

Understanding The Decline and Downfall of The Indian National Congress in Manipur: An Analysis of The Factors for Its Defeat in The State Assembly Elections Of 2017 And 2022

Peter Paoginpu

Phd Scholar, Manipur University

Abstract

The Indian National Congress (INC) has been a dominant political force in Manipur, a northeastern state of India, for more than four decades. However, since the 2017 assembly elections, the party has lost its foothold in the state and has been reduced to a marginal player. This paper examines the factors that contributed the fall of the INC in Manipur, using both secondary and primary sources. The paper argues that the INC's decline can be attributed to four main factors: Anti – Incumbency against the Congress, defections and factionalism within the party; Dis-advantage of not being in power at the Centre, and emergence of the BJP as a viable alternative.

Keywords: Political defections, Factionalism, Incumbency, BJP, Congress, Manipur.

Introduction:

Manipur is one of India's Northeastern state with a complex socio-political landscape, characterized by ethnic diversity, armed conflicts and political instability. According to 2011 Census, the state has a population of about 2.8million, comprising mainly of three major ethnic groups: Non tribals - including Meiteis (60%) inhabiting the valley districts following Hinduism and *Sanamahi* as their religion; the tribals - Nagas and Kukis (40%) inhabiting the hill districts following Christianity as their religion. The state has experienced frequent political turmoil, with frequent changes of governments, defections of legislators, and imposition of President's rule. Since its merger with the Indian Union in 1949, the state has been under President's Rule for 10 times.

The INC has been the most dominant party in Manipur's Political history since the state's formation in 1972 and has also produced the longest-serving chief minister of Manipur, Okram Ibobi Singh, who held office for three consecutive terms from 2002 to 2017. However, since the 2017 assembly elections, the INC has witnessed a sharp decline in its popularity and performance in Manipur. Despite emerging as the single largest party with 28 out of 60 seats in the 2017 elections, the party failed to form the government due to defections by some of its MLAs and lack of support from other parties. The BJP, which had won 'No seats' in 2012, formed the government with 21 seats with the support of regional parties such as Naga People's Front (NPF), National People's Party (NPP), Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), Trinamool Congress (TMC), Independent and one Congress defector. The party has also faced defeats in subsequent elections such as Lok Sabha elections in 2019, Rajya Sabha elections in 2020, and 2022 state assembly elections

where it was able to score just 5(five) out of 54 seats it contested. Therefore, the decline and fall of the INC in Manipur has emerged as a noteworthy phenomena deserving of academic study. It raised a question about, how come INC which scored the highest in the previous two Assembly elections of 2012 with 42 and of 2017 with 28 seats, and has been the most dominating party in the state politics for about 70 years from 1952 onwards is now turning into just a minor player in the state politics from 2015? So, the main objective of this article is to answer these question by collecting data using both secondary and primary sources which includes election results, surveys, party manifestos, media reports, interviews, and observations.

MANIPUR'S POLITICAL HISTORY AND CONTEXT:

