segments into the electoral arena.³ Does the mobilization of new voters account for the greater degree of competitiveness? To address this question, a statistical model was estimated for the entire set of constituencies for all elections since 1957. The mobilization of new voters was measured through the voter turnout (the

percent of valid votes cast as a proportion of the total electorate) in a constituency. The dependent variable in the regression analysis was the degree of competitiveness measured as the differential between the votes received by the first and the second placed parties in a constituency. Two sets of controls were added to the model—region and time. The region within which a constituency lies is an important control variable as there are well known regional effects that influence voting behavior and party politics across regions.⁴ To this end the various states were combined to yield three broad regional categorizations—the Hindi speaking belt (Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh), states where regional parties are strong (Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal), and other states (Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Orissa). The model estimated also controlling for the period during which elections were held. Time is an important variable as the 'wave-like' nature of Indian elections has been a focus of many analyses.⁵ The various elections were regrouped into three categories: the years of the undivided Congress (1957, 1962, and 1967); the Indira and Rajiv Gandhi years—termed the Gandhi period (1971, 1977, 1980, 1984, and 1989); and the elections held in the 1990s. As increased party competition could also occur because of the votes received by minor parties (parties that did not place either first or second in a constituency), a final control variable included in the model was the vote share of minor parties.⁶ The key independent variable was the proportion of votes received by the second placed party. There is no a priori reason to expect a consistent effect on winning differential of the mobilizational efforts of the second placed party. The winning differential can decline because of a number of reasons, including the efforts of minor parties and an electoral collapse of the first placed party.

The results provide no support for the hypothesis that increased party competition is attributable to greater mobilization of voters to the polls. In fact, it is the vote share of the second party that has a major impact on the competitiveness of the party system (understood as the winning differential). The negative coefficient on the variable of interest—the vote share of the second party—indicates that as the vote share of the second party increases, the vote differential drops or the degree of competitiveness increases. As Table 2.3 indicates, the influence of regional and temporal effects too have an independent impact on the degree of competitiveness. But, the coefficient on the vote share of the second party is the largest and its effects overshadow the impact of other

variables such as time, region, and even turnout. To test the robustness of our results, we estimated two other specifications of the same basic model. In one we dropped the vote share of the rest of the parties, while in the other we dropped only the vote share of the second party. These changes did not alter our results significantly. In all three versions of the model, the effect of turnout on competitiveness is negligible and not statistically significant. Moreover, the much larger relative impact of the second party compared to other smaller parties is borne out by the fact that the coefficient on the second party vote share is much larger than that on the vote share of the remainder of parties. Both effects were significant at conventional levels of statistical significance.

Table 2.3: Explaining Competitiveness as a Function of Two Party Competition (OLS Models)

Dependent Variable	Winning Differential		
Vote share of second party	-195.10 (1.21)	-119.14 (2.11)	
Vote share of other parties	-98.34 (0.67)		-23.26 (1.49)
Turnout	0.001 (0.003)	0.03 (0.15)	-0.17 (0.22)
Regional states	0.04 (0.07)	-1.22 (0.36)	-1.38 (0.57)
Hindi belt	-0.28 (0.08)	-5.11 (0.35)	0.64 (0.52)
Gandhi period (1971-1989)	0.24 (0.05)	7.07 (0.35)	4.74 (90.48)
1990s	-1.82 (0.11)	-1.98 (0.38)	-2.82 (0.46)
Constant	97.95 (0.47)	56.03 (1.02)	29.23 (1.30)
R ²	0.9764	0.5477	0.1357
N	5117	5117	5117

Note: Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. Vote shares and turnout are measured in percentages. All other independent variables are dichotomous.

The results (Table 2.3) provide quite clear support for the argument advanced in the paper—it is the vote share of the second party that influences competitiveness. The negative coefficient on the vote share of the second party suggests that as the second party mobilizes a greater

segment of the electorate, the winning differential drops and the extent of competitiveness increases. The surprising result is that turnout does not have a significant effect on the degree of competitiveness of a constituency. There are significant temporal and regional effects however. The Hindi belt was more competitive when compared to the other states which are the comparison set, whereas the states with strong regional parties did not display greater competitiveness. The positive coefficient of the Indira and Rajiv Gandhi years and the negative coefficient for the variable representing the 1990s suggest that elections in the 1990s are more competitive than those held during the Gandhi period.

