**Electoral Volatility and Turnout: Party Entry and Exit in Indian Elections**

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**Abstract**

High levels of electoral volatility are common in new and developing-world democracies. In this article, we examine the implications of electoral volatility—more specifically, party entry and exit—on voter turnout. We hypothesize that new party entry should be associated with increases in turnout, as new parties mobilize previously apathetic voters through new party organizations and networks of canvassers. Further, we hypothesize that existing party exit should be associated with decreases in turnout as parties’ mobilization networks become dormant and cease contacting certain voters. We test these hypotheses on data from national elections in India from 1977 through 2004. Regression analysis using district-level fixed effects reveals consistent evidence in favor of our hypotheses. Furthermore, we find evidence suggesting that mobilization is, indeed, the link between party entry and exit and aggregate-level turnout.

**Keywords:** turnout, volatility, mobilization, India

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When electoral volatility is high new political parties frequently emerge, existing parties disappear, and the remaining parties gain and lose many votes from election to election. Volatile elections are common in many democracies, particularly in new and developing-world democracies (Chhibber and Nooruddin 2008; Heath 2005: Hicken and Kuhonta 2011; Powell and Tucker 2014; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Weghorst and Berhard 2014). How does volatility affect the health of a democracy? So far, the consensus is that it has largely negative consequences, producing weakly institutionalized party systems that ultimately undermine democratic stability (Innes 2002; Mainwaring and Scully 1995). In this article, we argue that electoral volatility affects another important pillar of democracy: voter turnout.

In particular, we focus specifically on the entry and exit of parties—or Type A volatility (Powell and Tucker 2014). We hypothesize that when the menu of party options changes from election to election, turnout also changes, with new party entry associated with increases in aggregate-level turnout and existing party exit associated with decreases in aggregate-level turnout. We argue that voter mobilization drives this relationship. When new parties enter the party system, they establish at least some new party networks and enlist new party workers, increasing the level of mobilization activity. Meanwhile, when parties exit the party system, we expect turnout to decrease because some of the parties’ organizational structures and mobilization networks disappear and, with them, the impetus that pushes many citizens to vote.

To test this argument, we examine national elections in India from 1977 through 2004. India is particularly suitable for testing our argument for three reasons. First, India not only exhibits high levels of volatility (Heath 2005), but party entry and exit often occur at different times across the country, thanks to its regionalized party system. Second, India is home to considerable variation in aggregate turnout, both across single-member electoral districts—where turnout can range from 20% to 80%—as well as within these districts.[[1]](#footnote-1) Third, comparatively little research has examined voter turnout in the world’s most populous democracy.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Theoretically, this article’s main contribution is in identifying a novel, yet intuitive, explanation for aggregate-level turnout that is rooted in the disruptions to party competition common in volatile party systems. Understanding variation in turnout levels matters because voter turnout is an important political outcome. Apart from normative concerns that low turnout is intrinsically bad for democracy, turnout also has important empirical implications, influencing election results (Fowler 2015), public goods provision (Nooruddin and Simmons 2015), and minority-group representation (Hajnal 2010). In offering an explanation for variation in turnout rooted in a phenomenon common to many new and developing-world democracies, our explanation can potentially shed light on politics across much of the world.

**Linking Volatility to Turnout**

Why should electoral volatility affect voter turnout? When linking volatility to turnout, we refer only to the volatility associated with party entry and exit, not to the volatility induced by shifting vote shares between existing parties. Electoral volatility should affect turnout because party entry and party exit influence parties’ mobilization efforts, which in turn influence voters’ likelihood of turning out to vote. This argument rests on the consistent finding that personal contact with an election campaign increases a voter’s likelihood of turning out. In a classic study, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) argue that “people participate in electoral politics because someone encourages or inspires them to take part,” (161) a finding confirmed by studies of both election campaigns (Bochel and Denver 1971; Caldeira et al. 1990; Enos and Fowler forthcoming) and non-partisan get-out-the-vote efforts (Gerber and Green 1999; Green et al. 2003; Niven 2004). Campaigns not only mobilize those they directly contact; they also benefit from “secondary mobilization” (Cox 1999, 2015), when the voters they contact in turn mobilize members of their own social networks. Whereas most research on voter mobilization comes from advanced industrial countries, face-to-face campaign mobilization should arguably be more important in developing countries, where the reach of mass media is less complete and illiteracy limits the range of media that some voters can access. Analysis of the 2004 Indian National Election Study reveals that for a voter with modal levels of education, assets, and political interest, predicted turnout is about 5.5% higher among those contacted by a campaign. More recently, Chhibber and Ostermann (2014) show that local activists mattered greatly in shaping vote choice and turning out votes for the victorious Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India’s 2014 parliamentary election.

If personal contact by campaigns increases turnout, then changes in the supply of political parties in a locality should impact turnout by influencing a voter’s likelihood of being contacted by a campaign. Cox (2015) describes voter mobilization as a form of labor. A party’s members and activists who engage in face-to-face canvassing are the “capital” required to effectively use this labor. To successfully compete, party leaders must make “capital investments”—recruiting campaign workers and activists to urge voters to turn out. New parties entering the party system should generate new ground organizations aimed at contacting voters and urging them to turn out. Although this ground organization may be populated in part by those previously active in politics on behalf of another party, it is also likely to attract at least some activists who were previously uninvolved in politics and whose friends and acquaintances may not have been reached by previous mobilization efforts. The addition of another party organization thanks to new party entry should therefore increase the number of voters contacted by campaigns, thereby boosting turnout. By the same token, when parties cease to compete in elections, these organizations and their associated mobilization networks at least partially disappear, as not all prior activists are necessarily absorbed into other parties. As a result, parties’ canvassing efforts—and the impetus that pushes many people to turn out—reach fewer voters, thereby diminishing turnout. Consequently, party entry and exit should affect aggregate levels of turnout. From this overarching argument about electoral volatility and turnout, we identify four key hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 1 (Party entry): When a party enters the party system, not having contested the prior election, turnout should increase*. This increase should be particularly pronounced when a large party enters. A large party with extensive mobilization networks and many activists is more likely to influence turnout than a small party that has a less extensive mobilization networks and fewer activists. Thus, new party entry’s affect on turnout should increase with the size of the party entering the party system. New parties could, in theory, focus solely on mobilizing voters with a strong propensity to vote, in which case party entry would not increase turnout. Although we certainly expect a new party’s mobilizing efforts to target many habitual voters, new parties should also reach many previously unmobilized voters for two reasons.

