



# How Peace Is Effected By The Elections In India

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## Abstract

Elections play a pivotal role in shaping the political and social landscape of India. While they are essential for democratic governance, elections often give rise to political polarization, communal tensions, and misinformation, thereby influencing peace and social harmony. This study examines how political campaigns, party rhetoric, and the role of media and technology contribute to instability during elections. It also explores the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms, including law enforcement and election monitoring, in maintaining peace. Through an analysis of political, social, and institutional factors, the report aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and propose strategies for fostering more peaceful electoral processes.

**Keywords:** Elections, Political Polarization, Communal Tensions, Misinformation, Institutional Response

## Objective

The objective of this research is to analyze how elections in India influence peace and social stability. Specifically, the research aims to:

- Investigate the role of political parties and their campaigns in promoting or undermining peace during elections.
- Examine the impact of communal tensions and social divisions that emerge or intensify during electoral periods.
- Assess the role of media and technology, particularly in the spread of misinformation and political propaganda. Evaluate the effectiveness of institutional responses, including law enforcement and election monitoring bodies, in maintaining peace during elections.
- Propose recommendations to mitigate election-related unrest and promote peaceful electoral processes.

**1. Wilkinson, S. (2004). Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India. Cambridge University Press.**

Wilkinson explores the relationship between electoral competition and ethnic violence in India. He argues that political parties often exploit ethnic divisions to consolidate their voter base, leading to outbreaks of communal violence. The book provides empirical evidence of how political polarization and strategic manipulation of communal identities influence peace during elections.

**2. Pal, J. (2020). Politics of Misinformation and Social Media in Indian Elections. Journal of Political Communication.**

Pal investigates the role of social media platforms in spreading misinformation during Indian elections. The study reveals how political parties and interest groups use misinformation to sway public opinion and mobilize voters, which in turn leads to increased political polarization and social tensions.

**3. Shastri, S., & Sridharan, E. (201U). Electoral Politics in Indian States: Impact on Social Harmony. Indian Journal of Political Science.**

This article examines the socio-political dynamics of state-level elections in India and their impact on communal relations. It highlights how political rhetoric, caste-based mobilization, and regional issues contribute to social fragmentation and conflict during elections.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do political parties and their campaigns influence peace and communal harmony during elections in India?
2. What role does social media and mainstream media play in shaping public perception and political polarization during elections?
3. How effective are law enforcement agencies and election monitoring bodies in preventing election-related unrest and violence?
4. What are the root causes of communal tensions and political violence during Indian elections?
5. What policy measures and institutional reforms can help ensure more peaceful electoral processes in India?

## Limitations of the Research

1. Scope of Analysis: The research focuses primarily on national and state-level elections, with limited attention to local body elections.
2. Data Reliability: Data on election-related violence and political influence may be underreported or misrepresented due to political bias or media influence.
3. Temporal Limitations: The study focuses on the 2024 elections and recent electoral cycles, which may limit the generalizability of findings to future elections.
4. Access to Information: Restricted access to certain government reports and internal party strategies may limit the depth of the analysis.

## Introduction

Elections represent the cornerstone of democratic governance, offering citizens the opportunity to choose their representatives and influence the policy direction of their country. In India, the world's largest democracy, elections are not just political events—they are complex social and cultural phenomena that reflect the country's vast diversity and deep-rooted societal divisions. While elections are intended to strengthen democratic institutions and promote public participation, they often become flashpoints for political polarization, communal tensions, and misinformation campaigns.

The 2024 general elections in India were marked by intense political competition, divisive rhetoric, and increased incidents of communal violence. Political parties employed aggressive campaign strategies, often resorting to identity-based mobilization and inflammatory messaging. The rise of social media platforms further amplified political polarization, with misinformation and propaganda shaping public perception and influencing voter behavior. At the same time, law enforcement agencies and election monitoring bodies faced significant challenges in maintaining order and ensuring the integrity of the electoral process.

This report explores how these political, social, and technological dynamics have affected peace and communal harmony in India. Through a detailed analysis of political campaigns, media influence, and institutional responses, the study aims to identify the root causes of electoral unrest and propose strategies for fostering more peaceful elections in the future.

## Methodology

This research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of elections on peace in India.

