The Big Vote

How India Conducts the World's Largest Elections

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Abstract

This paper explores how India, despite its large size, immense diversity, and infrastructure deficits, can instil such a high degree of faith and confidence in its electoral process and the factors that enable the conduct of free and fair elections. It relies on extensive secondary research as well as conversations with functionaries of the State Election Commission of Maharashtra, including the State Election Commissioner, Mr. U.P.S. Madan. The paper highlights that it is a combination of factors including the independent, centralized structure of the Election Commission, well documented electoral processes, use of Electronic Voting machines and widespread accessibility to voting that create the foundation for conduct of elections and seamless transfer of democratic power. Some issues and areas that need to be addressed are also discussed.

Introduction

India is the world's most populous country[1]. It is also the world's largest democracy. In a foreword in The Report of the Global Commission on Elections, Democracy and Security titled Deepening Democracy: A Strategy for Improving the Integrity of Elections Worldwide, the Chair of the Global Commission and the Former Secretary General to the UN, Kofi Annan wrote, "Elections are the indispensable root of democracy".

The legitimacy of a democratically elected government derives from the promise that each member of the electorate has a voice, and that it is the collective voice of this electorate that determines who ultimately wields power. It is a belief in this promise that allows an individual to accept that the person in power may be different from the one they wanted but that their views have been given a fair hearing. And it is a break of this fundamental promise that can shake the foundations of governance and lead to anarchy.

India follows a system of parliamentary democracy where the political party with the highest representation in the elected house of the legislature (*Lok Sabha* at the national level) forms the government and the leader of this political party is the Prime Minister (Dastur and Dastoor, 1958). Since the formation of the Indian republic in 1950, there have been 17 elections for the Lok Sabha and other than a brief period of 2 years between 1975-77, when a state of national emergency was declared by Indira Gandhi (Nemani, 2019), the transfer of

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[1] https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-no-153-india-overtakes-china-as-the-worlds-most-populous-country/

power at the end of elections has been seamless. In addition to the national elections, there have also been more than 395 elections to state legislatures (Election Commission Pocketbook 2021) over the last 70 years. In each of these national or state elections, while the individual practices of specific candidates or political parties may be challenged, including in courts of law, the overall legitimacy of the vote has never been brought into question. Further, the poorest and most socially disadvantaged in India are no less enthusiastic supporters of the election process and this underscores the sacrosanct place elections occupy in modern Indian public life (Banerjee, 2007). Lastly, the 67.4% voter turnout in the most recent national elections in India conducted in 2019 is consistent with the global average for national elections (Solijonov, 2016).

Lest we take the conduct of elections as something for granted, we only need to look at the happenings in the world's second largest democracy and the most powerful country in the world - the United States of America. The controversy of the gridlocked 2000 presidential election of Bush v. Gore, which was finally settled by the Courts, was based on an interpretation of whether certain chads were properly punched or not in the voting cards in Florida (Posner 2004). The more recent 2020 presidential elections were marred by even more serious allegations by the incumbent President on how the election was stolen from him and this narrative continues to dominate the political discourse of the republican party in the US even today. NBC reported a Monmouth University poll in September 2022 that showed that 61% of republican voters and 29% of all respondents believed that President Joe Biden didn't win the 2020 presidential election legitimately (Murray 2022).

Scope of the issue

India is a federal republic of 28 states and 8 Union Territories. With a population of over 1.4 billion people, it has the largest electoral base of any country that conducts elections on a national scale. For elections to the Lok Sabha, the registered number of voters has grown from 173 million in the first national election in 1951 to 912 million in the most recent elections in 2019.

These voters are spread across a diverse and large landmass, which is divided into 543 parliamentary constituencies. Voting for the 2019 national elections was conducted in more than a million polling stations, which were setup with a design principle that no voter should have to travel more than 2 km to cast their vote.

Registered electors for general elections (millions)
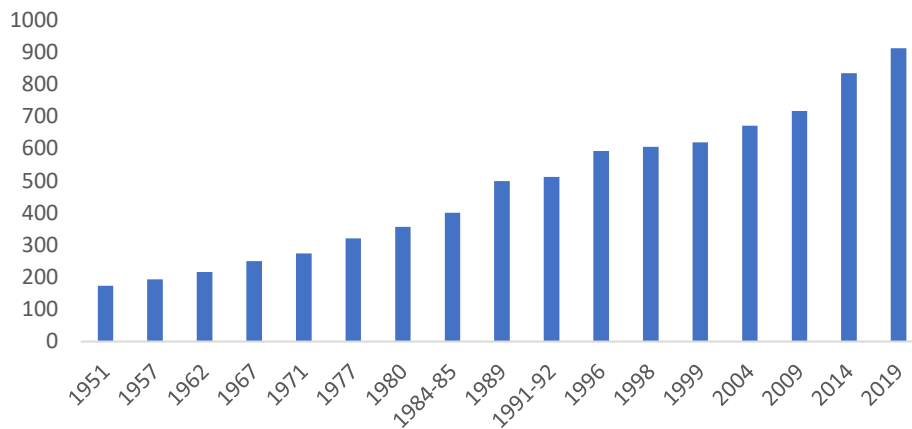
Source: Electoral Statistics Pocketbook 2021, Election Commission of India

## Number of Polling Stations for General Elections
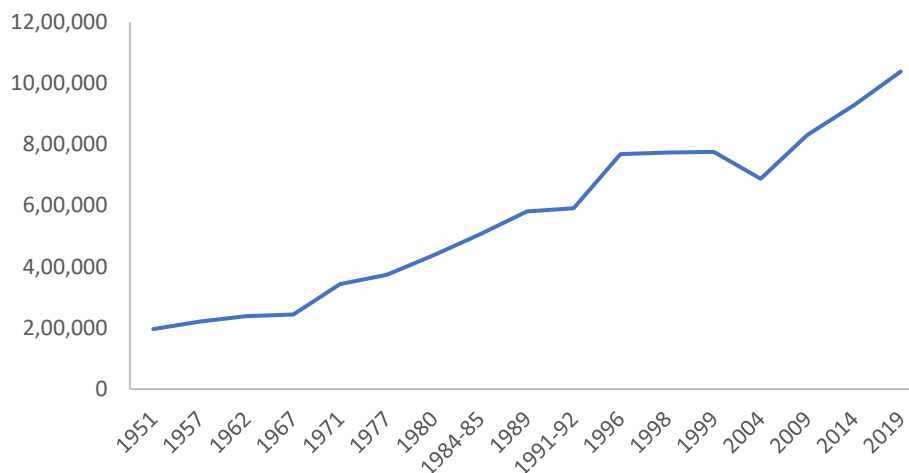
Source: Electoral Statistics Pocketbook 2021, Election Commission of India

The 2019 national elections in India were conducted in seven phases over a six-week period in which an army of 11 million officials and security staff were involved (Ford 2014). To put these numbers in perspective, the second largest election exercise in the world, which is the US presidential election, catered to about 231 million potential voters in the 2020 elections with around 96,000 polling stations and about a million poll workers (Joseph & Rob, 2020) (Fabina & Scherer, 2022) (EAVS Deep Dive).