First, previously unmobilized voters are easier to persuade than partisans. Although parties employ a range of mobilizing strategies, they tend to favor mobilizing core or unattached voters over those opposed to the party (Dunning and Nilekani 2012; Stokes et al. 2013), especially in new democracies (Karp and Banducci 2007: 223-224). Parties often target unmobilized voters, rewarding them for showing up at the polls (Nichter 2008). When new parties enter an area, they do not have core supporters to target, so their next best strategy is to mobilize unattached voters. In contexts where voters are embedded in clientelistic networks, wooing voters with a long track record of participation on behalf of another party may be fruitless. In such places, parties should be especially interested in previously unengaged voters, as they can potentially become incorporated into a new party’s own patronage network and become the party’s future core supporters.

Second, even if a party mainly targets habitual voters, a truly new party includes at least some new activists (Barnea and Rahat 2011: 308) whose social networks potentially include those who were previously unmobilized by other parties. Parties can attract new activists for many reasons, whether because they have appealing leaders, engage in a new style of politics, or offer new activists an opportunity to rise quickly through the new party’s ranks. For example, the Aam Aadmi Party in India grew out of an anti-corruption social movement, gaining notoriety for mobilizing novices into politics with its participatory style (Roy 2014). Or, Chandra (2004) argues that the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) attracted party workers from the ranks of the Scheduled Castes (the former Untouchables) in places where they were unable to rise within the ranks of existing parties. Whatever the reason, in attracting new activists, new parties potentially reach those whom no other party might otherwise have contacted and impelled to turn out.

Parties can newly enter a local party system for many reasons. In particular, we focus on three types of new parties: newly founded parties, successor parties, and parties that re-enter the party system after previously being part of an election alliance. The types of entry identified below are not exhaustive. Parties may enter for other reasons too; however, identifying precisely why a party enters the party system is not always easy. Thus, we stick with categories of party entry that are common among large parties and that we can define and measure with confidence.

*Hypothesis 1A (Newly founded parties): When a newly founded party enters the party system, turnout should increase*. We anticipate the largest effect on turnout among newly founded parties. These are parties that do not have existing mobilization networks or an existing support base. Therefore, they must either acquire networks previously deployed in service of another party or create their own. When creating their own, these networks can reach out to previously unmobilized voters. Since newly founded parties do not have the option of targeting core voters, the strategy of mobilizing previously unmobilized voters is particularly attractive.

*Hypothesis 1B (Successor parties): When a successor party enters the party system, turnout should increase*. Successor parties are parties that are new in their current incarnations but include elements of former parties. They are typically the results of either a merger of older parties or a party split. Mergers and splits can generate interest and excitement that might draw in new activists who, in turn, reach new voters. For example, the merger of two parties might make the party far more likely to cross an electoral threshold or form the government, prompting an influx of new activists with close ties to previously unmobilized voters. Or, a party split might bring a new leader to the fore who attracts a new type of party activist, perhaps from the new leader’s ethnic group. Thus, the entry of successor parties should increase turnout even though these parties may draw on many existing mobilization networks.

*Hypothesis 1C (Previously in alliance): When a party previously in an election alliance re-enters enters the party system, turnout should increase*. In some countries, of which India is one, parties frequently form pre-election alliances in which allied parties agree not to contest against one another. To do so, they divide up the seats being contested, so that in each seat only one alliance partner fields a candidate. Parties not contesting a particular seat are supposed to campaign for their alliance partner and urge their supporters to vote for the allied party. The hope is that with the support of multiple parties’ voters behind it, the alliance’s candidates will be more likely to win. Because of these alliances, parties often appear in an electoral district after having not competed in the prior election because an alliance partner contested the seat. In these cases, when parties re-enter the party system there is little that is actually new about the party. Since its activists worked in the prior election for another candidate, the party does not necessarily generate new mobilization networks, and it already has core supporters whom it can target. However, parties often allege that their allies’ activists campaign less than they ought for the alliance’s candidate. If some set of activists previously did little to mobilize voters, then a party’s re-entry should have some positive effect on turnout by re-energizing activists who did little during the previous campaign.

*Hypothesis 2 (Independent candidates)*: *When credible independent candidates enter a race, turnout should increase.* Hypothesis 2 applies Hypothesis 1 to independent candidates. Just like with parties, when credible independents—those with the resources and name recognition to be viable—enter a race, they establish new networks of mobilization or expand upon existing ones. Thus, for the same reasons as with Hypothesis 1, the entry of credible independent candidates should increase turnout. Similarly, independents capable of winning large vote shares are likely to have more extensive mobilization networks, producing a greater impact on turnout than independents with little vote-winning capacity.[[3]](#footnote-3)

*Hypothesis 3 (Party exit): When a party exits the party system, not competing after having previously contested, turnout should decline*. When a party exits the party system, some of its mobilization networks are lost. Other parties will absorb some, but not all, of the exited party’s activists. Voters previously contacted by the exited party might not experience any campaign contact and, as a consequence, remain at home on election day. When a large party exits the party system, a larger mobilization network is lost, which should have a greater impact on turnout than the exit of a small party with a less extensive network of activists and canvassers. Further, we expect that different types of party exit may differ in their association with turnout. We focus on two types of party exit: parties that cease to exist and become defunct and parties that voluntarily withdraw from the race as part of a pre-election alliance. As with party entry, these two types of exit are not exhaustive.

*Hypothesis 3A (Defunct party): When a party becomes defunct, turnout should decline*. If a party dies, then its mobilization networks are partially lost. Turnout should therefore decline.

*Hypothesis 3B (Party in alliance): When a party does not contest an election because it enters a pre-election alliance, then turnout should decline*. When a party voluntarily decides not to contest because it is part of an alliance, the activists who worked for the party that withdraws may still canvass for the candidate contesting on behalf of the alliance. However, party workers may be far less active and enthusiastic when campaigning for another party. Indeed, some may even stay home. Therefore, we expect parties exiting the race because of an alliance should have a negative impact on turnout, albeit one that is somewhat less than when parties cease to exist.

*Hypothesis 4 (Party exit X Party entry):*  *Party exit immediately followed by party entry should mitigate the negative effect of party exit on turnout decline*. Party entry often follows party exit.[[4]](#footnote-4) When a party exits the party system, political entrepreneurs might sense an opportunity to profitably enter the party system. Where parties of comparable size enter and exit in the same election, we expect to see little effect on turnout. As the positive effect of entry outweighs the negative impact of exit, the overall supply of mobilization remains relatively constant. To investigate this possibility, we specify an interaction term between party exit and party entry.[[5]](#footnote-5)

*Hypothesis 4A (Defunct party X Successor party): The exit of defunct parties immediately followed by the entry of successor parties should mitigate the negative effect of party exit on turnout*. When a party becomes defunct the party sometimes simply dies. However, in other cases the defunct party is reincarnated as a successor party. When the original party ceases to exist but a new successor party enters, we expect to see less impact of party exit on turnout because the new party effectively replaces the defunct party, keeping the supply of mobilization relatively constant. To investigate this possibility, we specify an interaction term between defunct party exit and successor party entry.

