

Political Reforms in India: Converging Priorities and Divergent Party Approaches

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1. Introduction

Manifestos are pre-election documents that political parties use to give people a taste of their platform. Manifestos provide a formal record of a political party's stance on state policy and governance, but their relevance has diminished due to personality-driven politics and fast developments in communication technologies [1], [2]. Nyay Patra (Document for Justice), the name of the Congress party's 2024 manifesto, is an appeal for the party's return to politics in opposition to the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) vast ideological agenda. Justice for kids, women, farmers, employees, and equality are just a few of the 25 assurances put forward by Congress. The party's platform promises to "reverse the damage" caused by the National Democratic Alliance administration headed by Narendra Modi, while also emphasizing social justice, economics, and the significance of constitutional institutions. The most important political pledge is to do a caste census throughout the country and to eliminate the 50% quota ceiling for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes (OBC) [3], [4]. On this front, the Congress is venturing into uncharted territory; the party has long denied that caste plays a role in politics, but the BJP has grown its support by appealing to it. Some of the things that have been proposed include a new law to make sure that "'bail is the rule, jail is the exception' in all criminal laws," a review of all laws that restrict people's right to privacy and their choice of what they eat, wear, or marry, a media self-regulation regime, and a law to protect people's freedom to use the Internet. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) or the Indian National Congress (INC), the two main national parties in India, have common platforms that prioritize inclusive growth, institutional stability, and democratic rule. Their differing ideologies, philosophies of government, and electoral methods are on full display in the vast differences in how they respond to political transformation. This article delves into the topic of how different party-specific methods coexist with convergent reform agendas. In several democracies throughout the globe, religiously motivated political groups have recently seen a boom in popularity. This combination of religious zeal with democratic politics is seen in South Asian [5], [6], Latin American, and Middle Eastern contexts, among others. Given its size and the length of time it has been a democratic nation, India is an important case study in this area. It is not a recent phenomenon on the Indian subcontinent for religion and politics to intersect. In the aftermath of Partition and after the nation gained its independence, the founders of India opted to establish a secular state that ran counter to popular Western ideas when they drafted the constitution. India's constitution did not spell out a clear demarcation between church and state; instead, it established a "principled distance" between the two, meaning that the government would respect and accommodate all of India's religious traditions without showing bias. By comparing the 2024 Lok Sabha election platforms of the two main national parties, we can see where they agree and where they disagree on key national concerns [7], [8], [9], [10].

1.1 Ideological Foundations of Divergence

- **BJP: Rapid decision-making, centralized leadership, a focus on government efficiency, and a nationalist orientation characterize the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).**
- **Congress: Social coalition politics, participatory government, institutional autonomy, and the liberal-democratic heritage are all aspects of Congress.**

The ideological foundations of each party influence their conceptions of political change, not in terms of ends but in means and protections. Among the ten points that Congress pledged to uphold in its manifesto was a commitment to justice on the following fronts: social, young, women, farmer, labor, economic, fiscal, state, defense, and environmental.

Table 1. Convergence vs Divergence Summary Matrix

Reform Domain	Convergence	Divergence
Electoral Integrity	✓	Methods
Anti-Corruption	✓	Instruments
Federalism	✓	Degree of autonomy
Institutional Reform	✓	Executive vs institutional balance
Governance Efficiency	✓	Speed vs safeguards

2. Divergent Party Approaches to Political Reforms

This article uses historical as well as comparative analysis to follow the evolution of political parties in India. It demonstrates that the two nations' party development paths in the medium and long term were drastically different, despite numerous similarities in their experiences as British colonies, transoceanic connections between nationalist parties, and dominating party structures that persisted for a number of years following independence. In contrast, the INC strove to bring Indians together despite their caste and ethnic differences, established strong social roots, and expanded into rural regions. The two nations' incentive systems for leveraging party violence differed due to these dissimilar paths, which in turn affected the emergence of new party entrants. Despite agreement on the end result, the parties' approaches to reform and the details of their plans for putting it into action differ greatly.

Table.2. Divergent Party Approaches to Political Reforms

Reform Dimension	Ruling Party Perspective	Opposition Party Perspective
Electoral Reforms	Emphasis on electoral efficiency (e.g., simultaneous elections, EVM trust-building)	Emphasis on safeguards, transparency, and institutional oversight
Campaign Finance	Electoral bonds as a formalized funding mechanism	Demand for full disclosure and abolition of opaque funding
Institutional Autonomy	Strong executive-led reforms for faster decision-making	Greater institutional independence and checks & balances
Federalism	Cooperative federalism with centralized coordination	Competitive federalism and greater fiscal autonomy
Judicial & Constitutional Reforms	Focus on efficiency and backlog reduction	Focus on independence and constitutional safeguards

