

HOW INDIA VOTES

A State-by-State Look

EDITED BY

Ashutosh Kumar

Yatindra Singh Sisodia



Orient BlackSwan

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HOW INDIA VOTES: A STATE-BY-STATE LOOK

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Party Types and Electoral Performance across States, 1980–2016

Suraj Jacob

The proliferation of political parties in India has produced interesting scholarship exploring its causes and consequences. It has been linked with democratic stability or instability (Chandra 2005; Nooruddin 2011; Palshikar, Suri and Yadav 2014), federalisation (Arora 2003; Ziegfeld 2012), ethnic mobilisation and democratic upsurge (Chandra 2004; Varshney 2000; Yadav 2000), political entrepreneurship (Wyatt 2010), increased ideological incoherence or convergence over time (Hasan 2010; Palshikar, Suri and Yadav 2014; Yadav and Palshikar 2009), party organisation (Chhibber, Jensenius and Suryanarayanan 2014), legislative behaviour (Ayyangar and Jacob 2015), inequality (Huber and Suryanarayanan 2016), provision of public goods (Chhibber and Nooruddin 2004; Thachil and Teitelbaum 2015) and human development outcomes (Joshi 2012). Even when pragmatism and flux have reduced inter-party differences in ideology and intra-party democracy, and weakened organisational structure (Hasan 2010), one aspect of differentiation has endured, namely the distinction between national and subnational parties. This chapter takes up this distinction and focuses on subnational parties—which account for the vast majority of India's parties—across states and time in the electoral domain.¹

The chapter is organised as follows. The first section discusses various approaches to national/regional/state/ethnic party appellations and develops a threefold categorisation of party types (national, mesonational and subnational) using the concept of interest bundle size, which is strongly correlated with and yet distinct from categorisations based on narrowness of geographical base or salience of direct ethnic appeals. The second section applies the threefold categorisation to Lok Sabha election data and identifies three clear phases in the post-1980 period. The third section turns to assembly election data. For the 20 Indian states with population of over half a crore (excluding Telangana formed in 2014), it graphically presents and analyses descriptive statistics

for vote shares and seat shares of different party types for all Lok Sabha and assembly elections in the period 1980–2016 and poses several questions that are insufficiently answered in extant literature. Among subnational parties, it also empirically distinguishes between state, ethnic and other parties. The fourth and final section discusses selected empirical patterns and questions that emerge from the data. It explores the argument of stability in the post-Congress polity (Palshikar, Suri and Yadav 2014) for assembly elections and the relationship between subnational party vote share and party proliferation. It ends with a brief survey of explanations of the empirical trends described earlier, although the emphasis throughout the chapter is on establishing empirical patterns and trends rather than constructing and defending explanations.

Conceptualising National and Subnational Parties

The distinction between national and subnational parties is a contentious one. Hepburn (2009) notes the presence of a large number of terms in the international literature: ethnic, ethnonationalist, ethnoregionalist, ethnoterritorial, minority nationalist, stateless nationalist, regional nationalist, autonomist, regionalist and non-statewide. The challenge is whether and how to include two competing drivers: territorial and ethnic/cultural (De Winter, Gómez-Reino and Lynch 2006). The India literature favours the terms ‘regional’, ‘state’ and ‘ethnic’. As Brancati (2008) notes, regional parties do not compete/win in roughly equal measure across (single-state or multi-state) regions, while ethnic parties adopt exclusionary rhetoric and/or practices based on preferred ethnic groups; she gives the example of the DMK, which is a regional but not ethnic party, and the BJP which is a ‘religious party’ but not a regional party.

In India, the ‘regional party’ appellation dates back to an earlier vintage than that of the ‘ethnic party’. Observing the politics of the 1960s, Fickett (1971: 194) distinguishes between ‘classic regional chauvinist parties’ and other regional parties. He points out key examples of the former: the DMK (TN), Akali Dal (Punjab), Muslim League (Kerala) and Shiv Sena (Maharashtra). It can be argued that these parties all had long-developed ethnic party characteristics as well, unlike the second category of regional parties created by dissident Congress groups such as the Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD) in Uttar Pradesh (UP), Bangla Congress (West Bengal [WB]), INC (Urs) in Karnataka and Telangana Praja Samiti (AP). More recently, Ziegfeld (2012, 2016) has used the appellation ‘regional party’ to refer strictly to the narrowness of a party’s geographical base (in contradistinction to a ‘national party’) irrespective

of ideology or party messaging (including regionalist appeals).² In this conceptualisation, regionalist parties are regional, but regional parties are not necessarily regionalist. Further, some parties can be unintentionally regional if their support base is geographically clustered although originally their mobilisation strategy was not so.

For India, the ‘ethnic party’ appellation has appeared later, and was popularised particularly by Chandra (2004). She notes that ethnic appeals (based on religion, caste and language) are used even by parties that are not ethnic parties,³ but the key point is that other parties (such as the INC) blend coded ethnic appeals with several other issues while ethnic parties prioritise direct ethnic appeals. Following Chandra, Thachil and Teitelbaum (2015) distinguish between ethnic parties mobilising narrower ethnic bases (for instance, RJD, SP and BSP) and those mobilising more encompassing ethnic identities (for instance, AIADMK, AGP and TDP).

In defining the ‘subnational party’, Ziegfeld’s (2012, 2016) definition of ‘regional party’⁴ is a good starting point—which, in its contrast with the national party, is the most expansive of extant conceptualisations. However, in Ziegfeld’s conceptualisation, the size of a party’s ‘interest bundle’ is absent. Ayyangar and Jacob (2015: 242) note:

A party’s bundle of interests could originate as an aggregate of its constituents’ interests, from path dependencies, and from new mobilization opportunities. It may or may not share logical connectedness such as being programmatic or having a coherent ideology; in India’s case, party interest bundles appear to be largely contingent upon available political opportunities. However, the size of a party’s interest bundle is likely to reflect the width of the electoral canvass it seeks to represent.

Building on Ayyangar and Jacob (2015), here the conceptualisation of the ‘subnational party’ combines the concept of interest bundle size with Ziegfeld’s ‘regional party’ and Chandra’s ‘ethnic party’. A subnational party *has a narrow interest bundle*, which typically translates into *a narrow geographical base and/or salience of direct ethnic appeals*. Note that there is considerable correlation between narrow geographical base and direct ethnic appeals—hence the usage of ‘ethno-regional’ by some scholars, as discussed by Hepburn (2009)—and also considerable correlation between these and narrow interest bundles.⁵ However, parties can have less narrow interest bundles even if they have narrow geographical bases, as is the case, for instance, for India’s Left parties; Ziegfeld (2016) and Joshi (2012) would classify the CPM as a ‘regional party’. To account for such cases, Ayyangar and Jacob (2015) use the term ‘mesonational party’.

Other scholars, for instance, Kumar (2013: 149), also prefer not labeling the communist parties as 'regional' based on narrow geographical base alone.

Putting the above discussion together, this chapter distinguishes four types of political party: national party (INC and BJP), mesonational party (Left and Janata parties), subnational party (based on the definition provided above) and independents.⁶ For the purposes of the mesonational party classification, those 'Left' parties are included which formed pre-electoral coalitions with the CPM and CPI, or are similarly closely related. Specifically, besides the CPM and CPI, the following are included: Forward Bloc, Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), different CPI (Marxist–Leninist) variants, Indian People's Front (IPF), Marxist Coordination (M-COR) and Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI). Note that other Communist parties like the Peasants and Workers Party of India (PWP) are not included. The decision regarding which Janata *parivar* parties to include is less straightforward. Some Janata offshoots, for instance RJD, have narrow interest bundles and narrow geographic bases, and make direct salient ethnic appeals. Only those offshoots are included which can be traced to the broader interest bundle of the 'original' Janata Party of the late 1970s. Specifically, the following are included: Janata Party, Jan Parishad, Janata Party (Secular), Janata Party (Secular–Raj Narain), SP (Rashtriya), Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD), JD, Lok Dal (A and B).⁷ Note that the Samata Party/JDU is not included because it made caste appeals in Bihar besides having a long alliance with the BJP; and JD(S) is not included because Deve Gowda's party was viewed primarily as a Vokkaliga-centred party (Thachil and Teitlebaum 2015).

