

# The Political Fallout of Liquor Policies: Analysing the Downfall of the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee and Its impact on the 2018 General Election

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## Abstract

The Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC), which had ruled the state for two terms in a row, lost the 2018 Mizoram Assembly elections, marking a dramatic political change. This paper examines the political ramifications of the administration led by Congress's liquor laws and examines how they aided in the party's demise. After over 20 years of stringent prohibition, the MPCC introduced the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act) in 2015, partially lifting the state's long-standing ban and permitting the regulated sale of alcohol. Although the goal of this policy was to increase income and decrease the illegal alcohol trade, it caused a great deal of discontent among the largely Christian populace, whose cultural and religious beliefs strongly discourage alcohol use. The paper looks at how the church, powerful civil society groups like the Mizoram People's Forum (MPF), and the general public were all alienated by this policy. These organizations expressed worries about the alleged decline in moral principles and the detrimental societal effects of alcohol consumption, which resulted in a decline in confidence in the governance of Congress. The study also looks into how the Mizo National Front (MNF) took advantage of this discontent by pledging a return to complete prohibition in order to win over important stakeholders. The paper demonstrates how the liquor policy evolved into a crucial issue that influenced public opinion and aided in the downfall of the Congress party by analysing election outcomes, voter behaviour, and policy ramifications. The results imply that in civilizations where religious values shape public opinion, policy choices with significant moral and cultural ramifications can have significant political repercussions. When creating legislation that impact public morality and societal standards, officials must take cultural sensitivities into account, as this article emphasizes.

**Keywords:** 2018 Mizoram Legislative Assembly Election, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee, Government Repercussions (Mizoram liquor Prohibition and Control Act) ,Public Sentiment, Sensitivity to Culture, Influence of society, Religious Value.

## Introduction

A major political change occurred in the state in 2018 when the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee

(MPCC) lost the Mizoram Assembly elections. The Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014, which relaxed the state's long-standing ban on alcohol, was one of the major causes of this fall. After giving it some thought, the Congress-led administration decided to repeal the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act (MLTP Act), which had been in effect since 1997. The decision was made in an effort to raise money, stop the illegal alcohol trade from growing, and lessen the amount of alcohol that is smuggled into the state. However, the powerful Church and civil society groups, which have significant moral and cultural influence over Mizoram's predominately Christian populace, fiercely opposed this audacious action.

Churches and well-known NGOs in Mizoram were approached by the Congress government to determine public opinion prior to the policy's implementation. In recognition of the moral quandary facing the ruling party, one of the Congress leaders, at the time, even claimed that he visited the church to pray before introducing the measure in the legislature. The Congress government made the decision to implement the policy in spite of the sensitivities involved because it thought it was an essential step for the administrative and economic well-being of the state. This decision, however, caused a split between the Church and the Congress as well as other civil society organizations, who saw it as a betrayal of the state's Christian principles.

This study investigates how the public's faith in the Congress government declined as a result of the liquor policy being a crucial issue. The Mizo National Front (MNF) successfully capitalized on the unpopularity of the program by promising to reintroduce complete prohibition, winning over voters and ultimately defeating the Congress party.

## Objectives

1. To examine how the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014, affected voter behaviour and public opinion in the 2018 Mizoram Assembly elections.
2. To assess the degree to which the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee's (MPCC) demise was caused by the liquor policy's alienation of the Church and civil society groups.
3. To look at how the liquor policy was decided upon, including the discussions with leaders of civil society and religion and the challenges the Congress leadership faced.
4. To evaluate how the Mizo National Front (MNF) mobilized voter support and won the 2018 elections by taking advantage of public discontent with the liquor policy.

## Methodology

Using a mixed-method approach, this study will look at the political ramifications of Mizoram's liquor rules and how they affected the 2018 General Election by integrating quantitative, qualitative, and ethical analysis. The Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014, and its impact on voting behavior will be the subject of a survey questionnaire designed to collect quantitative data from a broad sample of voters. In order to investigate the moral and sociological issues raised by the policy, qualitative data will be gathered through interviews with important stakeholders, such as legislators, representatives of NGOs, and leaders of churches. While qualitative insights will be thematically evaluated to offer a fuller understanding of the moral and political ramifications, statistical analysis will be used to establish correlations between the Congress party's electoral fall and discontent with the liquor policy. In order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic, this combined

method will provide a thorough analysis that captures both numerical trends and sociological perspectives.