In 1949, the king of Manipur accepted the merger agreement with the Indian government and as a result the state joined India union. Some segments of Manipuri society, however were against the merger and called for Manipur to have an autonomy or independence. Since then, other movements and military conflicts for self-determination have taken place in Manipur, including from the hill tribes (Kuki's and Naga's). Some of these organizations are still operating and taking part in negotiations for a political settlement with the Centre. Manipur, Tripura and Meghalaya attained their statehood in 1972. Since then, Manipur's political system and administration have seen numerous changes. The Manipur People's Party (MPP), a local party that favored more autonomy for Manipur inside India won the first and second assembly elections in 1972 and 1974. However, due to defections and Political instability in the state politics, MPP was unable to complete its entire mandates. The Janata party in 1977 also formed government, But then, defections and dissidence led to dismissal of the ministry in November 1979 under President's rule. In January 1980, Congress (I) got a majority in Manipur in the third assembly election, and after 10 months, Rishang Keishing—the first chief minister from a hill tribe, replaced RK Dorendro Singh. Keishing held onto his position of authority until 1988, when he was succeeded by another Congressman, Raj Kumar Jaichandra Singh. President's rule was once more imposed in Manipur on January 1992 as a result of political unrest and Instability under RK Ranbir Singh's ULF ministry. After the President's Rule was revoked on April 1992, the Congress was restored to power under the leadership of RK Dorendro Singh which was followed by the President's Rule. In the 6th Assembly election in February 1995, the Congress continue to rule with Rishang Keishing as the Chief minister. Wahengbam Nipamacha Singh of MSCP led United Front ministry then succeeded Rishang in 1997 and retain power till February 2001. Under the direction of Radhabinod Koijam of the Samata Party, a coalition government – Samata led MDF ministry was established on 15th February 2001. However, due to internal conflicts and defections, this government only held power for five months and another President's Rule was imposed in the state from 2nd June 2001 to 7th March 2002. In the Eight Assembly election 2002, the Congress became the majority party and established the SPF Coalition government in Manipur under Okram Ibobi Singh. The Congress continue to dominate even in the next two assembly elections -2007,2012. So, Okram Ibobi Singh, under his strong and able leadership was able to secure comfortable majorities for three successive terms (2002, 2007, and 2012). During his time in office, he also dealt with a number of difficulties and controversies, including the extension of the NSCN(IM) cease-fire, the creation of new districts in the hills, the need for Inner Line Permits (ILPs) in the valley, the rise of corruption and nepotism and an increase in extrajudicial killings and human rights violations.

However, In 2017, Manipur witnessed a close contest between Congress and BJP, With both Parties winning 28 and 21 seats respectively. But then, the BJP managed to form a Coalition government with

the support of NPP, NPF, LJP, TMC, Independent, and a defected Congress MLA. Nongthombam Biren Singh, a former Congress leader who defected to BJP in 2016, became the chief minister of Manipur and completed the five years tenure. In 2022, For the first time In two decades, the Congress fought the 12th assembly elections 2022 as an Opposition party. In this election, the BJP created history by winning 32 out of 60 Seats reducing the Congress to only 5. The rest of the seats were distributed among Smaller parties and independent candidates. Whereas the NPF won five seats out of ten it contested from the Naga-dominated AC, the newly floated Kuki Peoples Alliance (KPA) won in the two Kuki-dominated AC it contested. In fact, no Kuki ever won in the Naga inhabited areas and vice versa.

Table 1: Formation of different ministries in Manipur from 1972 to 2022

Chief Ministers	Governments	Period	Remarks
Md. Alimuddin	MPP led ULP ministry, <u>President's Rule</u>	20.3.1972-28.3.1973, 28.3.2973 – 4.3.1974	First legislative assembly
Md. Alimuddin	MPP led ULP ministry	4.3.1974 – 10.7.1974	Second Legislative assembly
Yangmaso Shaiza	PDF ministry	10.7.1974 – 6.12.1974	
R.K Dorendro	DLP ministry	6.12.1974 – 23.7.1975	
R.K Dorendro	Congress-CPI ministry, <u>President's Rule</u>	23.7.1975 – 15.5.1977, 15.5.1977-29.6.1977	Emergency
Yangmaso Shaiza	Janata Party ministry, <u>President's Rule</u>	29.6.1977-14.11.1979, 14.11.1979-14.1.1980	
R.K Dorendro	Congress-MPP ministry	14.1.1980-27.11.1980	Third legislative assembly
Rishang Keishing	Congress ministry, <u>President's Rule</u>	27.11.1980-28.2.1981, 28.2,1981 – 19.6.1981	
Rishang Keishing	Congress ministry	19.6.1981 – 4.1.1985	
Rishang Keishing	Congress ministry	4.1.1985 – 4.3.1988	Fourth legislative assembly
RK Jaichandra	Congress ministry	4.3.1988 – 23.2.1990	