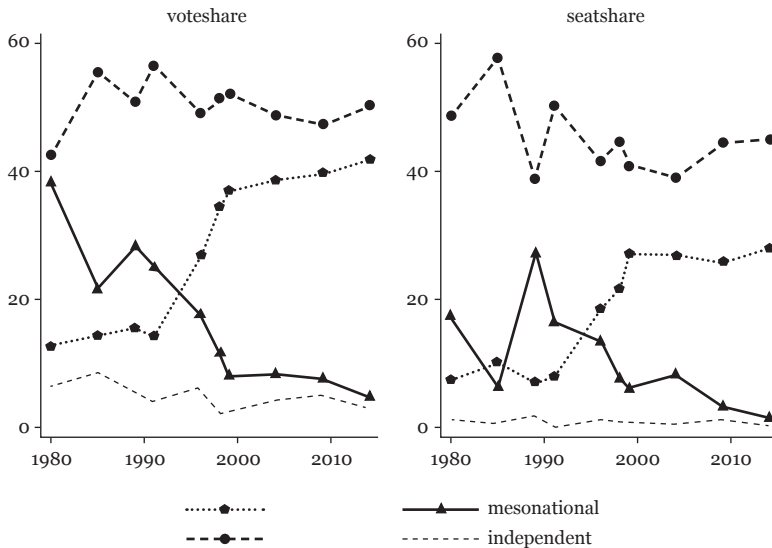
Subnational parties are a residual category, that is, any party other than the two national parties and the two clusters of mesonational parties is a subnational party. Further, within the set of subnational parties, this chapter distinguishes three types: state parties, ethnic parties and a residual category of 'other' parties. While ethnic parties make direct salient ethnic appeals for electoral mobilisation, state parties rely on regional cultural tactics to 'mobilize citizens within their respective states usually against the dominant national party in the state', and are 'concerned with issues such as self-determination, regional autonomy or simply access to a larger share of national resources' (Ayyangar and Jacob 2015: 336–37). For the 20 Indian states with population of over half a crore,⁸ the parties receiving at least 5 per cent of the seat share in at least one assembly election in 1980–2016 are classified along the following lines. The state parties⁹ are AIADMK, DMK, TDP, TRS, BJD, AGP, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), TMC, JKNC, JKDPD and INLD. And the ethnic parties are Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM), Muslim League, AIUDE, Shiv Sena, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), SAD, SAD (Amritsar), Kerala Congress, BSP,¹⁰ SP, Janata Party (Secular), RLD, RJD, Samata Party, JDU, Lok Janshakti

Party (LJP), RPI, Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), JD (Secular), Gondwana Party, Indian Justice Party (IJP) and BPF.

The distinction between state and ethnic parties is more obvious in some cases than others. Examples of borderline cases are Haryana’s INLD, which is classified as a state party although it could plausibly be classified as an ethnic party instead as Jat Hindus are an important source of party support, more so in the aftermath of the 2016 Jat agitation for reservation. However, note that even if some arbitrariness was inevitably exercised in such borderline cases, the overall distinction between state and ethnic parties on the one hand and national and mesonational parties on the other is arguably far more robust. One related issue—an inevitable drawback of the procedure adopted here—is that this classification tends to essentialise what are in fact dynamic changing parties, for instance, the BSP moving from a Bahujan (majority lower castes) to Sarvajan (all castes) rhetoric and strategy. Nevertheless, arguably this is justified given that the purpose is to construct a wide-angle aggregate perspective of ‘core’ party attributes across broad party types.

The vast majority of parties are the residual ‘other’ subnational parties. These are ‘*ad hoc* splinter parties’ that are ‘usually too small to aspire to come

Figure 5.1 Performance in National Elections, by Party Type



Source: Election Commission of India (ECI).

to power by themselves even at the state level' and typically consisting of 'personality-driven networks masquerading as political parties' (Ayyangar and Jacob 2015: 337; see also Banerjee 1984). There were only 14 parties in the 'other' category that received at least 5 per cent seat share in at least one assembly election in 1980–2016 in the 20 states,¹¹ of which only four received at least 10 per cent seat share even once—YSR Congress, NCP, INC (Urs) and Indian Congress (Socialist).

Lok Sabha Election Performance of Different Party Types

Figure 5.1 presents a synoptic view of electoral performance of the different party types (national, mesonational and subnational parties, along with independents) in Lok Sabha elections in 1980–2014.¹² While the vote share of national parties (INC and BJP) has hovered around 50 per cent throughout the period (and the seat share around 60 per cent), there has been a clear reversal of roles between mesonational and subnational parties over time.¹³ For mesonational and subnational parties, especially in terms of vote shares, three phases emerge in this 35-year period. The first is the decade of the 1980s, the second the decade of the 1990s and the third is the 2000s.

For the Janata Party and its offshoots, from its position of strength in the late 1970s—which continued albeit in weakened form into 1980—there was a rapid decline in the 1980s and 1990s. The Janata decline in the 1980s benefited the BJP (whose precursor was anyway temporarily part of the Janata Party of the late 1970s) and the Janata decline in the 1990s benefited subnational parties. In the five elections between 1989 and 1999, the Lok Sabha vote share of Janata party offshoots fell from about 18 per cent to close to zero (while the vote share of the Left parties hovered around 9 per cent throughout). So, between 1989 and 1999, the vote share of mesonational parties fell by almost 20 percentage points and the vote share of subnational parties increased by almost the same amount; the flip happened in the 1996 Lok Sabha elections. The proximate reasons behind this flip in the 1990s are well-known to students of Indian politics, the key being the formation of ethnic parties in the Hindi heartland from the old Janata core,¹⁴ itself linked to the possibilities of national coalition government (Ziegfeld 2012). Sridharan (2010: 123) notes:

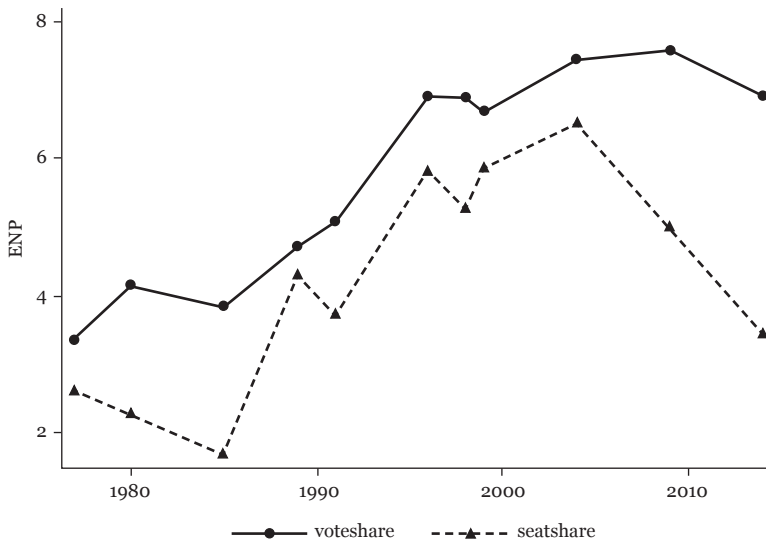
The 1989 election results were not just another repeat of a broad-front anti-Congressism of the JP kind, but signified a more far-reaching and seismic shift in the party system, rooted in the shifts in party

organizational strength and support bases at the state level in an increasing number of states, and in India's political economy and changing patterns of social mobilization. [block

In sharp contrast to the decade of the 1990s, the third phase—the 2000s—saw no such dramatic changes in vote shares or seat shares across these party types (national, mesonational or subnational), suggesting a period of consolidation after the turbulence of the 1990s. Palshikar, Suri and Yadav (2014: 4) argue that the post-Congress polity stabilised in the period after 1999 with the 'tempering of the political chaos and accommodation of contending issues of the previous decade' involving a routinisation into the 'new normal pattern of electoral competition.' Figure 5.1 suggests that, as far as Lok Sabha results for different party types (national, mesonational and subnational) is concerned, the argument of the post-1999 'new normal' indeed holds.

