

VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN CONFLICT AREAS OF INDIA**Dr. Waqas Farooq Kuttay**

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ABSTRACT

This review paper is an attempt to study the voting behavior of people in conflict areas of India. This presents an overview of the overall literature produced on voting behavior and elections. The literature on voting behavior is arranged thematically with last part of the article particularly dealing with elections and voting behavior in major conflict areas of the India. There is dearth of literature on study of elections in conflict areas, at the same time conflict areas have been extensively researched in many parts of the world. Studying voting behavior in conflict areas provides unique insights how people balance electoral choices with the imminent threat of political violence. This paper discusses the extent to which voting behavior and elections have been studied in India and what are the future possibilities for carrying out the research in conflict areas.

Keywords: Voting Behaviour, India, Elections, Conflict Areas, Political Violence Voting Behaviour in India

Studies of Indian elections have been inspired by theoretical developments of Colombia and Michigan schools in the United States (Kondo, 2007). However, India as a developing country has contextual differences from a developed country like the USA. India presents a case of heterogeneity where caste, class, religion and other local factors have a formidable effect on electoral politics. Besides, the Indian democratic experiment presents a unique and contrasting picture to that of the western developed nations, as India is a poor country with a successful procedural democracy at work for the last seven decades (Banerjee, 2011). The vastness and diversity within the country has added to the complexities in studying elections. Both parliamentary and assembly elections have followed different trajectories in Indian politics which has made study of elections more interesting.

The Indian society, as mentioned above, presents a peculiar case of heterogeneity, with presence of multiple castes, religions, ethnicity, languages and regions. All of these factors have an impact on voting behaviour of people resulting in use of a wide range of methods like case studies, ethnography, monographs to survey research. The earlier studies on voting behaviour in India are based on aggregate data, and focused on how literacy, context, communications, number of candidates (Forrester, 1977; Hardgrave, 1977), competition, party preferences (Dasgupta Morris-Jones 1975 cited in Kondo 2007), caste, religion (Blair, 1979 cited in Kondo 2007) affected electoral outcomes. These early studies were mostly limited to studying the effect of sociological factors on voting behaviour, ignoring the psychological factors at individual level. However, later studies have continued to look at the relationship between socio-economic variables and electoral turnout (Chibber, 1999 cited in Kondo 2007). It can be said that the focus of the earlier studies on elections in India looked mostly on sociological factors affecting voting behaviour, while the later studies have looked at both *contextual (sociological)* as well as *individual factors* affecting voting behaviour and have used a diverse set of methodologies to provide newer insights.

The case studies and survey research particularly gained speed after the 1970s with a keen interest in studying party loyalty, education, religion, caste loyalty and values of voters (Kondo, 2007). Case studies looked at elections at a local level or within defined boundaries and the units of study usually constituted a village, constituency (assembly or parliamentary), district or the state. These studies were comprehensive and provided minute details at the local level. Paul Brass (Uttar Pradesh in 1977 and 1980) and Subrata Mitra (Odisha in 1979) were the first ones to use the case study method to study elections in India (cited in Kumar & Rai 2013, 31). Hauser and Singer (1986), and Iqbal Narain and Associates (in Rajasthan) also used the case study method for studying elections at village level (Narian & Associates 1967). Apart from case studies, *monographs* (like one by Wiener 1977) were also written on Indian elections. Anthropological studies have typically explored elections at only village level and they try to dig deeper into the meanings which electoral processes hold for voters at local

International Journal of Applied Engineering & Technology

level. M. N. Srinivas and A. M. Shah (late 1960s); Mukulika Banerjee (West Bengal in 2007) are among the few who started participatory and ethnographic studies of Indian elections (cited in Kumar & Rai, 2013).