Over the years, national elections in India have also seen an increase in the number of political parties and candidates contesting for the same number of parliamentary constituencies.

Number of Political Parties Contesting General Elections
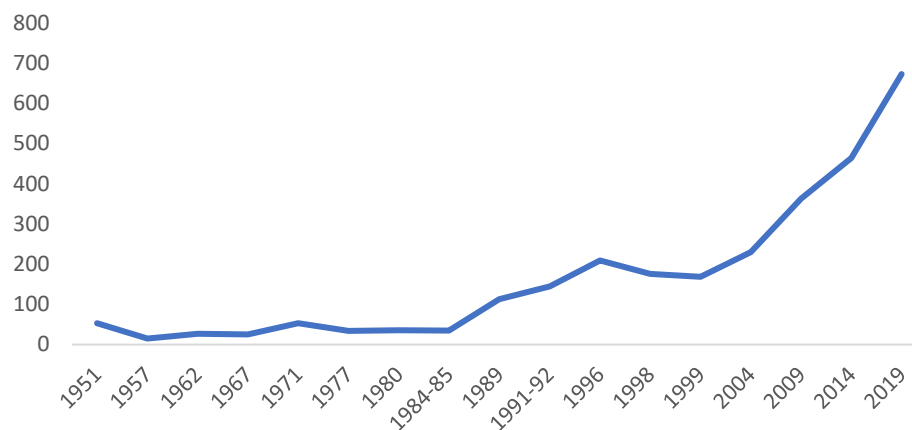
Source: Electoral Statistics Pocketbook 2021, Election Commission of India

Number of Contestants in General Elections
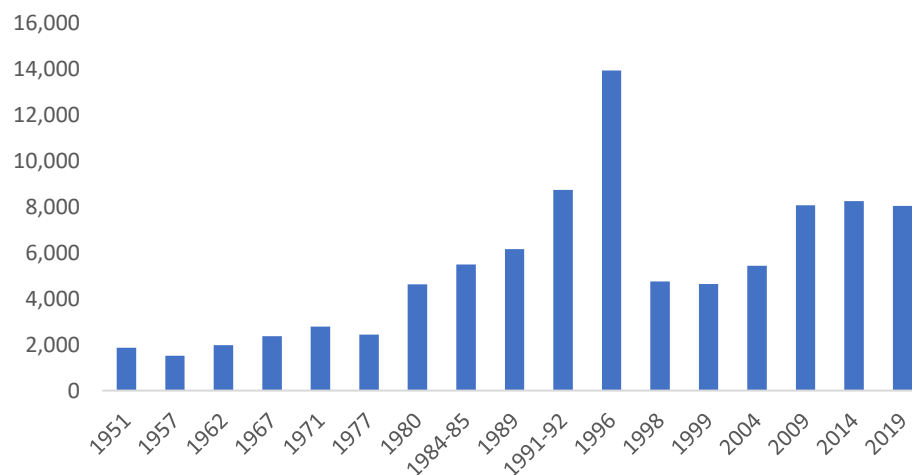
Source: Electoral Statistics Pocketbook 2021, Election Commission of India

Conducting such a massive exercise is clearly a huge logistical challenge. This is made even harder by the relatively poorer social and physical infrastructure available in India. For example, India has one of the most understaffed police forces, among the lowest literacy rates, and the lowest density of hospital beds in the world.

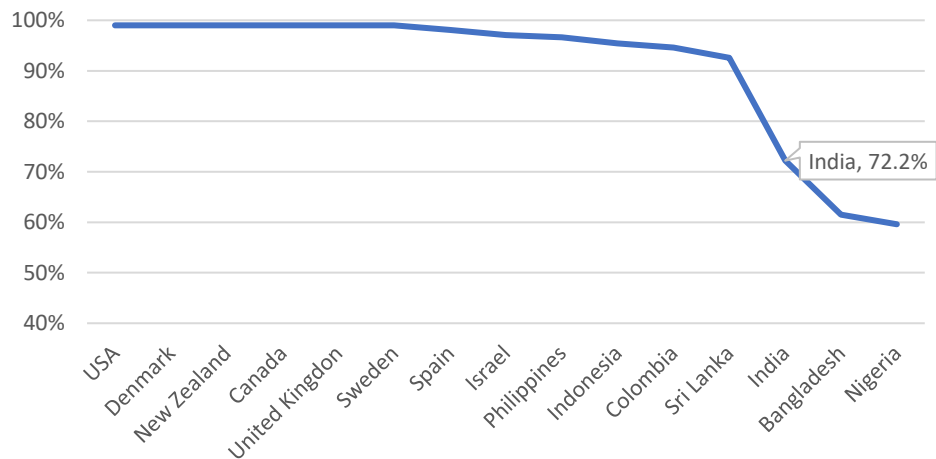## Police Officers per 100,000 people
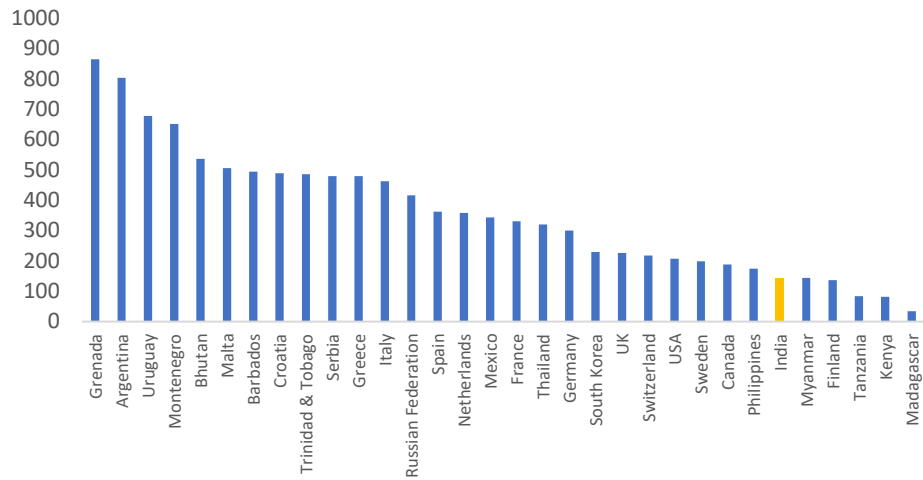
Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Data on Police Organizations 2017,
UN Population Division: Data from 2015-17