RK Ranbir Singh	ULF ministry, <u>President's Rule</u>	23.2.1990 – 7.1.1992, 7.1.1992 – 8.4.1992	
RK. Dorendro Singh	Congress ministry, <u>President's Rule</u>	8.4.1992 – 31.12.1993, 31.12.1993 – 13.12.1994	Dismissed on charges of bad law and order
Rishang Keishing	Congress ministry	13.12.1994 – 24.2.1995	
Rishang Keishing	Congress ministry	24.2.1995 – 16.12.1997	Sixth legislative assembly
W Nipamacha	MSCP led United Front ministry	16.12.1997 – 2.3.2000	Split in Congress
W Nipamacha	MSCP led United Front ministry	2.3.2000 – 14.2.2001	Seventh Legislative assembly
Radhabinod Koijam	Samata led MDF ministry, <u>President's Rule</u>	15.2.2001 – 2.6.2001, 2.6.2001 – 7.2.2002	
Okram Ibobi Singh	Congress led SPF ministry	7.3.2002 – 1.3.2007	Eighth Legislative assembly
Okram Ibobi Singh	Congress led SPF ministry	2.3.2007 – 5.3.2012	Ninth legislative assembly
Okram Ibobi Singh	Congress ministry	6.3.2012 – 14.3.2017	Tenth legislative assembly
N.Biren Singh	BJP led NDA ministry	15.3.2017 – 21.3.2022	Eleventh legislative assembly
N.Biren Singh	BJP led NDA ministry	21.3.2022 to Incumbent	Twelfth legislative assembly

Source : Manipur Information Centre, New Delhi
(<https://www.epw.in/journal/2002/06/commentary/manipur-assembly-electiontrends-and-issues.html>)

Party System and Electoral Trends in Manipur since 1972

The party system in Manipur has been characterized by fragmentation, fluidity, and volatility. No single party has been able to secure an absolute majority in any of the assembly elections held since 1972. The Congress has been the dominant party in terms of vote share and seat share, but it has also faced challenges from various regional parties, such as the Manipur People's Party (MPP), the Manipur Hills Union (MHU), the Federal Party of Manipur (FPM), the National People's Party (NPP), etc., as well as from national parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Communist Party of India (CPI), etc. The party system has also witnessed frequent splits, mergers, alliances, and realignments among different parties.

The table below shows the results of some of the major political parties in the assembly elections of Manipur from 1972 to 2022:

Table 2: Results of General elections to Lok Sabha in Manipur from 1952 – 2019;

Note: Manipur has only 2 Lok Sabha seats (one Inner Manipur and the other Outer Manipur)

Year	Lok Sabha elections	Inner Manipur	Outer Manipur
1952	First Lok Sabha election	Indian National Congress	Socialist
1957	Second Lok Sabha election	Socialist	Indian National Congress
1962	Third Lok Sabha election	Indian National Congress	Socialist
1967	Fourth Lok Sabha election	Communist Party of India	Indian National Congress
1971	Fifth Lok Sabha election	Indian National Congress	Indian National Congress
1977	Sixth Lok Sabha election	Indian National Congress	Indian National Congress
1980	Seventh Lok Sabha election	Communist Party of China	Indian National Congress
1984	Eighth Lok Sabha election	Indian National Congress	Indian National Congress
1989	Ninth Lok Sabha election	Indian National Congress	Indian National Congress
1991	Tenth Lok Sabha election	Manipur State Congress Party	Indian National Congress
1996	Eleventh Lok Sabha election	Indian National Congress	Indian National Congress
1998	Twelfth Lok Sabha election	Manipur State Congress Party	Communist Party of India
1999	Thirteenth Lok Sabha election	Manipur State Congress Party	National Congress Party
2004	Fourteenth Lok Sabha election	Indian National Congress	Independent
2009	Fifteenth Lok Sabha election	Indian National Congress	Indian National Congress
2014	Sixteenth Lok Sabha election	Indian National Congress	Indian National Congress
2019	Seventeenth Lok Sabha election	Bharatiya Janata Party	Naga People’s Front

Source: Statistical reports of General elections to Lok Sabha elections in Manipur from 1952 – 2019 issued by Election Commission of India.

