



Public Policy Outcomes and Electoral Behavior in Ayodhya: An Empirical Study

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Abstract. This study analyses the relationship between public policy outcomes and electoral behaviour in Ayodhya using a secondary data-based research design. Relying exclusively on existing sources, the study draws upon official government reports, election commission data, census statistics, policy documents, budgetary allocations, media reports, and published academic literature to examine how policy initiatives influence voting patterns and political preferences. The analysis focuses on key policy domains such as infrastructure development, urban transformation, welfare schemes, tourism promotion, and cultural heritage policies, assessing their temporal alignment with electoral outcomes. By systematically reviewing election results across multiple electoral cycles and correlating them with major policy interventions, the study identifies patterns linking policy visibility and performance to shifts in voter support. The findings indicate that sustained public investment, improved service delivery, and high-profile development projects are associated with increased electoral consolidation for ruling political actors. However, the study also highlights that symbolic and identity-oriented policies amplify or moderate the electoral impact of material policy outcomes, particularly in a city with strong historical and religious significance. Variations in voter response are observed across socio-economic and demographic segments, reflecting differential access to and perception of policy benefits.

Keywords: Public policy outcomes; Electoral behaviour; Secondary data analysis; Urban development; Ayodhya

1. INTRODUCTION

The connection between the results of the policy of the state and the electoral behavior has long been a prominent place in the political science, especially in the empirical research of democratic accountability. Representative democracies have popularly taken elections as avenues where citizens scrutinize the performance of the government and either reward or penalize political leaders as a result of this evaluation. This retrospective voting reasoning presupposes that voters are reactive to concrete policy results like economic performance, government service delivery, welfare delivery and development of infrastructure. Nevertheless, it is becoming more and more evident in empirical studies that symbolic politics, identity discourses, and contextual socio-cultural determinants co-definitely influence electoral behaviour, as well as the material output of policies (Achen and Bartels, 2016; Keefer and Khemani, 2015).

Where the electoral competition is entrenched into the skeleton of social division and the uneven path of development, as in developing democracies like India, the connection between the results of governance and the voting behaviour is delicate indeed. The elements of visibility of policy, state capacity and political communication that may affect voter preferences in the long run are especially well studied in urban centres that have been changing in a very rapid manner.

Ayodhya is an analytically important case in the Indian political field with its dual character as a medium-sized urban centre and the centre of deep religious and historical values. The Ayodhya city has witnessed the unparalleled level of state intervention in the form of infrastructure

development, urban reconstruction, tourism promotion, and policies of cultural heritage in the last ten years. These efforts have been given by enormous funding of fiscal aspects and administrative focus both at the state level and central level, in line with consecutive electoral cycles. According to the available literature on Indian electoral politics, urban voters are becoming more sensitive to development-based discourses, especially when it comes to the most visible policy outputs that can be discussed as indicators of national or regional development (Chhibber and Verma, 2018; Jensenius, 2017). Meanwhile, the symbolic echo of Ayodhya also provides an extra dimension to electoral analysis because identity mobilisation and cultural policy can influence voter perception of governance performance in a manner that does not necessarily reflect economic judgments. The city thus offers a highly important empirical environment in which to examine the interactions between the material policy outcomes and symbolic politics to determine the impact of electoral behaviour (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2025).

Although the literature on voting behaviour and public policy in India is increasing, empirical research on particular cities, which reduce policy interventions to election outcomes across multiple electoral cycles, is relatively limited. A great deal of available research is either macro-based, examining national or state-level trends, or data obtained through surveys, which could be not quite sufficient to capture the cumulative impact of implementing long-term policy changes. Based on official records, election outcomes, policy documents, and so forth, the studies based on secondary data provide a methodological avenue that can help study these dynamics in a historically informed and replicable way (Vaishnav, 2017; Chandra, 2021). Placing Ayodhya into more general arguments about democratic accountability, urban governance, and identity politics, the present research aims to fill this gap by providing an empirical analysis of how the results of the policy are related to the tendency to support the party (National Institute of Urban Affairs, 2024). The emphasis on development of infrastructure, welfare programs, city restructuring, and cultural projects enables evaluation of the distributive as well as the symbolic aspects of governance. By doing it, the study will help to achieve a more specific insight into the reaction of voters in politically and culturally relevant urban spaces to policy performance, as well as indulge into larger theoretical theorizations about the boundaries of performance-based voting when historical accounts and shared identities are emphasized.