## Literature Review

### **Dena, Lal (1998). History of Modern Mizoram.**

A thorough and in-depth description of Mizoram's transition from membership in the Indian Union to full statehood in 1987 may be found in **Lal Dena's "History of Modern Mizoram: 1947–1987."** His book painstakingly chronicles Mizoram's sociopolitical environment in the years following independence, emphasizing the difficulties the Mizo people and their leaders had in negotiating the intricacies of democratic governance while maintaining their unique cultural identity. Dena examines the long-standing political instability that afflicted Mizoram during the conflict that ended in 1986 with the signing of the Mizo Accord. Following two decades of bloody insurgency spearheaded by the Mizo National Front (MNF), this agreement restored calm to the area, cleared the path for Mizoram's statehood, and reinstated democratic processes.

Dena's research becomes especially pertinent when considering the implementation of Mizoram's alcohol prohibition. The Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act (MLTP), 1997, was imposed as a result of strong pressure from the Church and powerful civil society groups like the Young Mizo Association (YMA). His work provides context for this legislation. The community's goal to preserve moral integrity and stop the social ills linked to alcohol use was reflected in the MLTP Act. The Church, which has a lot of moral clout in Mizoram, led the campaign for prohibition by presenting it as a way to keep Mizo society morally upright and guarantee that Christian principles were upheld.

According to Lal Dena's research, Mizoram's firmly held cultural and moral values—which are influenced by Christian teachings—have a significant influence on public opinion and political results. His research clarifies why the Congress government's rationale for partially relaxing prohibition under the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014, as a practical measure to reduce illegal alcohol consumption and raise money, was seen as a violation of Mizo values. Widespread public dissatisfaction resulted from the Church, YMA, and civil society's strong opposition to this decision. The ensuing belief that Mizo moral character had been compromised by the Congress played a major role in the party's loss in the 2018 Assembly elections. Dena's study emphasizes the serious political consequences that might result from policy decisions that are in odds with public ideals.

### **Ralte, Lalnithanga (2004). Political History of Mzoram.**

The Political History of Mizoram by Lalnithanga Ralte offers a thorough examination of the state's political climate, following significant events from colonial times until the early 2000s. Ralte looks at the emergence of major political parties, especially the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Mizo National Front (MNF), as well as how they handle administration in a culture where religious beliefs are very important. His research demonstrates the historical significance of the Church, particularly the Mizoram Presbyterian Synod, and well-known civil society groups like the Young Mizo Association (YMA) in influencing public opinion and policy choices.

Lalnithanga's observations are especially pertinent to comprehending the public's resistance to the Congress government's 2014 introduction of the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act). According to his perspective, any measure that is thought to depart from the moral and ethical principles that the Church and civil society uphold is likely to face opposition. This was made clear by the strong opposition to the partial easing of prohibition, which was seen as a break with Mizo customs

and beliefs. Strong opposition from the Church and civil society fueled anti-Congress sentiment and played a major role in the party's 2018 electoral defeat.

Therefore, Ialnithanga work offers a key foundation for examining the political ramifications of policies that conflict with ingrained social ideals. It describes how the Congress's inability to adjust its booze policy to popular opinion left a political void that gave the MNF the opportunity to seize control by vowing to reinstate complete prohibition.

#### **Sangkima (2004) Mizoram: Historical, Cultural and Political Perspectives.**

A comprehensive examination of Mizoram's cultural, social, and political development is provided by Sangkima's *Mizoram: Historical, Cultural, and Political Perspectives*, which highlights the impact of Christian ideals on public opinion and policy choices. His work demonstrates how Mizo society's ethical framework has traditionally been shaped by the moral teachings of the Presbyterian Church and other religious institutions, which have shaped the collective conscience on issues of governance. Sangkima also emphasizes how important civil society groups are to maintaining Mizo cultural values and having a big say in policy discussions, especially the Young Mizo Association (YMA).

Understanding the broad resistance to the Congress government's 2014 introduction of the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act) is made easier with the help of Sangkima's analysis. His study shows that civil society's opposition to lifting ban stemmed from the idea that doing so would compromise Mizo society's moral and ethical basis. Strong public opposition that struck a deep chord with the electorate resulted from the Church and the YMA's perception that the partial easing of prohibition constituted a direct assault to the social fabric. In the end, this response helped the Congress party lose the 2018 elections, which opened the door for the Mizo National Front (MNF) to reinstate prohibition.

A useful lens for examining how deeply rooted socio-religious values affect Mizoram's political outcomes is offered by Sangkima's work. His observations show how laws that go against the moral convictions of the populace can elicit a powerful electoral reaction and change the political climate of the state.

#### **Lalkima, C. (2008). Social and Political Change in Mizoram.**

A thorough analysis of the intricate connection between societal ideals, political choices, and election results in Mizoram can be found in C. Lalkima's book *Societal and Political Change in Mizoram*. His research explores how changes in public opinion, influenced by Mizo society's moral and cultural underpinnings, have a big influence on government stability and policy adoption. Lalkima highlights how firmly ingrained Christian principles, supported by powerful organizations like the Presbyterian Church and the Young Mizo Association (YMA), have influenced Mizoram's socio political landscape. These groups are essential in influencing public opinion, especially with regard to laws that are thought to have an impact on society's moral foundation.