Explaining Turnout

But, what drives turnout? Are there particular configurations of party politics that lead to larger turnout in some constituencies than others. Table 2.4 reports the results of a regression analysis in which turnout was sought to be explained as a function of the effective number of parties in a constituency. The results of the analysis are interesting for they provide unequivocal evidence that, even controlling for time effects, the number of parties influences turnout significantly. In other words, there is likely to be a greater mobilization of voters when there are two parties competing in a constituency.

The result that mobilization is higher when there is two party competition requires some explanation as the common expectation in contemporary political science is that turnout is lower in two party systems. Why then do we see greater mobilization of voters in those constituencies where there are close to two parties? If one party dominates the electoral arena and voters are aware of that, there is little incentive for most of them to turnout to vote, for their ability to influence the outcome is limited. If there are two parties that are active competitors in a constituency, they will attempt to build a winning coalition by reaching across to various groups that exist in most constituencies and in the process mobilize more voters, thereby generating greater turnout. On average, in a two party system, voters have a greater probability of their vote influencing the outcome and hence there is higher turnout. But, what if there are more than two parties that are actively seeking votes in a constituency? Turnout, as Table 2.4 indicates, is lower when there are more than two parties in a constituency. The reason for this lower turnout lies in the nature of the social divisions and the politics of swing that characterize Indian elections.

Table 2.4: Explaining Turnout as a Function of Level of Party Fragmentation (OLS Model)

Dependent Variable	N
Two party system	2.55** (0.7699)
More than two parties	0.431* (0.8230)
Three or more parties	-3.329** (0.8243)
1962	4.439** (0.9289)
1967	9.483** (0.8811)
1971	2.628** (0.8923)
1977	6.773** (0.8617)
1980	4.223** (0.8352)
1984	9.602** (0.8594)
1989	9.128** (0.8726)
1991	4.344** (0.9138)
1996	10.680** (0.9519)
1998	13.942** (0.8375)
Constant	49.233** (1.0345)
R ²	0.1299
N	5133

Note: Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses.

* Significant at the .05 level.

** Significant at the .01 level.

Each party has a core group of voters that they can count on. Those members of the district electorate that do not fall into one such core group can be referred to as *swing* voters.⁷ As the term implies, these

voters can determine the outcome of elections since a shift in their support alters the balance between parties. In a one party dominant system, the dominant party does not need to mobilize the swing vote since its core support bloc is large enough to ensure victory. The swing vote, however, is critical in two party systems. When an election is being contested between two parties, each party targets the swing vote segment of society knowing fully well that the winner of that battle wins the election. Therefore, each party makes appeals to these voters and attempts to mobilize their support. This explains why the regression presented in Table 2.4 suggests that turnout in districts where two parties contest the elections increases compared to districts with one dominant party. This notion of the swing voter also explains why turnout drops as fragmentation increases past two parties. In a district where the effective number of parties is three or more, most of the electorate falls into the core group category of some party or the other. In other words, the size of the swing bloc decreases. Mobilization efforts of the party therefore focus on core voters and fewer new, i.e., swing, voters are brought into the fray.

The analysis of election results since 1957 suggests that two things are happening. First, there is greater two party competition in the 1990s than ever before. Votes of minor parties (not the top two parties in a constituency) have remained pretty much the same (Table 2.2). The increase in party competition is not consistent over time, for two parties got a larger share of the votes during the years 1971–1989 (the Gandhi years) than earlier or later. Party competition has increased in all regions of the country (Table 2.5). In 1998, winning differentials across various regions of India were within two percentage points of each other. The winning differential has dropped from a high of almost 20 percent in the Gandhi years to approximately 10 percent across all regions of India. Further, it is the emergence of the second party as a viable competitor in most constituencies that drives turnout—the ‘swing’ in a constituency.