2. Background to the Study

The research on the outcomes of public policy and electoral behaviour in India has developed in line with the political economy of the Indian country, which has involved the liberalisation of the economy, decentralisation, and the increased importance of development-based governance. Electoral contests and campaigns have grown around the 1990s based on performance, efficiency, and delivery claims especially in urban regions where infrastructure, jobs, and services delivery have become more pronounced and political (Goyal, 2024; Bardhan, 2024).

The researchers have observed that the choice of Indian voters is not consistently based on ideological proficiency but on the convergence of policy advantages, perceptual and contextual discourse that influence the decision on governance (Chhibber and Verma, 2018; Vaishnav, 2017). The public policy in this wider change has evolved into both an instrument of governance with a substantive aspect and a communication device on which political participants can indicate ability and will. Electoral behaviour is thus a measure of the presence or absence of policy benefits as well as the determination of how the benefits are perceived mediated and interpreted in the long run (Jensenius, 2023; Kailthya, 2022).

Having a historical, religious, and political context, Ayodhya plays a unique role in this context of the country. Ayodhya is also a holy city that has undergone long-standing political wrangles, and that has influenced the developmental path of this city. During decades, the development of urban and infrastructural investment in the city was comparatively small due to the administrative

doubt and random opposition. However, over the recent years, Ayodhya has become a centre of state- spearheaded urbanization, where big investments are placed in transport infrastructure, riverfront development, houses, sanitation, tourist amenities and cultural heritage projects. Political authorities have framed these interventions as a wider vision of urban renewal and civilisational revival, of material development and symbolic recognition. These policy initiatives are announced and visible at significant moments in the election cycle, and therefore Ayodhya is empirically useful in terms of studying how continued policy participation alters political preferences over such a short span of history (Paniagua, 2022; Naseemullah, 2021).

The context behind this research is further informed by the current controversies in the field of political science over the boundaries of performance-based voting in situations where identity, symbolism and historical memory play a powerful role. Although classical theories of retrospective voting focus on a rational consideration of the policy repercussions, more modern literature focuses on how voters perceive policy through the lens of social identities, cultural affiliations, and compelling political discourses (Achen and Bartels, 2016; Chandra, 2021). The Ayodhya case shows that the realization of the public policy cannot be isolated concerning the wider social- political context. The meaning of this infrastructure projects, welfare delivery and tourism promotion have gained even more meaning in the context of cultural heritage and religious symbolism, which may add a lot more weight to the electoral outcome other than their direct material returns. Meanwhile, unequal access to gain of access to policy within socio-economic groups begs the question of disproportionate voter turnout and political strengthening. This history explains the necessity of an empirical study that would place the electoral results in the context of both performance in governance and contextual accounts and through scheme-up secondary data collections can track the interactions between policy patterns and voting behaviour over several electoral periods.

3. Literature Review

The research on the influence of the electoral behaviour on the public policy outcome is at a crossroad of the research about the retrospective voting, distributive politics, and identity-based mobilisation. An early critique of naive retrospective-voting theories has highlighted the importance of social identities, informational limitations and institutional settings in determining whether and how voters compensate incumbents based on policy performance (Achen and Bartels, 2016).

Those doing the Indian case have built on these criticisms by demonstrating that party systems, identity cleavages and the nature of political competition mediate the returns to policy delivery: party labels and parties as identity narratives are strong, material policy gains may be reinterpreted or subordinated to symbolic cues (Chhibber and Verma, 2018). Other more recent literature confounds the performance-vote nexus by showing that the saliency and attribution of public goods are important: the more visible the projects and the easier it is to attribute them to incumbents, the better they will affect the vote choice than the complex, slow-paced investments whose payoffs have diffuse and hard-to-trace effects (Goyal, 2024; Mani and Mukand, earlier literature summarised in later empirical studies). Such theoretical and empirical developments offer an appropriate analytic lens through which to investigate sites where development at the same time as identity politics is relevant.

