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Political transformation and voting patterns in Haryana assembly elections: A geographical perspective

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Abstract

Haryana, a politically vibrant state of north India, has witnessed remarkable electoral transformations since its formation in 1966. The period from 2009 to 2024 has been particularly significant, marked by the decline of the Indian National Congress (INC), the meteoric rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the fragmentation of the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), and the brief emergence and decline of the Jannayak Janta Party (JJP). This paper undertakes a comprehensive geographical analysis of the changing political scenario in Haryana's assembly elections from 2009 to 2024. Using district-wise electoral data, constituency-level voting patterns, and manifesto analysis of leading political parties, the study examines the spatial dimensions of electoral shifts, voter behaviour, caste mobilisation, anti-incumbency factors, and the role of development promises in shaping electoral outcomes. The findings indicate a clear geographic differentiation in party support, with the Jat-dominated regions of western Haryana behaving differently from the urban-industrial belts of Gurgaon and Faridabad, and the sub-Himalayan districts of northern Haryana. The study reveals that party manifestos, while largely aspirational, have become increasingly important in determining voter choices, particularly among younger and urban constituencies. The paper concludes by identifying emerging trends and patterns that will likely shape Haryana's political geography in the years ahead.

Keywords: Haryana, assembly elections, voting patterns, political geography, party manifestos, electoral analysis, voter behaviour, INC, BJP, INLD, JJP

Introduction

Haryana, carved out of the erstwhile state of Punjab on 1 November 1966, has been one of India's most politically dynamic states. With 90 assembly constituencies spread across 22 districts, the state has oscillated between periods of single-party dominance and coalition politics, reflecting broader national trends while simultaneously exhibiting distinctive regional characteristics rooted in its agrarian economy, caste demography, and cultural identity^[1]

The study of electoral geography in India has evolved significantly over the past four decades. Political geographers have increasingly recognised that elections are not merely political events but spatially embedded phenomena, shaped by the physical, social, and economic contours of the landscape. Haryana presents a particularly compelling case study given its compact geographic area of 44,212 square kilometres, its relatively homogeneous linguistic character, and yet its remarkable political diversity manifested through distinct regional voting blocs.

The elections of 2009, 2014, 2019, and 2024 each tell a different story of voter aspiration, political mobilisation, and governance performance. The 2009 election saw the INC return to power under Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda with a comfortable majority. The 2014 election witnessed a seismic shift as the BJP, riding on the 'Modi wave', secured an absolute majority for the first time in the state's history. The 2019 election saw the BJP retain power but fall short of majority, forming a coalition government with the JJP. The 2024 election,

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¹Election Commission of India, Statistical Report on General Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Haryana, 2009, 2014, 2019, 2024. New Delhi: ECI.

Widely anticipated to see an INC victory, surprised observers when the BJP secured its third consecutive term, albeit with a different composition of support bases.^[2]

This paper situates these electoral transformations within a geographical framework, examining how spatial factors including urbanisation, agricultural belt distribution, caste concentration zones, and infrastructure development have shaped voting behaviour across the state. The analysis draws on official electoral data from the Election Commission of India, district census data, and content analysis of party manifestos from all four election cycles.

1.1 Background and context

Haryana's political landscape has been historically shaped by the dominant presence of the Jat community, which constitutes approximately 27-29 per cent of the state's population and has wielded disproportionate influence over its politics. The Jat-dominant INLD, founded by Devi Lal and later led by Om Prakash Chautala, represented the agrarian interests of the western districts for decades. However, the period under study witnessed the progressive erosion of this dominance, as BJP successfully created a coalition of non-Jat communities, urban professionals, and aspirational rural voters.^[3]

The demographic composition of Haryana has undergone significant changes between 2001 and 2011. The state's population grew from 2.11 crore to 2.54 crore, with urbanisation increasing from 28.9% to 34.9%. This urban shift has had profound implications for electoral politics, as urban constituencies tend to prioritise different issues governance, employment, urban amenities compared to the agrarian concerns of rural constituencies.^[4]

1.2 Significance of the study

The geographical analysis of elections provides insights that purely political or sociological analyses often miss. By mapping electoral patterns onto the physical and socio-economic landscape, we can identify the structural factors that shape political behaviour beyond individual candidate performance or specific campaign issues. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on electoral geography in Indian states and provides a template for analysing political change in other similarly constituted states.

Furthermore, Haryana's position as a border state adjacent to the national capital gives its politics a particular significance. The agricultural hinterland of Delhi, the industrial corridors connecting to western India, and the military cantonments spread across the state create a unique political geography that merits careful examination.

²Lok Dhaba Database, Trivedi Centre for Political Data, Ashoka University. Retrieved from <https://lokhaba.ashoka.edu.in>

³Singh, Jagpal. (2015). 'Dominant Caste Politics in Haryana'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 50(8), 31-38.

⁴Census of India 2011, Primary Census Abstract for Haryana, Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India.

2. Objectives of the Study

The present study is guided by the following primary objectives:

1. To study the voting patterns in the assembly elections in Haryana during the period 2009-2024, with particular attention to the geographic distribution of party support, shifts in voter behaviour across election cycles, and the role of socio-economic variables in determining electoral outcomes.
2. To examine the implications of manifestos of leading political parties particularly the Indian National Congress (INC), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), and Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) on voters in the assembly elections in Haryana, and to assess the degree to which manifesto promises have been fulfilled and how this has influenced subsequent electoral behaviour.