The public's reaction to the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014, which was adopted by the Congress government under Lal Thanhawla, is best explained by Lalkima's interpretation. He draws attention to how many voters were offended by the decision to partially abolish prohibition since it was seen as a departure from Mizo values. There was disagreement about the policy as a result of the Congress government's inability to interact with religious and civil society organizations in a meaningful way. Widespread discontent and mistrust among voters were cultivated by this misalignment between the government's policy goals and popular opinion.

Lalkima also looks at how this policy error gave the Mizo National Front (MNF) a strong electoral narrative that strongly reflected the moral and cultural feelings of the populace. By threatening to reinstate prohibition, the MNF took advantage of the public's unhappiness. This tactic struck a chord with voters and allowed the party to make a comeback in the 2018 Assembly elections. Thus, Lalkima's work provides a comprehensive understanding of how policies that are incompatible with Mizo society's moral convictions can have political repercussions, changing the electoral landscape and giving power back to parties that share the public's values.

**Lalnuntluanga, J. (2019). Liquor Policy in Mizoram: A Critical Analysis.**

The goals, application, and sociopolitical ramifications of the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014 are thoroughly examined in J. Lalnuntluanga's *Liquor Policy in Mizoram: A Critical Analysis of the MLPC Act, 2014*. His book critically assesses how the Congress government, led by Lal Thanhawla, presented the move to partially repeal prohibition as a practical step to address two main issues: reducing the use of dangerous, illegal alcohol and bringing in much-needed state money. According to Lalnuntluanga's research, the Congress government thought that controlled alcohol sales would lessen smuggling and bootlegging, which would stop the spread of hazardous homemade whiskey that was endangering the public's health.

However, Lalnuntluanga's research highlights that the policy did not have broad public support, even though the government made an effort to interact with important stakeholders, such as NGOs, the Church, and civil society organizations. His research shows that even though the government made an effort to consider many viewpoints prior to enacting the legislation, the general public's belief that abolishing ban would compromise Mizo moral and cultural values remained strong. Being heavily impacted by Christian doctrine and the moral authority of the Presbyterian Church and Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizo society saw the lifting of the ban as a departure from the moral standards that had been maintained for many years.

Lalnuntluanga emphasizes the general dissatisfaction caused by the Congress government's inability to sufficiently address public issues and the moral anxieties related to the partial removal of prohibition. According to his research, this mounting discontent played a major role in the Congress party's electoral collapse in the 2018 Assembly elections, as voters switched their allegiance to the Mizo National Front (MNF), which pledged to reinstate prohibition. Thus, Lalnuntluanga's work offers crucial insights into how policy choices that go against society's strongly held moral principles can have a big political impact and change Mizoram's electorate's preferences and public trust.

**C. Laldina (2020). Prohibition and Control: Understanding Liquor Policy In Mizoram**

*Prohibition and Control: Understanding Liquor Policies in Mizoram (2020)* by C. Laldina provides a thorough analysis of the social and political ramifications of the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014, with an emphasis on the reaction of the general public and how it affected election results. His study offers factual evidence of the increase in events involving alcohol after the Mizoram Liquor Total restriction Act (MLTP), 1997, partially lifted the restriction. According to Laldina's findings, there has been a notable rise in traffic accidents, alcohol-related crimes, and domestic violence incidents, which has increased public fear and bolstered resistance to the Congress government's policy.

Laldina's work highlights how the public was greatly affected by the Church, the Young Mizo Association (YMA), and other civil society organizations' concerns about the social repercussions of abolishing prohibition. According to his study, these organizations argued that the partial relaxation of



prohibition compromised the moral integrity of Mizo society and centered their criticism on the moral and ethical ramifications of increasing alcohol availability. Laldina points out that these worries were not only hypothetical; rather, they were based on real-world increases in social harm, which gave rise to the widely held belief that the Congress government had put financial gains ahead of the welfare and moral character of Mizo society.

Laldina also shows how this moral opposition grew in strength and played a significant role in influencing popular sentiment before to the 2018 Assembly elections. His research gives a thorough explanation of how the public's belief that societal harm had worsened stoked discontent with the Congress administration and sparked a powerful anti-incumbency movement. Voter behavior was ultimately impacted by this wave of dissatisfaction, which helped the Congress party lose the election and made room for the Mizo National Front (MNF), which pledged to reinstate prohibition and solve public issues. In a society where moral and cultural values define governance, Laldina's research provides a fundamental knowledge of how popular perceptions of social suffering caused by policies can result in electoral backlash and political reform.