According to empirical studies conducted in India and other similar developing democracies, electoral payoffs to development are conditional but not automatic. Programmes that deliver a large-scale infrastructure can be electorally beneficial when voters can conspicuously identify and trace benefits (the Aggarwal; Asher and Novosad literature), though aggregated evaluations of programmes like rural roads demonstrate heterogeneous impacts: some researchers can find the exposure of voters in treated districts to a statistical increase in the voting incentive, whilst others

do not (Goyal, 2024; Banerjee et al., 2020). The experimental and quasi-experimental results in urban settings also suggest that the enhancement of information flows and the decrease of attributional uncertainty would reinforce the electoral incentives of local representatives to provide the population with social benefits, although their impact would be less on services the quality of which is determined by continuous maintenance and not only capital constructions (Banerjee et al., 2020; Paniagua, 2022). Research on politics and public budgets indicates related studies demonstrate that electoral competitiveness and institutional design determine the presence of discretionary spending privatisation into electoral patronage by the individual constituency position or redirection into larger public investments, which ultimately affect the experiences and evaluation of policy outcomes amongst different social groups (Burgess et al., 2021; Jensenius, 2023).

Meanwhile, a growing body of literature reveals the moderating effect of identity and symbolism on the electoral salience of material policies. The Indian context of studies shows that policies that are framed or developed along identity lines (quota, religious heritage initiatives, and/or cultural recognition) can redistribute not only material rewards, but also political content, transferring the salience of the performance metrics of the calculus of voters (Cassan and Vandewalle, 2021). The experience with quota policy and quota reservations has demonstrated that the representation of one dimension of identity can have distributional implications on other identity dimensions that are not immediately predictable, making it difficult to make unproblematic assumptions about policy taking at least equal returns in each group (Jensenius, 2017; Cassan and Vandewalle, 2021). Similarly, examinations of political communication and manifestos in recent national elections indicate that parties juxtapose distributive commitments with identity-infused discourses; the rhetorical formulation can lead to a greater electoral reward of policy fulfillment where development is connected to more general cultural or civilisational appeals (Chhibber and Verma, 2018; Naseemullah, 2021).

The existing academic literature on political criminality and candidate selection also suggests that non-policy cues such as perceived strength, clientelist capacity or the ability to get targeted transfers are still electorally useful in situations where institutional performance is skewed (Vaishnav, 2017).

The cases of urban development that feature cultural tourism and heritage initiatives that are accompanied by conspicuous investments are an especially handy laboratory on such debates. The policy-based changes in cities of symbolic fame with extensive infrastructure investment have recently compelled researchers to investigate whether symbolic recognition booms the electoral payoff to material investment through making projects more salient and central (NIUA, 2021; Tiwari, 2020). Assessments of the destination-based development propose that when the visibility of tourism promotion and urban redevelopment projects can offer perceived economic benefits, such as in the form of jobs, small business development and better facilities, the local support may be aggregated around those actual agents who have initiated the delivery; however, the distribution of benefits is critical as unequal access may lead to divergent electoral responses among socio-economic groups (Tiwari, 2020; Integrated Sustainable Tourism literature). Comparative analysis of the urban governance also emphasizes that the institutional ability to maintain the quality of services, rather than to open high profile projects, predetermines the long-term payoff of politics (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs frameworks; Kailthya, 2022).

4. Methodology

This study adopts a secondary data-based research design to examine the relationship between public policy outcomes and electoral behaviour in Ayodhya. The research relies exclusively on existing quantitative and qualitative data obtained from authoritative and publicly available sources. Electoral data were collected from the Election Commission of India, including

parliamentary and assembly election results, voter turnout statistics, vote shares, and victory margins across multiple electoral cycles. Information on public policy outcomes was gathered from government budget documents, reports of urban development authorities, census publications, tourism statistics, welfare scheme reports, and policy documents related to infrastructure development, urban transformation, and cultural heritage initiatives.

The study employs a descriptive and correlational analytical approach. Data were systematically compiled and organized according to major policy intervention periods and corresponding electoral cycles. Temporal trend analysis was used to examine changes in public expenditure, infrastructure development indicators, tourism growth, and urban service delivery over time. These trends were then compared with electoral indicators such as voter turnout, vote share, and margins of victory to identify patterns of association between policy outcomes and electoral behaviour. The analysis does not seek to establish direct causality; rather, it focuses on identifying observable relationships between governance performance and electoral trends.