Table 3: Past Electoral Performances of different Political parties in Manipur Assembly Elections from (1972 – 2022)

Party	1972	1974	1980	1984	1990	1995	2000	2002	2007	2012	2017	2022
INC	16	13	13	30	25	22	11	20	30	42	28	5
BJP				0	0	1	6	4	0	0	21	32
CPI	5	6	5	1	3	2	0	5	4	0	0	
MPP	15	20	4	3	11	18	4	2	5	0	0	
MHU		12			0	0						
FPM							6	13				
NPP					1	2	0	0	3		4	7
NPF							0	0	0	4	4	5
KNA		2	2	1	0	0						0
MSCP							23	7	0	5		
IND.	19	5	19	21	1	3	1	0	10	0	1	3

(Source: Statistical Reports on General Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Manipur from 1972 – 2022).

As can be seen from the tables, the Congress party has won the most seats in most of the General elections to State Legislative Assembly or General elections to the Lok Sabha. The Congress party has also formed the government in Manipur for most of the time since 1972, either alone or with coalition partners. However, in some cases, the party was unable to form the government despite winning the most seats, such as in 2017 due to defections or lack of support from other parties. The data also shows that in the electoral trends in Manipur, the voters have not given a clear mandate to any party or coalition, and have often switched their preferences from one election to another. This has led to a situation of political uncertainty and instability, where only few governments has been able to complete its full term and where defections have become a common phenomenon. Therefore, based on this data, it can be said that the Congress party has been the dominant party in Manipur since 1972, but its dominance has been challenged and eroded by other parties over time.

Factors for the Decline and Downfall of the INC in Manipur since 2015

As the main target of this paper is to analyze why INC decline so much from 2015 onwards in Manipur, it is desirable to focus on the last two Assembly Elections of 2017 and 2022.

The 11th Manipur assembly election; It was conducted in the month of March to elect 60 members of legislative assembly. The Congress got 28 seats higher than 21 seats of BJP, but the Congress lose to BJP in forming the government. The BJP was able to form the Government as it got the support of National People's Party (NPP)-4, Naga Peoples Front (NPF)-4, All India Trinamool Congress (AITC)-1, Lok Janshakti Party (LJP)-1, an independent MLA, and a Congress defector.

The 12th State Assembly election in Manipur: It was held in the month of February and March 2022 to elect 60 members and when the results were declared on 10th March, the BJP scored the highest seats with 32. The Congress performance declined so much so that it got only 5 seats, sharing the same score with a regional party Naga People's Front (NPF). The rest of the seats were distributed among smaller parties and independent candidates, including NPP – 7, JD(U) – 6, Independent-3 and newly formed Kuki People's Alliance (KPA)-2.

Now, Let us analyze the factors that contributed to INC's decline and downfall in Manipur:

Anti-incumbency against Congress:

One of the main reasons for the decline of INC in Manipur from 2015 onwards - was the anti-Incumbency factor against the Congress government led by Okram Ibobi Singh that ruled the state for 15 years from 2002-2017, While Ibobi Singh had some achievements to his credit, such as improving infrastructure, providing electricity and water supply, implementing welfare schemes, etc, He also faced several allegations of misrule, Bandhs, Economic blockades, strikes and Protests, Nepotism, favouritism, manipulation, and Corruption (10% Ibobi). He was accused of being autocratic and arrogant in his style of functioning and of promoting his family members and loyalists in politics and administration. He was also blamed for creating divisions among different communities by playing politics over sensitive Issues such as ILP demand in the valley and creation of new districts in the hills, which resulted into United Naga Council's(UNC) Economic blockade for 139 days from 1st Nov. 2016 to 19th March 2017.