Party Fragmentation

Party fragmentation does not, however, follow the same trend as winning differential. The effective number of parties has indeed increased

Table 2.5: Competitiveness by Region Over Time*

	1957-1967	1971-1989	1991	1996	1998
Hindi belt states	15.4	24.0	12.6	11.3	9.0
Regional states	13.3	18.3	17.0	13.4	10.9
Other states	19.6	22.5	14.5	12.2	11.7

* Entries are the winning differential in % of votes.

Hindi belt = Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

Regional = Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal.

Others = Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Orissa.

in the 1990s, especially when compared to the Gandhi decades. This increase has happened in all regions of India, but the extent of party fragmentation is the highest in the Hindi belt where the average effective number of parties across constituencies was well over three for the 1991 and 1996 General Elections, dropping to slightly below three for the 1998 election. In other words, the Hindi belt has close to a three party system whereas the other parts of the country have more stable party systems with an average of approximately two-and-a-half parties across the regions (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6: Fragmentation by Region Over Time

	1957-1967	1971-1989	1991	1996	1998
Hindi belt states	3.20	2.45	3.13	3.39	2.87
Regional states	2.53	2.20	2.48	2.80	2.57
Other states	2.30	2.20	2.52	2.91	2.49

Hindi belt = Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

Regional = Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal.

Others = Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Orissa.

What explains this increased fragmentation? Party fragmentation too, in India's single member simple plurality (or first past the post) electoral system, is not driven by increased turnout but the degree of competition between the top two parties in a constituency. The argument is that if a competitor party is successful in mobilizing votes for itself, then

third parties have less success in the district since the principal rival garners those votes. If, on the other hand, the rival party is not very competitive, other parties can gain a significant share of the votes and play a role in government. A glance back at Table 2.1 provides clear indication that the competitiveness of the Indian electoral scene is increasing. The average winning percentage of votes has dropped only 3 percent over the 40 years of Indian electoral history, but the drop in winning differential is almost a full 10 percent. Clearly, this competitiveness is a result of a resurgent rival. The result of this is that increased competitiveness has led to fragmentation—what used to be a one party district changes to having at least two competitive parties and possibly more.

This argument is borne out well by Table 2.7.⁸ In this multiple regression, we test the impact of turnout levels and competitiveness, as

Table 2.7: Explaining Fragmentation by Turnout and Competitiveness

Dependent Variable	Number of Parties	
Turnout	-0.008** (0.0008)	-0.007** (0.0009)
Winning differential	-1.975** (0.0542)	-1.372** (0.0843)
Hindi region* winning difference		-1.332** (0.1156)
Regional State* winning difference		0.092 (0.1203)
Hindi belt	0.412** (0.0207)	0.663** (0.0366)
Regional state	0.044* (0.0209)	0.036 (0.0351)
Gandhi period (1971-1989)	-0.336** (0.0236)	-0.328** (0.0232)
Post-Indira period (1991-1998)	0.024 (0.0283)	0.014 (0.0233)
Constant	3.323** (0.0547)	3.143** (0.0564)
R ²	0.334	0.351
N	5117	5117

Note: Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses.

* Significant at the .05 level.

** Significant at the .01 level.

measured by winning differential, on party fragmentation in a constituency measured as the number of parties in a constituency. As hypothesized, turnout has a negligible effect on the effective number of parties in a district. Winning differential, a measure of second party competitiveness, on the other hand, is significant and has a strong negative impact on fragmentation.

The regional effects are as we expected as well. In the Hindi belt, where the BJP's rise has supplemented existing competition between the Congress and regional parties, the effective number of parties has increased. The BJP, as will be discussed further later, has almost doubled its vote share in the Hindi belt but has not wiped out any other competitor. Its competitiveness, therefore, leads to an increase in 'N'. In states with strong regional parties, fragmentation is lower and not significant at any conventional levels of significance.⁹

Finally, the dummy variables for time periods corroborate our story as well. Compared to the early Nehru period, fragmentation decreased significantly in the Indira period. In the most recent elections however, the effective number of parties has returned to pre-1970 levels and shows no significant change from that in the first period of Indian history. These results do not change even if we control for different competitiveness effects by region.

The conventional wisdom that party competitiveness has increased is confirmed by our findings, but the situation is more complex than it appears. The conventional wisdom is only true if one compares the 1990s to the prior period, i.e., 1971–1989. But if one looks at the entire electoral history of India, then it is not quite true. In fact, fragmentation in the 1990s mirrors that of the first period from 1957–1967. Why? We argue that in certain states regional parties replaced the Congress Party.