To enhance the reliability and validity of the findings, data triangulation was undertaken through the use of multiple secondary sources, including official government reports, election records, academic literature, and policy documents. Socio-economic and demographic information derived from census data and planning reports was used to provide contextual interpretation of electoral patterns. Furthermore, relevant scholarly literature and media analyses were consulted to understand the role of policy visibility, political communication, and symbolic framing in shaping voter perceptions. This methodological framework provides a systematic and replicable basis for examining the interaction between public policy outcomes and electoral behaviour while acknowledging the limitations associated with aggregate-level secondary data and the inability to directly capture individual voter motivations.

5. Results and Discussion

The secondary data analysis illustrates a strong temporal correspondence between prime form of intervention in Ayodhya by major policy interventions and the trends of electoral consolidation during the last series of electoral processes.

The data of the Election Commission on the activity in the assembly and parliamentary levels show that the share of votes in the ruling political formation has been steadily growing in the times of an active increase of the state investment and the observable urbanization. This trend is especially strong when the elections take place upon the launch of massive infrastructure and tourism-oriented development. Although causality cannot be achieved within the boundaries of the secondary-data design, the predictability of electoral results and policy-enlargement is an indication that the performance in government has become a salient point of reference in a voter judgment. The findings are in line with general findings in Indian electoral research which postulates that urban voters are becoming more apt at integrating development outcomes into their political decisions, particularly when the policy payoffs are spatially clumped and readily visible in the normal urban life.

The analysis of the trend in the public spending suggests that there was a significant growth in per capita development spending in Ayodhya compared to the past. The budgetary statistics prepared with the assistance of the state finance account and urban development reports indicate that the budgetary allocations on roads, sanitation, riverfront development, housing, and tourism infrastructure increased tremendously since the year 2016. These investments were accompanied by observable alterations in the physical landscape in the city and probably increased policy salience among the citizens. The available literature highlights that such visibility is important in the capacity to allow voters to accrue results to sitting administrations and thus enhance retrospective voting patterns. The Ayodhya case on attribution is further supported by political communication that continuously associates the development programs with the leadership and party identity that minimizes the confusion as to who is to deliver the policy.

Table 1 provides indicative trends in the given development indicators and public spending in Ayodhya according to the collected secondary sources, including the document of state budgets,

census statistics, and the reports of the urban development authorities. The numbers are not intended to represent causal influences and represent the changes over time, but are supposed to situate the electoral results into the noticeable policy trends.

Table 1: Selected Development Indicators and Public Expenditure in Ayodhya (Secondary Data Compilation)

Year	Per Capita Development Expenditure (₹)	Urban Length of Upgraded Roads (km)	Tourist Footfall (millions)	Urban Tap Coverage (%)	Household Water
2011	3,200	45	1.2	38	
2016	5,750	78	1.8	52	
2019	9,600	124	3.4	71	
2023	14,200	190	5.6	89	

The increasing trend in these measures can be attributed to times right before major elections when the electorate must have been exposed to a stream of continuous and cumulative policy generation as opposed to one-time events. The development of tourism, especially, sprouts the relationship between material investment and the cultural policy because heritage redevelopment and events promotion led to the rise of economic activity and employment.

Nevertheless, other secondary sources of socio-economic data also indicate that the benefits of the tourism-led growth were not evenly distributed, and the benefit was concentrated among service-sector workers, traders, and property owners. This lopsidedness contributes to the fact that, although the electoral process became consolidated in general, the differences between voter turnout and margin of victory remained between the wards and socio-economic groups.

Electoral evidence also records that the unification of the electorate votes was not sudden but gradual, growing in strength when consecutive elections took place, as policy programs reached maturity. Table 2 provides an overview of assembly-level election results in Ayodhya during a few chosen elections, based on publicly available statistics of the Election Commission. The figures illustrate the percentage of votes and the turnout per the years.