So far, our hypotheses have referred only to parties entering or exiting competition. What about the other parties in the system? Can their efforts potentially influence turnout and undo the hypothesized effects of party entry and exit? For three reasons, we expect that other parties’ strategies will not wholly undo the effects of party entry and exit. First, party entry and exit can affect the competitiveness of a race, which in turn can influence elite strategy. On average, party entry makes races more competitive, since greater party system fragmentation means that winners more often win with a lower share of the vote and smaller margins of victory. By the same token, on average, party exit makes races less competitive, since fewer parties mean that the winning margins can be much greater.[[6]](#footnote-6) Elites invest greater effort on mobilization in highly competitive races—particularly in single-member district settings (Cox 1999; Cox 2015; Shachar and Nalebuff 1999). Consequently, party entry should spur other parties to engage in greater mobilization efforts, while party exit should diminish other parties’ incentives to mobilize. Thus, volatility should not only directly affect turnout thanks to party entry and exit, but it should also have an indirect effect through the strategies of other parties.

Second, with regard to party exit, even if the remaining parties try to target an exited party’s voters, which could counteract the impact of party exit, they may not be able to fully do so.[[7]](#footnote-7) When a party exits, the remaining parties can respond by targeting voters previously contacted by the party that exited. But unless they are able to wholly incorporate the parties’ former activists, some previously mobilized voters may remain uncontacted. Alternatively, a party might use its existing activists to target those mobilized by an exited party. Doing so is, however, not necessarily easy. Those campaigning on behalf of the remaining parties may be less effective than the exited party at turning out voters who had previously been their rivals. Since effort is partly a function of responsiveness—parties do not wish to expend mobilization effort that is unlikely to yield results (Cox 1999; Cox 2015; Shachar and Nalebuff 1999)—the remaining parties’ limited efficacy in mobilizing other parties’ former voters may dampen their incentives to engage in efforts to mobilize those who previously supported the exited party.

Third, even if parties have much to gain from incorporating another party’s activists or targeting a former party’s voters, parties may not do so if such a strategy involves crossing salient social, economic, or ethnic divides. Thachil (2014) notes how the leadership of the BJP in India identified its lack of support among historically marginalized groups as a major impediment to electoral success. Yet, because of deep-seated caste prejudices, other party members blocked a strategy of promoting lower caste leadership. Similarly, a party’s activists might shy away from mobilizing voters from low-status or rival groups or the party might avoid recruiting activists from such groups who are now up for grabs thanks to a party’s exit. All told, for reasons related to competiveness, efficacy, and will, we expect that the remaining parties should only be able to partially undo the effects of party exit and may, in the case of competiveness, even enhance the direct effects of volatility on turnout.

**Data and Methods**

To test our hypotheses, we use district-level data from Indian national elections from 1977 through 2004. During this period, India’s electoral boundaries did not change, allowing us to explore variation within each electoral district while holding constant a wide range of factors that vary substantially across districts. As is common in subnational studies of India, we include only India’s largest states, which together account for more than 95% of India’s population.

*Variables*

The argument described above contends that party entry (exit) should increase (decrease) turnout. Therefore, our dependent variable is *Turnout Change* or the change in turnout in an electoral district between elections *t* and *t-1.* Turnout data come from Jensenius (2013). Our independent variables of interest come from the Election Commission of India. The appendix provides summary statistics and the sources of all variables. To construct the independent variables related to party entry and exit, we identify all candidates who 1) competed on a party label and 2) won more than 2% of the district-level vote. We therefore exclude the many candidates winning infinitesimal district-level vote shares.[[8]](#footnote-8)

*Party Entry* (Hypothesis 1) is the total vote won in district *i* in election *t* by parties that are new since election *t-1. Party Entry* is not causally prior to *Turnout Change* since vote choice takes places at the same time that voters turn out to vote. Therefore, *Party Entry* is a proxy for new parties’ mobilization activity. We expect that parties that go on to win larger vote shares should engage in more extensive mobilization efforts prior to the election. Nevertheless, to guard against concerns that this variable is measured simultaneously with *Turnout Change,* we show that our results are robust to an alternative measure of *Party Entry* —the absolute number of new parties in district *i*—which is widely known prior to the election. To test Hypotheses 1A, 1B, and 1C, we create three separate entry variables.[[9]](#footnote-9) *Entry-Newly Founded* is the vote won by parties that are either newly founded since the last national election or newly active in a state. For example, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) first contested national elections in 1984, so its vote in that election counts toward *Entry-Newly Founded.* Because most of India’s parties compete in only a small portion of the country, we also count as newly founded those parties contesting in a particular state for the first time. For instance, the Shiv Sena began contesting elections in the state of Maharashtra in the 1960s, but it did not contest elections elsewhere in India until much later, in the 1990s. Thus, in the 1996 election, the Shiv Sena vote share does not count as new in Maharashtra. However, because the Shiv Sena had never before competed in the state of Bihar, its candidates in Bihar count toward *Entry-Newly Founded*. After 1996, the Shiv Sena candidates in Bihar no longer count toward *Entry-Newly Founded*.[[10]](#footnote-10)

*Entry-Successor* is the vote won by new parties that are successors to previously existing parties. Recall, these are typically the results of party mergers or splits. One prominent example is the Janata Dal, which resulted from the merger of the Janata Party and Lok Dal in 1988. Votes for the Janata Dal in 1989 count toward *Entry-Successor.* Another example involves the Janata Dal’s split into the Janata Dal (United) (JD(U)) and Janata Dal (Secular) (JD(S)) in 1999. Both the JD(U) and JD(S) are successor parties, as the Janata Dal was defunct and voting for either the JD(U) or JD(S) was as close as voters could come to voting for the former Janata Dal. When parties experience minor splits, the splinter parties are not treated as successor parties because the original party remains more or less intact. Finally, *Entry-Prior Alliance* is the vote won by parties in an election at time *t* that were part of a pre-election alliance in the previous election (*t-1*) and therefore did not compete in the prior election. Since pre-election alliances in India are virtually always brokered on a state-by-state basis, whether a party previously contested in alliance is coded at the state-level and applies to all districts in a state. Data on election alliances comes from our own data collection effort based on news reports and secondary sources.