**Hmingthansanga, R. (2020). Mizoram and Liquor Policy: An Inquiry into Public Sentiments and Political Consequences.**

Hmingthansanga's Mizoram and Liquor Policy: An Inquiry into Public Sentiments and Political Consequences (2020) examines in detail the political repercussions and public reaction to the partial removal of prohibition under the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014. His study explores how worries about moral decay and societal harm served as the foundation for the public's discontent with the Congress government's choice. Hmingthansanga emphasizes that the Congress government, led by Lal Thanhawla, presented the decision to relax prohibition as a practical way to raise money for the government and reduce the use of dangerous, illegal alcohol. His analysis, however, shows how this justification fell flat with most Mizo people, who saw the action as a danger to the moral integrity of society and a violation of Mizo ideals.

Hmingthansanga's findings highlight how the Church, the Young Mizo Association (YMA), and other civil society organizations—all of which vehemently opposed the repeal of prohibition—strongly impacted popular opinion. These organizations used moral and ethical arguments to support their resistance, claiming that greater access to alcohol would weaken Mizo society's moral foundation by increasing crime, domestic violence, and social degradation. According to Hmingthansanga's research, a strong sense of anti-incumbency sentiment developed in the lead-up to the 2018 Assembly elections as a result of the Congress government's inability to sufficiently address these issues, which caused widespread popular disenchantment.

Hmingthansanga's work also shows how this public dissatisfaction was a major factor in the demise of the Congress party and the revival of the Mizo National Front (MNF). According to his research, the MNF took advantage of public hostility to the liquor policy by identifying with the moral principles upheld by civil society and the Church, vowing to restore prohibition and preserve Mizo cultural values. The MNF's strong win in the 2018 elections was aided by this alignment with public mood, whereas the Congress party's electoral collapse was caused by its incapacity to strike a balance between revenue collection and societal ideals. By showing how policy decisions, public opinion, and election results interact and how a failure to align policy with societal ideals can have significant political repercussions, Hmingthansanga's study offers insightful information.

### Research Questions

1. How did the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014, affect voter behaviour in the 2018 General Election? How did the public see it?
2. How much did the Church's and civil society organizations' resistance affect public sentiment and play a role in the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee's (MPCC) demise?
3. What was the impact on voter preferences and the election outcome of the Mizo National Front's (MNF) pledge to reintroduce complete prohibition?
4. What moral and legal conundrums did the Congress government face while trying to strike a balance between the public's religious sentiments and economic interests?

### Background Of Liquor Policies In Mizoram

Strict alcohol control laws have long been in place in Mizoram, a state in Northeast India where Christian values have a significant impact on public opinion. The state has enforced total prohibition since the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act (MLTP Act), 1995, which reflects the moral and religious beliefs of the Mizo people. Enforcing and upholding this ban was greatly aided by the Church's influence, especially that of the Presbyterian Church, which shared the general view that alcohol use was harmful to moral principles and social harmony.

Nevertheless, the illegal liquor trade and cross-border smuggling thrived in spite of the strong prohibition, creating difficulties for law enforcement and costing the state money. The 18-year ban was partially eased in 2014 when the Congress-led government adopted the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), acknowledging these problems. In an effort to reduce the illegal market and increase government revenue, this policy change allowed for the controlled sale of alcohol. Although administrative and economic factors drove this decision, the Church and civic society fiercely opposed it, causing a deep gap between the state and religious organizations.

As a compromise between upholding moral principles and taking into account economic realities, the MLPC Act, 2014 was introduced. The Act imposed stringent regulations to monitor and restrict alcohol consumption and allowed the controlled sale of liquor through licensed sellers. The government defended the choice by emphasizing the opportunity to make money, stop adulteration, and lessen the adverse effects of the uncontrolled alcohol trade. The Church and other powerful organizations saw the Act as a break from Mizo traditional values in spite of these protections. The strategy was fiercely opposed by religious groups, especially the Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee (MKHC) and the Presbyterian Church, which said it damaged the moral and spiritual foundation of Mizo society. Political unrest that would eventually be a major factor in the 2018 Mizoram Assembly elections was sparked by this broad opposition.

Public discontent with the Congress government's alcohol policy was a major factor in the 2018 Mizoram Assembly elections. The MLPC Act's introduction caused a rift between the Church and powerful civil society groups, making it difficult for the Congress-led Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) to justify its policy choices. The Mizo National Front (MNF) took advantage of the public's rising dissatisfaction by vowing to restore total prohibition in the event that they were elected to power. The electorate responded favorably to the MNF's promise to abolish the MLPC Act, especially those who attend church and support a return to traditional moral values. By presenting itself as a champion of Mizo cultural and religious identity, the MNF was able to increase its popularity among voters thanks to its calculated positioning.