There was absence of surveys or very limited surveys were carried out for studying electoral behaviour during earlier periods (Brass 1984). Nonetheless, many scholars used survey research as a tool for studying Indian elections (Lama-Rewal 2009). The history of election surveys dates back to the 1950s with the establishment of Indian Institute for Public Opinion (IIP0) by Dr Eric de Costa (Kumar & Rai 2013, 17-31). The aim of these initial surveys was to study voting behaviour in India and how it might vary with changes in income, caste, religion, dominant political issues and leadership. Other notable studies from this time were by S. V. Kogekar and Richard Park (Report on Indian General Elections 1950s), V. M. Sirsakar (Poona Parliamentary seat in 1967 elections), Samuel Eldersveld and Bashiruddin Ahmad (General elections of 1967 and 1971), Shriram Maheshwari (Delhi in 1977), Myron Weiner and John Osgood Field (1977) [all cited in Kumar & Rai, 2013, 17-31]. Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS 1967) started national level study of electoral attitudes and opinions which continued till the 1980s. There was a break of national level electoral surveys by CSDS from 1980 to mid-1995. However, from 1995 onwards CSDS has revised the tradition of National Election Studies (NES) which continues till date. It conducts surveys in both parliamentary and assembly elections in almost all states of India (Kumar & Rai, 2013, 17-31). The diversity of methods used in studying Indian elections provide us with a rich literature but there has been a debate or even academic rivalries going on between proponents of different methodologies.

It must be pointed out that till 1964 Congress was a dominant party in both Lok Sabha and state assemblies. Kothari (1964) termed this dominance of the party as “Congress System”. However, after 1967, Congress started to face major setbacks in both Lok Sabha and many state assemblies. The ‘destabilization’ of the Congress System, at both the national and state level, increased the scholarly interest in the study of elections (Kondo, 2007). A major blow to the Congress system came after the 1977 defeat of Congress party in Lok Sabha elections. From 1977 to 1989 many hitherto marginalized people started to assert themselves electorally which climaxed into emergence of coalition politics in India from 1989 onwards. This was termed as the ‘second democratic upsurge’ by Yadav (1996). The entry of marginalized classes into electoral politics, and the beginning of the coalition era also led to increased interest of scholars in studying electoral politics in India.

Caste and Voting Behaviour

In Uttar Pradesh (UP) during initial phase of studies on voting behaviour, emphasis was laid on caste, class, religion and patron-client relations (Brass 1978; 1981). Party organisation and leadership were also studied during 1984 Lok Sabha (LS) elections in UP, apart from the above mentioned variables (Brass, 1984). The relevance of caste in electoral politics has persisted over decades as P. Kumar (1999) adds that caste and community divisions have a prominent role in elections in Uttar Pradesh. Pai (1999) in a study of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) for 1999 LS elections shows that caste and religion are two important social divisions affecting electoral outcomes in UP. The electoral compulsions force caste based parties to look beyond their support base to win seats. Despite being traditionally a lower caste party BSP had to attract voters from across social divisions to increase its winning prospects. In a study of 2002 LS elections in UP, Verma (2004) argues that low income, low educated and rural people tend to support BSP and Samajwadi Party (SP), while high income, highly educated and urban people tend to support Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and SP. However, the picture is more complex for Congress and SP as they can attract voters across sectarian thresholds. Verma (2004) adds that overall broad fault lines across parties and their social bases remain intact in state. Also, community based mobilization by major political parties has declined and the focus has shifted to issue based politics.

Opler, Rowe and Stroop (1959) studied elections in earlier years after independence at village level. They argue that village elites and upper castes were obeyed by all other groups in the village when it came to making voting decisions. Women voters mostly took voting decisions on orders of male family heads. These authors show the prevalence of what is commonly known as *parochial attitudes* of voting where village elite, patriarchy or traditional loyalties are given importance. However, Narain and Associates (1967) in a study of Rajasthan village

International Journal of Applied Engineering & Technology

for Panchayat elections refute the argument that only *parochial attitudes* determine the voting behaviour at local level. They argue that “causes of victory and defeat of various candidates shows that the elections were contested, and their results determined, more by purely political factors” (Narain & Associates, 1967). They argue that traditional social bases of support alone couldn't make a difference in elections; rather political goals of candidates/parties were of paramount importance for mobilization of the electorate. No social group had enough strength to choose a candidate of its choice without cooperating with other social groups. A social group also didn't consist of a single homogenous category rather there were many subgroups within a group. What Narain and team try to emphasise is that voting behaviour in non-Western contexts is not governed by tradition only rather by a complex mixture of both tradition and modern democratic values.