### 1. Data Collection

#### ❖ Primary Data:

- Interviews with political analysts, law enforcement officials, and social activists.
- Surveys of voters and community leaders regarding their experiences and perceptions during elections.

#### ❖ Secondary Data:

- Analysis of media reports, government documents, and election commission reports.
- Review of political party manifestos, campaign speeches, and social media activity during the 2024 elections.

### 2. Analytical Framework

The study applies a thematic analysis approach, focusing on four key areas:

- Political Factors: Political parties, campaigns, and polarizing rhetoric.
- Social and Communal Factors: Communal tension and its impact on marginalized communities.
- Media and Technology: Spread of misinformation and the influence of media reporting.
- Law and Order: Effectiveness of law enforcement and election monitoring mechanisms.

### 3. Case Studies

Two case studies will be presented to illustrate the real-world impact of political, social, and institutional dynamics on peace during elections. These case studies will focus on significant electoral conflicts and the response of authorities and civil society.

## 4. Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1 Political Factors

#### 4.1.1 Role of Political Parties and Campaigns in Influencing Peace

Political parties in India play a central role in shaping the electoral landscape and influencing social harmony. The highly competitive nature of Indian elections often drives political parties to adopt aggressive and divisive campaign strategies, which can disrupt peace and deepen social divisions.

##### 1. Identity-Based Mobilization

Political parties in India have historically relied on identity-based mobilization, appealing to voters based on religion, caste, ethnicity, and regional affiliations.

- For example, during the 2024 general elections, several national and regional parties openly targeted specific religious and caste groups to consolidate voter support.
- This strategy often intensifies social divisions, as opposing communities feel marginalized or threatened, leading to tensions and potential violence.

##### 2. Use of Provocative Rhetoric

- Political leaders frequently use inflammatory language to appeal to their voter base and undermine their opponents.
- Campaign speeches often include references to religious or historical grievances, reinforcing a sense of victimhood and distrust among communities.
- For instance, in the 2024 elections, senior leaders from major political parties made provocative statements regarding religious identity, migration, and national security, which contributed to clashes between Hindu and Muslim communities.

##### 3. Distribution of Material Incentives

- Political parties frequently use material incentives, such as cash, liquor, and gifts, to influence voter behavior.
- Such practices not only undermine the democratic process but also fuel resentment among marginalized communities who may feel excluded from political benefits.
- During the 2024 elections, reports of vote-buying and distribution of illegal incentives were widespread, contributing to allegations of electoral malpractice and deepening public

mistrust.

#### 4. Coalition Politics and Fragmentation

- The complex nature of coalition politics in India often leads to fragmented governance and policy instability.
- Political parties forming pre-election or post-election alliances based on opportunistic calculations rather than ideological alignment can exacerbate tensions within communities.
- In the 2024 elections, shifting alliances among regional parties created political uncertainty, leading to protests and clashes in some states.

##### 4.1.2 Polarization and Rhetoric: Its Impact on Communal Harmony

Political polarization has become a defining feature of Indian elections, with major political parties framing elections as existential battles between competing ideologies and identities.

###### 1. Religious Polarization

- Religious divisions are often exploited by political parties to consolidate vote banks.
- Campaign narratives frequently portray one religious group as a threat to national security or cultural identity, creating a climate of fear and hostility.
- In the 2024 elections, several political parties used issues like the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), and the abrogation of Article 370 to mobilize Hindu nationalist sentiment.

###### 2. Caste-Based Polarization

- Caste-based political mobilization remains a powerful tool in Indian elections.
- Political parties strategically align with dominant caste groups to maximize electoral gains, often at the expense of lower and marginalized castes.
- In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, caste-based political alliances during the 2024 elections intensified caste-based violence and social fragmentation.

### 3. Ethnic and Regional Tensions

- Regional identity and autonomy issues are frequently politicized to influence voter sentiment.
- In Assam and the northeastern states, political parties capitalized on immigration and border security issues, leading to protests and inter-community clashes.
- The rise of regional parties asserting local identity contributed to tensions with central authorities and other ethnic groups.

## 4.2 Social and Communal Factors

### 4.2.1 Incidences of Communal Tension During Elections

Communal tensions often escalate during elections as political parties exploit religious and ethnic identities to consolidate their support base.