A major electoral shift resulted from the MPCC's failure to address the general dissatisfaction with the liquor policy and the MNF's successful mobilization of public support. As a result, the Congress-led government's policies were decisively rejected in the 2018 elections, which led to the MNF's electoral win.

The MLPC Act, 2014, which partially lifted the prohibition on alcohol, has a complicated socio political aftermath with wide-ranging effects. The strategy alienated important players including the Church and civil society organizations, despite being implemented to alleviate economic difficulties and control the illegal booze trade. The liquor policy became a politically delicate topic as a result of this estrangement, which affected public opinion and voting patterns in the 2018 Mizoram Assembly elections. Growing anger resulted from the Congress government's inability to match its policy choices with the people's firmly held moral and religious beliefs, and the MNF was able to capitalize on this resentment to win an election. The complex interrelationships among Mizoram's governance, political strategy, and public morals underscore the necessity of a sophisticated comprehension of the ways in which liquor policies can influence election results and reshape political environments

### **Evolution of Liquor Policy in Mizoram.**

Mizoram's liquor policy history is intricately linked to the state's social, religious, and cultural values. Christian principles, especially those promoted by the Presbyterian Church, have had a substantial impact on governmental policy, notably with regard to alcohol consumption, since Mizoram's early years as a union territory and later as a full-fledged state. Religious and civil society organizations strongly advocated for the prohibition of alcohol because of the deeply ingrained belief in Mizo society that drinking causes moral decay and societal disintegration.

A resolution approved by the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in 1985 was the first official attempt to enforce prohibition in Mizoram. The Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act (MLTP Act), 1995, which went into force in 1997, was made possible by this initiative. The sale, use, and distribution of alcoholic beverages were outlawed in the state by the MLTP Act. The Church and other powerful social organizations applauded this action as a measure to protect Mizo society's moral foundation. Mizoram adhered to complete prohibition for almost 20 years, bringing official policy into line with the moral and religious beliefs of its citizens.

Notwithstanding the MLTP Act's noble goals, there were many difficulties in dealing with the real-world effects of complete prohibition. Increased consumption of illegal and frequently tainted booze, a flourishing black market, and cross-border smuggling were all consequences of the alcohol ban. The state's financial resources were further taxed by the income losses from alcohol sales as it battled to stop illegal trade and related criminal activity. These unforeseen repercussions eventually brought attention to the necessity of a more practical approach to alcohol control.

A major change in the state's liquor policy was brought about by the Congress-led government's introduction of the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014, in response to these issues. The 18-year ban was partially repealed by the MLPC Act, permitting the sale and consumption of alcohol under strict regulations. The government used the necessity to stop the illegal liquor trade, improve control over alcohol consumption, and bring in money for the state as justifications for this change in policy. To manage the distribution of booze, government-controlled establishments and licensed wineries were set up, and severe sanctions were put in place to stop abuse.



However, civil society organizations and religious institutions fiercely opposed the change from total prohibition to limited regulation. The MLPC Act's passage was seen by the Church, which had been an outspoken supporter of prohibition, as a departure from Mizo moral and cultural values. Even with stringent controls, the legalization of alcohol was seen as compromising the moral and spiritual purity of Mizo society. Public opinion became divided between those who supported controlled alcohol sales and those who called for a return to complete prohibition as a result of this opposition, creating a socio political division.

Thus, Mizoram's changing liquor laws show a complicated interaction between popular opinion, moral principles, and real-world governance issues. The shift to controlled liquor sales was a reaction to the socioeconomic realities that surfaced over time, whereas the original prohibition was motivated by ethical and religious considerations. The results of the 2018 Mizoram Assembly elections were significantly influenced by the political repercussions that followed these policy changes, especially the Church's estrangement and its impact on voting patterns. The development of Mizoram's liquor laws over time highlights the difficult balancing act that must be done by legislators between upholding cultural norms and attending to the practical demands of the populace.

### **The MLPC Act of 2014's Effect on Public Opinion and Voter Behaviour**

A major change in Mizoram's liquor policy was brought about by the enactment of the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014, which also changed public sentiment and the voting patterns of voters in the 2018 Mizoram Assembly elections. In order to control alcohol sales, lessen illicit trade, and increase state revenue, the Act partially relaxed the 18-year ban imposed by the Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act (MLTP Act), 1995. However, religious organizations and segments of civil society fiercely opposed the move to loosen prohibition, which caused a rift in public opinion and ultimately impacted the political climate.