This study looks at the ways in which people's ideologies shape their views on the positions taken by different political parties. In addition, we look at how three other measures of ideological strength—the degree to which one's worldview aligns with their party identification, the amount of education one has, and their involvement in political activities—influence these views. We find that (i) respondents' ideologies significantly impact their perceptions of the opposing party's positions, and (ii) this effect is more noticeable among people who have more strongly held political convictions, as shown by each of the three indicators mentioned earlier, even after accounting for the respondents' own issue positions. When looking at how people see one's preferred political party, however, ideology shows a modest and inconsistent influence across all three indicators of ideological strength. We recognize constraints relating to the dataset's features and address theoretical frameworks that may shed light on these results and their significance for understanding differences in politics. Before we get into the meat of the matter, let us declare the unambiguous fact that political parties are multi-faceted organizations that promote a wide variety of informational platforms, not all of which are complimentary. It should come as no surprise, however, that individuals holding various ideologies have distinct, and at times, conflicting, opinions on the major political parties. There are two apparently technical components—question phrasing and answer scales—that cause the ideological evaluations, personal issue positions, and perceived party positions to diverge. In most cases, the wording and scoring system for questions regarding one's personal and the party's stance on a certain subject are quite similar. The only distinction is whether one is passing judgment on oneself or another. Questioning the respondent's ideology, on the other hand, makes use of distinct question phrasing and answer scales. The link between the respondent's personal issue viewpoint and the perceived party position may be influenced by question phrasing and scale effects (see below). Question phrasing and scale effects do not impact the link between ideology and imagined party perspective when personal position is accounted for.

On paper, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress share more similarities than distinctions on issues like foreign policy, healthcare, education, infrastructure, social security, agriculture, defense, national security, terrorism, healthcare, and reforms related to the economy, infrastructure, and social security. Their views on federalism, reservations, and cultural and religious liberties are fundamentally different. A break with the BJP's stance is pledged by the Congress party in their platform, which includes Jammu and Kashmir, the National Capital Territory of Delhi, Manipur, or the Institution of Governor. Intriguingly, Congress has also pledged to divide up the legislative domains in the Seventh Schedule and reach an agreement on moving certain domains from the Concurrent List to the State List. executive branch. Furthermore, it may have publicly stated its intention to uphold the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act's duty to maintain the religious character of all places of worship as they were on August 15, 1947. Even while it says in its platform that it would pass a legislation to recognize civil unions between LGBTQIA+ couples, the party might have really secured their right to marry. Religion and national identity, however, are major factors in Indian politics. While the BJP was in office, they became more famous, but they aren't the only ones responsible for the rise of politicized. Religion. Political parties are trying to brand oneself as pro-Hindu or pro-Hindu and a defender of minorities, which has led to an upsurge in religiously motivated politics. The separation of religious and political power is what secularism means in India, as it does everywhere else. While secularism in the West and the US share many core

principles, this split differs somewhat on other important points. We find a detailed analysis of the BJP and Congress platforms here.

Table.3. Reform Dimensions for BJP Approach and Congress Approach

Reform Dimension	BJP Approach	Congress Approach
Governance Model	Strong central leadership; executive-driven reforms	Institutional pluralism; emphasis on checks and balances
Federalism	Cooperative federalism with centralized coordination	Competitive federalism; enhanced state autonomy
Electoral Reforms	Simultaneous elections, administrative efficiency	Electoral safeguards, transparency, institutional oversight
Campaign Finance	Support for electoral bonds to formalize funding	Advocacy for abolition of electoral bonds and full disclosure
Anti-Corruption Strategy	Preventive and technological solutions	Legal-institutional accountability and independent oversight
Judicial Reforms	Focus on efficiency and backlog reduction	Focus on judicial independence and constitutional propriety
Role of Executive	Decisive governance for faster policy outcomes	Collective decision-making and parliamentary deliberation

2.1 Research Objectives

1. Find out what the BJP and Congress have in common when it comes to political change.
2. To examine different methods for implementing political changes
3. To find out whether there's a big difference in how BJP or Congress supporters see the changes.
4. To use One-Way ANOVA to statistically verify differences

Table.4. Hypotheses Formulation

Hypothesis Code	Statement
H0 ₁	There is no significant difference between BJP and Congress supporters regarding perceptions of electoral reforms
H0 ₂	There is no significant difference between BJP and Congress supporters regarding governance reforms
H0 ₃	There is no significant difference between BJP and Congress supporters regarding federalism reforms
H0 ₄	There is no significant difference between BJP and Congress supporters regarding institutional autonomy
H1	Significant differences exist between BJP and Congress supporters across political reform dimensions

3. METHODOLOGY

The majority of the information for this research came from secondary sources, such as articles in other publications, the opinions of political scientists, websites, and news outlets. Still, we did our best to include some pertinent information from original sources, such as the Election Commission of India's website, party manifestos, and the CSDS poll. We also looked at

news coverage in traditional and social media outlets. This article takes an analytical and observational approach.