*Independent Vote* (Hypothesis 2) is the share of the vote won in district *i* in election *t* by independent candidates who individually won 10% or more of the vote in their district. Thus, in a district where independents as a group won 12% of the vote, but no independent candidate won more than 10% of the vote, the value for *Independent Vote* is 0. However, if a single independent candidate won 12% of the vote, then the variable’s value would reflect the candidate’s vote share. We impose the 10% threshold because we do not expect that frivolous independent candidates, of which there are many, should have any discernible impact on turnout. We only anticipate that competitive independent candidates will exert an impact similar to that of a new party. Such competitive candidates are typically well known and have local roots in the district. As with *Party Entry, Independent Vote* should be thought of as a proxy for the mobilization generated by a competitive independent candidate. Our results are similar when we use the number of independent candidates winning more than 10% of the vote.

*Party Exit* (Hypothesis 3) is the total vote won in district *i,* in election *t-1,* by parties that did not contest in election *t.* Because this variable captures the vote share won in a previous election, its measurement is causally prior to our dependent variable. We further break this variable down to test Hypotheses 3A and 3B. *Exit-Defunct* is the vote won in the previous election by parties that subsequently ceased to exist. In many cases, defunct parties merged into an existing party or with another party to form a new third party. Second, *Exit-Alliance* is the vote won by parties in the previous election that are currently part of an election alliance and therefore not competing in the district *i*.

We also include several control variables. *Lagged Turnout* is a district’s turnout in election *t-1*. Unusually high or low turnout in the previous election should influence the extent to which turnout is likely to increase or decrease in the subsequent election. *Previous ENP* is the effective number of parties in the prior election, which is, across most studies, negatively associated with turnout, even though theory might predict a positive association (Blais 2006). *Previous Margin* is the difference between the vote shares won by the winner and runner-up in election *t-1.* Many studies show the closer races produce higher levels of turnout (Geys 2006). *Electorate* is the number of voters divided by 100,000. As district population increases, voters may increasingly believe that their vote is unlikely to affect the outcome of the election or see the race as increasingly distant and irrelevant. *Concurrent* is a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 when a district holds simultaneous national- and state-level elections. Since state elections in India are highly salient, turnout should be higher when voters have two important races for which to turn out (Nikolenyi 2010). *Elapsed* is the number of complete months that have elapsed since the previous national election. When elections are held in close proximity, voters are more likely to suffer from election fatigue and less likely to turn out. *Suffrage* is a dummy variable taking a value of 1 for all elections in which the age of suffrage was 18. Prior to 1989, the age of suffrage was 21. Since young people are less likely to vote, we expect that increasing the pool of young voters should decrease turnout.[[11]](#footnote-11) *Time* is a linear time trend that begins at 0 in 1977 and increases by one unit for each year so as to capture any secular increase (or decrease) in turnout. Using year dummies instead of the timetrenddoes not substantively alter most of our results. *Population* *Density* is the natural log of the population of eligible voters divided by a district’s area. This variable, taken from Auerbach (2015), proxies for a district’s level of urbanization. We expect that in densely populated urban areas, parties can mobilize more voters at a lower cost, thereby increasing turnout. Finally, *Literacy Rate* is the literacy rate for the state in which a district is located. Prior research has suggested an association between literacy and turnout (Diwakar 2008). In the appendix, we also present models that include state-level economic variables shown by Chhibber and Nooruddin (2008) to affect state-level electoral volatility.

*Estimation Strategy*

Our data are best characterized as time-series cross-sectional (TSCS), since the set of observations includes an average of nine election years per district, across 524 districts. Estimating a simple regression on the TSCS data can lead to erroneous conclusions if there are unobserved differences among districts (Green et al. 2001; Hsiao 2003). Thus, we estimate district-level fixed effects to ensure that unobserved differences between districts do not affect our findings. We also estimate district-level fixed effects because our core hypotheses focus primarily on intra-district over-time variation in the dependent variable, rather than cross-sectional variation. Furthermore, by deriving our estimates fromvariation within the same districts, we effectively control for a wide range of unobservables that vary across districts. Such observables include a district’s caste demography (which the census does not measure), breakdown of partisan support, and underlying propensity to turn out.

**Results**

Table 1 presents the main results from our analysis. All models are estimated using OLS and district-level fixed effects with robust standard errors. In model 1, we establish a base-line turnout model with only control variables. Because of the fixed effects specification, we do not include any variables that do not vary over time within a district. Reassuringly, the results from this baseline model are as expected. Turnout decreases when prior turnout was higher (*Lagged Turnout*), the margin of victory in the previous election was larger (*Previous Margin*), the district is very populous (*Electorate*), and the age of suffrage is lower (*Suffrage*). Meanwhile, turnout increases when the effective number of parties in the previous election was larger (*Previous ENP*), state and national elections are concurrent (*Concurrent*), more time has elapsed since the previous election (*Elapsed*), districts are more densely populated (*Population Density*), and literacy rates are higher (*Literacy Rate*). Additionally, turnout increases slightly over time. These findings provide confidence that there is nothing unusual about the Indian context that would limit the generalizability of any other findings.

**Table 1 about here**

Next, in model 2, we introduce *Party Entry, Independent Vote,* and *Party Exit.* As expected, there is some evidence that the first two are associated with increases in turnout, while the last is associated with a decrease in turnout. *Party Exit* is not statistically significant, but the p-value is relatively small (0.119). The results are consistent with, but do not exhibit especially strong support for, Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. When, in model 3, we disaggregate *Party Entry* and *Party Exit* into the component parts described above, the results are much stronger. First, the entry of newly founded parties is associated with increased turnout, presumably because new mobilization networks bring new voters into the electoral process. The findings for *Entry-Newly Founded* are consistently positive and statistically significant across a variety of model specifications. Second, Table 1 also indicates that successor parties are associated with increased turnout, as expected, since their new incarnations can entice new party workers to join, thereby expanding their networks of mobilization. However, this result should be treated with some caution. It persists across many other model specifications and robustness tests, but not all. In particular, if we include year dummies instead of a time trend or pool our data instead of using fixed effects, this result disappears. Third, we find no evidence of a boost in turnout associated with new parties that were formerly in alliance. This finding is perhaps not particularly surprising since the re-entry of a party after a brief hiatus might not involve the addition of new activists. Rather, the logic behind Hypothesis 1C was that a party’s activists might not campaign as vigorously for an allied party’s candidates as they would for their own party’s candidate. With regard to Hypothesis 2, there is a strong association between credible independent candidates and increases in turnout, as expected. Finally, in model 3, both types of party exit are associated with decreases in turnout, as expected. The results for these two variables are robust across specifications. Here too, the results for the different types of exit are stronger than for the aggregate *Party Exit* variable, which includes instances of exit not associated with defunct parties or alliances. Interestingly, the exit of a party because of an alliance depressed turnout, but a party’s re-entry does not then increase turnout.