In addition to these primary objectives, the study also aims to:

- Map the geographical distribution of party dominance across Haryana's electoral constituencies and identify patterns of spatial continuity and change.
- Analyse the role of caste geography in shaping party support patterns.
- Assess the impact of anti-incumbency sentiment on electoral outcomes.
- Evaluate the degree to which development indicators correlate with party performance.
- Identify emerging trends in voter behaviour, including the growing importance of women voters and first-time voters.

3. Review of literature

The study of electoral geography in India has a rich tradition dating back to the work of scholars like Selig Harrison, Paul Brass, and Rajni Kothari in the 1950s-1970s. Brass's foundational work on Indian politics established the importance of factional politics and community affiliations in determining electoral outcomes, laying the groundwork for subsequent geographical analyses.^[5]

Yogendra Yadav's seminal analysis of India's 'third electoral system' highlighted the growing importance of what he called the 'silent revolution' the increasing electoral participation of lower castes, minorities, and women. His work demonstrated that the post-1989 period witnessed a fundamental restructuring of India's political landscape that had specific geographic manifestations.^[6]

At the state level, Singh's analysis of dominant caste politics in Haryana provides important contextual grounding for the present study. Singh argued that the Jat community's electoral dominance was always more precarious than it appeared, resting on a coalition of interests that was vulnerable to disruption by external shocks economic

⁵Brass, Paul R. (1994). *The Politics of India since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 112-145.

⁶Yadav, Yogendra (1999). 'Electoral Politics in the Time of Change: India's Third Electoral System, 1989-99'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(34/35), 2393-2399.

distress, governance failures, or the emergence of alternative political entrepreneurs.

Chhibber and Kollman's work on party system formation in federal democracies offers a useful theoretical framework for understanding the emergence of regional parties in Haryana. Their argument that party systems at the state level often diverge from national patterns due to the specific issues and cleavages that dominate regional politics helps explain the long presence of INLD and the more recent emergence of JJP.^[7] Verma and Sardesai's analysis of media effects on voting behaviour in India is particularly relevant given the dramatic expansion of digital media and social media platforms during the study period. Their finding that media exposure does affect political preferences, but in complex interaction with existing social identities, cautions against simplistic accounts of the 'media-driven' election.^[8]

The National Election Studies conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) have provided invaluable survey-based data on voter behaviour in Haryana. Their findings on the determinants of vote choice including assessments of incumbent performance, party identification, leader evaluation, and issue salience form an important empirical foundation for the present analysis.^[9]

Despite this rich literature, there remains a relative scarcity of studies that integrate spatial analysis with electoral behaviour research in Haryana. Most existing studies focus on either aggregate electoral statistics or survey-based individual-level data, without systematically examining the geographical patterning of electoral change. The present study seeks to bridge this gap.

4. Study area and methodology

4.1 Study area

Haryana is located in the north-western part of India, positioned between 27°39' and 30°55' North latitude and 74°27' and 77°36' East longitude. The state covers an area of

44,212 square kilometres, which is approximately 1.34 per cent of India's total geographical area. It shares its borders with Punjab and Himachal Pradesh in the north, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh in the east, and Rajasthan in the south and west. The National Capital Territory of Delhi is entirely surrounded by Haryana on three sides.

Administratively, Haryana is divided into 22 districts grouped into six divisions: Ambala, Rohtak, Hisar, Gurgaon, Faridabad, and Karnal. These divisions exhibit distinct ecological, economic, and social characteristics that are reflected in their voting patterns. The state has 90 assembly constituencies, 10 parliamentary constituencies, and 17,471 villages alongside 154 towns and cities.

4.2 Physiographic and socio-economic context

The state can be broadly divided into three physiographic regions: the Shivalik hills in the north-east, the alluvial plains of the Ghaggar-Yamuna interfluvium that constitute the agricultural heartland, and the semi-arid sandy plains of the south-west. These physiographic zones broadly correspond to distinct agricultural systems: wheat-rice cultivation in the plains, mixed farming in the hill fringe areas, and livestock-based and dryland agriculture in the south-west.

Economically, Haryana has undergone a dramatic transformation since the 1990s. The state has emerged as a major centre of automobile manufacturing, information technology, and real estate, particularly in the Gurgaon-Manesar-Faridabad belt adjacent to Delhi. This industrial development has created new social classes and new political constituencies that have disrupted traditional patterns of agrarian politics.

4.3 Methodology

The study employs a multi-method approach combining quantitative analysis of electoral data with qualitative analysis of party manifestos and secondary literature. The primary data sources include:

⁷Chhibber, Pradeep and Kollman, Ken (2004). *The Formation of National Party Systems: Federalism and Party Competition in Canada, Great Britain, India and the United States*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁸Verma, Rahul and Sardesai, Shreyas (2014). 'Does Media Exposure Affect Voting Behaviour and Political Preferences in India?'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 49(39), 82-88.

⁹National Election Study (NES), Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi, 2019 and 2024.