The overall trends across these three phases are also reflected in Figure 5.2 on ENP, albeit in more muted form.¹⁵ While the ENP for vote share hovered around four in the 1980s, it jumped to almost seven in the 1990s and continued to hover at a little over seven in the 2000s.¹⁶

Figure 5.2 ENP of Parties in Lok Sabha Elections

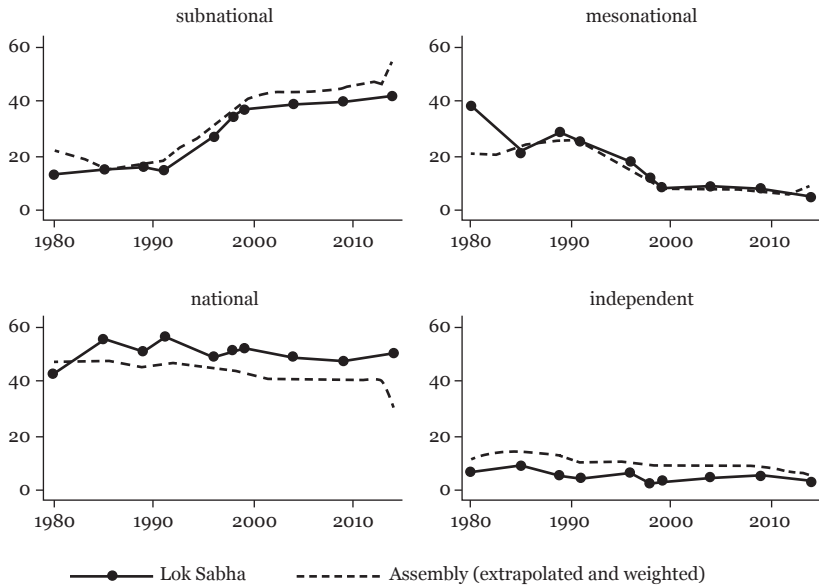


Source: ECI.

Assembly Election Performance of Different Party Types

It turns out that in the aggregate vote share, performance across party types (national, mesonational, subnational and independents) is not dramatically different for the Lok Sabha and assembly elections throughout the 35-year period. Figure 5.3 presents time-series graphs for vote share performance for the two sets of elections for each party type. To construct the aggregate vote share for the assembly elections (which occurred in different years across states), an interpolation and weighting procedure was devised.¹⁷ Figure 5.3 shows that while subnational parties and independents typically had higher vote shares in assembly elections compared to Lok Sabha elections and while the opposite was true for national parties, the differences for the two sets of elections were not very large in proportional terms. This is an interesting feature of the party type classification. It is also counterintuitive since federalised party systems may be expected to show different aggregated outcomes for the national and subnational levels (Gibson and Suárez-Cao 2010).

Figure 5.3 Vote Shares in National versus State Elections, by Party Type



Source: ECI.

Consider, now, the electoral performance of the different party types in assembly elections in 1980–2016 for the 20 states. Below they are discussed in five groupings of four each: Hindi heartland states, southern states, eastern/western states, northern states and Assam and newly-formed states.¹⁸

Hindi Heartland States

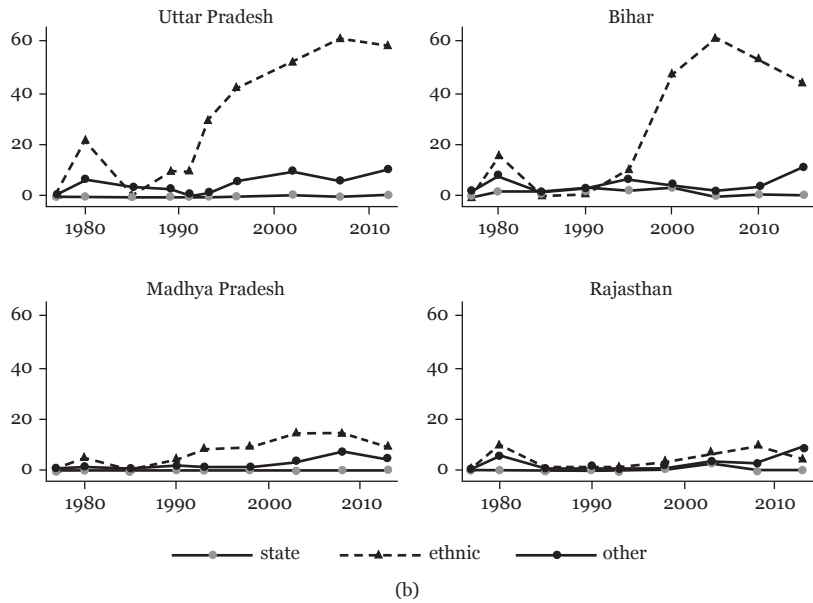
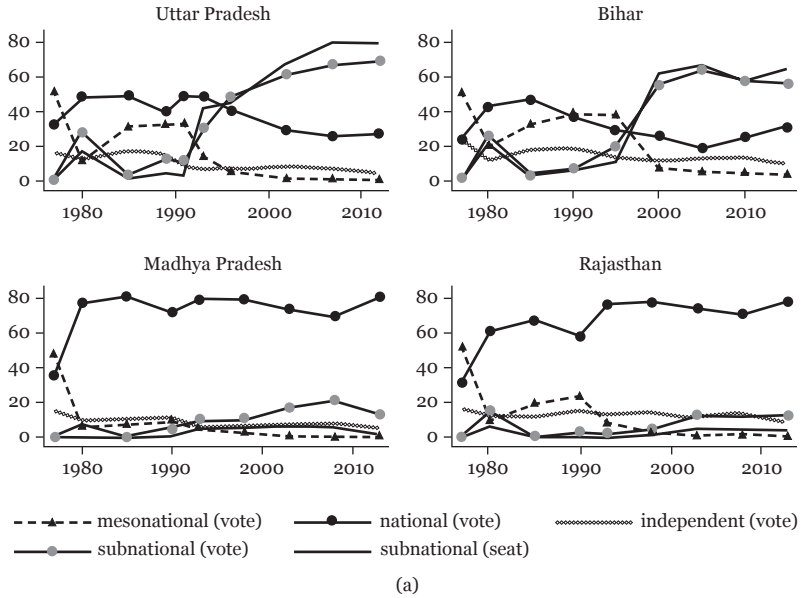
Figure 5.4 presents graphs for the four Hindi heartland states of UP, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Rajasthan. The graphs for UP and Bihar are strikingly similar to each other, and likewise the graphs for MP and Rajasthan are also strikingly similar to each other. For UP and Bihar, subnational party votes share increased dramatically in the 1990s and became consolidated in the 2000s. This dramatic rise was at the expense of both mesonational parties (and in particular, the Janata offshoots) and national parties (and in particular, the INC). Further, the rise in subnational party vote share went in tandem with seat share. The Figure 5.4(b) also shows that the 1990s rise of subnational parties in UP and Bihar is a story of ethnic rather than state or other subnational parties, a feature that has been extensively commented upon in extant literature. By contrast, in the other two states of MP and Rajasthan, there is striking continuity rather than change throughout the entire post-1980 period, with national parties crowding out both mesonational and subnational parties.