Hospital beds per 10,000 population
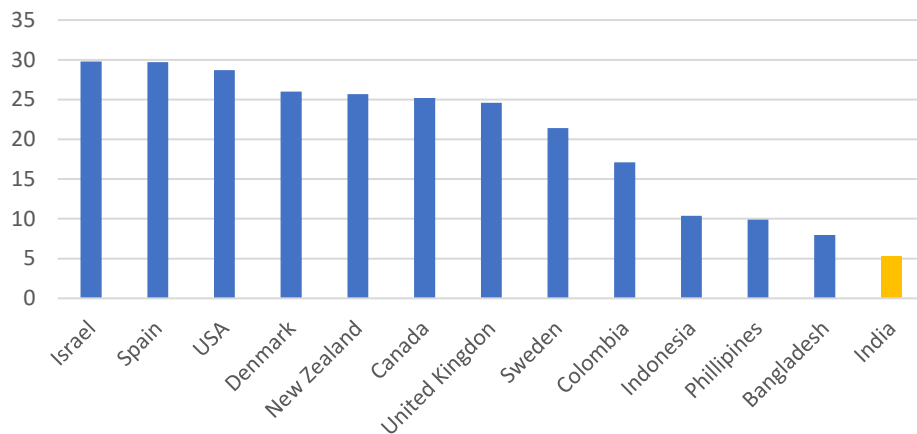
Source: World Health Organization; Data from 2017-19

Literacy rate (%)

India, 72.2%

Source: World Population Review, 2023

Factors that drive India's success in conducting elections

Independent, centralized Election Commission with extensive powers

The Constitution of India has vested in the Election Commission of India (ECI) the superintendence, direction, and control of the entire process of elections to the Parliament (both houses) and the Legislature of every state and to the offices of the President and the Vice-President of India (Bhalla 1972).

The framers of the Indian constitution wanted to ensure that elections were conducted in a free and fair manner and not influenced by the ruling political party of the day. To ensure the Election Commission was free from the control of the executive arm of government, it was setup as a permanent constitutional body. Further, it was felt that while India has a federal governance structure, the role of elections to the national and state legislatures would be best handled by a centralized body rather than leaving it to each state to conduct these elections. This ensures that individual states, with their individual political dispensations, do not have the ability to modify the rules and processes under which elections are conducted. The ECI is widely regarded as politically neutral and relatively efficient (McMillan 2012)

The ECI is headed by a Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two Election Commissioners (EC), who are all appointed by the President for a fixed term of six years or until they reach the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.

The CEC and the ECs enjoy the same status and receive the same salary and perquisites as available to judges of the Supreme Court of India. The CEC can be removed from office only through impeachment by both houses of Parliament. This allows the CEC to discharge his functions without interference from the executive arm.

The ECI has an independent and permanent secretariat of around 300 officials to manage its administrative affairs. To help with election related work in the states, the ECI appoints a Chief Electoral Officer of the state, who is in most cases a full-time officer and has a team of supporting staff. Likewise, for district and constituency levels, there are District Election Officers, Electoral Registration Officers, and Returning Officers, who are then supported by many junior functionaries.

Each state in India has a State Election Commission, which is responsible for conducting elections to the local and municipal bodies in urban and rural areas of the state.

The ECI decides the election schedules for the conduct of elections, whether these are at the national or the state legislature level. It has full discretion on deciding the number and location of the polling stations, the assignment of voters to specific polling stations, the location of the vote counting centres and all other matters related to the conduct of elections. The ECI gives political parties recognition and allots them political symbols. It also has the power to delay or cancel any elections if it feels the environment is not conducive to free and fair conduct of elections and may order a re-poll or a recount of votes in any poll if it feels there has been any misconduct.

Once the ECI announces the date of any election, it also imposes a model code of conduct for all political parties. This model code of conduct has been evolved through a consensus between political parties. Its purpose is to ensure the ruling parties do not misuse their position of advantage to gain an unfair advantage by using the state machinery to further their electoral ambitions or making promises about new projects that may sway a voter. This code also regulates political speeches to prevent communal discord. The model code of conduct is typically imposed about 6-8 weeks prior to the conduct of any elections.

Since work related to the elections is not permanent and only peaks around the election cycle, many of these appointees also perform other administrative functions in addition to their election related responsibilities. However, it is important to note that during election time, they are available to the Commission on a full-time basis.

The gigantic task force for conducting a countrywide general election consists of nearly five million polling personnel and civil police forces. This huge election machinery is deemed to be on deputation to the Election Commission and is subject to its control, superintendence, and discipline during the election period, extending over a few months. Further, senior government officials are usually deputed to election duty in states other than the ones they have their normal administrative duties, to further minimize the chances of political interference in the conduct of elections.

The design of the ECI, the powers vested in it by the Constitution, and the processes laid down for its functioning thus ensure that it can work as a truly independent body in discharging its duties to hold free and fair elections. The independence of the ECI, achieved through its organizational design and constitutional protection, is an important pillar of why India's election machinery works as well as it does.