#### 1. Religious Violence

- In the run-up to the 2024 elections, several incidents of religious violence were reported, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Delhi.
- In Aligarh, communal clashes broke out following a political rally where inflammatory slogans were raised against a minority community.
- In Gujarat, riots erupted after a political leader accused a religious group of plotting against national interests.

#### 2. Mob Violence and Lynching

- Hate crimes and mob lynching incidents increased during the election season, often fueled by rumors and misinformation spread through social media.
- In Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh, several cases of mob violence were linked to political propaganda targeting religious minorities.

#### 3. Destruction of Religious Sites

- During the 2024 elections, multiple reports emerged of religious sites being vandalized as part of politically motivated violence.
- In West Bengal, attacks on temples and mosques were reported following provocative campaign speeches.

#### 4.2.2 Impact on Marginalized Communities

Elections in India disproportionately affect marginalized communities, including religious minorities, Dalits, and tribal groups.

##### 1) Political Marginalization

- Marginalized communities often face limited political representation and are used as vote banks without meaningful policy engagement.
- Political parties tend to exploit the grievances of marginalized communities without addressing their structural issues, such as poverty and lack of access to education and healthcare.

##### 2) Economic Backlash

- Post-election violence and political instability often disrupt local economies, disproportionately affecting marginalized groups.
- In rural Maharashtra, agricultural communities reported loss of income and employment following politically motivated violence.

##### 3) Intimidation and Suppression

- Marginalized communities frequently face intimidation during elections, including threats of violence and forced displacement.
- Reports of voter suppression and denial of voting rights were widespread in states with a high concentration of Dalit and tribal voters.

#### 4.3 Media and Technology

##### 4.3.1 Influence of Social Media on Spreading Misinformation or Promoting Peace

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for political mobilization and propaganda during Indian elections.

###### 1. Misinformation Campaigns

- Political parties and interest groups use social media platforms to spread false information and inflammatory content.
- During the 2024 elections, deepfake videos and doctored images targeting political opponents were widely circulated on platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter.

## 2. Targeted Advertising and Algorithmic Bias

- Political parties invested heavily in targeted advertising, exploiting user data to shape voter behavior.
- Algorithms on social media platforms often amplified divisive content, reinforcing political polarization.

### 4.3.2 Role of Mainstream Media in Election Reporting

#### i. Media Bias

- Major media outlets were accused of favoring certain political parties and downplaying electoral misconduct.
- State-controlled media outlets often reflected the ruling party's narrative, influencing voter perception.

#### ii. Sensationalism and Divisive Coverage

- Several mainstream media channels focused on sensationalist reporting, framing electoral competition as a "battle for survival" between religious and ideological groups.
- Coverage of communal violence often lacked context, further exacerbating social divisions.

## 4.4 Law and Order

### 4.4.1 Role of Law Enforcement Agencies in Maintaining Peace

#### a) Political Interference

- Law enforcement agencies often faced political pressure to act in favor of ruling parties.
- During the 2024 elections, delayed responses to communal clashes were attributed to political interference.

#### b) Use of Force

- In several cases, police used excessive force to disperse political protests, leading to civilian casualties.

#### 4.4.2 Effectiveness of Election Monitoring Mechanisms

##### 1. Election Commission's Limitations

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) issued warnings and notices to political leaders but lacked the power to impose stronger penalties.

##### 2. Lack of Real-Time Monitoring

- The ECI's inability to track social media and misinformation campaigns in real-time limited its effectiveness in controlling electoral misconduct.

#### Case Study 1: 2024 General Elections – Communal Clashes in Uttar Pradesh

##### Background

Uttar Pradesh (UP), India's most populous state, has historically been a hotspot for communal tensions during elections. In the 2024 general elections, political polarization was particularly intense due to inflammatory campaign rhetoric and identity-based mobilization. Major political parties targeted religious and caste-based voting blocs, fueling communal divisions.

##### Events

- In April 2024, communal riots erupted in the cities of Aligarh and Meerut following a provocative campaign speech by a senior political leader. The leader accused a minority community of being “anti-national” and urged voters to protect the “Hindu identity.”
- Social media platforms were flooded with doctored videos and hate messages, further escalating tensions.
- Clashes between Hindu and Muslim groups resulted in at least 15 deaths and hundreds of injuries. Several houses and places of worship were vandalized.
- Law enforcement agencies were slow to respond, leading to criticism of political interference and lack of preparedness.