David Elkins (1975 cited in Forrester, 1977), in his study of the assembly elections from 1952 to 1967, in southern states of India, argues that regional differences between north and south India results in variation in electoral turnout in these two different regions. Caste is also a dominant factor in defining voting behaviour in these southern states. Wyatt (2002) in the case of Tamil Nadu argues that class, regional politics, leadership, populism, ethnicity, changing political situation at national and state level are some of the reasons which have shaped the electoral environment in the state from early 1940s to till date. Kohli (1988) argues that leadership and caste equations have played an important role in electoral politics of Andhra Pradesh.

A. Kumar (2004a and 2004b) argues that religion, language, rural-urban divide, caste, specific issues and leadership are some of the major factors which have affected the electoral outcomes in the state of Punjab. During the early 1990s, many people did not participate in elections due to conflict in state and considered the electoral practice as a futile exercise. However, the electoral boycott was only a short phase in the electoral politics of the state and soon people started to participate in huge numbers. Annpurana Nautiyal (2009) argues that caste still remains one of the major support bases of almost all political parties in Uttarakhand. Binoy Prasad (1997) argues that caste and social factions played an important role in elections in Bihar. Muneshwar Yadav (2004) adds that in Bihar, caste and community equations play an important part in electoral politics. Rural, illiterate, poor, Muslims and Yadavs mostly preferred Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) alliance in 2004 Lok Sabha elections.

Dipankar Gupta (2019) goes on to argue that reading of caste as such a big denominator in electoral outcomes is a fallacy. He shows that many electoral constituencies (throughout India), traditionally considered to be strongholds of a particular caste, have actually little numerical presence of that particular caste. Caste equations have always signified mutual repulsion in India. In fact, every caste sees itself as superior to other castes, as oral histories of different castes (including lower castes also) adhere to this. A single reason which helps these disparate repulsive groups to unite is economic betterment of the whole. These clusters of caste groups do not vote parochially; rather their voting behaviour is complex in character; they display heterogeneity and diversity in their voting preferences. Chandra and Parmar (1997) argue that although most of the political parties are ethnic based, they do not exclusively appeal to voters from their core group only. The political realities and demographics force ethnic parties to woo voters from across the ethnic spectrum but this strategy has a drawback in the form of increased electoral volatility. Heath (2005) puts that party systems which mobilize the electorate on the basis of social cleavages have less electoral volatility. This may change if more than one political party tries to attract a particular community. Heath and Yadav (1999) argue that community based mobilization has led to emergence of regional parties at state level; and these new regional parties have cut into the voter base of Congress. Mrug (2004) in a study of 2003 assembly elections of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh argues that Congress has lost vote share in all the three states and it has not gone to BJP alone but to smaller regional based parties whose support is mostly caste based.

A new brand of politicians, particularly film stars, are emphasizing on caste free politics. Prominent among these are Rajnikanth and Kamal Haasan who want to establish their political parties in Tamil Nadu. Both of these actors have argued that Dravidian politics with its focus on caste has led to corruption in public life as these parties solely depend on populism. Krishnan (2018) argues that these film stars blame Dravidian movement for “...divisive politics based on caste differences. Since caste identity has always been seen as a corruption of the

ideal of deracinate citizenship as well as the historically ordained class struggle, the cleaning up of corruption is subtly underlined by an argument about cleaning politics of caste identities.” Chhibber and Petrocik (1989) argue that at national level, the place of residence is a stronger marker of a voter’s choice than social factors like social class, caste or religion. However, at state level social factors become politically significant since these factors have formidable influence locally and are major points of conflict.