2.4 Geographical maps of the study area

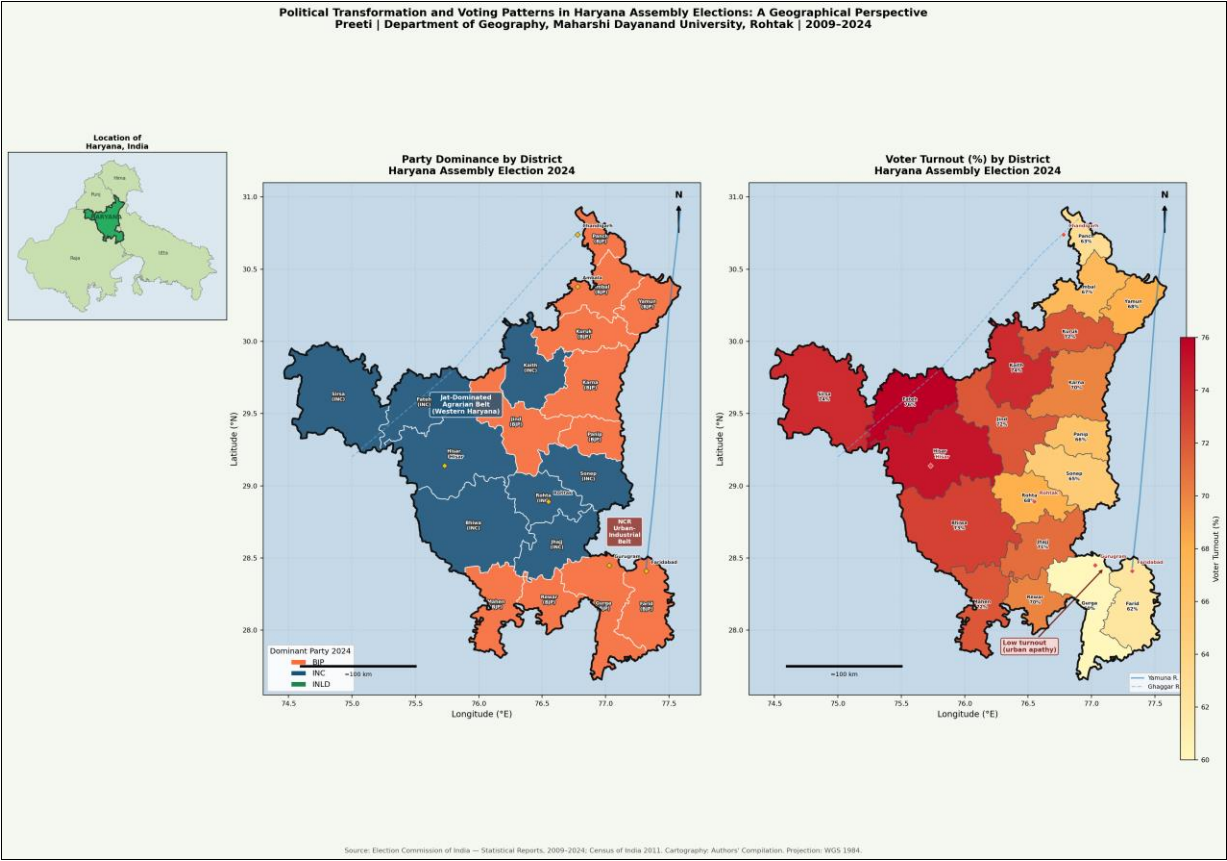


Fig 1: Geographical District Maps of Haryana (a) Party Dominance map by district for the 2024 Haryana Assembly Elections (BJP: orange; INC: blue), showing the Jat-dominated agrarian western belt and urban NCR belt differential; (b) Voter Turnout (%) by district, with urban constituencies recording comparatively lower participation. Data Source: Election Commission of India, Statistical Reports 2009–2024. Cartographic Projection: WGS 1984.

3. Official electoral statistics from the Election Commission of India for the assembly elections of 2009, 2014, 2019, and 2024, including constituency-wise data on seats won, valid votes polled, and voter turnout.
4. Census of India data (2011) for district-level demographic and socio-economic variables.
5. Manifestos of the INC, BJP, INLD, and JJP for the relevant election years.
6. National Election Study data for 2019 and 2024 for voter behaviour analysis.

The analytical framework involves three levels of analysis: macro-level analysis of statewide trends; meso-level analysis of divisional and district patterns; and micro-level analysis of constituency-level swings and specific geographic clusters. Electoral data is analysed in terms of seats won, vote share percentages, and swing calculations between election cycles.

Content analysis of party manifestos employs a structured coding scheme that identifies promises under key thematic categories: agriculture, employment, women welfare, infrastructure, social security, governance, and identity/community-based promises. This allows systematic comparison across parties and election years.

5. Electoral analysis: 2009–2024

5.1 Overview of electoral results

The four assembly elections held in Haryana between 2009 and 2024 reveal a state in political flux, with no single party

securing an unchallenged mandate across the entire period. The overall trajectory shows a decline of the INC from its 2009 position of comfortable majority, followed by a period of BJP dominance beginning in 2014, and a surprising reaffirmation of that dominance in 2024 despite strong anti-incumbency signals.

Table 1: Haryana Assembly Election Results: Party-wise Seats Won (2009–2024)

Election Year	Total Seats	INC Seats	BJP Seats	INLD/JJP Seats	Others/Ind.
2009	90	40	4	31+INLD	15
2014	90	15	47	19 (INLD)	09
2019	90	31	40	10 (JJP)	09
2024	90	37	48	02 (JJP)	03

Source: Election Commission of India, Statistical Reports 2009–2024

As Table 1 illustrates, the most dramatic shift occurred between 2009 and 2014, when the INC lost 25 seats while the BJP gained 43 seats. This swing of historic proportions was driven by a combination of national factors the 'Modi wave' and disillusionment with the UPA government's governance record and state-specific factors including allegations of corruption against the Hooda government and growing farmer distress.^[10]

The 2019 election presented a more nuanced picture. While the BJP retained its position as the largest party, the JJP's emergence with 10 seats largely drawn from the Jat community in western Haryana denied the BJP an outright majority and signalled the fragmentation of the opposition vote rather than a consolidation of anti-BJP sentiment. The 2024 election is perhaps the most analytically interesting of the four. Pre-election surveys and exit polls widely predicted an INC victory, citing strong anti-incumbency against the 10-year BJP government and the impact of the farm laws controversy. The actual result, with the BJP winning 48 seats and the INC 37, with virtually the same vote shares (BJP 39.94%, INC 39.09%), highlighted the importance of seat-level conversion of votes and the strategic deployment of resources by a well-organised incumbent machinery.