The spatial variation (UP/Bihar *versus* MP/Rajasthan) and the temporal variation (pre-1990s *versus* post-1990s) together produce some fascinating puzzles:¹⁹ Why did MP/Rajasthan not produce subnational parties? Why did UP/Bihar produce ethnic rather than state parties? Given that the BJP could partially consolidate its standing in UP/Bihar after the turbulence of the 1990s, and given that the INC did so in other states (such as AP and Assam) despite the emergence of subnational parties, why did the INC fail to do this in UP/Bihar?

Southern States

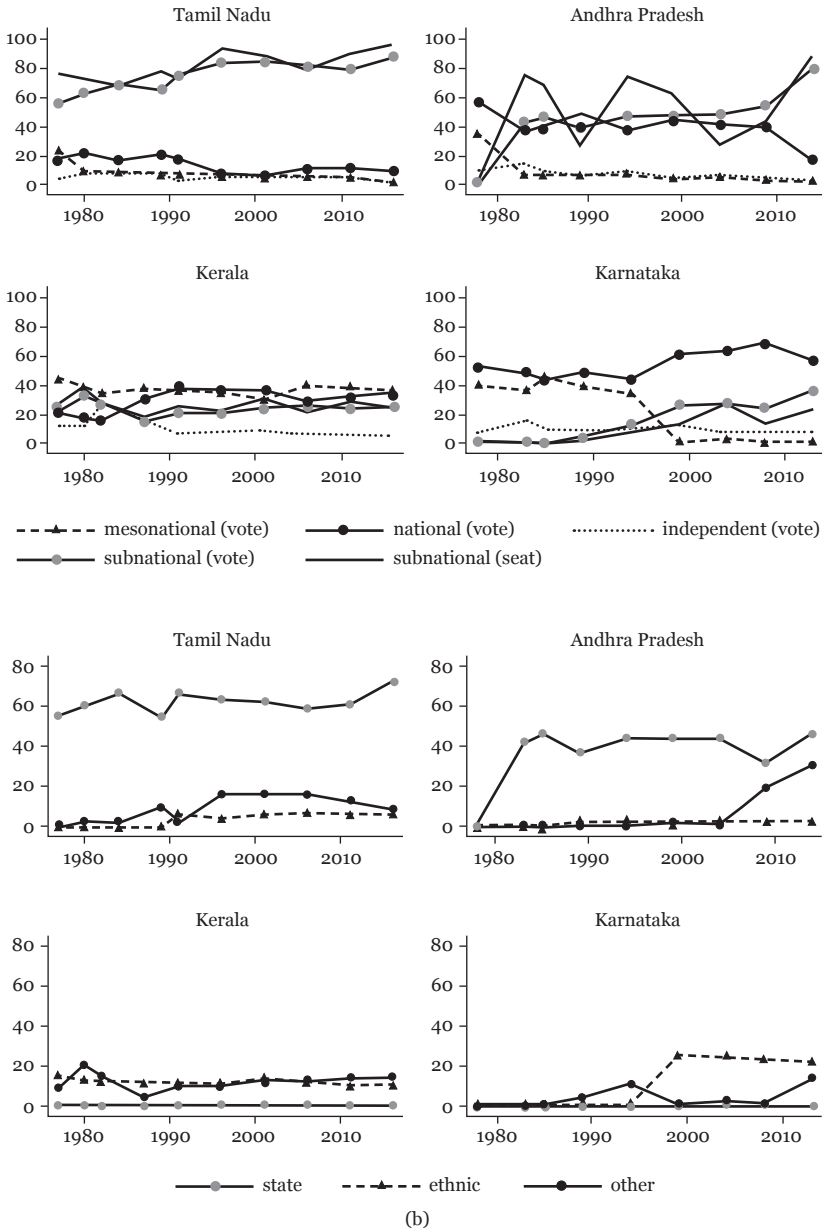
Figure 5.5 presents electoral performance in the four southern states of Tamil Nadu (TN), Andhra Pradesh (AP),²⁰ Kerala and Karnataka. TN and AP share some broad similarities in that they exhibit stable and robust performance of subnational parties. This is more in TN because of the two dominant subnational Dravidian parties and slightly less in AP because the axis of competition has been around one subnational party (TDP) and one national party (INC).²¹ Mesonational parties have been marginalised electorally in TN and AP, unlike in Kerala and Karnataka. Further, the subnational party strength in TN and AP is due to state rather than ethnic parties, in sharp contrast to UP and Bihar.²²

Figure 5.4 Performance in Assembly Elections, Hindi Heartland States



Source: ECI.

Figure 5.5 Performance in Assembly Elections, Southern States



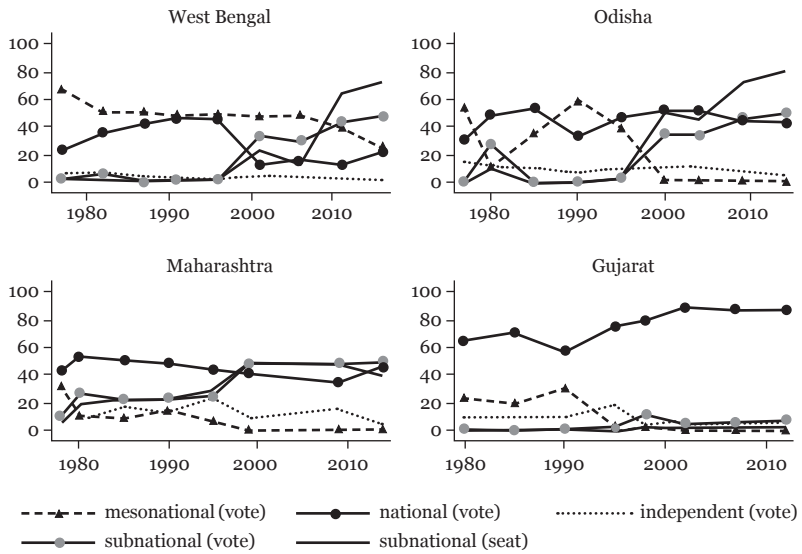
Source: ECI.

Alone among all 20 states, Kerala exhibits relatively similar vote shares for the national, mesonational and subnational parties, and that too, remarkably stable for the entirety of this long period. This is because of an earlier-established coalition system where important subnational parties [Muslim League, Kerala Congress, and ‘other’ splinter parties—see Figure 5.5(b)] are affiliated with two major party coalition *formateurs* [one national (INC) and the other mesonational (CPM)], and where the other national party (BJP) and the other set of mesonational parties (Janata) are relatively absent.