Clear and uniform laws and processes

Many laws have been enacted in India to support the working of the ECI and to lay down clear processes for the conduct of elections at the national and state level. These laws are uniformly applied across the country. Some of these include [free and fair elections ECI]:

- The Representation of the People Act, 1950
  This Act lays down the procedures for the demarcation of constituencies, the allocation of seats in the state legislatures as well as in the national Parliament, the procedures for the preparation of electoral rolls, and the qualification of voters.

- The Representation of the People Act, 1951
  This Act provides for the conduct of parliamentary and state legislature polls, the basis for qualification and disqualification of candidates, and how to resolve conflicts around these issues, and the procedure for how candidates and political parties should register with the ECI.

- The Registration of Electors Rules, 1960
  The rules in this section apply to the planning, periodic updation and revision of the electoral polls. The Act also provides for the registration process for registered voters and the issuance of voter identification cards containing a picture of the voter.

- Conduct of Election Rules, 1961
  This Act deals in depth with various processes during elections. It includes the issuance of written notices concerning the announcement and conduct of elections, the filing of nominations, the review of nominations, and the withdrawal of candidates. It also deals with process of counting of votes. Several changes to these rules have been made, such as the Conduct of Election Rules (Amendment), 2016 and the Conduct of Election Rules (Amendment), 2013

There are several other laws that have been enacted from time to time to ensure that the process of conducting elections is well documented and there is limited discretion or variability in how the process is carried out in different parts of the country. A uniform and well documented set of laws and processes ensures that electoral practices are not left to the interpretation of officials, who may have their individual political leanings.

The courts in India have also done their part in ensuring that the election laws laid down by the legislature are upheld and any disputes related to their interpretation are settled in line with the principles laid down in the constitution.

Efforts on voter education

Boosting voter turnout is a paramount goal in any election. One can easily see why this is so. A poor voter turnout will yield low vote shares of the winning candidate, which brings into question the legitimacy of the candidate as a representative of the people.

Seeing voter turnout stagnate between 55 and 60 percent, the Election Commission of India introduced the Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) Division in 2009 to enhance voter turnout.

Voter Turnout in General Elections (%)
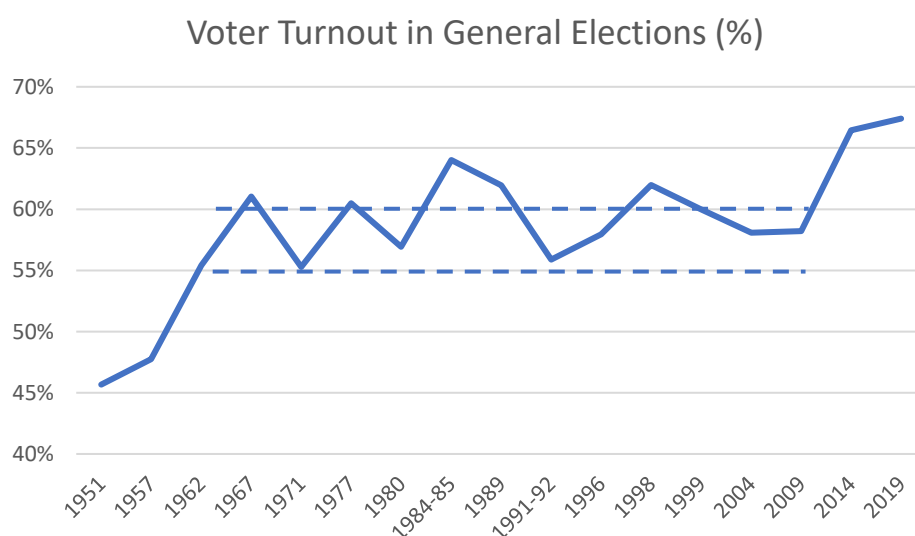
Source: Electoral Statistics Pocketbook 2021, Election Commission of India

Before engaging in any activities, the SVEEP Wing sought to understand the prevalent reasons for apathy towards voter registration, through surveys. Doing so brought to light several attitudes that prevented citizens from voting: ignorance of the procedure, indifference towards politics, fear of intimidation from militants or dominant castes. As an example, a significant finding of these surveys in the states of UP and Bihar was that women were especially concerned about their safety at polling booths where violence was a common occurrence. This realisation allowed the SVEEP Division to undertake programs specially designed for women to alleviate their worries about security. The next election saw an

unprecedented turnout of female voters, outdoing the male turnout in these 2 states. These numbers stayed consistently high for both states in the following elections too.

How Bihar Voted
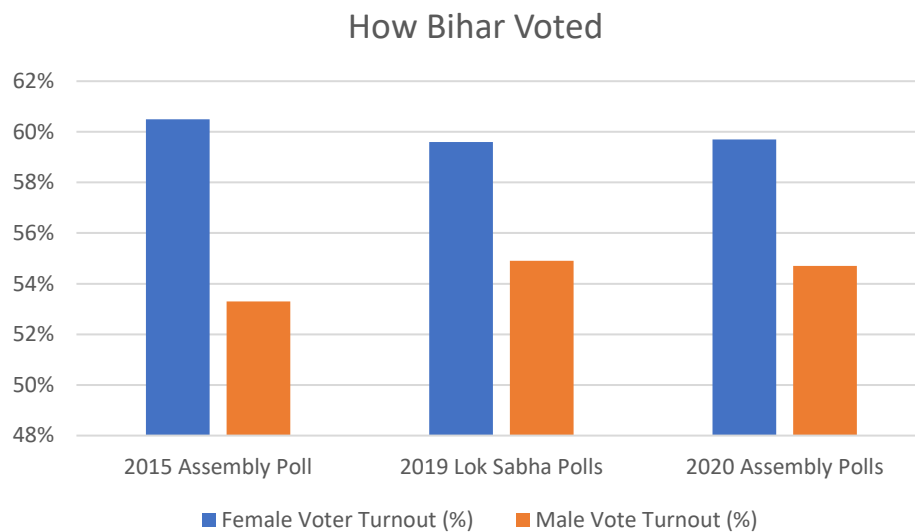
Source: Election Commission of India, The Times of India, November 9, 2020, Bharti Jain

Voter education includes informing citizens about their democratic rights, election procedures, political candidates and issues and motivating them to participate wholeheartedly in this democratic process. The process aims to make voters aware of their rights and every aspect of the process they must engage in, from how to register to where to vote. To this end, a 'Know Your BLO (Booth Level Officer)' campaign was launched to make the Booth Level Officer, the Elections Commission of India's own frontline worker, more accessible to the people to resolve their issues and clarify doubts. Other activities of SVEEP included making voter registration forms available at a plethora of places of public access, encouraging corporations to reach out to their employees, and organising training camps at schools and colleges. Celebrities and public figures were also engaged to help publicise these undertakings.