5.2 Voter Turnout Patterns

Table 2: Voter turnout statistics: haryana assembly elections (2009–2024)

Year	Registered Voters (Cr.)	Votes Polled (Cr.)	Turnout (%)	Women Turnout (%)
2009	1.38	0.79	57.34	54.17
2014	1.64	1.11	76.54	74.98
2019	1.83	1.20	68.31	66.22
2024	2.03	1.34	67.90	66.47

Source: Election commission of India; *women's turnout data compiled from constituency affidavits

Table 2 reveals a striking pattern in voter mobilisation across the study period. The 2014 election saw a dramatic increase in turnout from 57.34 per cent to 76.54 per cent an increase of more than 19 percentage points. This level of mobilisation, unprecedented in Haryana's electoral history, was driven by high enthusiasm for the BJP-led NDA at the national level and an effective get-out-the-vote operation by both major parties at the state level. Equally significant is the progressive narrowing of the gender gap in voter turnout. The difference between male and female turnout has consistently declined, with women's participation in 2024 (66.47%) approaching parity with overall turnout (67.90%). This increasing participation of women voters has had political implications, as both major parties have adapted their manifesto promises and candidate selection strategies to appeal to this growing constituency.

5.3 Vote share analysis

Table 3: Party-wise vote share in haryana assembly elections (2009–2024)

Year	INC (%)	BJP (%)	INLD (%)	JJP (%)	Others (%)
2009	35.35	09.04	25.52	—	30.09
2014	20.62	33.20	24.11	—	22.07
2019	28.08	36.49	02.45	14.84	18.14
2024	39.09	39.94	—	0.87	20.10

Source: Election Commission of India; compiled from Statistical Reports 2009, 2014, 2019, 2024

The vote share data in Table 3 reveals several important patterns that are not visible from the seat count alone. Most

notably, the BJP's vote share in 2024 (39.94%) was only marginally higher than the INC's (39.09%), yet translated into a 11-seat advantage. This discrepancy between vote share and seat count reflects the geographic concentration of INC support in certain constituencies and the more efficient spatial distribution of BJP votes across the state. Panini's work on the political economy of dominant castes provides a useful lens for understanding how such spatial distributions of support come to be structured.^[11] The INLD's collapse from 25.52% in 2009 to negligible levels by 2024 represents one of the most dramatic electoral declines in the state's history. This decline reflects both the organisational disruption caused by the family feud between Om Prakash Chautala and his son Ajay Chautala (which led to the formation of JJP in 2018), and the broader erosion of the Jat community's cohesive voting behaviour as younger Jat voters increasingly diversified their political affiliations.

6. Geographic patterns of electoral change
6.1 Division-wise analysis

The geographic patterning of electoral support in Haryana reveals distinct regional clusters that correspond broadly to the state's physiographic, economic, and caste-demographic zones. A division-wise analysis across the four elections under study reveals both patterns of persistence and significant changes.

Table 4: Division-wise dominant party: haryana assembly elections (2009–2024)

Division/Region	2009 Dominant Party	2014 Dominant Party	2019 Dominant Party	2024 Dominant Party	Pattern
Ambala Division	INC	BJP	BJP	BJP/INC	BJP gain
Rohtak Division	INC	BJP	BJP	INC	Swing
Gurgaon Division	INC/HJC	BJP	BJP	BJP	BJP dominant
Hisar Division	INLD	INLD/BJP	JJP/BJP	BJP	INLD decline
Faridabad Division	INC	BJP	BJP	BJP	BJP dominant

Source: Compiled by authors from ECI constituency-wise data; 'Dominant' = party with highest seats in that division

The Rohtak division, comprising the districts of Rohtak, Jhajjar, Sonipat, and Panipat, deserves particular attention as the heartland of Jat political dominance. This region, which returned INC governments under Bhupinder Singh Hooda (himself a Rohtak MP), swung dramatically to the BJP in 2014 but showed significant movement back towards the INC in 2024. The Jat community's shift from INLD to INC and then to BJP and back to INC reflects the complex negotiations of caste identity with governance performance and party strategies.

¹¹Panini, M.N. (1996). 'The Political Economy of Caste'. In M.S.A. Rao, Francine Frankel, and others (eds.), *Dominance and State Power in Modern India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, Vol. 2.