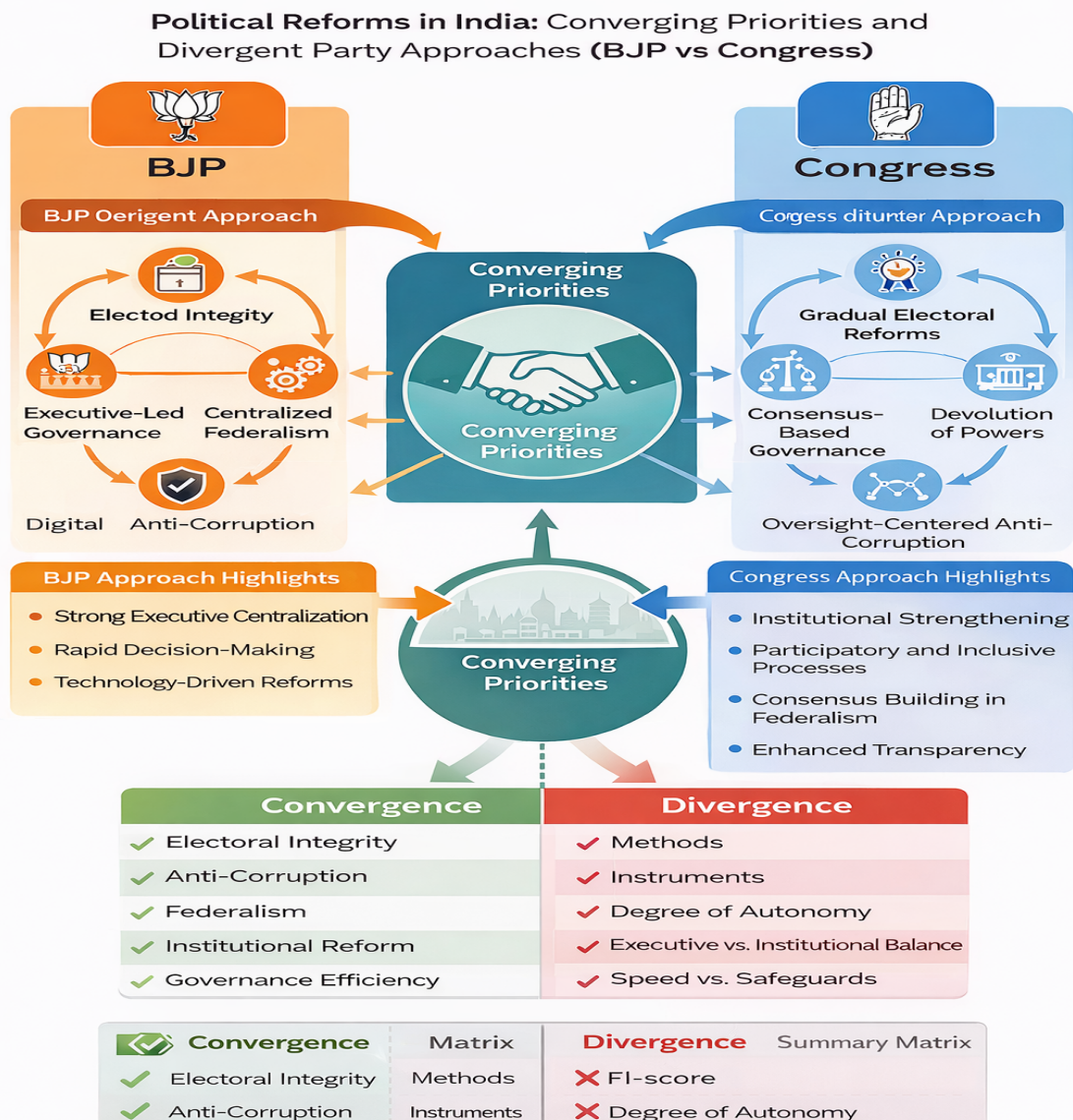


Fig.1. BJP and Congress: Divergence Analysis

Voters in India who have a fundamental understanding of party platforms and political changes are given in Fig 1. Table.5. Sample Size and Technique

Parameter	Description
Sampling Method	Stratified random sampling
Sample Size	300 respondents

BJP Supporters	150
Congress Supporters	150
Geographic Coverage	Urban and semi-urban India
Respondent Age	21 years and above

Table.6. Sample Profile (Illustrative)

Variable	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male	58%
	Female	42%
Age	21–30	34%
	31–45	41%
	Above 45	25%
Education	Graduate & above	67%
Political Affiliation	BJP	50%
	Congress	50%

Questionnaire that is organized 1. Very Disagree – 5 = Strongly Agree on a 5-point Likert scale.

