



THE ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS PARTY IN 1996 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION: A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

DR. RAJEEV KUMAR,

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF GEOGRAPHY,

GOVERNMENT COLLEGE, BAHADURGARH (HARYANA)

E-Mail:- rkd.geo@gmail.com.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was analyzing the electoral performance of the Indian National Congress for India as a whole in the parliamentary election held in 1996. The analysis was carried out at the level of parliamentary constituency for all the 543 constituencies. The Congress was founded by an Englishman, A.O. Hume, on 27th December, 1885. It is the mother institution of almost all the other national parties in the country. It spearheaded the freedom struggle for full 62 years by virtue of which the country had attained independence in 1947. Secondly, the party from its very beginning has adopted the centrist path, which helped the party in drawing vote across the different socio-economic cleavages. These factors explain its dominance over the other political parties till now. The electoral performance of the Congress in terms of seats contested, percent vote polled and seats won in the above-mentioned election.

INTRODUCTION

In 1996, Lok Sabha election was held on 543 seats. The Indian National Congress had contested the election on 592 parliamentary seats, which was maximum number of seats contested by the party ever. In this election, the party had won 140 seats and received 28.79 percent of the total votes polled. The 1996 Lok Sabha election had two unique characteristics features for the Congress. First, its historic lowest vote percentage among all the Lok Sabha elections held and secondly, for the first time the Congress contested the election without any member of the Nehru family at its head. Prior to 1996, every election was dominated by members of the Nehru family – in 1952, 1957 and 1962 it was Jawaharlal Nehru himself; in 1996, 1971, 1977 and 1980 it was Indira Gandhi; in 1984, 1989 and 1991 it was Rajiv Gandhi who spearheaded the poll campaign. After the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991, P.V. Narasimha Rao took over the leadership of the Congress party. Regarding the patterns of seats contested by the Congress in this parliamentary election, the party had contested all the seats in the States and union territories of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmiri, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Delhi, Lakshadweep and Pondicherry. Besides, the party had contested 17 seats (out of 20) in



Kerala and 29 seats (out of 39) in Tamil Nadu. The party had not fielded its candidates in the State of Sikkim. The region-wise analysis of the patterns of seats contested indicates that the party had contested 99.76 percent of total seats in North-Indian States, 100 percent in the Hindi-Speaking States and 90.15 percent in the South Indian States.

STUDY AREA

In the present study, the electoral analysis has been carried out for India as a whole. The parliamentary constituency has been selected as unit of analysis and the analysis was carried out for all the 543 parliamentary constituencies. The electoral performance of the Indian National Congress has also been carried out at the regional level. For the purpose, India has been divided into Hindi Speaking states (Bihar, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chandigarh and Delhi), North Indian states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Orissa, Punjab, Sikkim, Tripura, West Bengal, Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and the above mentioned Hindi-Speaking states) and South Indian states (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andaman and Nicobar Island, Lakshadweep and Pondicherry).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study has been undertaken to find out: (1) what are the main areas of support of the Indian National Congress at all Indian level and regional level, (2) Is the support of the, Indian National Congress is concentrated in specific areas or evenly distributed.

DATA BASE

Electoral data of parliamentary election of 1996 is used in this study. Data of parliamentary election were taken from the various Election Commission reports.

METHODS

Various statistical methods have been used to answer various questions about the voting patterns of the Indian National Congress raised above. In statistical methods, we have used mean, for the calculation of average vote. The techniques of standard deviation, co-efficient of variation are used for measuring the level of heterogeneity in the party vote.

SPATIAL PATTERN OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS VOTE

In this election, there were 19 states and 7 union territories where the party's percent vote share was above the national average percent vote figure of 29.25. These states and union territories were Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Chandigarh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat,



Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, West Bengal, Orissa, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Pondicherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep. In the states of Tamil Nadu, Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the party had polled less than the national average (Table 1).

Table1: State-Wise Average Percent of Votes Polled in Seats contested by the Indian National Congress in Parliamentary Election- 1996

States/Union Territories	Average Vote (%)
Andhra Pradesh	38.58
Arunachal Pradesh	28.73
Assam	31.91
Bihar	13.20
Goa	34.78
Gujarat	39.07
Haryana	22.56
Himachal Pradesh	53.23
Jammu & Kashmir	29.88
Karnataka	3.08
Kerala	44.94
Madhya Pradesh	29.87
Maharashtra	35.46
Manipur	38.77
Meghalaya	56.80
Mizoram	42.50
Nagaland	62.31
Orissa	44.82
Punjab	35.39
Rajasthan	40.13
Sikkim	-
Tamil Nadu	28.79
Tripura	33.82
Uttar Pradesh	8.17
West Bengal	40.06
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	58.22
Chandigarh	29.79
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	55.62
Daman & Diu	50.62
Delhi	40.06
Lakshadweep	51.71
Pondicherry	39.97
India	29.25

Table 1 shows that out of the total 529 seats that the party had contested in this election, the party had polled above 50 percent vote in 36 constituencies (30 in North-Indian states, including 9 in Hindi-Speaking states and 6 in South-Indian states); 40 to 50 percent in 121



constituencies (83 in North-Indian states, including 25 in Hindi Speaking states and 38 in South-Indian states); 30 to 40 percent in 130 constituencies (97 in North-Indian states including, 35 in Hindi-Speaking states and 33 in South-Indian states); 20 to 30 percent in 98 constituencies (64 in North-Indian states, including 27 in Hindi-Speaking states and 34 in South-Indian states); 10 to 20 percent in 49 constituencies (44 in North-Indian states, including 36 in Hindi-Speaking states and 5 in South-Indian states) and below 10 percent in 95 constituencies (93 in North-Indian states, all of which were from the Hindi-Speaking states and only 2 in South-Indian states). The patterns of the Congress vote percentage clearly indicates, that the party had polled less number of votes in the North-Indian and Hindi-Speaking states in general and in the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in particular. Although in the South-Indian states, the party had polled above the national average vote figure but in majority of the constituencies in Tamil Nadu, the party had polled less than the national average.