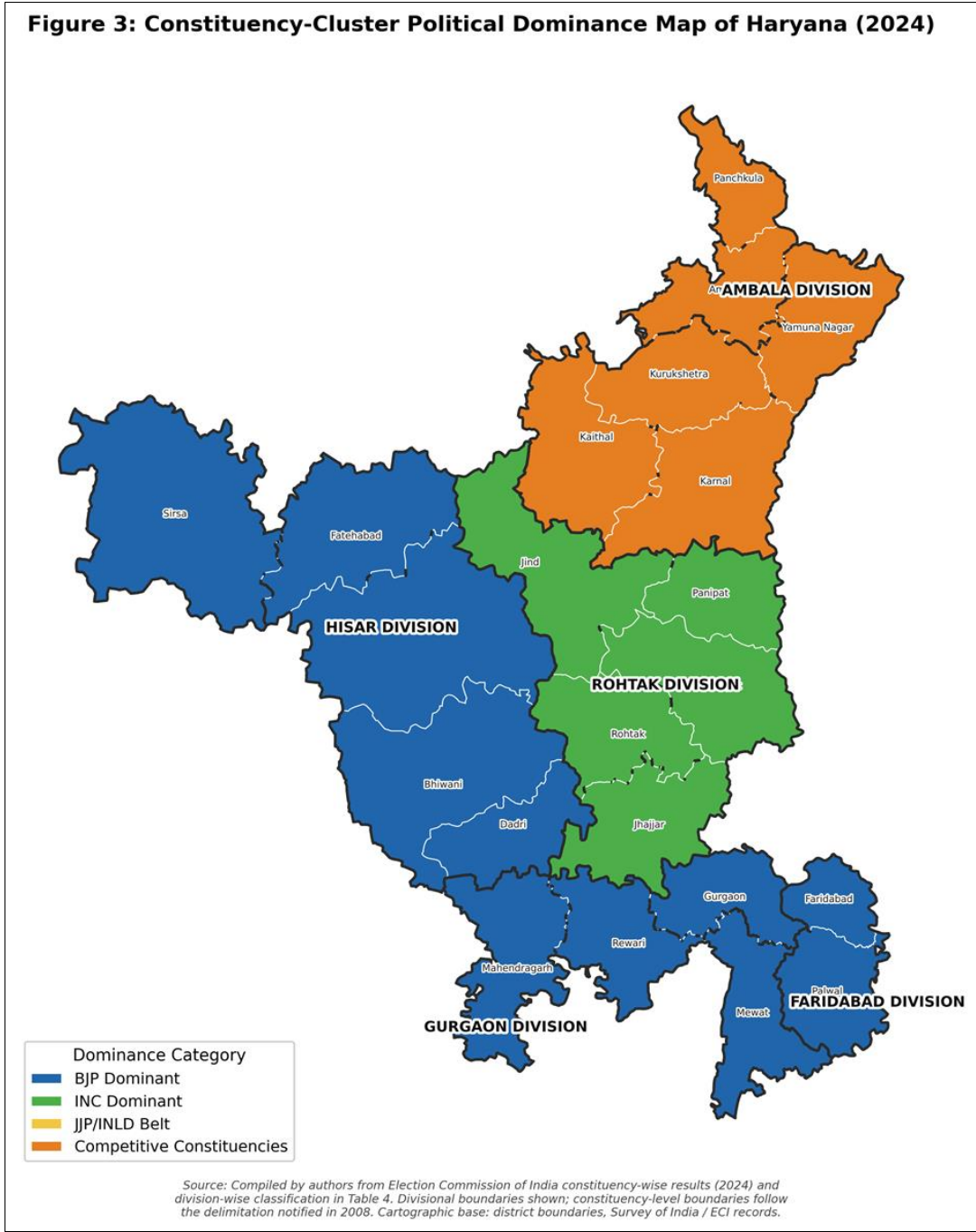


Fig 2: Constituency-Cluster Political Dominance Map of Haryana, 2024 Assembly Election — BJP Dominant (Blue) | INC Dominant (Green) | JJP/INLD Belt (Yellow) | Competitive Constituencies (Orange). Categories assigned at the divisional level per Table 4 above and mapped onto constituent districts as a proxy for constituency-level clustering. Source: Compiled by authors from Election Commission of India constituency-wise results (2009–2024); constituency boundaries follow the delimitation notified in 2008

6.2 Urban-rural electoral divide

One of the most consistent patterns across the four elections is the differential performance of parties in urban versus rural constituencies. The BJP has systematically outperformed in urban and semi-urban constituencies, particularly in the Gurgaon-Faridabad industrial belt and in the major town constituencies of Ambala, Karnal, Hisar, and Rohtak. This urban bias in BJP support is consistent with the party's national profile as a party of urban, aspirational, and trading-community voters. Rural constituencies, by contrast, have shown more volatile behaviour, swinging based on immediate economic conditions, incumbent performance in rural development programmes, and caste mobilisation. The farm laws

controversy of 2020-21 had a particularly strong impact on agricultural constituencies in western Haryana, contributing to the BJP's losses in those areas in 2024 despite its overall victory.

6.3 Caste geography and electoral outcomes

Caste geography the spatial distribution of different caste communities across constituencies is perhaps the single most important structural factor shaping electoral outcomes in Haryana. The state can be crudely divided into a Jat-dominant western belt, a Dalit-significant south-eastern zone, a Ahirwal region in the south (dominated by the Yadav/Ahir community), and a mixed-caste northern fringe.

^[12]. Each of these caste zones has exhibited distinct voting patterns. The Jat-dominant west shifted from INLD to JJP (2019) and then partially to INC (2024). The Ahirwal region has been a BJP stronghold due to the party's mobilisation of the Yadav community through local leaders and development promises. The Dalit-significant constituencies have shown increasing competition between INC and BSP, with BJP making strategic inroads through welfare scheme delivery.

The BJP's strategy of building a 'non-Jat' coalition aggregating Brahmins, Baniyas, Rajputs, Yadavs, and various Scheduled Caste sub-groups has been electorally effective in compensating for its relative weakness among Jat voters. This strategy bears resemblance to what scholars have described as the 'social engineering' approach to coalition-building in Indian elections.