Models 4 and 5 test Hypotheses 4 and 4A, respectively, about the overall supply of mobilization thanks to both party entry and exit. When party entry immediately follows party exit—as often occurs when parties become defunct but give rise to new successor parties—then we expect party entry to mitigate the negative impact of party exit. Model 4 tests this hypothesis by including an interaction term between *Party Entry* and *Party Exit*. The coefficient on *Party Entry* is effectively zero, but the other coefficients of interest are sizeable and precisely estimated. In other words, model 4 indicates that when party exit occurs without any new party entry, turnout tends to decline. We suggest that this is because the overall level of mobilization in the district decreases. However, when party exit is followed by party entry, turnout does not change so much. We suggest this is because the supply of mobilization remains relatively constant. Finally, Model 5 replicates model 3 but with an interaction between *Entry-Successor* and *Exit-Defunct* to test Hypothesis 4A about the supply of mobilization involving defunct and successor parties. The results in model 5 are fairly similar to model 3, and the coefficient on the interaction term is large and statistically significant. When a party becomes defunct and there is no successor, turnout tends to decline. In contrast, when a party becomes defunct and is reincarnated as a successor party turnout does not decline so much.[[12]](#footnote-12)

We present the substantive impact of these interactions in graphical terms in Figure 1. The left panel in Figure 1 refers to model 4, while the right panel refers to model 5. Both panels plot the average marginal effects of exit (*Party Exit* on the left and *Exit-Defunct* on the right) at varying levels of party entry (*Party Entry* on the left and *Entry-Successor* on the right), along with 95% confidence intervals. The left panel indicates that when exit is followed by modest levels of entry, party exit has a negative impact on turnout. However, when large party entry follows party exit, the effect of party exit is not distinguishable from zero. In other words, party entry mitigates the impact of party exit. The right panel reveals a similar pattern. When successor parties enter after parties become defunct, entry compensates for exit. When entry does not follow exit, party exit exerts a strong negative impact on turnout. However, the marginal effect of the exit of a defunct party gets smaller as the size of the successor party increases. Eventually, when very large parties enter, the marginal effect of exit is positive.

**Figure 1 about here**

What is the substantive impact of the results in Table 1? The results in Model 5 indicate that a standard deviation increase in the vote share won by newly founded parties (8%) is associated with a 0.54% increase in turnout. Although this might appear, at first, to be a modest change, the mean electoral district in our data has 963,901 eligible voters, meaning that a 0.54% increase is, on average, equivalent to an additional 5,205 voters turning out to vote. By the same token, a standard deviation increase in the share of the vote won in the previous election by parties that are defunct in the next election (10%) is associated with a 0.86% decrease in turnout, if there is no entry by a successor party, or an average of 8,328 voters. If this 0.86% decrease in turnout in the mean electoral district is entirely attributable to partisans of the defunct party and turnout in the previous election was 60%, then the decrease in turnout is equivalent to 14% of the parties’ former voters staying home. Finally, a standard deviation increase in the vote share won by major independent candidates (7%) is associated with a 0.50% increase in turnout, or 4,781 votes in the average district. To put these effect sizes in further context, 102 races in our dataset were decided by margins of less than 0.5%, meaning that small increases or decreases in turnout can swing some races if turnout changes disproportionately benefit one party.

Recall too that the results presented in Table 1 exploit variation *within districts.* Given the many factors known to affect turnout and an estimation strategy that accounts for district-specific factors that shape baseline levels of turnout, it would be implausible to expect volatility to produce enormous changes in turnout from one election to the next. Furthermore, as we have noted, when new parties enter, their mobilization networks often draw partly on existing networks, and when parties exit their mobilization networks are not wholly lost. Thus, the effects we anticipate should not be enormous. That being said, as a point of comparison, a standard deviation increase in the prior election’s margin of victory (12%) is associated with only a 0.24% decrease in turnout. Even though the closeness of the race is one of the more robust findings in the literature, this too appears to have a relatively modest effect in percentage terms.

To conclude, the results from Table 1 point to a consistent association between party entry and exit and turnout that is substantively meaningful in the context of within-district variation. The results are particularly strong and robust for newly founded parties, major independent candidates, defunct parties, and parties that exit because of alliances. Moreover, we find evidence that party entry can compensate for party exit.

*Robustness*

To verify the robustness of our results, we run a number of additional analyses. First, in Table 2, to guard against the fact that our dependent variable (*Turnout Change*) and our independent variables for new party and independent candidate entry are simultaneously determined, we replicate the analysis in Table 1 using the number of new parties and new major independent candidates, since parties and independent candidates enter the race prior to voters’ decisions to turnout. Table 2 replicates model 3 from Table 1 except that it substitutes the number of new parties (newly founded, successor, and previously in alliance) and new major independents in lieu of their vote shares. Though causally prior to turnout, the number of new parties is potentially only weakly correlated with new voter mobilization. To illustrate, imagine one district in which there are three new parties, but each barely crosses the 2% threshold. Even though there are three new parties in the district, their impact on turnout through mobilization should be modest because of their small sizes. Meanwhile, imagine another district with only one new party that has a well-developed network of activists and goes on to win 25% of the vote. We would expect this party to have a much larger impact on turnout. Yet, simply counting the number of parties, these two examples would lead us to believe that as the number of new parties increases, turnout should decrease because the district with the larger number of new parties produces a smaller increase in turnout than the district with the smaller number of new parties. To address this problem, in successive models, we only count new parties that cross a particular vote threshold. These models therefore count major new parties, using increasingly high thresholds for classifying parties as major. However, when we set the threshold extremely high (as in model 5 in Table 2), we still encounter measurement problems. We might only count one new party that just barely wins 20% of the vote and discount three new parties that each wins 15% of the vote. The former would count as one new party and the latter as zero, even though we would expect the three new parties to have a greater impact on turnout. Finally, since we earlier set a 10% threshold for counting an independent candidate as major, in all models we simply count the number of independent candidates individually winning 10% of the vote.

**Table 2 about here**

Given the problems with simply counting parties, it is important in Table 2 to look at the broad patterns across the models. The results in Table 2 are generally consistent with the analysis in Table 1, though the coefficients tend to be somewhat smaller and less precisely estimated – which should come as no surprise given the bluntness of the measure. Across all models *Entry-Newly Founded* and *Independent Vote* are always positive, as in Table 1, and *Exited-Alliance* is always negative, again as in Table 1. For *Entry-Successor* and *Exited-Defunct*, the coefficients are in the expected direction in models 2-5 and statistically significant for *Entry-Successor* in three of the models. Using an alternative specification with year dummies instead of a time trend, the coefficients on *Exited-Defunct* are statistically significant (see Table A12 in the online Appendix).Finally, in analysis presented in the appendix, we show that our results in Table 1 are virtually identical without fixed effects. Furthermore, these results are robust to excluding instances in which entering or exiting parties win unusually high votes shares.