Chandra (2004) presents a very complex picture of ethnic voting and argues that patronage flows through channels of caste in India. In such a scenario a voter may vote both because of expressive reasons and for possible material gains. Therefore, it can be argued that patronage and caste are mixed in the case of India. Chandra (2009) adds that voters belonging to a particular ethnic group will use ‘strategic voting’ when voting for ethnic parties. A voter will vote ethnically only if they feel (based on local calculations) that the candidate or party she votes for is having a fair chance of winning. Since two parties/candidates may be relevant at two different levels (local or national) there is always a chance that a voter will use ‘split vote strategic voting’ in order to get benefits from both levels. By split vote strategic voting Chandra means that voters will vote for different parties at different contests/levels.

In one of the few anthropological studies on Indian elections, Banerjee (2011; 2014) argues that in voting, people perform the democratic ideals of political sovereignty and popular equality which is otherwise less visible in normal times in India. It is the time when despite all their caste differences people stand in one queue at the electoral booth. Also during elections the politicians roam around villages with dusty roads getting their neat costly clothes soiled and with folded hands ask poor marginalized Indian voters for their vote. She goes on to add that “the polling booth thus provides a space for the social drama of the election to be played out. Its rules and etiquette facilitates the suppression of everyday social discrimination and the assertion of a more egalitarian vision of society” (Banerjee 2011)

Dalit, Adivasi, Women and Muslim Voting Behaviour

Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims and different social categories differ vastly in exercising their franchise. Vaid (2009) argues that an increase in education/income of Adivasis has led to increase in turnout among them. Demographically Hindu Adivasis are more likely to vote than their Christian counterparts; and when it comes to vote share of political parties Congress fares better in Adivasi votes than the BJP. Thachil and Herring (2008) argue that considering Dalit/Adivasis as a homogeneous group at national level is a fallacy and splitting of their vote at national level is result of different political conditions each community face in different states. They go on to show that a higher Human Development Index (HDI) of Dalits means a lower BJP vote share, medium HDI means medium vote share for BJP and a lower HDI means a higher vote share for BJP. This also holds true for some Adivasi cases. They also show in detail how BJP has penetrated and successfully increased its vote share among these marginalized groups. In case of Phulbani (now Kandhamala, Odisha) Mohapatra and Bhattacharya (1996) have shown how the division between Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes shape the political and electoral terrain of the district. Arun Kumar (2009) argues that education, gender consciousness and assertion of voting rights by deprived sections have an impact on voting behaviour.

Negi (2011) while studying the voting behaviour of women in Garhwal argues that there is a marked difference in voting patterns of the women residing in rural and urban areas. Some of the variables studied are marital status, caste, education, family income, occupation, family structure, political socialization, and political awareness. Deshpande (2009) argues that in Indian context women do not vote as gendered beings, therefore, ‘gender’ had very little bearing on electoral outcomes. Women’s vote to a large extent is shaped by changed political dynamics at state or regional level, caste, class, religion and education.

Apart from caste, religion is part of the electoral landscape of contemporary India and has regularly been used as a major tool by some political parties for electoral mobilization. Religion has provided electoral dividends in the form of victories to many candidates and parties. Religion has also been studied extensively in Indian electoral politics. The discussion here is limited to Muslims as this religious group is the largest minority in India and other

International Journal of Applied Engineering & Technology

minority religions do not have substantial effect on electoral outcomes (except Sikhs in Punjab). In addition, most of the religious mobilization particularly by Hindu Right Wing parties is done against Muslims (Christians being an electorally miniscule group).