In addition to it, the Congress party was facing serious problems in the hills of Manipur. The party and its MLAs were boycotted in all the hill districts of the state. The Congress MLAs has been boycotted in Churchandpur district since the three Bills that the state Assembly passed on 31 August 2015. The Bills were - The Protection of Manipur People's Bill, 2015, the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms

(Seventh Amendment) Bill, 2015 and the Manipur Shops and Establishments (Second Amendment) Bill, 2015. As a counter to the move of the government, several tribal student organizations namely the Kuki Students' Organization (GHQ); All Naga Students' Association Manipur (ANSAM) and the ATSUM (All Tribal Student Union, Manipur) have jointly protested against the three bills. In the tussle between the protesters and the security forces eight civilians were killed and around 40 were also injured in Churachandpur district. The death bodies were kept in a morgue for more than one and half years. It was buried only on 25 May 2017 (exactly after 632 days). The amount of problems that the Congress party faced in the hill areas of state was clearly understood when the then CM of Manipur, O. Ibobi Singh, along with his Deputy CM Gaikhangam, and other leaders of the Congress visited Ukhrul on 24 October 2016 in a chopper to launch a series of development projects including the new Ukhrul district hospital, two power sub-stations and two block development offices at different places in the district. But as soon as they got off in a chopper, protests erupted in the area and unknown assailants opened fire towards the team. As a result they decided to return. So, all these incidents and issues reduce the popularity and trust towards the Congress from the voters and the people of the State were looking for an alternative party in replacing the Congress. In other words, these issues gave a wonderful opportunity for the BJP to grab power in Manipur by replacing the Congress.

Defections and factionalism: Another factor that led INC's decline in Manipur was the defection of several Congress leaders to BJP before and after the elections. Some defected, looking for better political status or dissatisfied with the leadership of Ibobi or were denied party tickets by the Congress. Some were also influenced by BJP's Promises or incentives or were influenced by the leadership quality of Modi who were in power at the Centre. Some of these defectors were senior Congress leaders having a high profile in their respective constituencies and their Defections was a big blow for the party. The first Congress MLA who defected to BJP was Yumkham Irabot Singh (former Congress Minister and sitting MLA from Wangkhei AC during the time) in the month of September 2016. Next, In the month of October 2016, Nongthombam Biren Singh (the then Congress Spokesperson), Who later on became the new CM of Manipur and Francis Ngajokpa (Tadubi AC) also defected to BJP. So, the practice of Defections from the Congress to BJP before 2017 Assembly elections, was one side of the story for the defeat of Congress in the 11th State Legislative Assembly elections 2017.

Again, soon after the 2017 Election, there were 28 elected Congress legislators, but within short time the Congress party already lost 15 legislators and only 13 remain in the Manipur Assembly which includes Shyamkumar who defected to BJP on 12th March 2017 (i.e. a day after the result) was given a minster post, but later disqualified, and Rajkumar Imo Singh with Yamthong Haokip. In June 2020, the speaker continue to disqualified three Congress defectors to ruling BJP - Kshetrimayum Biren Singh, Y. Surchandra Singh, Sanasam Bira Singh. The big blow for the Opposition Congress continues, because in 2021 when the next election was just few months away, Govindas Konthoujam, who was the former President of Manipur Pradesh Congress Party (MPCC) and the Vice President Chaltonlien Amo joined the BJP. So, there was the 12th Manipur Assembly elections in the month of March 2022 in which the Congress party that secured the highest seats in both previous Assembly elections; 42 of 60 in 2012 and 28 of 60 in 2017 was reduced to just 5 (Five) seats.