*Ruling out Confounding Explanations*

To be confident that party exit and party entry influence turnout, we must rule out the possibility that the same factor drives both party entry or exit and changes in turnout. To this end, we briefly consider the most important causes of party exit and entry, first from an elite perspective and then from the voters’ perspective. From an elite perspective, new parties are more successful in proportional systems where the institutional barriers to entry are low (Cox 1997; Hug 2001). Since institutional barriers across India (in terms of electoral system and district magnitude) are fixed, our design rules out this important factor. Second, new parties are more likely to emerge when the benefits from office are greater (Tavits 2006). In India, the advent of coalition government in the 1990s increased small parties’ chances of joining the national government and enjoying the benefits of national-level power (Ziegfeld 2012). Our *Suffrage* variable is perfectly coterminous with the coalition era in India, meaning that we have already controlled for the changed environment for small parties. Third, the decision to enter the race depends upon the probability of support (Cox 1997), defined in terms of “elite uncertainty.” In new democracies, the number of new entrants diminishes as parties develop reputations and “electoral histories” and uncertainty diminishes (Tavits 2008). By the time our analysis begins in 1977, India was no longer a new democracy. Nevertheless, our analysis includes a time term.

From the voter’s perspective, the emergence of new issues may simultaneously increase the probability of electoral support for new parties, making their emergence more likely and increasing turnout. Previous studies have found that controversies over nuclear energy and immigration drove the emergence of green and far right parties in Europe, respectively; however, the relationship between these parties’ emergence and turnout is not clear-cut (Immerzeel and Pickup 2015). Moreover, beyond these two types of niche parties, new issues are not related to the emergence of new parties in general (Hug 2001: 89-99). Given the absence of these sorts of niche parties in India and absence of issue-based parties in India more generally, we should not expect new issues to drive party exit or entry.[[13]](#footnote-13) In contrast, far more evidence links new parties to the economy. New parties are more successful when established parties repeatedly fail to address citizens’ economic problems (Benton 2005). New parties can profit from economic downturns by highlighting existing parties’ economic policy failures (Hug 2001) and seizing on the economy as a salient issue on which existing parties seem less credible (Tavits 2008). Moreover, the economy can influence turnout, leading to higher turnout under especially good and bad economic conditions (Martins and Veiga 2013). To address this confounder, supplemental analyses in the appendix include economic controls; our results do not change.

**Mechanism**

We have argued that the link established between volatility and turnout is the result of voter mobilization. In this section, we present evidence in support of this mechanism. Existing literature has amply demonstrated the link between mobilization and turnout. Therefore, the important question is whether we uncover evidence linking volatility to mobilization. Before turning to direct evidence in support of the mobilization mechanism, we first note that our findings to this point lend indirect support for our claim about mobilization by ruling out some other potentially important mechanisms. Most notably, volatility might affect turnout through the cognitive costs of voting. For voters who are in the habit of voting for a particular party, party exit means that they can no longer vote for their preferred party. Rather than incur the cognitive costs of deciding for whom to vote, some voters may opt not to vote at all. This mechanism cannot, however, explain why party entry has a positive impact on turnout (Hypothesis 1) or why entry can compensate for party exit (Hypothesis 4). The entry of new parties does not minimize the cognitive costs of voting when a voter’s habit is broken; if anything, the addition of a new party further raises those costs. Of course, evidence in support of Hypotheses 1 and 4 does not mean that mobilization is the only mechanism at work. But, whereas a cognitive costs mechanism cannot account for our findings, a mobilization mechanism can.

To directly test for an association between volatility and mobilization, we use the 2004 Indian National Election Study to derive district-level estimates of whether respondents were contacted by a political party during the campaign, which we merge with our data from the same year.[[14]](#footnote-14) In model 1 of Table 3, *Mobilization*—the share of respondents in an electoral district who report having been contacted by a campaign—is the dependent variable. Our key independent variables are *Party Entry, Independent Vote,* and *Party Exit,* measured as they were in Table 1. All models in Table 3 are all estimated using OLS with robust standard errors. As expected, *Party Entry* is positively associated with the share of respondents contacted by a campaign and *Party Exit* is negatively associated. The coefficient on *Independent Vote* is in the unexpected direction but fairly imprecisely estimated and smaller than the other two coefficients. In short, Model 1 generally supports our contention that volatility influences mobilization.

**Table 3 about here**

Next, in model 2, our dependent variable is *Turnout Change,* as it was in Tables 1 and 2. This model essentially replicates our analysis from model 2 in Table 1, but examining only the turnout change from 1999 to 2004. Even on this reduced subset of cases the main findings hold up. The coefficients for party entry and party exit are in the expected direction, though the coefficient on *Exited All* falls short of statistical significance. Finally, in Model 3, we include *Mobilization,* this time as an independent variable. Our expectation is that levels of mobilization should have a direct impact on changes in turnout. Moreover, the inclusion of *Mobilization* should diminish the association between volatility (as measured by *Party Entry* and *Party Exit*) and turnout change. Indeed, we find a statistically significant association between *Mobilization* and *Turnout Change* indicating that electoral districts with higher levels of mobilization see greater increases in turnout. Furthermore, we see the coefficients on *Party Entry* and *Party Exit* diminish in size. Since the changes between the relevant coefficients in models 2 and 3 are quite modest in size we conduct mediation analysis (available in the appendix) to test whether party entry and exit are mediated by mobilization. Our results indicate that the average causal mediated effect (ACME) of mobilization is negative for party exit, and the 95% confidence interval does not include zero. For party entry, the ACME is positive, and the 95% confidence interval similarly does not include zero. Mediation analysis therefore provides suggestive evidence that mobilization in fact mediates the relationship between volatility and turnout. However, we should note that our measure of mobilization is a conservative one because it does not account for secondary or spill-over mobilization, which past research has shown to be important (Cox 2015). The limited availability of survey data in India prevents us from testing the mobilization mechanism on additional data, but the results from the data that are available are consistent with our claim that volatility influences turnout at least partly through voter mobilization.

**Conclusion**

Local party systems in developing democracies are often fluid and unstable, as parties frequently enter and exit electoral races. This turnover in the parties competing in elections has implications for turnout. When popular parties withdraw from electoral competition turnout tends to decline, while turnout increases when major independent candidates or new parties enter. Further, party entry can partly, thought not fully, compensate for existing party exit. Finally, we distinguish between different forms of party entry and exit, finding that turnout declines both when parties die and when they exit as part of an electoral alliance, while the entry of newly founded parties and successor parties enhances turnout, but the re-entry of parties previously in alliance does not. Throughout, we contend that mobilization is a key mechanism linking volatility and turnout. New parties recruit new activists who, in turn, reach new voters, while parties that exit the party system no longer reach certain voters, depressing turnout. Although we have focused on mobilization, other mechanisms are also potentially at work and worthy of future research.