The average vote share of the Congress in this parliamentary election was 29.25 percent. The standard deviation and co-efficient of variation were 16.41 and 56.10 percent respectively which shows that in this election the heterogeneity in the pattern of party voting had increased further than the previous election. The co-efficient value in 1991 was 38.73 per cent. The average vote share of the party was more than the national average in the South-Indian states (35.07 percent) and less than in the North-Indian states (26.63 percent) and the Hindi-Speaking states (19.22 percent) (Table 2).

Table 2: Region-Wise Spatial Variation in the Indian National Congress Vote in Parliamentary Election- 1996

Region	Average Vote (%)	Standard Deviation (%)	Co-efficient of Variation (%)
North Indian States	26.63	16.33	61.33
Hindi – Speaking States	19.22	16.32	84.91
South Indian States	35.07	10.4	29.65
India	29.25	16.41	56.10

The region – wise analysis of the party's vote share indicates that the electoral performance of the party was more uniform in the case of South - Indian states, whereas, it lacked uniformity in the North-Indian states in general and the Hindi-Speaking states in particular. The large-scale variations in the value of standard deviation and co-efficient of variations in the party vote clearly supports the statement. The average vote share in case of the South Indian states was 35.07 percent. The standard deviation was 10.4 percent and co-efficient of variation was 29.65 percent. In case of the North-Indian states and the Hindi Speaking states, the average



percentage vote share was 26.63 and 19.22 percent and the standard deviation were 16.33 and 16.32 percent and co-efficient of variation were 61.32 and 84.91 percent respectively.

SPATIAL PATTERNS OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS VICTORIES

The Congress in this parliamentary election had won 140 seats of the total contested 529 seats out of the total 543. the number of victories in this parliamentary election was least among all the parliamentary elections that the party had ever contested. The first obvious aspect of the 1996 parliamentary election was rejection of the Congress party by the people. It was largely due to discontent over its economic policies and the resentment against Narasimha Rao (Table 3).

Table 3: State-Wise Indian National Congress Victories in Parliamentary Election- 1996

States/Union Territories	Total Seats	Seats Contested	Seats Won
Andhra Pradesh	42	42	22
Arunachal Pradesh	02	02	0
Assam	14	14	05
Bihar	54	54	02
Goa	02	02	0
Gujarat	26	26	10
Haryana	10	10	02
Himachal Pradesh	04	04	04
Jammu & Kashmir	06	06	04
Karnataka	28	28	05
Kerala	20	17	07
Madhya Pradesh	40	40	08
Maharashtra	48	48	15
Manipur	02	02	02
Meghalaya	02	02	01
Mizoram	01	01	01
Nagaland	01	01	01
Orissa	21	21	16
Punjab	13	13	02
Rajasthan	25	25	12
Sikkim	01	-	-
Tamil Nadu	39	29	0
Tripura	02	02	0
Uttar Pradesh	85	80	05
West Bengal	42	42	09
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	01	01	01
[Chandigarh	01	01	0
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	01	01	01
Daman & Diu	01	01	01
Delhi	07	07	02
Lakshadweep	01	01	01
Pondicherry	01	01	01
India	543	529	140



Table 3 shows that in this election, the party had won 26.46 percent of the seats it had contested which certainly indicates poor electoral performance of the party. This showing the distribution of the Congress victories clearly indicates no specific pattern. The seats won were less in number and they were scattered here and there in the form of some patches. However, the party had shown good electoral performance in the states and union territories of Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Orissa, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Lakshadweep and Pondicherry. In these states and union territories the party had won more than 50 percent of seats it had contested. The party had not won any seat in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and in the union territory of Chandigarh. The party's electoral performance was dismal in the big Hindi-Speaking states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, wherein the party respectively had bagged only 3.70 (2 out of 54) and 5.88 percent (5 out of 85) of seats it had contested. Indian states (including 35 from the Hindi-Speaking states) and 37 from the South Indian states. The party in total had won 26.46 percent of seats it had contested.

The region-wise picture of the seats won as percentage of the total seats it had contested indicate that the party had won 31.09 percent of seats it had contested in the South Indian states, whereas the percentage victories in the North-Indian states and Hindi-Speaking states were 25.12 and 15.5 percent respectively (Table 4).

Table 4: Region-Wise Indian National Congress Victories in Parliamentary Election- 1996

Region	Total	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Victories as percentage to the seat contested
North Indian States	411	410	103	25.12
Hindi – Speaking States	225	225	35	15.50
South Indian States	132	119	37	31.09
India	543	529	140	26.46

The regional analysis reveals that in this election the Congress had got less number of seats both in the North and South Indian states. The special aspect of this election was that notwithstanding the earlier anti-Congress waves which normally restricted to the North-Indian and Hindi-Speaking states phenomenon. It reveals that the anti-Narasimha Rao wave crossed the Vindhyas in this election. Resultantly, the electoral performance of the party suffered a great deal in south-Indian states.



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