Heath, Verniers and Kumar (2015) study the impact of candidate's religion on vote choice with specific focus on Muslim candidates and Muslim voters in India. They argue that Muslim voters are likely to vote for a Muslim candidate in any constituency in India, and their vote is not always 'expressive' in nature rather they make strategic calculations also. Bhambhri and Verma (1972) studied the voting behaviour of Muslims in Jaipur and found that search for security is the dominant factor in Muslim voter. Prakash (2003) argues that religion plays an important part in electoral politics of the state of Gujarat and BJP is trying to 'Hindutvise' people across all sections of caste hierarchy to pitch them against Muslims and other minorities, however, Other Backward Castes (OBCs) and Adivasis are still not entirely embracing the Hindutva project. Engineer (1995) in a study of Bombay Muslims argues that the community is very heterogeneous, so is their voting behaviour. Muslim elites always try to influence voting behaviour of Muslim masses for their own interests but Muslim masses always tend to vote against elite interests. However, the perception of a common threat, particularly one concerned with 'security' may force all of Muslims to vote united. Khalidi (1993) tells us about how in order to protect, promote and organize their interests Muslims have voted/supported different political parties since Independence. S. Kumar (1996) also argues that Muslims no longer constitute an electoral monolith rather voting patterns change with class, educational status and other socio-economic indicators. He adds that Muslims had a concern for social and physical security which was reflected in their voting choices. Alam (2009) also argues that Muslims do not constitute a heterogeneous group who vote en masse to influence the electoral outcomes. The voting behaviour of Muslims throughout India depends on local politics and the context they are living in. To consider Muslims as a cohesive electoral unit who behave uniformly during elections will be a mistake.

Issues, Policy, Economy and Voting Behaviour

Issues, policies and economy also have an effect on voting behaviour in India and have been studied by many scholars. Bharucha (2003) argues that since voters have overlapping identities, the political parties are more concerned with framing the rules of the 'political game' in order to get efficient outcomes in the economic sphere, than in identity politics. She goes on to argue that with

“...caste no longer acting as a traditional vote bank, masses no longer feel compelled to vote solely according to caste considerations and parties have begun to encompass a greater saleability of broad based appeal. Interest in re-election seems to assume the strategy of not only appealing to dominant caste but also involves formulating a conscious issue based policy based program for a political party” (Bharucha, 2003).

However, she continues that elite domination at local level is very high in India and people are compelled to vote for a certain party or candidate, inhibiting issue based politics to emerge at local level. Yet, to attract diverse sections of society within its fold, political parties have widened their outreach program in order to attract heterogeneous groups resulting in loss of identity for the party, and growth of issue-based politics. Benson (1978) argues that in the 1977 Lok Sabha elections, Congress swept almost all the parliamentary seats in Andhra Pradesh in contrast to the party's performance in rest of India. The twenty points program, pro-poor in nature and mostly populist, actually worked in favour for Congress in the state. Ahuja and Chibber (2007) studied voting behaviour in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Delhi and tried to look at voting behaviour through voter's relationship with state. They categorize citizens into three groups a) *Marginalized* are those who do need state's services but do not have access to them and are excluded from such services and goods b) *State's Clients* are those who do have access to state's goods and services but they are not guaranteed a regular supply and c) *Elites* are those group of citizens who do not need state services and goods and most of the time state works for their interests. *Marginalised* usually consider vote as a tool for their recognition and as a right. *State's Clients* use vote as a tool to gain much better access to state's goods and services. The last group i.e. *Elites* do not need the electoral process as a means to gain access to state or as a way to gain protection of state, they consider vote as a civic duty. G. G. Kumar (2004) argues that anti-incumbency, mis-governance and non-performance of Congress

International Journal of Applied Engineering & Technology

led coalition helped left parties in winning elections in Kerala in 2004 assembly elections. Prasad (2009) argues that in Tamil Nadu (2009 LS elections) issue based politics seemed to gain preponderance over caste and community based appeals.