The first phase of SVEEP spread roughly from end 2009 to 2013 and covered elections to the Legislative Assemblies of 21 States and 2 Union Territories. This phase saw a remarkable growth in voter turnout, largely attributable to the Election Commission's flagship program. As the following figure demonstrates, other than Nagaland and Sikkim, every state saw a rise in voter turnout from 2009 to 2014, the most significant being Goa which saw a 21.78 percent advance. Previously employed reasons for an unexpected increase in voter turnout, such as anti-incumbency votes, fail to explain such a large jump on their own.

Increase in voter turnout between 2009 and 2014 general elections (percent points)
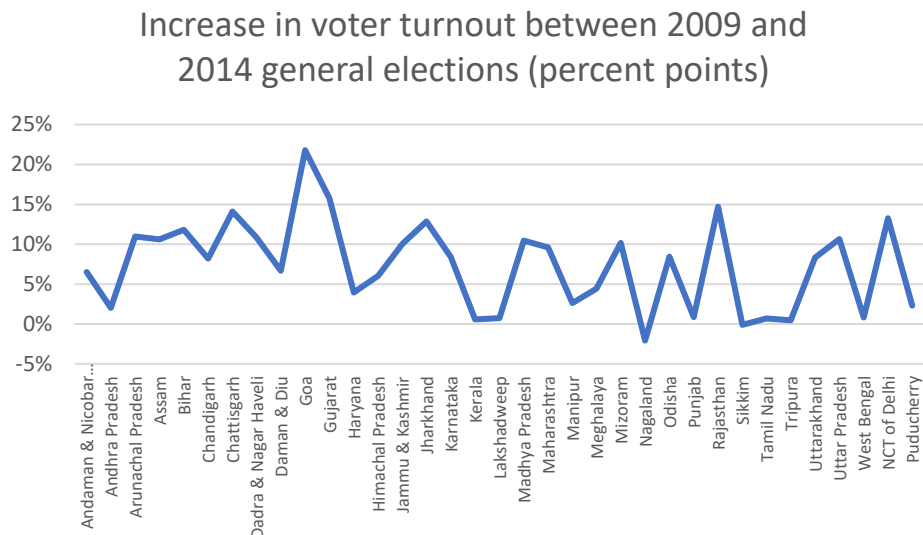
Source: Electoral Statistics Pocketbook 2015, Election Commission of India

However, voter literacy does much more than just hiking up the voter turnout; an informed citizenry is bound to elect a more meritorious candidate and capable leader than an unaware one. Thus, voter education succeeds in not just making the result of an election more reflective of the choice of a larger number of citizens, but also in improving its quality.

Voter registration and electoral rolls

Accurate identification of voters at the polling stations is critical to ensure that every voter can exercise only one vote and absentee voters' mandate is not stolen. Historically, India has had weak identity records for citizens, particularly those in remote and rural areas. This often led to the misuse of identity to conduct electoral fraud.

The ECI undertakes the task of preparation and regular updation of the Electoral Rolls in India. This task is handled by the Chief Electoral Officers in each state, who are appointed by the ECI in consultation with the state government. Each constituency has an Electoral Registration Officer who updates the electoral roll in that constituency.

To improve the accuracy of the electoral rolls and prevent election fraud, the ECI in August 1993 ordered the issue of Electors' Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) for all voters (Rao 2004). It further mandated that people who possessed EPIC had to produce it at the time of voting. Those who had not been issued EPICs could use other forms of proving identification.

With the rollout of the Aadhar card to 1.35 billion Indians, the Aadhar is now accepted as a form of identification for anyone visiting a polling booth for elections. However, it is imperative that the name of the voter is included in the electoral roll. As elections to state legislatures or the parliament approach, the ECI steps up its voter awareness drive to encourage voters to check that their names are included in the electoral rolls and if not, to submit the necessary documentation to do so. Many of these processes are now also possible online.

Use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)

The traditional form of elections in India were through paper ballots, where the voter would mark her choice on a printed ballot which had the names of the candidates and the name and symbols of their political party printed.

EVMs were first introduced in India, as an experiment, in the state assembly elections of Paravur in the state of Kerala in 1998 (Ravi 2019). The objective of introducing EVMs was to strengthen the electoral process, reduce electoral fraud, and reduce the cost of conducting elections on a massive scale. Following the initial success, the ECI procured 150,000 machines in 1990 to use in the national elections. However, there was widespread resistance from the political parties, who feared that the machines could be tampered with, and they appealed to the Supreme Court against the introduction of EVMs. Through a combination of constitutional changes that allowed for the use of EVMS, a widespread awareness building program, and a phased introduction across several state elections, EVMs eventually replaced paper ballots throughout the country from 2001 onwards.

A research study (Debnath, Kapoor & Ravi, 2017) published in 2017 showed that the introduction of EVMs led to a significant decline in electoral fraud as well as strengthening the representation of weaker and vulnerable sections of society.