## Response and Outcome

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) issued notices to the political leader for violating the Model Code of Conduct, but no substantial action was taken.
- Civil society organizations organized peace marches and interfaith dialogues to restore calm.
- The state government ordered a judicial inquiry, but findings were not made public.
- The communal divide deepened, with long-term social tensions persisting even after the elections.

## Case Study 2: Misinformation and Electoral Unrest in West Bengal

### Background

West Bengal witnessed intense political rivalry during the 2024 elections, particularly between the ruling party and the main opposition. The state has a history of political violence, and in 2024, misinformation campaigns played a central role in fueling unrest.

### Events

- In May 2024, a viral deepfake video showed a prominent opposition leader allegedly making derogatory remarks about a particular religious community.
- The video was widely circulated on WhatsApp and Facebook, triggering protests and violent clashes in Kolkata and other urban centers.
- Investigations later revealed that the video was created using artificial intelligence (AI) tools and was traced to a politically motivated social media cell. Political parties accused each other of orchestrating the misinformation campaign, escalating tensions further.

### Response and Outcome

- Law enforcement authorities were able to identify the creators of the deepfake video, leading to multiple arrests.
- The Election Commission imposed temporary bans on certain political rallies and social media accounts linked to misinformation.
- Despite these measures, political tensions remained high, and several post-election attacks were reported.

- The incident highlighted the growing threat of AI-generated misinformation and the challenges of regulating social media content during elections.

## Challenges

### 1. Identifying the Root Causes of Election-Related Unrest

Political and social unrest during elections in India stems from deep-rooted structural and political issues:

#### 1. Political Manipulation of Identity

- Political parties frequently exploit religious, caste, and ethnic identities to consolidate electoral support, deepening social divisions.
- Campaigns often rely on divisive slogans and identity-based appeals, fostering an “us versus them” narrative that fuels hostility and unrest.

#### 2. Misinformation and Propaganda

- The rise of social media platforms has facilitated the rapid spread of misinformation and propaganda.
- Political parties and interest groups deploy targeted disinformation campaigns to undermine opponents and manipulate voter behavior.
- Deepfake videos and doctored images have increased confusion and mistrust among voters.

#### 3. Economic and Social Inequality

- Marginalized communities, including Dalits, tribal groups, and religious minorities, face political and economic exclusion.
- Economic deprivation creates a fertile ground for political exploitation, with communities being used as vote banks rather than empowered participants in the political process.

#### 4. Weak Institutional Frameworks

- Election-related violence and political interference often stem from institutional weaknesses in law enforcement and election monitoring.
- The Election Commission of India (ECI) lacks sufficient authority to impose strict penalties on

- political misconduct.
- Law enforcement agencies are often perceived as biased or influenced by political interests.

## 2. Institutional Weaknesses in Maintaining Peace During Elections

### 1. Law Enforcement Failures

- Inadequate policing and delayed responses to communal clashes and political violence undermine public confidence in state institutions.
- Political interference prevents law enforcement from acting impartially during elections.

### 2. Election Commission's Limited Powers

- The ECI can issue warnings and notices but lacks the authority to disqualify candidates for hate speech or inflammatory rhetoric.
- The absence of real-time monitoring systems for social media content hampers the ECI's ability to prevent the spread of misinformation.

### 3. Judicial Delays

- Investigations into electoral misconduct and political violence are often delayed, leading to a lack of accountability.
- Court verdicts on electoral violations and hate speech cases frequently come long after the elections have concluded.

### 4. Lack of Cyber Regulation

- Social media platforms lack accountability for the spread of harmful content.
- The absence of clear legal frameworks for handling AI-generated content and deepfakes complicates efforts to regulate online platforms.

## Recommendations

### 1. Policy Suggestions for Peaceful Elections

#### 1) Strengthening the Election Commission's Powers

- Amend electoral laws to grant the ECI greater authority to disqualify candidates involved in hate speech and misinformation campaigns.
- Establish an independent oversight body to monitor ECI decisions and ensure impartiality

#### 2) Tightening Campaign Financing Regulations

- Introduce stricter regulations on corporate and foreign funding for political campaigns.
- Mandate transparent disclosure of campaign donations and expenditures.

#### 3) Independent Election Monitoring Bodies

- Create independent election monitoring bodies composed of civil society representatives, legal experts, and media professionals.
- Equip these bodies with the authority to investigate and report electoral violations.