So, the practice of all these Defections was a game changer in the state assembly elections by weakening the Congress and strengthening the BJP, and it can be said that, these defectors were only changing the Colour of their clothes. In other words, it was the same old wine in the new bottle. Therefore, the practice

of switching from the Congress to the other party, mostly to the ruling government BJP, has weakened the party's strength and morale in the assembly and has hampered the party's unity and cohesion since 2015.

Dis-advantage of not being in power at the Centre:

Another factor for the decline of the Congress party in Manipur since 2015 was that, they were not favored by the voters as they are not in power at the Centre, not only that including the legislators tend to switch their party in line with the party in power at the Centre. Why? Because in India, small and hilly states like Manipur, which is categorized as "special category states" by the National Development Council, receive as much as 90 per cent of its funds as grants from the central governments due to its non-viable nature of state finances. So, Manipur voters, like those in other smaller states in the Northeast, cast their votes in favor of the party which is in power at the Centre. The main reason for that, the people preferred the state to be ruled by the party in power in New Delhi since this will make the central government more duty-bound and soft when it comes to allocating funds for development. In fact, the Union Government's financial support in a state like Manipur is crucial for the state's overall development. Instances can be given how the elected legislators often switch to the party which is in power at the Centre; In March 1977, when the first Non-Congress government was formed at the Centre with Morarji Desai as the new Prime Minister, the other interesting drama that took place in state politics of Manipur was that, the entire Congress legislators in the state who got 51 seats in the previous Democratic Legislative Party (DLP) ministry switched to the Janata party including the new CM Yangmaso Shaiza. The party's position in the state at the end of July 1977 was; Janata 55, CPI-4(the only opposition), Vacant-1, Congress-0, MPP-0, MHU-0, Independent-0. But this did not go more than three years as there was election for the third Legislative Assembly on January 1980, in which the Janata party which got highest 55 out of 60 seats in July 1977 was reduced to just 10 seats. So, from all these we can draw that one factor for the defeat of INC in Manipur Legislative Assembly elections of 2017 and 2022 was that, the voters didn't see the Congress as the better choice than BJP which is in power at the Centre.

Emergence of the BJP as a viable alternative: The BJP has emerged as a viable alternative to the INC in Manipur, by exploiting the weaknesses and failures of the latter. The BJP has been able to project itself as a pro-development, pro-people, and pro-Manipur party that can bring about a positive change and transformation in the state by carrying out their plans into actions. Some of the instances which the BJP adopted in replacing the long Congress rule in Manipur were:

• **Strategic alliances:**

The BJP in 2016 with National People's Party, Naga People's Front, National Democratic Progressive party, Asom Gana Parishad, Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, United Democratic party, United People's Party Liberal, Hill state people's democratic party, Republican party of India, Lok Janshakti Party, Independent, formed an alliance called North East Democratic alliance (NEDA) to fight elections in the North east India. So, having joined hands with NPP and NPF who had a broad support base across several ethnic groups in the state, like the NPF - which represented the interests of the Nagas and the NPP, which represented various sectors of all groups, the BJP was able to appeal to a wider range of societal segments beyond the valley districts and was able to form a Coalition government in 2017 Assembly election even though it received 21 seats which was less than that of the Congress with 28 seats.

- **Appeal to different ethnic groups:**

The BJP in order to win the 2017 Assembly election and to retain their power in 2022 Assembly election made an appeals to various ethnic groups in the state, particularly the Meitei's who make up the majority of the population in Manipur by taking advantage of their dissatisfaction and resentment at the previous Congress administration in handling the 2015 Framework agreement between the Centre and the NSCN-IM, which would jeopardize Manipur's territorial integrity and autonomy. So, the BJP promised the Meitei's that it would safeguard Manipur's sovereignty and integrity at all costs. Apart from this, the BJP also promised to the Meitei's to grant them Scheduled Tribe status which would entitle them reservation benefits in education and employment, withdraw the "draconian" Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) from the state and implement Inner line permit (ILP) system. On the other hand to the two tribal groups – the Kuki's and the Naga's, the BJP was willing to hear their pains. For example, to the Naga's who were dissatisfied to the Congress government's decision to create seven new districts in 2016 which was viewed as a step against their political determination for Greater Nagalim. To the Kuki's, the BJP promised to resolve their long-standing Political talks and demands through dialogue and consultation.