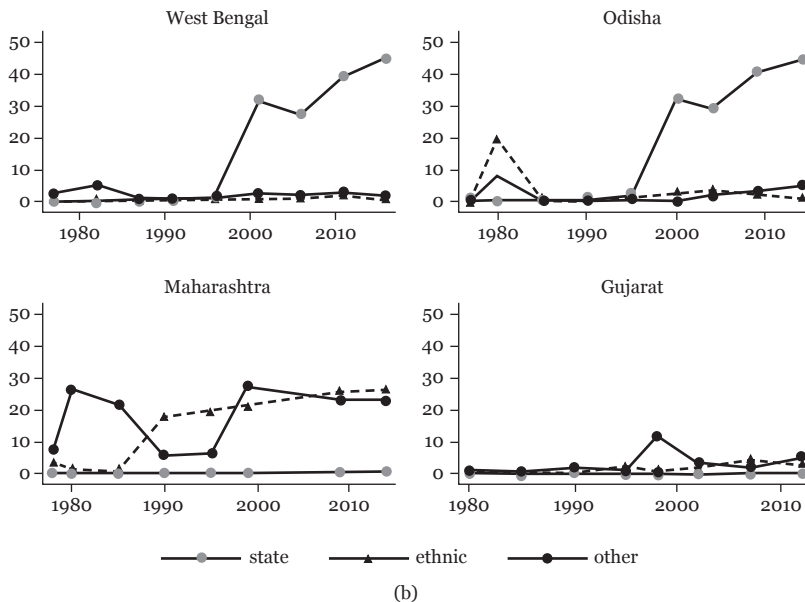
Alone among the southern states, Karnataka had a relatively strong early mesonational party presence (Janata). However, as in the case of UP and particularly Bihar, in the 1990s this collapsed and gave rise to subnational parties—ethnic, as Figure 5.5(b) shows—although unlike in UP/Bihar or TN/AP, these parties did not become sufficiently viable for government formation, as well as partly strengthening the national party vote share in the state.

As is the case with the four Hindi heartland states, the four southern states—particularly TN, AP and Karnataka—also offer some interesting comparative puzzles worthy of future analysis. Why could Karnataka not produce a powerful subnational party along the lines of AP or TN? Why does Karnataka’s trajectory have similarities with UP/Bihar unlike the case with AP? Why could national

Figure 5.6 Performance in Assembly Elections, Eastern/Western States



(a)



Source: ECI.

parties not hold on in TN unlike the case with AP and Karnataka? Why have stronger ethnic parties not developed in these states, particularly in AP and Karnataka where large caste groups exist for potential politicisation?

Eastern/Western States

Figure 5.6 tracks assembly election performance for two large eastern states (WB and Odisha) and two large western states (Maharashtra and Gujarat). WB and Odisha offer similarities in subnational party vote share: this vote share rose in the 2000s, culminating in governments formed by subnational parties. In WB, this was driven by the TMC, which fed off the INC's decline in the same period. In Odisha, this was driven by the BJD, which rose out of the Janata party collapse in the 1990s, similar to the case with UP/Bihar and Karnataka. The strong subnational party performance in WB and Odisha is due to state rather than ethnic parties—the latter are mostly absent in all four states [Figure 5.6(b)].

In the case of Maharashtra, the trajectory appears more similar to that of AP (as well as Punjab/Haryana, to be discussed subsequently) than any of the other states: in the 2000s, there were strong and similar vote shares for

national and subnational parties as a whole but not mesonational parties. In common with AP and TN, and unlike UP and Bihar, Maharashtra also has an older history of mobilisation by subnational parties, even though they received only half of the national party (INC) vote share prior to the 2000s. As Figure 5.6(b) indicates, this older history of subnational parties was driven by non-state non-ethnic parties in the 1980s (breakaway parties INC (Urs) in 1980 and Indian Congress (Socialist), spearheaded by Sharad Pawar, in 1985). And in the 1990s, it was driven by an ethnic party (Shiv Sena) while the 'other' party vote share collapsed as Pawar rejoined the INC. The jump in subnational vote share in the 2000s is because while the Shiv Sena maintained its vote share, yet one more 'other' party came into play—the NCP—when Pawar again broke away from the INC.

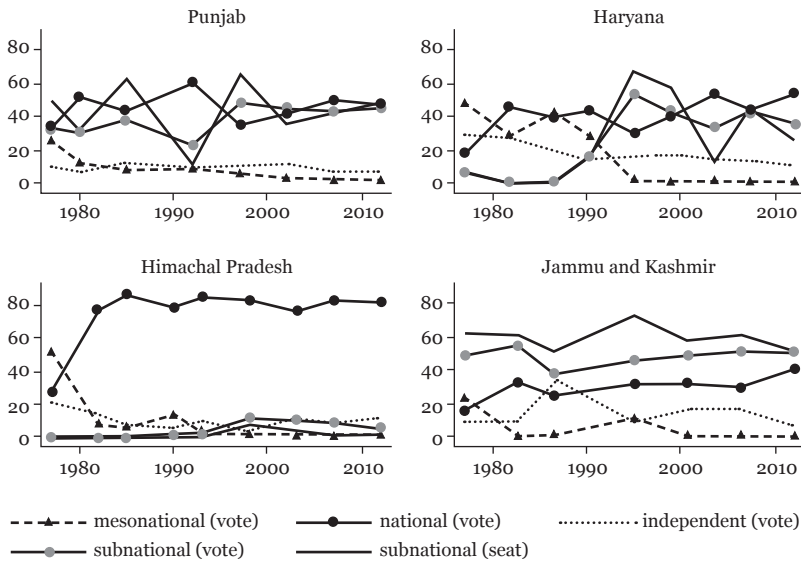
Finally, Figure 5.6 also presents party trajectories in Gujarat. The dominance of national parties is striking. Of the 30 states (including Delhi and Puducherry) holding assembly elections, Gujarat had the fourth highest average national party vote share for 1980–2016, fairly evenly split between the INC and BJP.²³ Further, national party vote share increased in Gujarat from the 1990s, as opposed to most other states (barring Assam and Karnataka); this occurred after the collapse of the Janata party when many leaders went to national parties rather than subnational parties.

The juxtaposition of the two eastern and two western states in Figure 5.6 produces several interesting questions. Why have WB and Odisha produced state rather than ethnic parties? Why has Gujarat not produced strong subnational parties unlike neighbouring Maharashtra, and why did the collapse of Janata lead to a strengthening of national rather than subnational parties?

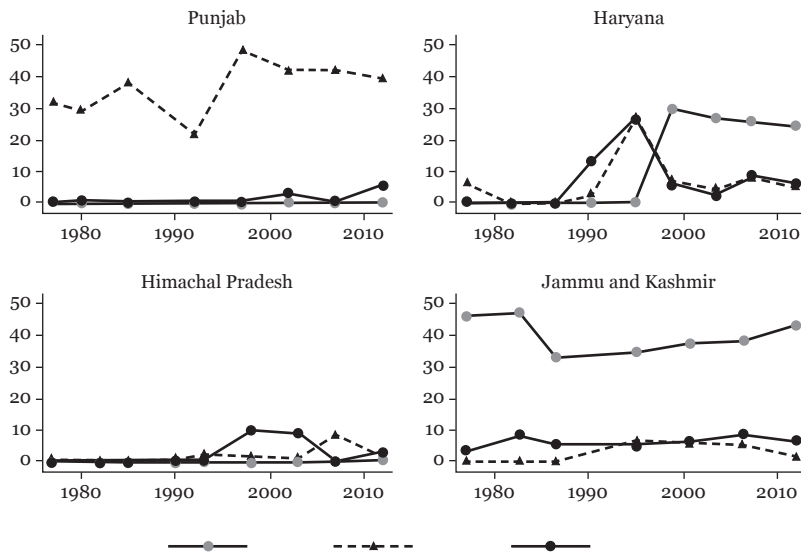
Northern States

Figure 5.7 turns to four states north of the Hindi heartland: Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh (HP) and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Subnational party vote shares are substantial in all except HP. In Punjab and Haryana, national and subnational party vote shares have been somewhat equal and stable in the 2000s, just as with AP and Maharashtra. In Punjab and J&K, subnational parties have been strong for the entire (post-1980) period under consideration, but in Haryana this occurred only from the mid-1990s. In Punjab, an ethnic party (SAD) has had a long history of mobilisation, while in J&K a state party (JKNC) has had a long history of mobilisation, supplemented in the 2000s with a second state party (JKPDP).²⁴ In Haryana, subnational parties took off in the 1996 elections when Bansi Lal split from Congress to form HVP and another subnational party (Samata, spearheaded in Haryana by Devi Lal and Om Prakash Chautala) arose out of the collapse of Janata, and which later

Figure 5.7 Performance in Assembly Elections, Northern States



(a)



(b)

Source: ECI.

converted into the state party INLD.²⁵ (Haryana was the only one of the four states to have a strong mesonational party—Janata, until its 1990s collapse.)