After the MLPC Act was introduced, there was a noticeable change in public sentiment regarding the liquor policy. A significant portion of the populace, especially those who adhered to Church doctrine, saw the policy shift as a moral concession, even though the government's justification for eliminating the ban centred on administrative and economic efficiency. Strong opposition was voiced by the Presbyterian Church and other well-known religious organizations, who saw the sale and use of alcohol as harmful to Mizoram's moral and social fabric. Civil society organizations echoed this opposition, claiming that the partial lifting of prohibition went against Mizo society's fundamental values. Public opinion gradually turned unfavourable, with many believing that the policy change was a betrayal of moral and ethical standards.

As dissatisfaction with the MLPC Act created political repercussions for the Congress-led Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC), the relationship between the liquor policy and voter opinion became more apparent. The MNF skillfully matched their campaign with the public's clamour for a return to complete prohibition after realizing the growing discontent. The MNF was able to establish itself as a champion of Mizo morals and cultural identity by promising to abolish the MLPC Act and restore total prohibition. Voters who saw the Congress government's change in policy as a departure from custom found great resonance in this story.

In the 2018 Mizoram Assembly elections, a statistical analysis of voter preferences showed a distinct pattern of electoral behaviour impacted by opinions on the liquor policy. According to survey data and post-election analysis, the MNF's strong position on reintroducing prohibition made a sizable section of

voters—especially those from older demographics and rural areas—more likely to support it. In areas where the liquor policy was most opposed, voter preferences clearly shifted in favour of the MNF. Furthermore, a significant swing toward the MNF was observed in seats with a higher number of church-affiliated communities, highlighting the critical role that religious emotion plays in influencing election results.

Different groups had differing opinions on the liquor policy, which reflected differing opinions about the partial repeal of prohibition. The government's justification for enacting the MLPC Act was more acceptable to younger people, urban dwellers, and economically progressive organizations, who recognized the necessity of preventing illicit trade and the possible economic advantages. But compared to the more conservative and traditional voter base that rejected the legislation, this demographic group made up a lower share of the electorate. Concerns regarding the social repercussions of alcohol use also led women's organizations to strongly favour candidates who called for the reinstatement of prohibition. Thus, the MLPC Act, 2014's effects on public opinion and voter behavior underscore the complex interrelationships of political tactics, moral principles, and policy decisions. The Congress government's decision to partially lift prohibition was motivated by practical grounds, but it did not reflect the majority's profoundly held ethical convictions, which led to considerable dissatisfaction. By promising to reinstate prohibition, the MNF was able to take advantage of this unhappiness and win an election, demonstrating the influence of popular opinion on political results in Mizoram.

## Survey Findings

The survey results that look at how the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014, affected public opinion and voter mood in the run-up to the 2018 Mizoram Assembly elections are analysed in this chapter. Public awareness of the Act, views on the partial repeal of prohibition, and opinions about how the Congress government handled the liquor policy were also evaluated in the study. The survey investigated if the Mizo National Front's (MNF) pledge to restore total prohibition affected voter preferences and whether the policy affected voting decisions. It also looked into how the Church and civil society influenced public opinion and how much of a role they had in the demise of the Congress party.

The results shed important light on how public opinion, policy choices, and election results interact in Mizoram. This analysis demonstrates how the state's political climate and voter behaviour were impacted by the liquor laws.

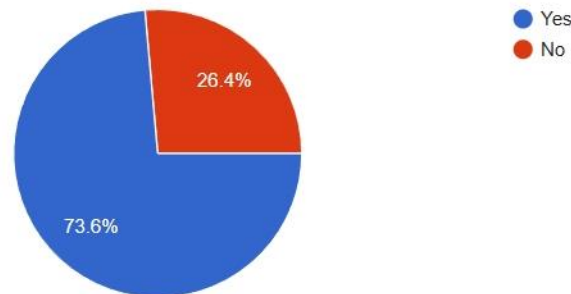
### 1. Awareness of The MLPC Act 2024

Prior to the 2018 elections, a sizable majority of respondents (73.6%) said they were aware of the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014, whereas 26.4% said they were unaware of it. This high degree of awareness suggests that the alcohol policy was a hot topic in the run-up to the elections. Public awareness of the policy changes was greatly aided by the media's broad coverage, civil society's active participation, and religious organizations' involvement.

Before the 2018 elections, did you know about the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014?