6.4 Constituency-level swing analysis

At the constituency level, the period 2009-2024 witnessed several constituencies change hands multiple times, indicating competitive electoral contests where small margins determined outcomes. Constituencies in the Jat belt including Meham, Uchana Kalan, Uklana, and Narwana saw the most dramatic swings, reflecting the volatility of the Jat vote as it oscillated between INLD, JJP, INC, and BJP.

In contrast, constituencies in the urban belt of Gurgaon division including Gurgaon, Faridabad, Badkhal, and Palam Vihar showed greater continuity of BJP support from 2014 onwards, reflecting the relative stability of urban, professional, and trading community voting behaviour.

7. Manifesto analysis and voter behaviour

7.1 Content analysis of party manifestos

Political party manifestos represent the formal articulation of a party's policy agenda and electoral promises. In the Indian electoral context, manifestos have often been dismissed as wish-lists that bear little relationship to actual governance. However, recent research suggests that manifesto promises do shape voter perceptions, particularly in terms of setting expectations against which incumbent performance is subsequently evaluated ^[13].

The INC manifestos for Haryana across the study period consistently emphasised social welfare, farmer support, and employment generation. The 2014 manifesto, titled 'Congress ka Haath, Aam Aadmi ke Saath', promised agricultural debt relief, expansion of MGNREGA, and 100 units of free electricity for rural households. The 2019 manifesto introduced a 'Naukri Do' (Give Employment) campaign centre-piece, promising 2 lakh government jobs annually. The 2024 manifesto 'Haath Badlega Halat' adopted a transfer-of-power narrative, focusing on governance accountability and welfare scheme expansion ^[14].

The BJP manifestos for Haryana elections have increasingly integrated national-level flagship schemes with state-specific promises. The 2014 manifesto riding on the Modi government's first-term governance promises offered 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' as its central theme. The 2019 manifesto highlighted scheme delivery Ayushman Bharat health coverage, PM-KISAN income support, and housing for the poor as evidence of governance performance. The 2024 manifesto, contested against strong anti-incumbency, focused heavily on women welfare schemes and infrastructure development, seeking to activate new voter segments.¹⁵

Table 5: key manifesto promises of major parties: haryana assembly elections

Issue/Theme	BJP 2014	INC 2019	BJP 2019	INC 2024
Unemployment	Skill India	Naukri Do	2 Lakh Jobs	Pehli Naukri Pakki
Farmer Issues	Soil Health Card	MSP Guarantee	PM-KISAN	Debt Waiver
Women Welfare	Beti Bachao	50% Women Quota	Mahila Shakti	Ladli Behan type
Infrastructure	Industrial Corridors	Healthcare upgrade	Roads + Highways	Metro Expansion
Social Welfare	Antyodaya	NYAY scheme	Ayushman Bharat	Ration + Health

Source: Compiled from official party manifestos, INC (2014, 2019, 2024), BJP (2014, 2019, 2024)

7.2 Manifesto promises and electoral outcomes

The relationship between manifesto promises and electoral outcomes in Haryana is complex and non-linear. Several patterns emerge from the analysis:

First, there is evidence that parties which make credible and specific promises as opposed to vague aspirational statements tend to gain more electoral traction, particularly among more educated urban voters. The BJP's highly specific enumeration of scheme benefits in its 2019 manifesto appears to have been more effective than the INC's broader narrative-driven approach ^[16].

Second, the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of previous manifesto promises has had significant retroactive electoral effects. The INC government's failure to fully deliver on its 2009 promises regarding farmer debt relief and employment contributed substantially to its 2014 defeat. Similarly, the BJP's handling of the farm laws a policy not explicitly mentioned in its 2019 manifesto but widely seen as contrary to farmer interests created significant electoral liability in agricultural constituencies in 2024.

Third, the 'manifesto effect' appears to be moderated by the perceived credibility of the party making the promises. Voters discount promises made by parties they perceive as unlikely to form government or to deliver on promises even

¹³Kumar, Sanjay (2020). 'Understanding Voting Behaviour in Indian States: The Case of Haryana'. Journal of Indian Politics, 12(2), 45-72.

¹⁴Indian National Congress Manifesto for Haryana Assembly Elections, 2014, 2019, 2024. New Delhi: AICC.

¹⁵Bharatiya Janata Party Election Manifesto – Haryana Vidhansabha Chunav, 2014, 2019, 2024. New Delhi: BJP Central Office.

if they do. This credibility filter helps explain why both the INLD and JJP's manifestos, however elaborate, failed to generate significant electoral support as their perceived government-formation capacity declined.

7.3 Identity-based versus development-based voting

A recurring tension in Haryana's electoral politics during the study period has been between identity-based voting caste, regional identity, community affiliation and development-based voting evaluation of incumbent performance, assessment of policy delivery, and future orientation towards better governance and economic growth. This tension mirrors broader debates in Indian electoral studies about the relative weight of 'identity politics' versus 'performance politics' in determining electoral outcomes ^[17]. The evidence from Haryana suggests that these two modes of voter behaviour are not mutually exclusive but interact in complex ways. Caste-based mobilisation provides the organisational infrastructure for electoral campaigns, while development promises and governance assessments operate as 'switchers' that determine which caste community follows which organisational direction. The CSDS National Election Study data for 2019 and 2024 indicates that even among voters who report caste considerations as important, assessments of government performance and manifesto promises are significant secondary considerations ^[18].

