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Q5(c)

Discuss the social bases of political mobilization in Independent India. Has some change occurred in these during the last 60-70 years?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Visions of Social Change in India

Visions of Social Change in India: Idea of development planning and mixed economy; Constitution, law and social change; Education and social change.

Core demand of the question

- **Name social bases of political mobilisation since 1947:** caste, class, language, region, religion, farmer, Dalit, OBC, women
- **Show what changed over 60-70 years:** Congress system, Mandal, Mandir, regional parties, media, welfare
- Use Srinivas, Rudolphs, Kothari, Yadav, Jaffrelot

Revision summary

Early mobilisation ran through the Congress coalition, language states and dominant-caste farmers.

Mandal made OBC politics central; Dalit parties institutionalised Ambedkarite identity.

Mandir and regional parties reordered religion and federal identity.

Media, the new middle class and DBT welfare added new glues.

Caste, class and region did not vanish; their hierarchy of importance shifted.

Introduction

Independent India's politics never floated free of society. The **social bases** of mobilisation have been caste, class, language, region, religion and, later, a welfare-beneficiary identity. Over seventy years the mix has shifted from a **Congress catch-all** to a more **segmented and mediated** arena.

Body

Early decades

The national movement bequeathed a **coalitional Congress (Rajni Kothari's Congress system): Brahmins and other elites plus dependent rural votes, with socialist and communist class pockets. Language** reorganised states. **Farmer** and **landed dominant castes** (Srinivas) captured state politics. Religion was never absent (Hindu Code debates, communal riots) but was not always the master frame.

The long shift

Mandal (1990) and **Indra Sawhney** (1992) made **OBC** the central arithmetic in the Hindi belt; **Christophe Jaffrelot** called it a silent revolution. **Dalit** parties (BSP) turned

Ambedkarite identity into a vote. **Mandir** politics from the 1980s-90s recentred **religious polarisation**. Regional parties (DMK, TDP, Shiv Sena, Akalis, TRS/BRS) mobilised **linguistic and sub-national** pride. After 1991, a **new middle class** and private media changed campaign style. The last fifteen years added **direct benefit transfer, welfare delivery and digital campaigning** as a social base of their own: the beneficiary household.

Women vote more autonomously in some surveys; they are not yet a single bloc. Class remains: farmers' protests, union belts, and informal labour, but class is usually spoken **through** caste and region. **Yogendra Yadav** described a democratic upsurge of the socially disadvantaged; later work asked whether that upsurge was captured by new elites of the same groups.

Social media and WhatsApp do not invent new bases so much as **intensify** religious and caste publics that already existed. Farmer identity in 2020-21 showed that class can still break through when prices and law hit a landed constituency. Adivasi belts mobilise around jal-jungle-zameen more than around a national Left.

- **Change, then:** from one-party accommodation to **competitive caste-religious federalism**, then toward a **national religious-welfare** combination-without the older bases disappearing.

Flow diagram

Congress system -> Mandal OBC Dalit
Congress system -> Regional linguistic
Mandal OBC Dalit -> Mandir plus welfare
Regional linguistic -> Mandir plus welfare

Conclusion

- **Mobilisation still sits on caste, region and religion. What changed is the ranking:** OBC and Hindu-majoritarian frames rose, Congress catch-all fell, and welfare media now glue coalitions that land reform once promised to.

Facts & figures

Mandal 1990

Implementation of OBC reservation in Union services; a watershed in social bases of politics.

Rajni Kothari

Described the Congress system as a one-party-dominant, internally coalitional order.

Jaffrelot

Silent revolution: rise of lower and intermediate castes in North Indian politics.