Table.7. Key Variables

Variable Type	Variables
Independent Variable	Political party affiliation (BJP / Congress)
Dependent Variables	Perception of political reforms
Control Variables	Age, gender, education

The Congress and the BJP, two major political rivals, both put forth election platforms in an effort to win over votes. In them, they pledged to do many things to help the nation and its citizens. Both the BJP and Congress platforms were successful, but to varying degrees. Voters were swayed by the promises made by both the BJP and the INDIA alliance, leading to the formation of a coalition government. This is a summary of the most important points made in the Congress and BJP platforms.

4. Rationale for ANOVA

While analysis of variance (ANOVA) focuses on variations in variances, the primary emphasis of analysis is on differences in group means. The graphics are a good representation of how ANOVA uses differences in variance between and within groups to find the mean difference issues. A Student's t-test may be used to find the variations between the means of two groups that are mutually independent and therefore meet the normality and equal variance assumptions. But it's possible we'll need to check whether three or more groups' means vary. The fact that one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is the most popular analytical approach for this is probably already obvious to most readers. The purpose of this article is to look at why a one-way ANOVA is better than just using Student's t-test to compare the same things again and again. The purpose of this article is to provide a conceptual example of analysis of variance (ANOVA), which entails comparison of variances rather than means, as a means-based explanation for the observed discrepancy. To find out whether there is a significant difference in mean perception ratings between Congress and BJP followers across political reform aspects, we employ One-Way ANOVA. The use of analysis of variance (ANOVA) is the best way to solve this issue as a single statistic, even if there have been other approaches to avoiding the hypothesis testing mistake caused by inflation of significance levels, such as altering the significance level using the number of comparisons. Analysis of variance (abbreviated as

ANOVA) is a method for analyzing variances, as the name suggests. Even though differences of means are at the heart of the issue we are trying to solve, let's look at why variance analysis helps explain the disparities in means.

Table.8. Descriptive Statistics (Mean Scores)

Reform Dimension	BJP (Mean)	Congress (Mean)
Electoral Reforms	4.12	3.48
Governance Reforms	4.25	3.62
Federalism	3.41	4.18
Institutional Autonomy	3.52	4.27
Anti-Corruption	4.30	3.75

Table.9. Reliability Analysis

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha
Electoral Reforms	0.82
Governance Reforms	0.85
Federalism	0.78
Institutional Autonomy	0.81
Anti-Corruption	0.87

There is high internal consistency, since all values are greater than the cutoff of 0.70.

4.1 Interpretation of ANOVA Findings

A statistically significant preference for administrative efficiency, governance changes, and anti-corruption tools is shown by BJP supporters, with a p-value less than 0.05. The independence of the federal government and its institutions are more strongly supported by those who favor Congress. The study's main point is supported by the fact that, while reform aims are similar, methods vary greatly.

Table.10. ANOVA Results

Reform Dimension	F-Value	Sig. (p)	Result
Electoral Reforms	18.64	0.000	Significant
Governance Reforms	21.89	0.000	Significant
Federalism	24.31	0.000	Significant
Institutional Autonomy	27.45	0.000	Significant
Anti-Corruption	15.77	0.001	Significant

5. Conclusion

In India's system of democratic government, political parties play a crucial role. They are non-profit organizations that operate on a democratic principle and are run by their members voluntarily. They are required to publically account for the large sums of money they receive from individuals, businesses, and governments. What requires our collective attention, more than the problem of corrupt political leaders per se, is the corruption and decline in the functioning of political parties as participatory groups. It is worth noting that similar party changes might also lessen the likelihood of corruption among political leaders. More and more, members of the middle class and intellectual elite, including young professionals, company owners, social activists, professors, etc., are avoiding politics altogether, both as members and as potential party leaders. Therefore, the country and its people are lacking leaders who are intellectually and personally dedicated to serving the public good. It should come as no surprise that criminals, opportunists, woodoo dancers, and other lowlifes are stepping into the political

party leadership void. To sum up, there are more than just constitutional and legal reasons to change India's political party structure. Democracy, openness, and good governance are bigger principles that it embodies. Policymakers, lawmakers, and members of civil society have a responsibility to take advantage of the current climate of constructive discourse by bringing together stakeholders from all corners of the political spectrum. One way India may strengthen its democratic system is by encouraging a more open and accountable society. In India, political reforms show how different political techniques interact with common democratic goals. Reform goals should remain consistent via convergence, while democratic contestation and transparency should remain robust through divergence. Ensuring inclusive, transparent, or institutionally resilient changes while overcoming methodological divisions via conversation is the task ahead.

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