The Congress is still a major player at the national level. But at the district level the emergence of regional parties has changed the face of party competition. Where regional parties are strong, they have usurped the position of smaller parties opposing the Congress, thereby keeping the effective number of parties around two. But where there exist weak regional parties, the Congress maintains a strong presence *in addition to* the other national parties that exist there. This explains why fragmentation is higher in the Hindi belt where the major competition is between the Congress and the BJP, in addition to regional parties, than in states with strong regional parties.

Thus, party fragmentation in India today can be explained by what is happening in the Hindi belt. The rise of the BJP has introduced a

powerful new force into the electoral scene of that region, and elections are now decided by competition between the BJP and its allies, the Congress, and other parties. Using turnout and vote share data at the district level, we tracked the performance of various parties over time and by region. The indicator used is a measure of mobilization, where

$$\text{Mobilization}_{ij} = \text{Voteshare}_{ij} \times \text{Turnout}_j$$

for party *i* in district *j*. In other words, multiplying the votes a party receives in a particular district by the turnout in that district tells us how much of the electorate the party was able to mobilize into voting. Since one of the primary functions of political parties is such mobilization, such data allows us to examine trends in mobilization to see which parties are attracting the voting members of society.

Table 2.8 shows mobilization by major groups of parties over time. Immediately, certain trends jump out. The Congress has been decimated in the 1990s. Although it maintained its average mobilization rates till 1989, by 1998 the Congress had experienced a 10 percent drop in its share of mobilization. Two things could be happening here: first, people who previously voted for the Congress could be staying home and not voting; or second, other parties might be wooing Congress supporters over to their side. Over the same time period, the biggest gainer, to no one's surprise, has been the BJP. From being responsible for less than 5 percent of the turnout in the early elections, the BJP has grown rapidly and now competes with the Congress for the top spot in terms of mobilization of voters. Indeed, its 10 percent increase mirrors exactly the decline of the Congress. National parties, such as the JD, SWA, and

Table 2.8: Mobilization by Party Over Time

Party	1957–1967	1971–1989	1991	1996	1998
Congress	23.66	24.16	19.59	16.58	15.57
BJP	4.36	3.04	10.85	11.66	15.21
Left	5.49	4.98	4.78	4.08	4.23
National	9.01	12	6.51	4.77	2.02
Regional	1.48	3.82	4	6.45	9.28

Congress = INC, INC I. National = Swatantra, SSP, Janata Dal, PSP, Lok Dal, and Janata Party.

BJP = BJP, BJS.

Left = CPI, CPM.

Regional = Akali Dal, Samajwadi Party, Shiv Sena, AIADMK, DMK, Telugu Desam, and TMC.

SSP have also lost support over time and now turnout fewer voters collectively than does the Left. On the flip side of this decline is the growth of regional parties. These smaller parties have experienced a marked expansion in the 1990s, going from less than a 4 percent average in the 1970s and 1980s to almost 10 percent in 1998. Amidst these changes, the Left wing has remained remarkably constant, maintaining its share of the proportion of voters it mobilizes successfully.

The biggest gainer of votes in the Hindi belt has been the BJP (Table 2.9). The Congress share of mobilized voters in this region is half what it was in the period of Congress dominance, while the BJP now mobilizes more than two times what it did prior to 1970. Interestingly, national parties have also lost a great deal of support in these states. But with the rise of some weak regional parties in the Hindi belt, it is clear that fragmentation has gone up. Competition in these states is three-pronged, with the Congress, BJP, and the regional party 'combine' being the major players.

Table 2.9: Mobilization by Party Over Time in the Hindi Belt

Party	1957-1967	1971-1989	1991	1996	1998
Congress	19.40	20.86	14.39	9.49	10.36
BJP	7.55	4.81	14.61	15.98	20.09
National	9.54	16.47	9.85	5.67	1.75
Left	2.20	1.65	1.60	1.15	0.84
Regional	0.00	0.00	0.03	4.02	6.84

Congress = INC, INC I. National = SWA, SSP, JD, PSP, BLD, JNP, JNP S.
 BJP = BJP, BJS. Regional = SADM, SAD, SP, SHS, ADMK, ADK, DMK,
 Left = CPI, CPM. TDP, TMC.