Electoral Fraud

Under the paper ballot system, polling stations would often be captured by the supporters of a political party and the ballot boxes stuffed with votes in favour of their candidate. By the time the security forces arrived, the stuffing was already completed and there was no way to separate the legitimate ballots from the stuffed ones. EVMs have a built-in security measure that allows them to record a maximum of five votes per minute. As a result, only a limited number of illegitimate votes can be recorded before the security forces arrive at the polling
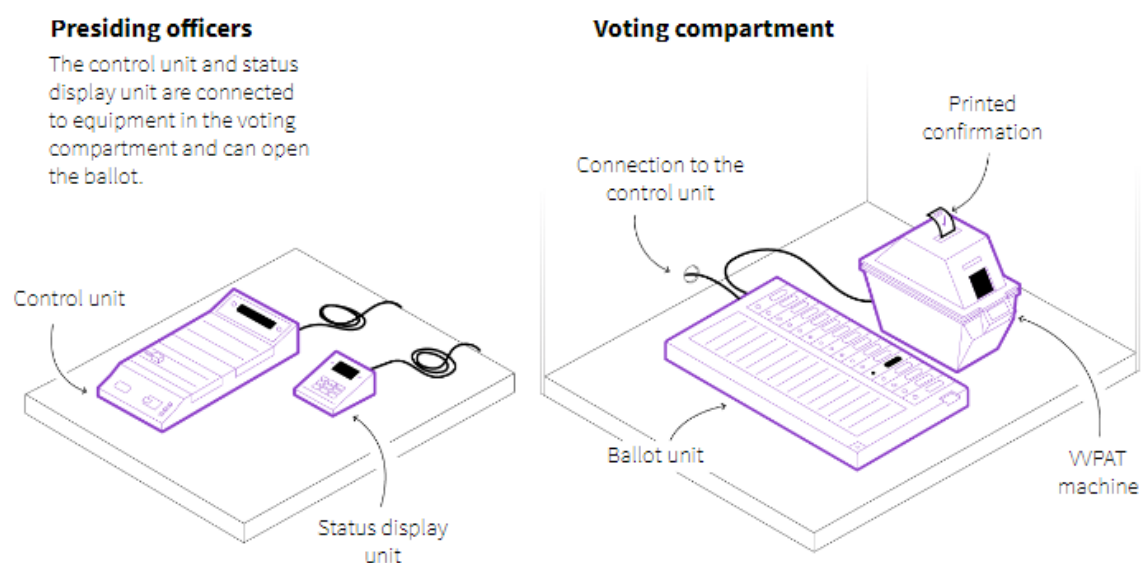
booth. Further, with voting machines, the presiding office at a station can press a button to 'close' a machine whereby it can no longer accept any further votes. Lastly, the EVMs also remove any discretion on the part of the officials counting the vote in terms of whether a ballot is recognised as a valid vote (in terms of being correctly marked by the voter).

Representation

In a country where a large section of society is illiterate or poorly educated, voters were often unable to mark the ballot in the correct manner as they were unable to correctly place their signature or thumb impressions. This was more likely to be the case among vulnerable and marginal sections of society such as scheduled castes, illiterate voters, the handicapped and the elderly. EVMs made it easier for all such people to press a button for their vote to get recorded.

EVMs have also significantly improved the turnaround time for counting of votes and declaring results once the voting is completed.

Over the years, there have been several objections cast on the security of EVMs. In 2013, the ECI formally incorporated Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines in the electoral system. The VVPAT leaves a paper trail of the vote cast, thereby acting as an additional layer of verifiability. The paper trail becomes part of the audit trail to ensure the vote has gone to the intended candidate. As per the Supreme Court of India's ruling in 2019, a random matching of VVPAT slips with EVMs took place in five polling booths per assembly constituency. Of the 1.73 million VVPATs deployed, slips from 20,625 VVPATs were


Presiding officers
The control unit and status display unit are connected to equipment in the voting compartment and can open the ballot.

Control unit

Status display unit

Voting compartment

Printed confirmation

Connection to the control unit

Ballot unit

VVPAT machine

Source: Reuters Graphics

physically counted. The physical audit did not find a single case of a mismatch between the VVPAT slip and the EVM count.

Making polling accessible

Adhering to the principle of not having a voter travel more than 2km to access a polling station is a logistical challenge in a country with diverse population densities and geographical landscape. In the general elections of 2019, a million polling stations were setup across the country with each station on average serving 900 voters but some stations serving over 3000 people (Hernandex, Scarr & Sharma 2019).

In India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, this meant 160,000 polling stations across the state. The picture below shows the expected clusters in major cities and town and empty spaces in rugged terrain or jungles.
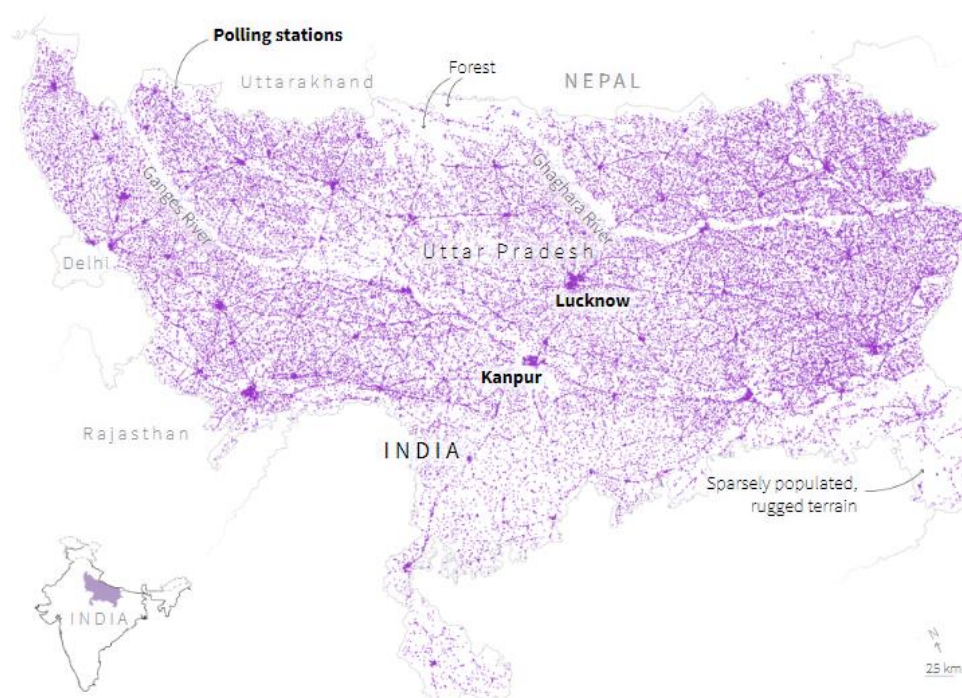
Source: Reuters Graphics