Suri (2009) argues that economic perceptions of people have an effect on voting behaviour of people. Higher level of satisfaction with the economy at both national level (socio-tropic) and household level (ego-tropic) worked for the benefit of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in 2009. However, ego-tropic condition matters more to voters than socio-tropic ones. Jaffrelot (1996) argues that social divisions and issue based politics played an important role in the defeat of BJP in assembly elections of Madhya Pradesh. Religion was relegated to the background in this particular (assembly) election and BJP mostly retained its support base in urban areas of the state. However religion has also been a major political plank in electoral politics in states like Gujarat (Jaffrelot 2008). Lodha (2004) argues that the perception of good performance of the BJP government at centre had worked in favour of the party in Rajasthan assembly elections. He adds that BJP has vehemently used religion as a tool in the state. Chibber (1997) argues that BJP has not only used religion as a tool to mobilize electoral support rather there has been a shift of BJP on economic policy. The party has changed its stance from being a supporter of socialist state to free market economy. This increased focus on free market economy has attracted middle classes particularly from urban areas to BJP's fold. Viramani (2004) opines that independent or floating voters are more likely to be affected by economic conditions than voters committed to a particular party for social, caste, religious and cultural reasons.

Candidate Characteristics and Some Other Variables Affecting Voting Behaviour

Ziegfeld (2015) explores the relationship between candidate characteristics and vote shares, and argues that there is a robust relationship between a candidate's vote share and characteristics she possesses. A candidate's share will depend on her previous experience, relatives in politics, gender and many other factors. In a study of 2008 Delhi assembly elections, S. Kumar (2009) argues that good governance and no formidable leadership challenge to Shiela Dixit helped Congress to win the assembly elections of 2008. Lodha (1999) in a study of both Lok Sabha and assembly elections in Rajasthan for 1998-99 argues that caste, electoral system and leadership were important factors which had an impact on the electoral outcomes in the state. Bath (2004) argues that among voters in Arunachal Pradesh, ideology, party loyalty and party programs had no major influence on voting behaviour. It was ethnic identities and loyalty to local level leaders which mattered most. This loyalty to the local level leadership has resulted in absence of leadership at the state level. Dev (1999) argues that ideology has very little to do with the elections in Meghalaya. The personality of the candidates is a determining factor in winning the elections. Over time the state leadership has got more prominence and become more important. Shastri (2009) argues that leadership at state level (in India) is more popular within the electorate than leadership at national level.

Conflict Areas and Voting in India

The armed conflict and voting behaviour is one of the least studied areas in electoral politics of India. Among the very few studies, no particular one has done an in depth study of voting behaviour in conflict zones. Few such serious studies actually come from Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe (Gutierrez 2014; Garcia 2009; Collier & Vicente 2012; Mochtak 2018). Nevertheless, very few scholars have worked on political violence and elections in India particularly in areas like Punjab, Maoist affected areas and North East India. In the case of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) two prominent research studies on whole electoral processes were carried out by two research organisations based in Delhi (Institute of Social Sciences 2002) and Uttrakhand (Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra 2002) during 2002 Assembly elections. Choudhary (2019) has also written extensively on electoral processes in J&K, at the same time some other scholars like Puri (2009), Webb (2002) and Gupta et al. (2015) have also written on post-1996 elections in J&K.

Starting with Punjab, and the troubled decades of 1980 and 1990, Singh (1992) argues that in post-1984 elections in Punjab, a moderate group of Akalis came into power but the government was dissolved within three years in 1987, and President's rule was implemented which continued till 1992. Moderate Akalis were undermined by the