In terms of the implications of this research, our argument should shed light on more than just changes in turnout within an electoral district. Assuming that the same parties enter and exit in electoral districts across a country, party entry and exit could well explain increases and decreases in national-level turnout, particularly in the developing world where volatility is often high and electoral turnout has historically received substantially less scholarly attention. Our findings also have more general implications for party system institutionalization, of which electoral volatility is an important symptom. A growing literature in political science examines why some party systems are well institutionalized while others are only weakly so (Mainwaring 2016). Our research shows that, due to electoral volatility, levels of party system institutionalization should also impact turnout. We would, based on our findings, predict that countries with highly institutionalized party systems should exhibit far more consistent turnout levels than countries with weakly institutionalized party systems that experience frequent party entry and exit. Whereas the scholarly literature on party system institutionalization tends to view weakly institutionalized party systems as unambiguously bad for democracy, our findings suggest that one aspect of weakly institutionalized party systems—frequent party entry—can have a positive effect on turnout. However, the extent to which volatility can exert a salutary effect on turnout depends in large party on a country’s electoral institutions. Although regulating party exit is nearly impossible, countries can more easily regulate party entry by determining whether barriers to new party entry—such as signature requirements for registration, access to public campaign finance or free advertising, or rules requiring parties to field a certain number of candidates—are high or low. Where barriers to entry are low, weakly institutionalized party systems are apt to see more instances of new party entry and, as a consequence, increases in turnout. In short, although it may be premature to revise scholarly pessimism about volatile elections and weakly institutionalized party systems, the possibility of party entry boosting election turnout offers at least one silver lining.

**Table 1. Party Entry and Exit and Turnout**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Party Entry |  | 0.018\* |  | 0.001 |  |
|  |  | (0.009) |  | (0.008) |  |
| Entry-Newly |  |  | 0.065\*\*\* |  | 0.067\*\*\* |
| Founded |  |  | (0.012) |  | (0.012) |
| Entry- |  |  | 0.040\*\*\* |  | 0.023\*\* |
| Successor |  |  | (0.008) |  | (0.009) |
| Entry-Prior |  |  | -0.003 |  | 0.005 |
| Alliance |  |  | (0.016) |  | (0.015) |
| Independent Vote |  | 0.062\*\*\* | 0.063\*\*\* | 0.071\*\*\* | 0.067\*\*\* |
|  |  | (0.020) | (0.018) | (0.021) | (0.018) |
| Party Exit |  | -0.019 |  | -0.053\*\*\* |  |
|  |  | (0.012) |  | (0.019) |  |
| Exit-Defunct |  |  | -0.027\*\* |  | -0.084\*\*\* |
|  |  |  | (0.012) |  | (0.022) |
| Exit-Alliance |  |  | -0.039\*\*\* |  | -0.038\*\*\* |
|  |  |  | (0.012) |  | (0.012) |
| Party Entry |  |  |  | 0.091\*\*\* |  |
| X Party Exit |  |  |  | (0.029) |  |
| Entry-Successor |  |  |  |  | 0.212\*\*\* |
| X Exit-Defunct |  |  |  |  | (0.050) |
| Lagged Turnout | -0.842\*\*\* | -0.837\*\*\* | -0.838\*\*\* | -0.837\*\*\* | -0.834\*\*\* |
|  | (0.021) | (0.020) | (0.022) | (0.020) | (0.021) |
| Previous ENP | 0.013\*\*\* | 0.015\*\*\* | 0.015\*\*\* | 0.017\*\*\* | 0.015\*\*\* |
|  | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) |
| Previous Margin | -0.019\* | -0.020\* | -0.025\*\* | -0.014 | -0.020\* |
|  | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.011) |
| Electorate | -0.015\*\*\* | -0.015\*\*\* | -0.015\*\*\* | -0.015\*\*\* | -0.015\*\*\* |
|  | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.004) |
| Concurrent | 0.047\*\*\* | 0.047\*\*\* | 0.046\*\*\* | 0.047\*\*\* | 0.045\*\*\* |
|  | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) |
| Elapsed | 0.000\*\*\* | 0.000\*\*\* | 0.000\*\*\* | 0.000\*\*\* | 0.000\*\*\* |
|  | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Suffrage | -0.038\*\*\* | -0.041\*\*\* | -0.041\*\*\* | -0.043\*\*\* | -0.042\*\*\* |
|  | (0.007) | (0.007) | (0.007) | (0.007) | (0.007) |
| Time | 0.001\* | 0.001\* | 0.001 | 0.001\*\* | 0.001 |
|  | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) |
| Population | 0.073 | 0.079 | 0.067 | 0.080 | 0.065 |
| Density | (0.050) | (0.050) | (0.050) | (0.050) | (0.050) |
| Literacy Rate | 0.002\*\*\* | 0.002\*\*\* | 0.002\*\*\* | 0.002\*\*\* | 0.002\*\*\* |
|  | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) |
| Constant | 0.098 | 0.058 | 0.102 | 0.054 | 0.108 |
|  | (0.235) | (0.235) | (0.235) | (0.234) | (0.235) |
| *R*2 | 0.54 | 0.54 | 0.55 | 0.55 | 0.55 |
| *N* | 4,089 | 4,089 | 4,089 | 4,089 | 4,089 |