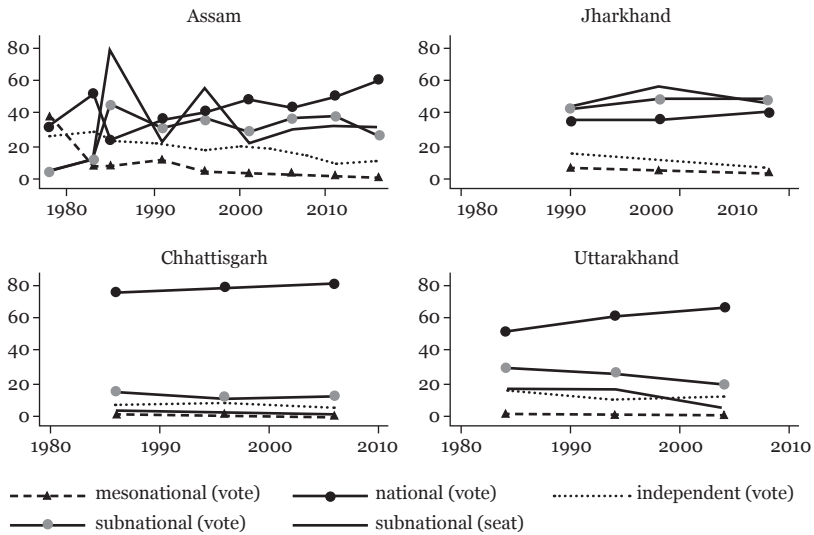
As with the other cases, the trajectories of these four states produce several questions. Why have ethnic parties succeeded only in Punjab among these four, and why, in particular, have they not succeeded in J&K? Why have no strong subnational parties formed in HP? Why has Punjab not produced a second strong subnational party (besides SAD) as TN has, and why does it lack state parties?

Assam and Newly-formed States

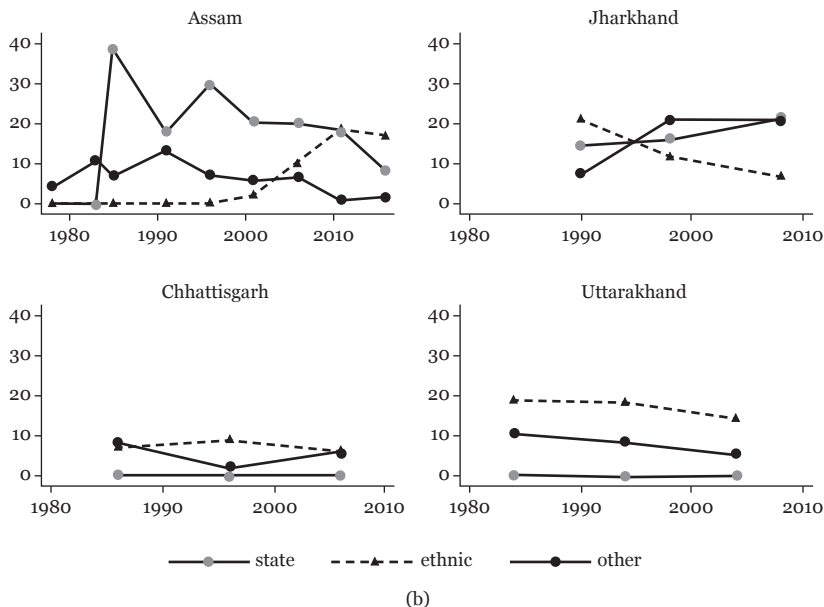
Figure 5.8 shows the trajectories for Assam. The subnational party vote share started strongly with the formation of the AGP in the mid-1980s, and the subsequent subnational trajectory has some similarities with AP (including the rise of a second subnational party in recent years—the ethnic AIUDF in Assam and the splinter ‘other’ YSR Congress party in AP).

Figure 5.8 also shows trajectories of the three newer states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand.²⁶ Of these, only Jharkhand has had strong subnational party mobilisation, trumping the vote share of national parties.

Figure 5.8 Performance in Assembly Elections, Assam and Newly-formed States



(a)



Source: ECI

This was driven largely by the state party JMM, but with secondary mobilisation also by a splinter group from the BJP—Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (JVM) led by Babulal Marandi. Chhattisgarh has been dominated by national parties since state formation and in this it is similar to MP, Rajasthan, Gujarat and HP. In the case of Uttarakhand again, national parties have increasingly dominated, although not to the extent of Chhattisgarh. Subnational parties have been present, led by two ethnic parties (BSP and to a smaller extent the SP), a spillover from the strength of these parties in Uttarakhand's parent state, UP.

Discussion and Conclusion

The Post-1999 'New Normal'

The earlier discussion established three phases (1980s, 1990s and 2000s) for subnational party vote share (and by extension also of national and particularly mesonational parties) in Lok Sabha elections, the third phase corresponding with Palshikar, Suri and Yadav's (2014) argument regarding a 'new normal' of stabilisation of a post-Congress polity. Does this also hold for assembly elections? The graphical analysis suggests that this is true for some states but

not others. Specifically, of 17 states (excluding newly-created states), the 'new normal' argument applies only in the case of UP, Bihar, Haryana, WB and Odisha—and to a smaller extent in the case of Karnataka and Punjab. In the other 10 states, there is considerable continuity rather than change in electoral vote shares of the different party types between the 1990s and 2000s. The key difference between the two sets of states has to do with stabilisation of the (substantial) vote share of subnational parties as specific subnational parties consolidated their vote shares over time—in UP, the SP and BSP; in Bihar, the RJD and JDU; in Haryana, the INLD; in WB, the TMC; and in Odisha, the BJD. Many of the other 10 states also have electorally important subnational parties—with the exception of MP, Rajasthan, HP and Gujarat—but it turns out that they had consolidated their vote shares considerably earlier than 1999 (in TN, the AIADMK and DMK; in AP, the TDP; in Kerala, the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) and Kerala Congress factions; in Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena; in Assam, the AGP; and in J&K, the JKNC).

More generally, Table 5.1 classifies the 17 states (excluding newly-created states) based on the presence or absence of strong state and ethnic parties as well as whether they are of less recent origin (prior to the 1990s) or not. All four states with older state parties also had strong sociopolitical-cultural movements associated with those parties (see also Joshi 2012). By contrast, in all three states with newer state parties, the parties were initially formed as splinters from national or mesonational parties rather than associated with strong movements. In the case of ethnic parties, in all three states with older ethnic parties, they are based on religion and/or language but not caste. By contrast, in all three states with newer ethnic parties, caste is the key ethnic dimension.