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53 responses



## 2. Viewing the Importance of Prohibition Removal

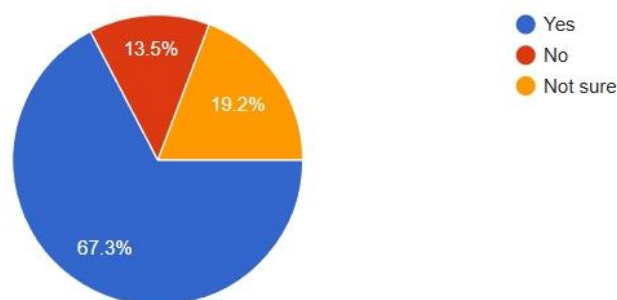
A majority of voters thought the policy was a necessary step, as seen by the 67.3% of respondents who said that easing the prohibition was justified when asked if the decision to partially repeal the liquor prohibition was essential. 13.5% of respondents, however, disagreed with this viewpoint, expressing worries about the possible harm to society. Furthermore, 19.2% of respondents expressed uncertainty, indicating that a sizable section of the populace was either unsure or lacked a firm stance.

The judgment was endorsed by the majority of respondents, suggesting that the state's liquor policy needed to be changed. The 19.2% ambiguity, however, indicates that the Congress government's explanation of the policy's justification may not have been totally successful.

Do you believe that the MLPC Act's decision to partially abolish the prohibition on liquor was necessary?

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52 responses



## 3. Views on the Prohibition End Decision by Congress

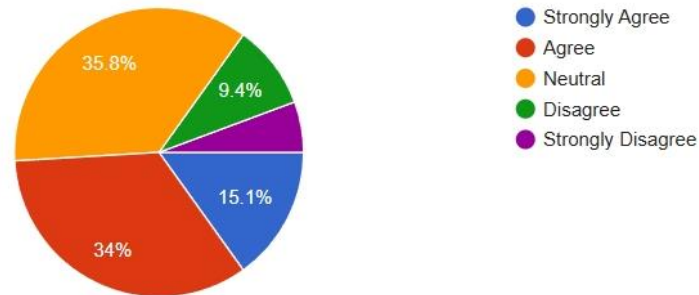
There was significant disagreement among the public on the Congress government's decision to abolish prohibition. There was an almost equal split in public opinion, with 34% of respondents agreeing with the decision and 35.8% disagreeing. Furthermore, 15.1% of respondents strongly agreed with the policy, indicating considerable support, whilst 9.4% disagreed and 5.7% strongly disagreed, indicating a significant degree of discontent. The conflicting answers imply that although some people saw possible advantages, others were worried about the ethical and societal ramifications of the approach.

The polarization of the electorate indicates that the liquor policy was a controversial topic. The proposal elicited conflicting responses, which might have reduced the Congress party's support base, as seen by the lack of a definite majority in favour or against it.

What were your thoughts on Congress's decision to end prohibition?

 Copy chart

53 responses



#### 4. Perceived Social Effects of the Liquor Law

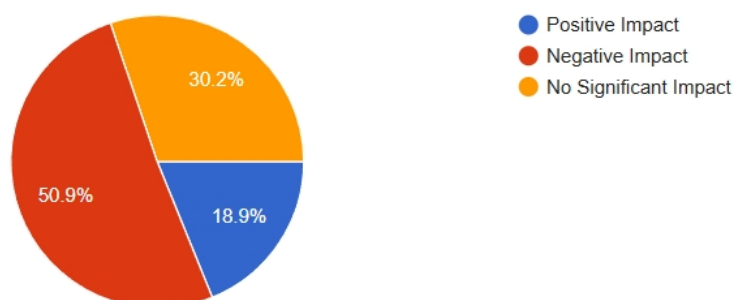
50.9% of respondents said the liquor policy had a negative effect on Mizoram society when asked if it had a positive or negative effect. This suggests that most people thought the measure would harm the state's social cohesion. Conversely, only 18.9% thought the program had a good effect, while 30.2% thought it had no effect at all, indicating a neutral position. Concerns about societal issues like rising alcohol consumption and the social problems that go along with it are reflected in the prevalent view of negative effects.

A majority of the people linked the lifting of prohibition to social harm, as evidenced by the impression of a negative societal consequence. The Mizo National Front (MNF), which pledged to restore prohibition, won the election because of this feeling, which probably fueled public discontent with the Congress administration.

Did Mizoram's society benefit or suffer as a result of the liquor policy, in your opinion?

 Copy chart

53 responses



## 5. Knowledge of Consultations with Churches and NGOs

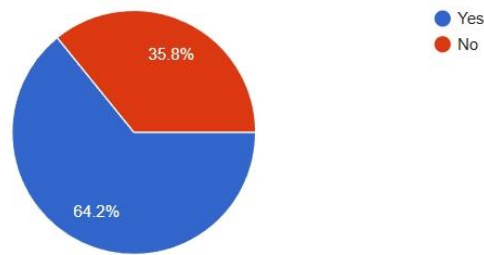
According to the study, 64.2% of participants knew that the Congress government had conferred with churches and non-governmental organizations before to implementing the alcohol policy, whilst 35.8% were not aware of this fact. This suggests that most people were aware of the government's attempts to consult important parties, especially civil society and religious organizations, prior to enacting the policy.