\* *p*<0.1; \*\* *p*<0.05; \*\*\* *p*<0.01

**Figure 1. Marginal Effects of Exit on Turnout when Followed by Entry**



**Table 2. Robustness Check: Number of New Parties and Major Independents**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1  All | 2  > 5% | 3  > 10% | 4  > 15% | 5  > 20% |
| Entry-Newly | 0.006\*\* | 0.017\*\*\* | 0.028\*\*\* | 0.030\*\*\* | 0.032\*\*\* |
| Founded | (0.002) | (0.006) | (0.007) | (0.008) | (0.010) |
| Entry-Successor | -0.006\*\* | 0.004 | 0.009\*\* | 0.010\*\* | 0.014\*\*\* |
|  | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.004) |
| Entry-Prior | 0.000 | -0.002 | -0.004 | -0.005 | -0.005 |
| Alliance | (0.005) | (0.011) | (0.012) | (0.012) | (0.012) |
| Independent | 0.012\*\* | 0.013\*\*\* | 0.013\*\*\* | 0.013\*\*\* | 0.013\*\*\* |
| Vote | (0.005) | (0.005) | (0.005) | (0.005) | (0.005) |
| Exit-Defunct | 0.003 | -0.006 | -0.006 | -0.006 | -0.008 |
|  | (0.012) | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.011) |
| Exit-Alliance | -0.022\*\* | -0.026\*\* | -0.027\*\* | -0.027\*\* | -0.028\*\*\* |
|  | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.011) |
| Lagged Turnout | -0.837\*\*\* | -0.837\*\*\* | -0.837\*\*\* | -0.839\*\*\* | -0.841\*\*\* |
|  | (0.021) | (0.021) | (0.021) | (0.021) | (0.021) |
| Previous ENP | 0.013\*\*\* | 0.014\*\*\* | 0.014\*\*\* | 0.014\*\*\* | 0.014\*\*\* |
|  | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) |
| Previous Margin | -0.019\* | -0.020\* | -0.020\* | -0.021\* | -0.021\* |
|  | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.011) |
| Electorate | -0.014\*\*\* | -0.015\*\*\* | -0.015\*\*\* | -0.015\*\*\* | -0.015\*\*\* |
|  | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.004) |
| Concurrent | 0.048\*\*\* | 0.046\*\*\* | 0.046\*\*\* | 0.047\*\*\* | 0.047\*\*\* |
|  | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) |
| Elapsed | 0.000\*\*\* | 0.000\*\*\* | 0.000\*\*\* | 0.000\*\*\* | 0.000\*\*\* |
|  | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Suffrage | -0.039\*\*\* | -0.039\*\*\* | -0.038\*\*\* | -0.038\*\*\* | -0.037\*\*\* |
|  | (0.007) | (0.007) | (0.007) | (0.007) | (0.007) |
| Time | 0.001\* | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 |
|  | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) |
| Population | 0.056 | 0.068 | 0.065 | 0.065 | 0.064 |
| Density | (0.050) | (0.050) | (0.050) | (0.050) | (0.050) |
| Literacy Rate | 0.002\*\*\* | 0.002\*\*\* | 0.002\*\*\* | 0.002\*\*\* | 0.002\*\*\* |
|  | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) |
| Constant | 0.181 | 0.112 | 0.124 | 0.125 | 0.130 |
|  | (0.234) | (0.235) | (0.235) | (0.234) | (0.235) |
| *R*2 | 0.55 | 0.54 | 0.55 | 0.55 | 0.55 |
| *N* | 4,089 | 4,089 | 4,089 | 4,089 | 4,089 |

\* *p*<0.1; \*\* *p*<0.05; \*\*\* *p*<0.01

**Table 3. Mechanism. Party Entry and Exit and Mobilization, 2004**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Dependent variable* | | |
|  | (1)  Mobilization | (2)  Turnout change | (3)  Turnout change |
| Mobilization |  |  | 0.035\*\* |
|  |  |  | (0.016) |
| New All | 0.261\*\* | 0.064\*\* | 0.054\* |
|  | (0.104) | (0.032) | (0.032) |
| Exited All | -0.290\*\*\* | -0.054 | -0.043 |
|  | (0.112) | (0.033) | (0.033) |
| Independent Vote | -0.075 | 0.041 | 0.044 |
|  | (0.188) | (0.042) | (0.045) |
| Lagged Turnout | 0.647\*\*\* | -0.229\*\*\* | -0.251\*\*\* |
|  | (0.111) | (0.041) | (0.043) |
| ENP | 0.001 | -0.015\*\* | -0.015\*\* |
|  | (0.021) | (0.006) | (0.006) |
| Lagged Margin | -0.407\*\*\* | 0.060 | 0.074\* |
|  | (0.135) | (0.039) | (0.038) |
| Electorate | 0.004 | -0.003\*\*\* | -0.004\*\*\* |
|  | (0.003) | (0.001) | (0.001) |
| Concurrent | 0.137\*\*\* | 0.065\*\*\* | 0.060\*\*\* |
|  | (0.030) | (0.008) | (0.009) |
| Literacy Rate | 0.002 | 0.002\*\*\* | 0.002\*\*\* |
|  | (0.001) | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Constant | -0.001 | 0.053 | 0.053 |
|  | (0.152) | (0.044) | (0.043) |
| *R*2 | 0.20 | 0.26 | 0.27 |
| *N* | 377 | 377 | 377 |

\* *p*<0.1; \*\* *p*<0.05; \*\*\* *p*<0.01

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1. In India, national-level electoral districts are referred to as parliamentary constituencies. Throughout, we use the term “district” to refer to parliamentary constituencies. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Exceptions are Chhibber and Nooruddin (1999), Diwakar (2008), and Nikolenyi (2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. We do not advance a comparable hypothesis about the exit of independent candidates because, in the Indian context (and we suspect, in many others), successful independent candidates rarely remain independents; instead, existing parties recruit them. The exit of a successful of independent does not usually mean that she and her mobilization networks have exited the party system. Rather, it typically means that a political party now deploys those networks. Thus, the exit of an independent should not necessarily decrease turnout. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See the online appendix for the correlation between party entry and exit. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This interaction allows us to examine changes in the overall supply of mobilization due to entry and exit, which differs from examining the impact of party exit when party exit directly causes party entry. The latter would require a different estimation strategy. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The appendix confirms that these expected patterns hold in India. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For new party entry, there is no comparable concern about other parties mitigating the positive effect of entry on turnout. If party entry mobilizes new voters who were previously unengaged in politics, then other parties’ would potentially try to reach out to those same voters, further enhancing turnout—not diminishing it. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. During the 1977-2004 period, more than half of all candidates won less than 0.5% of the vote. Candidates crossing this 2% threshold accounted, on average, for nearly 97% of the vote in districts in our data. The appendix documents that our results do not hinge on the choice of a 2% threshold. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The three entry variables do not necessarily sum to equal *Party Entry*;parties can enter for reasons other than those captured by these three variables. The same is true for *Party Exit* below. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Thus, a party is not treated as newly founded the first time it contests in a district if it previously contested in districts elsewhere in the state. The appendix discusses this coding decision further. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Using a dummy for the 1990s—a time with considerable churning in the party system—yields virtually identical results. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. We present figures with predicted values of *Turnout Change* based on models 4 and 5 in the appendix. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The appendix briefly describes the origins of the major new parties, corroborating the absence of many issue-based parties. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The 2004 NES has a sample size of 21,900 respondents from 407 districts, with an average of 54 respondents per district. The survey question we use is: “Did any candidate, party worker or canvasser come to your house during the campaign to ask for your vote?” The level of mobilization is calculated as the proportion of respondents (0-1) within the district who replied yes. Across districts the mean is 0.55 and the standard deviation is 0.25. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)