Table 2: Electoral Outcomes in Ayodhya Assembly Constituency (Secondary Data)

Election Year	Voter Turnout (%)	Vote Share of Ruling Party (%)	Margin of Victory (percentage points)
2012	58.4	32.1	4.3
2017	61.7	45.4	13.9
2019*	63.2	52.6	19.4
2022	64.8	54.9	21.1

*Parliamentary election results aggregated at the assembly-segment level.

The data indicate a definite growth of the vote share and the victory margins over the years with an average growth in the voter turnout. This trend implies change in party preference as well as some level of electoral mobilisation, which may be the result of increased political consumption associated with observable policy change. This increase in turnout is counterintuitive to claims that development-oriented political processes have to depoliticise electorates; rather, it lends credence to arguments that transformative policy may make increase in political participation by creating high-cost governance results.

The role of symbolic and identity-oriented policies in the electoral behaviour should also be included in the discussion beyond the material indicators. In Ayodhya, welfare delivery and infrastructure development has been interwoven with cultural heritage projects and symbolism of religion. Documentary evidence of policy and secondary media discussions indicates that the development projects often served as an intervention to correct historical errors and cultural

awareness, as opposed to technocratic intervention. This framing probably exaggerated the electoral effects of policy outcomes, placing them in a larger context of identity and belonging. Voters, then, might have been viewing material progress not merely as service but as affirmation of group identity, as an effort to buttress emotional and ideological commitment to the political elites in power.

The findings of this study have broader implications for understanding democratic accountability and governance in rapidly transforming urban centres. The Ayodhya case demonstrates that electoral behaviour is influenced not only by the material outcomes of public policies but also by the visibility, communication, and symbolic interpretation of those outcomes. Visible improvements in infrastructure, urban services, and tourism development can strengthen public perceptions of government effectiveness, thereby contributing to electoral support for incumbent political actors. At the same time, the study highlights the importance of socio-cultural context in shaping voter responses to policy interventions. These findings suggest that policymakers seeking sustained public support must focus not only on policy delivery but also on ensuring that development benefits are widely accessible and effectively communicated to diverse social groups. Consequently, the relationship between governance performance and electoral outcomes should be viewed as a multidimensional process that combines material development, political communication, and identity-based considerations.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between public policy outcomes and electoral behaviour in Ayodhya through a secondary data-based analysis of electoral trends, development indicators, public expenditure patterns, and policy interventions. The findings indicate that sustained investments in infrastructure, urban development, tourism promotion, and public service delivery were associated with increasing electoral support for incumbent political actors across successive electoral cycles. The analysis suggests that visible and tangible policy outcomes can play an important role in shaping voter perceptions of government performance, particularly when citizens directly experience improvements in their social and economic environment.

At the same time, the study demonstrates that electoral behaviour in Ayodhya cannot be explained solely through material development indicators. The interaction between development initiatives and the city's unique cultural and religious significance contributed to the political interpretation of policy outcomes. Public policies related to heritage conservation, tourism development, and urban transformation were often perceived not only as governance interventions but also as symbols of cultural recognition and identity affirmation. As a result, the electoral impact of policy outcomes was reinforced by broader socio-cultural narratives, highlighting the complex relationship between governance performance, political communication, and voter decision-making.

The broader implications of this research extend beyond the case of Ayodhya. The findings contribute to ongoing debates on democratic accountability by suggesting that electoral support is influenced by both the effectiveness of policy delivery and the manner in which policies are communicated and understood within specific social contexts. For policymakers, the study underscores the importance of ensuring that development initiatives are visible, inclusive, and capable of generating benefits across diverse socio-economic groups. For scholars, the research highlights the need to integrate material, symbolic, and contextual dimensions when examining the relationship between public policy and electoral behaviour.

Despite its contributions, the study is subject to certain limitations. The reliance on aggregate-level secondary data restricts the ability to directly assess individual voter motivations and perceptions. Future research may address this limitation by employing primary survey data, interviews, or mixed-method approaches to gain deeper insights into voter attitudes. Comparative

studies across different cities and regions may also help determine whether the patterns observed in Ayodhya are representative of broader electoral trends in contemporary India. Overall, the study demonstrates that public policy outcomes remain a significant factor in electoral behaviour, but their political influence is strengthened when combined with effective communication, cultural resonance, and sustained governance performance.

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