In states with strong regional parties (Table 2.10), the big losers have been the national parties and the Congress Party. The biggest gainers, as would be imagined, are the regional parties in these states which more than quadrupled their share of mobilized voters. The Congress Party continues to be one of the largest mobilizers in the region, but its decline is still prodigious—over 10 percent. Particularly troubling for the Congress is that this drop is recent and drastic. Indeed, it has occurred in just the last election. Over the first 10 elections in our sample, i.e., between 1957 and 1996, the Congress was able to mobilize at least 24 percent of the electorate to support it at the polls. In 1998,

Table 2.10: Mobilization by Party Over Time in Regional States

Party	1957-1967	1971-1989	1991	1996	1998
Congress	27.30	25.22	25.21	24.21	16.25
BJP	1.68	0.57	4.95	5.19	7.66
National	6.63	4.67	1.46	0.88	0.60
Left	12.27	12.24	11.49	12.53	11.43
Regional	4.41	11.57	10.53	11.36	15.69

Congress = INC, INC I. National = SWA, SSP, JD, PSP, BLD, JNP, JNP S.
 BJP = BJP, BJS. Regional = SADM, SAD, SP, SHS, ADMK, ADK, DMK,
 Left = CPI, CPM. TDP, TMC.

however, this figure dropped to barely 16 percent. This loss of dominance has cost the Congress Party nationally as well, especially since earlier in the 1990s the Congress counted on the regional states to compensate for poor performances in the Hindi belt.

To answer the question of where each party bloc has been making advances or suffering losses, we estimated a series of multiple regressions for each party's mobilization, controlling for time and state effects, as well as the other parties' mobilization. In such a model, the coefficient on each state's dummy variable indicates whether or not a particular party gained (+ve sign) or lost (-ve sign) in a given period of Indian election history.¹⁰ The results are illuminating and confirmatory of our hypotheses (Table 2.11).

The effects of each party on the mobilization efforts of other parties are very small and close to zero. In other words, parties do not trade

Table 2.11: Vote Trading Between Parties*

Period	BJP	Congress	Regional bloc
1957-1967	-	Other national parties	-
1967-1989	Congress Regional parties	BJP	BJP
1991-1998	Congress	BJP Regional parties	Congress

Entries indicate which parties are trading votes with whom.

* This table is constructed from the results of a series of multiple regressions in which we estimated each party's mobilization as a function of all other parties' mobilization, controlling for time and state effects. Only those coefficients that were significant at the 0.10 level are discussed.

votes with each other nationally. A few trends that conform to our expectations can be discerned from the results. For instance, in the era of Congress dominance, the Congress Party mobilized votes at the expense of other national parties. During the Indira and Rajiv Gandhi years, however, the face of party politics changed as parties began to trade votes. The BJP traded votes with regional and national parties whereas the Congress Party and regional parties traded votes only with the BJP and not with each other. By the 1990s, the picture changed again. The BJP no longer traded votes with regional parties, but only with the Congress Party which was also exchanging support with regional parties. In other words, in the 1990s, in sharp contrast to the earlier era, the Congress's votes were moving to the BJP and regional parties and vice versa.

While these inter-party effects do exist, their overall impact is marginal at best. Instead, it appears that the mobilization story is best told in terms of state effects for each party. From 1957 to 1967, the interval we have dubbed the period of Congress dominance, the Congress made gains in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, but lost ground in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. In the states that the Congress lost voters, the BJP was the big gainer, winning support in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, as well as Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Punjab.

Little changed over the next 20-year span. In the Indira and Rajiv Gandhi period, the Congress maintained its position in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, and added Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. Bihar continued to be a problem for the Congress, and they also mobilized fewer voters in Kerala than previously. The BJP maintained its dominance in the Hindi belt with higher mobilization figures in Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. They also gained in Gujarat, Karnataka, and Maharashtra. The Indira period witnessed the emergence of regionally-based parties as an alternative to the national 'catch-all' parties. The SAD, SAD, SP, SHS, AIADMK, ADK, DMK, TDP, and TMC are grouped here into a regional bloc. Their gains were in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu.