Table 5.1 Classifying States Based on Age of State and Ethnic Parties

	Origin pre-1990s	Origin 1990s
State parties	TN, J&K, AP, Assam	WB, Odisha, Haryana
Ethnic parties	Punjab, Maharashtra, Kerala	UP, Bihar, Karnataka
No State/ethnic parties	Gujarat, MP, Rajasthan, HP	

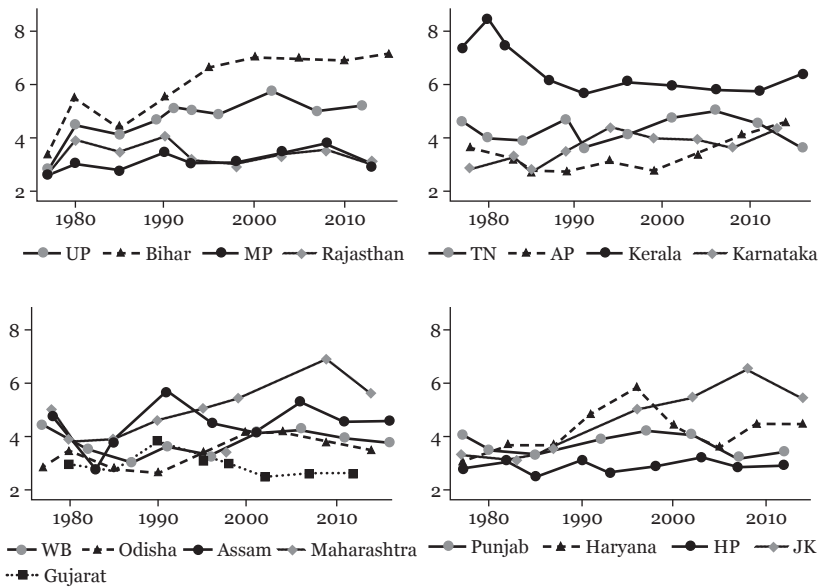
Source: Author's classification.

Subnational Parties and Party Proliferation

Since only two parties are classified as national parties, and the set of mesonational parties is also composed of a fairly small number of major parties, the trend of rising ENP for Lok Sabha elections from about four to seven in

1980–2014 (discussed earlier), which itself understates the increasing number of parties registered for elections over time, is clearly driven by subnational parties. The number of such parties is typically much greater during assembly elections than during Lok Sabha elections, even though subnational party vote share is not very different in the aggregate (Figure 5.3, discussed earlier).²⁷

Figure 5.9 ENP (by Vote Share) in Assembly Elections

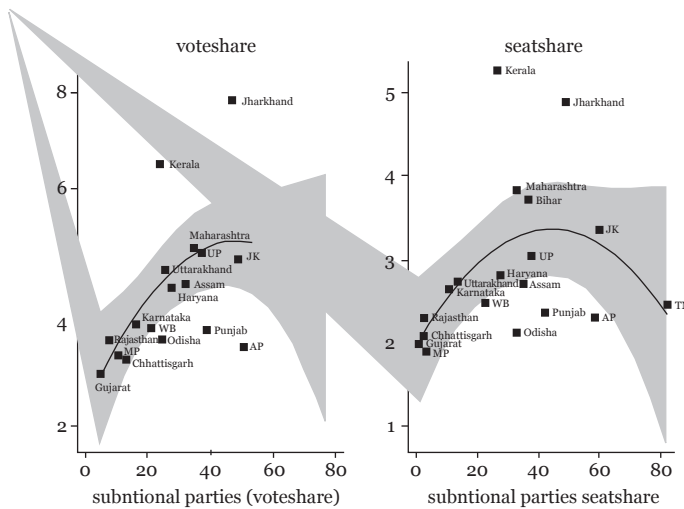


Source: ECI.

Further, it turns out that the trend of rising ENP in national elections does not carry over to many states for assembly elections. Time series graphs for ENP (vote share) for assembly elections are presented in Figure 5.9 for 17 states (except the newly-formed ones). The two states with the largest ENP (Kerala and Bihar) show very different time trajectories.²⁸ While in Kerala on average the ENP reduced in 1980–2016, in Bihar on average the ENP increased in 1980–2015, and in both cases the change was statistically significant.²⁹ In general, of the 17 states, 10 had an increase (statistically significant in seven of those instances), three had a decrease (statistically significant only for Kerala) and four had very little change.³⁰

One possible implication of increasing subnational party vote share is that ENP should also increase. However, intuitively this is likely when subnational party mobilisation starts from a low level and is replacing national/mesonational party mobilisation; in a situation with considerable subnational party vote share, such as in TN, any further increase may come at the expense of ENP. In other words, it is likely that the relationship between ENP and subnational party vote share is curvilinear: positive for low subnational party vote share and negative for high subnational party vote share. Statistical tests suggest that this is indeed the case.³¹ This is also suggested by Figure 5.10. The figure shows ENP plotted against the subnational party share (both averaged over time) for the 20 states—the left graph is for vote share and the right graph is for seat share. The figure also shows the quadratic fit along with the 95 per cent confidence interval: there is a statistically significant inverted-U relationship. For instance, TN with a subnational party vote share of nearly 80 per cent has a somewhat similar ENP as that of neighbouring Karnataka with less than 20 per cent vote share for subnational parties. The figure suggests that states with 40–50 per cent vote share (seat share) for subnational parties have relatively higher ENP than those with either more or less than that vote share (seat share). One implication of the non-linear finding in Figure 5.10 is that ENP stabilisation can occur even when vote shares change across party types, suggesting that discussions of political stabilisation (party system or other) should go beyond simply looking at the ENP.

Figure 5.10 ENP versus Subnational Voteshare in Assembly Elections



Source: ECI.

Extant Explanations

Although the threefold categorisation (national, mesonational, subnational) advanced in this chapter is regarding party types, the graphical analysis of the state/time trends show its connections to analysis of party systems. The literature points to two broad perspectives on party systems. The sociological strand argues that major socioeconomic cleavages manifest in support for distinct parties (Lipset and Rokkan 1967).³² The institutional or ‘political-systemic’ strand (Sridharan 2010: 118) argues that specific institutional features such as electoral rules create incentives for political forces to converge or diverge as parties. While the broader literature attests to the explanatory power of both the sociological and institutional strands, they cannot adequately explain party system differences (in terms of relative success of national, mesonational and subnational parties) or differences within the set of subnational parties (state, ethnic and other parties)—either across states or over time. In the case of the cleavage theory, what makes latent cleavages politically salient in some contexts (Bartolini and Mair 1990)?³³ Other arguments for India—such as fiscal centralisation (Chhibber and Kollman 2004) or level of party organisation (Chhibber, Jensenius and Suryanarayanan 2014) affecting party systems, representational blockage for some ethnic groups within some parties (Chandra 2004), political entrepreneurship (Wyatt 2010), national coalition government shaping political incentives to form regional parties (Ziegfeld 2012), or interethnic economic inequality leading to rise of ethnic parties (Huber and Suryanarayan 2016)—are also unable to satisfactorily explain the specific patterns of spatial-temporal variation across national, mesonational and subnational parties presented in Figures 5.1 to 5.9. All this suggests that there is need for greater in-depth comparative research on specific parties across states and time in order to construct robust explanations of a few cases at a time. From such careful comparative small-*n* studies may emerge more larger-*n* explanations that are attentive to mediatory processes and contextual factors driving the formation, growth, consolidation and demise of different parties across party types.

Notes

1. The emphasis on a long time period (1980–2016) fits with Palshikar’s (2013) call for moving beyond single elections.

2. Sridharan (2012: 339) observes that ‘regional party is something of a misnomer as it implies a party strong in two or more states in a region. All the regional parties, however, are single state-based parties except the Communist Party of

India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] strong in WB, Tripura, and Kerala. These sets of states, however, do not constitute recognizable regions⁵.

3. Decades before, Harrison (1956) had observed the use of caste appeals by the CPI in AP.

4. Ziegfeld (2016: 5) defines a regional party 'based on the geography of its supporters ... when one or a small number of regions monopolizes a party's votes, supplying all or most of its electoral support, then a party is regional⁶.