Apart from this, the BJP also tried to woo the minority Christian minorities in the state by highlighting the BJP's commitment to religious freedom and tolerance and by clarifying the party's stand on contentious issues like ban of Beef eating especially, And the BJP in 2022 election, knowing the tribals biggest problem, i.e Protection of tribal lands, made a strong promised that if given another chance to rule than, their land will be protected. So, When the election results were declared on 10th March 2022, the BJP got majority with 32 of 60 seats. Among the 32 elected MLAs – 25 seats are from the valley and 7seats from the hills, which shows the rise from 16 to 25 in the valley and from five to seven in the hills in comparison of 2017 and 2022 assembly elections. From here we can also see that one important factor how BJP in Manipur was able to dominate both the Assembly elections was that, the BJP fought the elections based on burning issues in the state. One thing to be noted in Manipur elections is that, the parties ideology and poll manifestos remained less-significant, poll promises hardly matter in the state. In other words, an election is fought more on local or ethnic lines than on national issues.

- **Why BJP and not the Congress in 2022 Manipur Assembly Election?**

Unlike the 2017 election, where the BJP used major issues for campaigning like Anti- Incumbency, frequent general strikes, economic blockades, etc; The campaign of BJP in 2022 Assembly elections focused on its achievements in the last five years. During its reign (2017 – 2022), the BJP government introduced various welfare schemes. Some notable initiatives introduced by the government include 'Go to Village', 'Go to Hills', 'Meeyamgee Numit' (People's Day), 'Hill Leader's Day', 'Chief Minister Hakshelgi Tengbang' (CMHT or CM Health Card), "CM Da Haisi" (Lets Meet the CM), "Lairik Tamhallasi" (Let the Kids Go to School), Start-up Manipur, Chief Minister-gi Sotharabasingi Tengbang (CMST Scheme for the Poorest of the poor), Chief Minister-gi Laiyeng Shen (Health scheme for the Widows), etc. Despite being a state largely dependent on the Centre, the BJP Government delivered much of its poll promises. Roads and Bridges were constructed, development packages were announced for the hill districts, and a Medical College was brought to Churachandpur, the first such institute in the hill districts. Whereas the tenure of the Congress-led government (2002 – 2017) witnessed frequent general strikes, Economic blockades, and fake encounters, the first BJP government (2017- 2022) have seen no such major incidents. In such a way, the BJP was able to bring renewed hope to the people of the state. By

the end of its first five-year term, most of the senior politicians, bureaucrats and civil society leaders who aspire to become MLAs have now become members of the BJP.

Conclusion

The paper has analyzed the factors that led to the fall of the INC in Manipur. The paper has argued that the INC's decline can be attributed to four main factors: Anti – Incumbency against the Congress, defections and factionalism within the party; Dis-advantage of not being in power at the Centre, and emergence of the BJP as a viable alternative. The paper has concluded that the INC's decline has created a situation of political instability and uncertainty, ethnic polarization and violence, and democratic deficit and erosion in Manipur.

The paper suggests that the INC needs to take urgent steps to revive its fortunes and regain its relevance in Manipur. The party needs to resolve its internal differences and restore its unity and cohesion. The party needs to provide a strong and visionary leadership and articulate a clear and coherent vision or agenda for Manipur's future development. The party needs to approach the people according to the issues to day and address the demands of various communities and protect or promote their interests or rights. The party needs to regain its credibility and trust among the voters and deliver on its manifesto commitments. The party needs to challenge the BJP-led coalition government on various issues or policies that affect Manipur's interests or welfare.

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