In contrast, the state of Arunachal Pradesh in the far northeast of the country is covered in thick forest. This tree cover gives way to snow-capped mountain peaks along the northern border with China. This challenging terrain meant some of the most remote and hard-to-reach polling stations in the country were set up in the state. One temporary booth was setup for a single female voter. The Malogam Temporary Structure was constructed by a

team of six election workers who travelled 30-40km for two days to put up the booth. Out of the 2202 polling stations in the state, seven had less than 10 voters, 281 between 11 to 100.
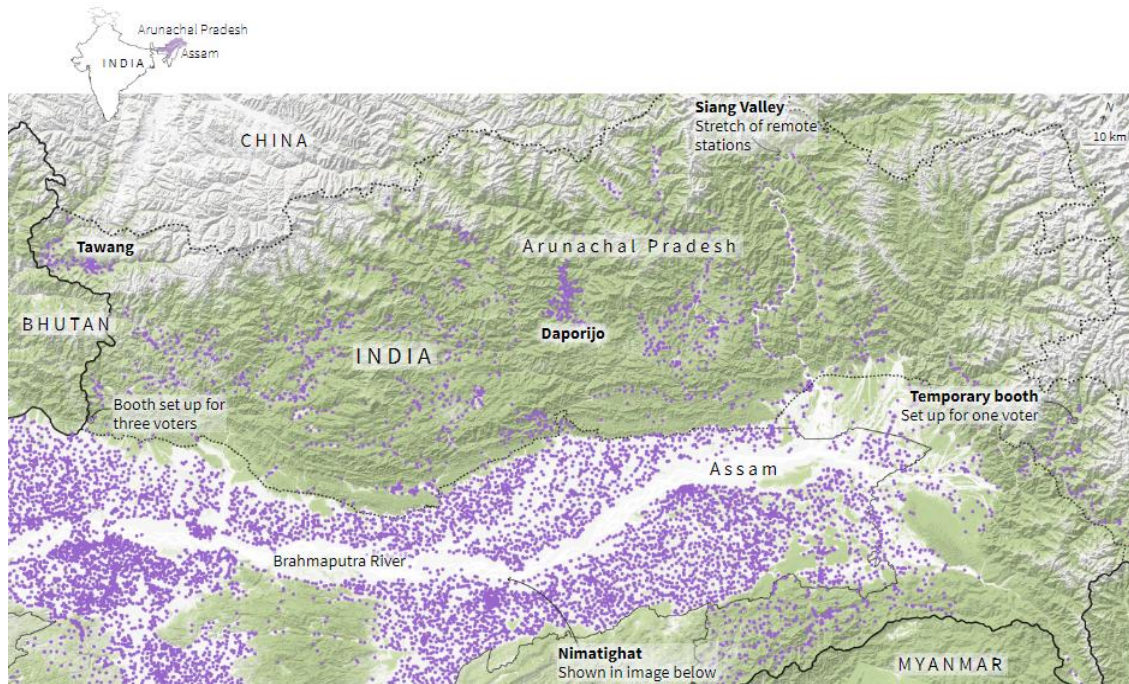
Source: Reuters Graphics

Immediately below Arunachal Pradesh is Assam, which has its own challenges in terms of small islands and sandbars scattered around the Brahmaputra River that runs through the state.

Polling officers carry EVMs towards their vehicles after arriving on a ferryboat in Nimatighat, Jorhat district, in the northeastern Indian state of Assam, April 9, 2019. REUTERS/ Adnan Abidi

Election officials travelling to cut-off locations need to carry all the necessary equipment and paperwork with them across tough terrain. Some of these journeys can take days. In all, a total of 1.8 million EVMs were used in the general elections of 2019. This immense logistical effort by many people and coordinated by the ECI allows for voters in all parts of the country to exercise their franchise and have their voice heard.

Porters carry VVPAT machines and EVMs through Buxa tiger reserve forest to a remote polling station in Alipurduar district in the eastern state of West Bengal, April 10, 2019. REUTERS/ Rupak De Chowdhuri

Persisting challenges

The multitude of factors discussed in this paper contribute to the conduct of free and fair elections in India. However, that does not mean these is no scope for improvement. There are several areas where reform is needed.

Absentee voting

As of today, voters in India can only vote in the constituency in which they are registered. This means that many migrant workers who do not reside in their constituency of domicile for work reasons are often unable to cast their votes unless they are prepared to travel home for voting. The use of postal ballots is only permitted to be used for those serving in the armed forces, para-military forces and government employees serving abroad. There is also a need to allow non-resident Indians to participate in elections through absentee voting.

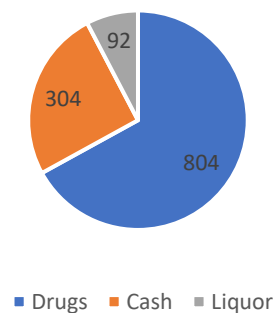## Regulating electoral spend and political funding

There are clearly laid down rules that limit the amount of money candidates may spend in any given election. Further, it is unlawful to explicitly offer voters money to seek their votes. A report by the CMS, an independent policy and research think-tank, in 2019 estimated that Rs.55,000 – 65,000 crores (~$6.7 -8 billion) was spent in the 2019 round of elections (CMS Report on Poll Expenditure 2019). The report further estimated that the total spend by the candidates was 4x the amount prescribed by law. There are no prescribed limits on the spends by the political parties and the report estimated that political parties spent almost as much as the aggregate spending by the candidates thereby further flouting the norms on capping spend per constituency.