5. See also Table 1 of Ayyangar and Jacob (2015) and the discussion around it.

6. Note that Ziegfeld (2016) includes independents as 'regional parties' but here they are treated separately. Further, in Ziegfeld's (2012, 2016) approach, national and regional parties are classified based on a threshold score from an index that measures a party's vote share spread across states. Alternatively, the Election Commission of India has a rule that categorises parties as 'national' or 'state' based on whether or not a party gains 'recognition' in at least four states, where recognition depends on specific criteria to do with electoral or non-electoral history of the party in the state. However, this is inadequate to operationalise the concepts of national, mesonational and subnational parties as developed here; see Ziegfeld (2016) for a critique. For instance, in the 2004 election, NCP was classified as national even though it had only nine MPs, all from the same state (Maharashtra). By contrast, RJD was classified as a state party even though it had more MPs (24) and had representation from two states. Or, in the 1999 election JD(S) was classified as a national party even though it had one MP while TDP with 29 MPs was classified as a state party. Finally, note that substate analysis of party types is not undertaken in this chapter, although recent work has highlighted intrastate variation in political formations (Kumar 2012).

7. See Appendix in Ziegfeld (2012) for a discussion of Janata offshoots.

8. These states are: AP (before the formation of Telangana in 2014), Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, HP, J&K, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, MP, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, TN, UP, Uttarakhand and WB.

9. The Election Commission of India recognises a political party as a state party if '(i) it secures at least six percent (6%) of the valid votes polled in the State at a general election, either to the House of the People or to the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned; and (ii) in addition, it wins at least two seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned OR it wins at least three percent (3%) of the total number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State, or at least three seats in the Assembly, whichever is more' (Election Commission of India 2000).

10. The BSP is classified in different ways by the extant literature. For instance, Joshi (2012) treats it as a regional party but Kumar (2013) does not. For Zeigfeld (2012), it was a regional party in 1991 and 1999 but a national party in 1996, 1998, 2004 and 2009.

11. These 14 parties are: All Jharkhand Students Union, DMDK (of Vijayakanth), Haryana Janhit Congress (Bhajan Lal), HVC (of Sukhram), Indian Congress (Socialist), INC (Urs), Indian Congress (Socialist)—Sarat Chandra Sinha, JVM (of

Babulal Marandi), two Kerala Congress factions (KCM and KCJ), NCP, PRP (of Chiranjeevi), TMC(M) (of Moopanar), UKD and YSRCPINC(U).

12. Note that even although the state/ethnic/other distinction within subnational parties has been coded only for 20 states, the national/mesonational/subnational parties have been coded for all states and union territories, and it is the latter information that is presented in the figure.

13. Note that while vote share is the better indicator from the perspective of electoral mobilisation (the primary focus of this chapter), seat share is the better indicator from the perspective of legislative and executive governance.

14. In fact, in the 1990s the five ethnic parties SP, RJD, JDU, Samata and BSP together accounted for about 16 percentage points increase in vote share, and all but the last were derived from the old Janata core.

15. The ENP is the inverse of the sum of squared vote shares (seat shares) of parties. See Laakso and Taagepera (1979) for the original formulation.

16. However, the ENP for seat share has declined steeply across the first three Lok Sabha elections of the 2000s, suggesting that party proliferation in vote share is not translating proportionately to electoral victories due to pre-electoral coalitions ('seat adjustment') and post-electoral strategising ('horse trading') around the two national parties.

17. Specifically, for each of the 20 states under consideration, the following procedure was adopted. First, vote shares for each party type were interpolated for non-election years using a simple linear formula across every two consecutive election years. Second, these were weighted using the share of Lok Sabha seats by state; note that since the 20 states do not account for all Lok Sabha seats although they do account for the vast majority, the weighting procedure was adjusted for the subset of Lok Sabha seats from the 20 states. Weighting was adopted because states differ in voteshares of different party types as well as overall seat shares in the Lok Sabha, and this procedure would make the aggregated assembly vote shares comparable to the Lok Sabha vote shares. Finally, note that even if an unweighted average of interpolated assembly vote shares were used, it turns out that the qualitative results reported in the text do not change substantially.

18. Note that Assam is being included with the three newly-formed states only for purposes of presentation rather than for the sake of establishing similarity in patterns.

19. Since this spatial and temporal variation occurs in a contiguous territory with several common cultural and historical features, it is also methodologically fertile ground for constructing explanations (see Jacob [2015] for a discussion of the methodological possibilities produced in such situations).

20. The AP graph shows the situation prior to the formation of the Telangana state except for 2014.

21. In the case of AP, interestingly there is considerable divergence between subnational party vote share and seat share over time (the latter is far more volatile),

explained by temporal differences in Duvergerian vote accommodation strategies across parties at the constituency level.

22. Figure 5.5(b) shows two more trends. First, in TN, both ethnic and 'other' splinter subnational parties also exist, although dwarfed by the two Dravidian state parties. Second, in AP, the rise in vote share of 'other' subnational parties is due to the YSR Congress, which ate into INC vote share.

23. HP, Chhattisgarh (formed only in 2000), MP and Gujarat had had 81, 79, 77 and 76 per cent, respectively. A similar point is also noted by Hasan (2010: 246).

24. The PDP is essentially a substate party with its support base being confined only to the Kashmir valley.

25. Note that Samata Party is classified as an ethnic party although INLD (which Devi Lal and Chautala went on to form) is classified as a state party. Admittedly, this shows some of the weaknesses arising from arbitrariness in the ethnic/state distinction for borderline cases.

26. Note that Assam is placed with the other three only for presentation purposes, not for juxtapositional/comparative purposes.

27. Take the case of Bihar's last assembly election (2015). As many as 159 parties competed in at least one constituency, although the ENP was only about seven—high though that is for a plurality-rule electoral system with single-member districts. Sridharan (2010: 128) notes that 'a process of bipolar consolidation has been taking place in many states, but of *multiple bipolarities* (for example Congress–BJP, Congress–Left, Congress–regional party), contributing to fragmentation at the national level...'

28. Kerala and Bihar had the highest average ENP (over six) in 1980–2016 for all 30 states in which assembly elections were held, barring Jharkhand where the average ENP (in 2005–14) was over seven.

29. Although there are only nine observations for Kerala and eight for Bihar, a bivariate linear regression of ENP on time yields coefficients of -0.05 (p -value 7 per cent) for Kerala and 0.07 (p -value 0.9 per cent) for Bihar.

30. These results are from the bivariate regression described in the previous note. Note the very low sampling power given that fewer than 10 observations are used in each case. The states with increasing ENP are: UP, Bihar, AP, Karnataka, WB, Maharashtra, J&K (all statistically significant), MP, Assam and Odisha (not statistically significant). The states with decreasing ENP are: Kerala (statistically significant), Rajasthan and Gujarat (not statistically significant). The states with little change in ENP are: TN, Punjab, Haryana and HP.

31. For the 20 states for 1980–2016, a regression of ENP on subnational party vote share and its quadratic term yields a positive coefficient for vote share and a negative coefficient for the square of vote share (both statistically significant). The results hold even when after controlling for state-fixed effects, although the latter coefficient is no longer statistically significant.

32. See Gowda and Sridharan (2007) for a discussion in the Indian context.

33. Palshikar, Suri and Yadav (2014: 22) observe that in recent years social cleavages have reduced in political salience; for instance, 'the language of politics suddenly shifted—from caste cleavage to Sarvajan in UP and from *pichhada* ['backward' classes and castes] to governance in Bihar.'

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