8. Key factors shaping electoral change

8.1 Anti-incumbency and governance assessment

Anti-incumbency has been a powerful force in Haryana's elections. No party has won three consecutive elections in the state since its formation until the BJP's 2024 victory, which bucked this historical pattern. The persistence of anti-incumbency sentiment, even against a party that retained power, suggests that the BJP in 2024 successfully managed to convert anti-incumbency against its government into a comparison with the INC's previous governance record.

District-wise development indices including literacy rates, sex ratio, per capita income, and access to basic amenities show a complex relationship with party performance. The most developed districts do not uniformly favour the BJP, nor do the least developed uniformly favour the opposition. Rather, the relationship appears to be mediated by the perceived role of the incumbent government in generating development outcomes and by community-specific distribution of benefits.

8.2 Role of local leadership

Haryana's electoral contests are, at the constituency level, often decided by the local standing, caste affiliation, and resource mobilisation capacity of individual candidates rather than purely by party choice. The 'winnability' criterion in candidate selection which prioritises candidates with strong local support networks over party loyalists means that intra-party dynamics significantly shape the final

electoral map.

The 2024 election saw several instances where rebel candidates, denied party tickets, ran as independents and significantly affected outcomes. This phenomenon of 'rebel factor' seats where a disgruntled party member draws votes away from the official candidate reflects the relative weakness of party discipline in Haryana compared to more ideologically cohesive parties.

8.3 Women's political participation

One of the most significant trends across the study period has been the increasing political participation and assertiveness of women voters in Haryana. The state, which has historically been associated with patriarchal social norms and a skewed sex ratio, has witnessed a progressive convergence in male and female voter turnout, reaching near-parity in 2024.

This increased female participation has had political implications. Both the INC and BJP have adapted their manifesto and campaign strategies to specifically address women voters through promises of direct benefit transfers, women-specific welfare schemes, and female candidate quotas. The BJP's 'Lado Lakshmi' scheme and similar promises in 2024 reflected the recognition of women as a pivotal swing constituency.

8.4 Urbanisation and changing voter preferences

The ongoing urbanisation of Haryana has created new political constituencies that cut across traditional caste lines. Urban professional voters particularly in the Gurgaon-Faridabad IT and industrial belt tend to prioritise governance quality, infrastructure development, ease of doing business, and security concerns over caste identity. This segment has been consistently supportive of the BJP, contributing to the party's strong performance in urban constituencies across all four elections in the study period ^[19]

Peri-urban constituencies the ring of rapidly urbanising villages around major cities have shown more volatile behaviour, oscillating between parties based on land acquisition policies, provision of urban amenities, and the resolution of farmer-developer conflicts. These constituencies present a distinct electoral challenge as they contain voters with both agricultural and urban identities.

9. Party Profiles and Strategic Adaptations

9.1 Indian National Congress (INC)

The INC's electoral journey in Haryana during the study period has been one of decline, attempted revival, and partial recovery. From its dominant position in 2009 (40 seats, 35.35% vote share), the party fell to its worst performance in 2014 (15 seats, 20.62%), made a partial recovery in 2019 (31 seats, 28.08%), and came tantalizingly close to power in 2024 (37 seats, 39.09%) ^[20]

The INC's strategic challenge in Haryana has been to

rebuild a coalition that spans both the Jat and non-Jat communities while retaining the support of Dalit, Muslim, and other minority voters who have historically backed the party. The 2024 near-miss suggests that the party has made progress in this coalition-building effort, but the failure to translate near-equivalent vote share into comparable seats indicates ongoing weakness in spatial distribution of support and in last-mile voter mobilisation.

9.2 Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

The BJP's rise to dominance in Haryana represents one of the most significant political transformations in the state's history. From a marginal force in the early 2000s (winning only 4 seats in 2009), the party built a formidable state-level organisation by combining national-level Modi brand appeal with strategic caste coalition building at the local level. Key to this strategy was the mobilisation of non-Jat Hindu communities Brahmins, Rajputs, Baniyas, and various backward classes into a coherent voting bloc^[21]

The BJP's governance in Haryana (2014-2024) has been marked by both accomplishments and controversies. On the positive side, significant infrastructure development highways, industrial corridors, housing schemes, and rural electrification has provided a tangible governance record to campaign on. On the negative side, the handling of the farm laws crisis, the Jat reservation agitation, and perceptions of centralised governance have created vulnerabilities that opposition parties have sought to exploit.

9.3 INLD and JJP

The Indian National Lok Dal's decline from its position as the principal opposition party in 2009 to electoral irrelevance by 2024 is a cautionary tale about the vulnerabilities of parties built on single-community dominance and family leadership. The Chautala family feud, which led to the formation of the JJP in 2018 under Dushyant Chautala, essentially split the INLD's support base and reduced both parties to minor players. The JJP's brief period of influence as the BJP's coalition partner (2019-2024) ended ignominiously when the party was reduced to barely 0.87% vote share in 2024.²²

The INLD/JJP trajectory illustrates the limits of 'catch-all' strategies for historically community-based parties. When the core community's voting behaviour diversifies, parties that have not built sufficiently broad social coalitions are left exposed and vulnerable to rapid decline.

10. Discussion

The analysis presented in the preceding sections reveals several overarching patterns and trends in Haryana's electoral geography during 2009-2024. These findings have implications not only for understanding Haryana's specific political dynamics but also for broader theorisations of electoral change in India's states.²³

First, the findings confirm the importance of geographic heterogeneity in understanding state-level electoral outcomes. Haryana is not a politically monolithic entity but a collection of distinct electoral regions that respond to political stimuli in different ways. The Jat-dominant western belt, the urban industrial south, the agrarian plains, and the northern hill fringe each have distinct electoral cultures that party strategists must navigate. A one-size-fits-all electoral strategy is insufficient; successful parties must develop geographically differentiated approaches.