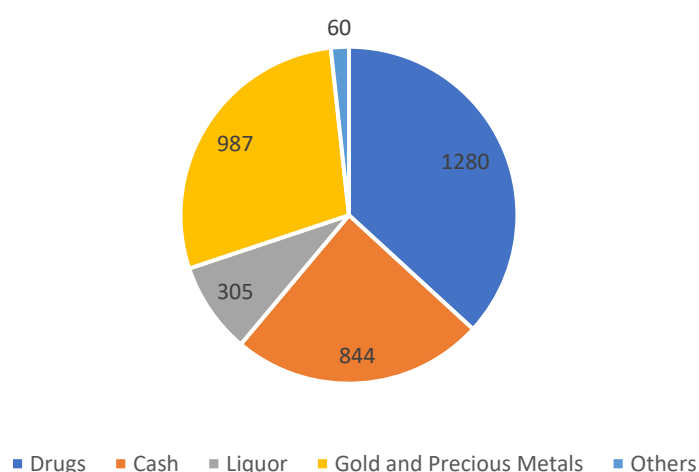**Expenditure by different heads in 2019 General Elections and Assmbly Elections (Rs. Crores)**
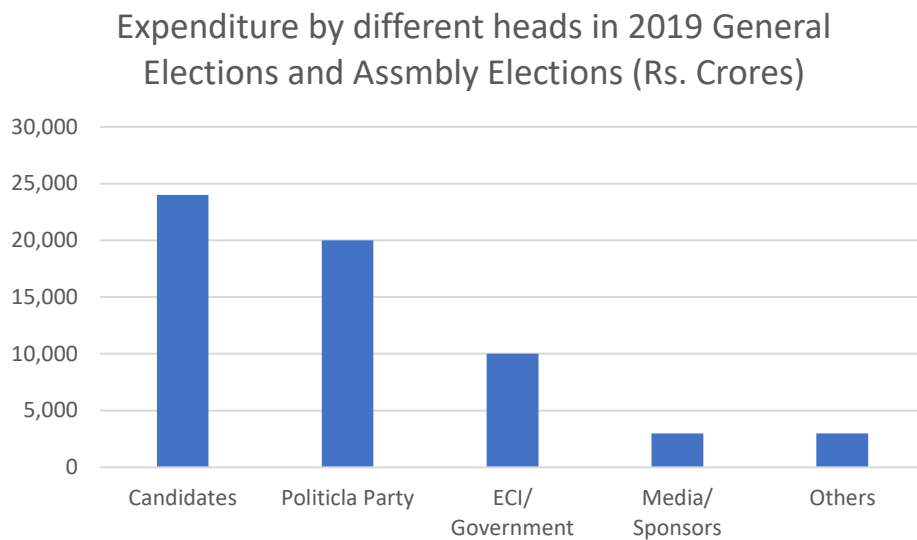
Source: Poll Expenditure, 2019. CMS Analysis & Estimation

Per the CMS report, total seizures of unaccounted cash, drugs, liquor and other freebies made by the ECI during the 2019 elections were Rs.3,476 crores (~$425 million), almost 3x the seizures made by ECI in the prior round of elections in 2014.

Total Seizures by ECI in 2014 Elections: Rs.1,200 Cr.

Total Seizures by ECI in 2019 Elections: Rs.3,476 Cr.

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        60
      987        1280
    305
        844
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■ Drugs ■ Cash ■ Liquor ■ Gold and Precious Metals ■ Others

Source: Election Commission of India

The report also provided some case studies of regions where exchange of money for votes was observed to be rampant e.g., in the state of Andhra Pradesh it was estimated that almost half the voters in most districts of Andhra Pradesh were paid on average Rs.1000-2000 per vote.

Andhra Pradesh, indicative estimates of money distributed...

Districts	Assembly seats	% of active voters who were distributed cash	Amount of cash distributed per vote
Srikakulam	10	60	500-1000
Vizianagaram	9	40	500-1500
Vishakhapatnam	15	40	1000-1500
West Godavari	19	45	1000-2000
East Godavari	15	60	1500-2000
Krishna	16	60	1500-3500
Guntur	17	60	2000-4000
Prakasam	12	65	1000-4000
Nellore	10	45	1500-3000
Chittoor	14	50	1000-2000
Kurnool	14	50	1000-3000
Anantapur	14	50	1000-1500
Chaddaph	10	60	1500-3000

Note: However, this does not mean that it was uniform in all constituencies of the district

Source: CMS Analysis & Estimation

Political funding in India is very opaque and there is no way to know the true sources of how a political party generates its resources. Of course, the whole issue of corruption is also intricately linked to the issue of political funding reform. The recently introduced Electoral Bonds offer a formal way for political donation. However, they are riddled with issues. Firstly, they maintain the anonymity of the donor and hence do not provide any greater transparency to the sources of money for a political party. Further, since they are sold through a government owned bank, opposition parties complain that the government of the day can see who is funding their opponents while the opposition has no window to this information.

One of the big underlying issues that impedes reform of political funding is the secrecy that donors desire in terms of which political parties they are willing to fund. This is because they fear they will be penalized by the opposing party in case their preferred party were to lose. Until there is an environment where there is neither appeasement nor penalization on any individual or corporate entity based on their political leaning, this is a hard problem to fix.

Stricter enforcement of the model code of conduct

The ECI has the mandate of enforcing a model code of conduct on all political parties and candidates in terms of their conduct during an election campaign. However, there are many instances of hate speeches, or campaigning that goes against India's secular character, or other forms of identity-based campaigning that goes unchecked or there are allegations of the rules being selectively applied depending on which political party is involved.

Reducing the criminalization of politics

According to a report by the Association of Democratic Reform (ADR) and National Election Watch (NEW), in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, 43% of the winners had declared criminal cases against themselves, and 29% had declared serious criminal cases such as murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, and crimes against women (Association of Democratic Reform 2014, 2019). For the 2014 election cycle, the same numbers were 34% and 17%. This points to the high extent of infiltration of criminals into the political system and its worsening trend.

The large use of unaccounted money and muscle power in swinging the electoral vote in their favour has led to political parties seeking the support of such elements. The parties, when in power, use their influence to return the favour to the criminals by protecting them from law enforcement, thereby deepening the nexus.

The obvious way for this problem to be solved is for voters to demand greater accountability from the candidates they support in elections. The ECI has over the years introduced norms for greater disclosure of financial assets of candidates as well as their criminal records. Ultimately, it will require a maturation of the Indian voter to focus on the quality of the candidate rather than any short-term gratification they may promise or provide, to improve the slate of candidates who win elections in India.

Conclusion

Elections in India are often called the dance of democracy. They are loud, participative, and lead to a seamless and peaceful transfer of power in the world's most populated country. The fact that this is accomplished despite all the infrastructural, social, and economic deficits in the country is a tribute to the founding fathers of the Indian constitution, and the many millions of officials who manage to pull off this complex logistical exercise every five years.

But of course, good process alone doesn't lead to good outcomes. While we have done well on ensuring that the elections are representative, free, and fair, a lot more needs to be done to ensure the playing field is level. That the quality of candidates being elected improves. And that the basis of their election is not a barter of free goodies for a vote but instead holding them accountable to represent the best interests of the voter once elected.

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