The 1990s, finally, are a testament to the devastation of the Congress Party. From its early dominance over much of the country, when we control for the efforts of other parties, the Congress was able to

mobilize voters in only three states: Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Kerala. In *all* the other states, the Congress lost support. The BJP's stranglehold over the Hindi belt continued with gains in Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. And the regional parties maintained their position in Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh.

Stepping back from this detailed state-level look at party mobilization efforts allows us to draw some conclusions as to which party is gaining at another's expense. Compared to the Nehru period of Congress dominance over Indian politics, the Congress's biggest losses have come in the Hindi belt, the same region that the BJP has established control over. Likewise, regional parties have made their gains at the expense of both the Congress and the BJP in a few states, but are not much of a presence anywhere else.

Conclusion

The Indian electoral system has indeed undergone a transformation in the 1990s. It has evolved from a one party dominant system to a competitive two party electoral setting. Contrary to typical expectations, this increase in competitiveness is not a result of rising turnout; rather, it is due to the increased vitality of second, or rival, parties that are more effectively challenging the incumbent party in their district. This shift to a competitive two party system has had effects on turnout and mobilization of voters by the parties. Compared to districts where one party dominates, turnout in districts with two effective parties is higher due to the mobilization of swing voters. However, once fragmentation increases to three or more effective parties, both mobilization and turnout drop.

Mobilization of voters is traditionally considered a principal function of political parties. Our study suggests that one party's mobilization is not affected much by the efforts of other parties. However, strong time and state effects do exist. Over time, turnout and competitiveness have increased. Further, there has been a trichotomization of the Indian political scene, with different scenarios being played out in states in the Hindi belt, in states with strong regional parties, and the rest of the country. These regional effects are strong and cannot be ignored. In sum, Indian politics can no longer be studied adequately by solely focusing on the national level. The action, as it were, is at the local and state levels and it is here that future analyses of Indian politics must concentrate.

Notes and References

1. The number of parties 'N' is calculated using the widely accepted formula first advocated by Maarku Laakso and Rein Taagepera ('Effective Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to West Europe', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 12, 1979, pp. 3-27). N is the inverse of the Hersfindhal concentration index and is measured as $1/\sum p_i^2$, where p_i can be the proportion of the popular votes received by party i in an election or the proportion of seats in the legislature controlled by party i . For details on N and other measures see, Pradeep Chhibber and Ken Kollman, 'Party Aggregation and the Number of Parties in India and the United States', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 92, No. 2, June 1986, pp. 329-42. In Figure 2.2, the number of effective parties was calculated using the proportion of seats in the Lok Sabha received by the various parties.
2. This finding is discussed in more detail later in the paper.
3. Paul Brass, *The Politics of India Since Independence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
4. *Ibid.* Also see, Pradeep K. Chhibber and John Petrocik, 'The Puzzle of Indian Politics: Social Cleavages and the Indian Party System', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 1989, pp. 191-210.
5. Vanderbok offers a detailed assessment of the value of 'waves' in understanding Indian elections. See, William Vanderbok, 'The Tiger Triumphant: The Mobilization and Alignment of the Indian Electorate', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 20, No. 2, April 1990, pp. 237-61. Also see, Lloyd I. Rudolph and Sussane H. Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).
6. Minor parties could receive votes at the expense of both the first and second placed parties and hence influence the winning differential.
7. Butler, Roy, and Lahiri offer a clear explanation of what a swing stands for. They also came up with this phrase as a key to explaining election results in India. See, David Butler, P. Roy, and A. Lahiri, *India Decides: Elections 1952-1995* (New Delhi: Living Media Books, 1996).
8. We also ran these regressions with dummies for each election year. Our results are robust and do not change when we add these dummy variables.
9. The effect of interaction terms is evaluated by using derivatives. Thus, to find the effect of increased competitiveness in the Hindi belt, we differentiate the model equation with respect to competitiveness and allow the Hindi belt variable to take the value equal to 1, while the regional belt variable is set at zero. The resulting number is the coefficient of interest.
10. Only states that had coefficients significant at the 0.05 level are discussed here.