### 2. Strategies for Community Engagement and Trust-Building

#### 1. Interfaith and Intercommunity Dialogues

- Encourage local governments and civil society organizations to organize peacebuilding workshops and interfaith dialogues.
- Promote inclusive political narratives that focus on common interests rather than religious or caste-based divisions.

#### 2. Grassroots Peace Committees

- Establish community-based peace committees to mediate conflicts and address political grievances at the local level.
- Ensure that these committees are diverse and represent various religious, caste, and ethnic groups.

### 3. Education and Awareness

- Introduce peace and conflict resolution programs in schools and universities to foster a culture of tolerance and mutual respect.
- Educate voters on recognizing and resisting political manipulation and misinformation.

## 3. Use of Technology to Counter Misinformation

### 1. AI-Based Fact-Checking Tools

- Develop government-backed AI tools to detect and flag deepfake videos, doctored images, and misleading content in real-time.
- Collaborate with social media companies to improve algorithmic detection of false content.

### 2. Regulating Social Media Platforms

- Require social media platforms to take down hate speech and false information more swiftly.
- Impose penalties on platforms that fail to regulate harmful political content.

### 3. Public Information Campaigns

- Launch large-scale public campaigns to educate voters about identifying misinformation and reporting harmful content.
- Partner with civil society and tech companies to improve digital literacy among rural and marginalized populations.

## Findings

The analysis of political, social, media, and institutional factors during the 2024 Indian elections highlights the following key findings:

### 1. Political Polarization Drives Electoral Unrest

- Political parties increasingly rely on religious, caste-based, and regional divisions to consolidate support, contributing to social unrest and communal tension.

## 2. Social Media as a Double-Edged Sword

- While social media platforms have increased political awareness and engagement, they have also become vehicles for misinformation and hate speech.
- The rapid spread of deepfake videos and inflammatory content has heightened political divisions and undermined trust in democratic institutions.

## 3. Institutional Weaknesses Undermine Peace

- Law enforcement agencies and the Election Commission of India struggled to respond effectively to election-related violence and misinformation.
- Political interference and limited regulatory capacity weakened institutional responses.

## 4. Marginalized Communities Face Disproportionate Impact

- Religious minorities, Dalits, and tribal groups were disproportionately affected by election-related violence and political marginalization.
- Political parties often used these communities as vote banks without addressing their structural grievances.

## 5. Judicial and Regulatory Gaps Persist

- The lack of real-time monitoring systems and weak enforcement of electoral laws limited the capacity to prevent or penalize electoral misconduct.
  - Judicial delays and weak cyber regulations created gaps in accountability for political violence and Misinform

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this research underscores the significant impact of elections on peace in India, with the 2024 general elections serving as a critical case study. Political polarization and identity-based mobilization have emerged as major sources of social tension, as political parties increasingly rely on religious, caste-based, and regional divisions to consolidate support. This divisive approach has not only fueled hostility between communities but also weakened the foundations of social harmony. The spread of misinformation and propaganda through social media has further complicated the electoral landscape, influenced voter behavior and intensified political divisions. Mainstream media, often accused of bias, has also contributed to the politicization of public discourse.

Social and communal tensions during elections have disproportionately affected marginalized communities, including religious minorities, Dalits, and tribal groups, who often face political exploitation without meaningful policy responses to their structural grievances. Institutional weaknesses, particularly within the Election Commission of India (ECI) and law enforcement agencies, have further exacerbated these challenges. The ECI's limited enforcement powers and delayed responses to hate speech and misinformation have allowed political misconduct to persist, while political interference in law enforcement has undermined public confidence in the state's ability to ensure fair and peaceful elections.

To address these challenges, the research highlights the need for comprehensive electoral reforms, including granting the ECI greater authority to regulate political campaigns and penalize misconduct. Strengthening real-time monitoring of social media and enhancing law enforcement's capacity to respond impartially to election-related violence are also essential.

Promoting inclusive political narratives, encouraging intercommunity dialogue, and increasing voter education on misinformation can help rebuild trust and social cohesion. Ultimately, elections should serve as a means to strengthen democratic governance and unity rather than deepen social and political divisions. Achieving this requires a balanced approach that combines stronger institutions, responsible political behavior, and greater public awareness.