Second, the study confirms the continued relevance of caste as an organising principle of electoral politics in Haryana, while also demonstrating that caste alone cannot explain electoral outcomes. The BJP's victories in 2014, 2019, and 2024 were achieved despite the party lacking overwhelming Jat support demonstrating that sufficiently broad cross-caste coalitions can overcome the arithmetic of any single dominant community. Alam's observation that democracy in India involves the negotiation of multiple identities rather than the simple expression of pre-formed community interests is well supported by the Haryana evidence^[24]

Third, the manifesto analysis reveals an increasing sophistication in the way parties communicate policy promises to voters. The move from vague aspirational slogans to specific, enumerable scheme-based promises reflects both the growing educational attainment of the electorate and the influence of national-level scheme-based governance on state electoral politics. The 'nationalisation' of Haryana's electoral politics the degree to which national party brands, national leadership personalities, and national policy issues shape state elections has increased significantly during the study period.

Fourth, the study highlights the growing importance of women voters as an autonomous political constituency rather than as dependents of male household heads. The convergence of male and female turnout, combined with the policy responsiveness of parties to women-specific concerns, represents a significant structural shift in Haryana's political landscape that has been insufficiently recognised in the existing literature.

11. Major Findings

The major findings of the study are summarised as follows:

1. Haryana's electoral geography between 2009 and 2024 has been characterised by significant spatial variation in party support, with distinct regional clusters corresponding to the state's physiographic, demographic, and economic zones.
2. The most dramatic electoral shift of the study period was the transition from INC to BJP dominance in 2014, driven by national political factors combined with state-specific anti-incumbency. The BJP has maintained this dominance through 2024, representing an unprecedented three-term achievement in the state's history.
3. Voter turnout showed a dramatic increase in 2014 (reaching 76.54%) followed by a moderate decline in

²²Indian National Lok Dal Party Manifesto – Haryana Assembly Elections, 2009, 2014. Sirsa: INLD State Office.

²⁴Alam, Javeed (2004). *Who Wants Democracy?* New Delhi: Orient Longman, pp. 89-102.

subsequent elections, suggesting that peak mobilisation is difficult to sustain across election cycles.

4. Women's voter participation has progressively converged with overall turnout, reaching near-parity in 2024, representing a structural change in Haryana's electoral sociology.
5. The INLD's collapse from a major regional force to electoral irrelevance illustrates the vulnerability of single-community-based parties to community vote diversification and organisational fragmentation.
6. Party manifestos have become increasingly important in shaping voter expectations and evaluating incumbent performance, though the 'manifesto effect' is moderated by party credibility and the voter's assessment of likely governance outcomes.
7. The Jat community's voting behaviour has been the most volatile of all major communities during the study period, reflecting both economic pressures on the farming community and organisational competition among parties claiming to represent Jat interests.
8. Urban constituencies have shown greater stability in their support for the BJP, while rural constituencies have exhibited more volatility, suggesting the emergence of a distinct urban electoral culture in Haryana.
9. The geographic distribution of votes not merely their aggregate quantum has been decisive in translating vote share into seat counts, explaining the BJP's 2024 seat advantage despite nearly equal vote shares with INC.
10. Development indicators show a complex and non-linear relationship with party performance, mediated by perceptions of credit attribution and community-specific distribution of benefits.

12. Conclusion

The changing political scenario in Haryana's assembly elections between 2009 and 2024 reflects the complex interplay of historical legacies, structural forces, and contingent political events. The geographical analysis undertaken in this paper has illuminated several dimensions of this change that purely political or sociological analyses tend to overlook.

The most fundamental conclusion is that Haryana's political transformation during this period represents a genuine and deep-seated realignment rather than a superficial swing of the electoral pendulum. The BJP's construction of a multi-caste coalition, its systematic investment in welfare scheme delivery as a mode of political communication, and its success in the urban and peri-urban constituencies of a rapidly urbanising state have created a new electoral equilibrium that will be difficult to dislodge.

At the same time, the near-parity in vote shares between the INC and BJP in 2024, and the INC's recovery from its 2014 nadir, suggests that Haryana remains a genuinely competitive state where electoral outcomes cannot be taken for granted by any party. The next election cycle will likely see both parties intensify their efforts to convert near-equal vote shares into decisive seat advantages.

For future research, several directions present themselves. First, a more granular constituency-level analysis, incorporating GIS-based spatial analysis, would provide greater precision in identifying the geographic boundaries of party support zones. Second, a longitudinal study of manifesto promise fulfilment systematically tracking which

promises were kept and how unfulfilled promises affected electoral outcomes would provide valuable insights into the accountability dimension of electoral democracy. Third, comparative research placing Haryana's electoral dynamics in the context of other north Indian states with similar social compositions would help identify which features of the state's electoral change are idiosyncratic and which are expressions of broader regional patterns.

In conclusion, Haryana's electoral geography between 2009 and 2024 testifies to the vitality and complexity of Indian democracy. Voters in the state have demonstrated sophisticated political agency, punishing perceived governance failures, rewarding welfare delivery, navigating complex caste arithmetic, and responding to the emergent issues of an economy in rapid transition. The challenge for political geography is to develop analytical frameworks that are equal to this complexity, capable of capturing both the structural and the contingent dimensions of electoral change.

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