International Journal of Applied Engineering & Technology

growing influence of militant Sikh organizations that favoured armed insurgency and rejected any constitutional resolution, as the Government of India had failed to implement the resolutions of the Rajiv-Longowal accord (for details see Jaitley, 2008). In 1991, Chandra Shekhar led Janata (S) Government announced assembly and parliamentary elections in Punjab. Rajeev Gandhi's response to the arrangement between Chandra Shekhar and leaders from Punjab was a negative one as he promised to revoke the elections in the state. The open call by national elites (Rajeev) to revoke any election which came out of such an arrangement showed the extent of political apathy towards conflict zones. The elections never took place because Election Commission had to postpone them due to increased political violence in the state. Meanwhile, prominent militant organizations of the state had boycotted the elections. The moderate groups who initially had agreed to participate in elections also decided to boycott elections until the military was pulled out of state. Another condition put forward by militants, for participating in elections was that the United Nations should monitor the conduct of polls. During the campaigning, the State used a heavy hand to suppress the boycott campaign of Sikh leaders by detaining the majority of them and deploying a huge military force. The participation in elections (state assembly 1997) was very low and it also saw less political violence but huge deployment of security forces remained in place. The moderate faction Akali Dal-Badal (AK-B) emerged as the most powerful of many Akali groups of Punjab. The AK(B) participated in elections (1997) in alliance with BJP. These two parties stood at ideological opposites but managed to win the elections against Congress (I) (Singh, 1998).

Singh (2004) argues that in the case of Manipur the presence of separatist organizations and separatist sentiments among people have an impact on the electoral process in the state. During the 14th Lok Sabha elections, many separatist groups gave calls for poll boycott and there were many incidents of political violence against members of different political parties contesting elections in the State. Despite boycott calls and political violence, voter turnout was as high as 67 per cent in this particular election. The author is not specific about how conflict and political violence affect voting behaviour of people. Banerjee (2009) briefly delves into Maoist violence during elections in Maoist affected areas of India. He says that during the past few many years (before 2009) Maoists had stopped harassing people for coming out to booths, however, they continuously target people affiliated with different political parties. Again this article falls short of an in-depth analysis of voting behaviour of people in such conflict ridden regions. Pal and Dev (2003) in case of Tripura, argue that there is 'clash on values and claims' between democratic and armed actors. This confrontation does not always manifest in the form of violence or conflict, it may sometimes play out in democratic space in the form of a political discourse. They go on to add that competitive politics has not only aggravated armed violence in the state but also made it an important outgrowth to tribal administration. In tribal council elections, only insurgent backed groups are able to wrest control of these local bodies. Despite the prevalence of electoral violence during 2003 assembly elections in Tripura, people voted in large numbers. This paper also fails to delve deep into voting behaviour of people in the state. Jamir (2009) argues that in rural Nagaland, village councils hold considerable influence over voting behaviour of the local community and the same may not be the case in urban areas. There are many people in Nagaland who demand independence from the Indian Union; hence they do not give importance to elections.

CONCLUSION

This review essay has mainly looked at the different methods and variables used to study in Indian elections. The vast diversity of the India has led scholars to experiment with wide array of methods in studying elections ranging from case studies, aggregate data analysis, ethnographies to survey method. Not only methods, scholars have explored a wide array of variables which may have an impact on voting behavior in India. All major variables which have an impact on voting behavior have been discussed.

The initial studies on Indian elections usually focused on broad sociological factors and their impact on elections, whereas, later studies have explored the impact of psychological factors and issue based politics and their impact. The election studies have also focused on studying the electorally significant marginalized groups. However, the conflict areas have got scant very less attention from the scholars of elections. One possible reason could be that major conflict areas of India only form a minor part of the larger electorate, therefore, having very less impact on

International Journal of Applied Engineering & Technology

electoral outcomes on overall results. Also conflict areas remain at the both geographical and electoral margins in Indian politics, therefore enticing very less interest from the scholars.

The study of voting behavior has led to increased interest particularly in areas like Mexico, South America, Eastern Europe and some countries of Africa. These studies provide some interesting insights into why and how people navigate through electoral choices and ever present political violence. That is not to say that there have been no studies on electoral behavior of people in conflict areas in India. Some of the major studies on electoral behaviour in conflict areas in India have been discussed above. The major limitation of these studies is that they do not rub the surface of how people vote in these areas. There are no in depth studies dealing with the subject. More and more studies are needed to see how conflict and voting behaviour shape each other.

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