Even while most respondents were aware of the consultations, the fact that more than one-third of the population (35.8%) was unaware of them raises the possibility that the government of Congress may not have adequately explained its participation initiatives. The idea that the policy was implemented without sufficient public participation may have been influenced by this ignorance.

Did you know that before enacting the policy, the Congress government talked with NGOs and churches?

53 responses

 [Copy chart](#)



## 6. Views of the Public Regarding the Congress Government's Consideration of Public Opinion

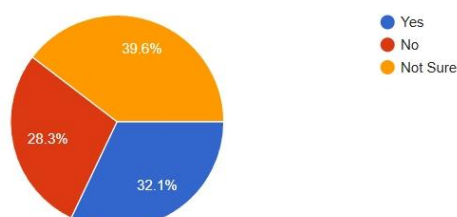
Responses to the question of whether the Congress administration considered public opinion sufficiently before implementing the liquor policy were not quite consistent. Just 32.1% of respondents thought public opinion was sufficiently taken into account, whereas 28.3% disagreed. Remarkably, a sizable percentage of respondents (39.6%) expressed hesitancy, suggesting a lack of clarity regarding the degree to which public opinion impacted the policy choice.

The public's ambiguity on whether their views were taken into consideration when making the policy decision is reflected in the high percentage of uncertainty (39.6%). This implies that the Congress government's decision-making process lacked adequate public trust and transparency. The conflicting answers might also suggest that, in spite of the involvement of churches and NGOs, the consultation process did not fully reflect the opinions of the general people.

Before enacting the liquor policy, do you think the Congress government gave enough thought to public opinion?

53 responses

 [Copy chart](#)





## 7. Liquor policy's impact on 2018 voting decisions

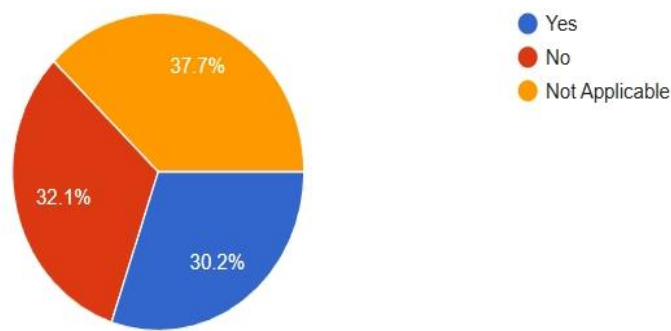
There was a wide range of responses. 32.1% of respondents indicated the liquor policy had no bearing on their vote, compared to 30.2% who said it did. Remarkably, a sizable percentage (37.7%) selected it as "not applicable," suggesting that other considerations were more important to many voters when making their choice.

While the liquor policy was a significant issue, the comparatively high number of voters who selected "not applicable" indicates that it was not the only factor that influenced the majority of voters. Voting decisions were also impacted by other elements like party loyalty, development, and governance.

In the 2018 elections, was the liquor policy a factor in your choice to vote?

 Copy chart

53 responses



## 8. Liquor policy's perceived contribution to the defeat of the Congress Part

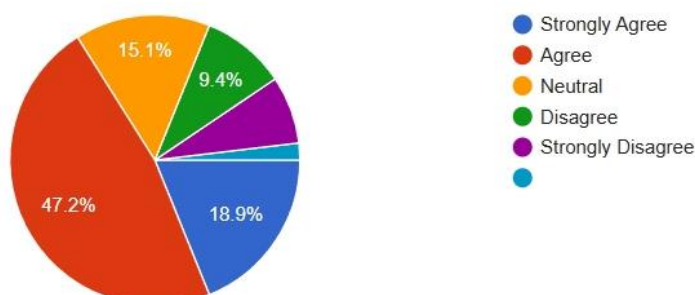
The majority of respondents thought that the Congress party's defeat was mostly due to the liquor policy. 47.2% agreed and 18.9% strongly agreed, meaning that 66.1% of respondents believed the policy was a key factor in the party's demise. A total of 16.9% (9.4% disagree + 7.5% strongly disagree) did not view the policy as a significant factor, while 15% were neutral.

The resounding majority (66.1%) indicates that popular sentiment against the Congress was significantly shaped by discontent with the booze policy. The policy's unhappiness alienated important voter groups, including as civil society organizations and the Church.

Do you believe that a significant contributing element to the Congress party's 2018 defeat was the liquor policy?

 Copy chart

53 responses



## 9. MNF's Promise to Restore Total Prohibition's Impact

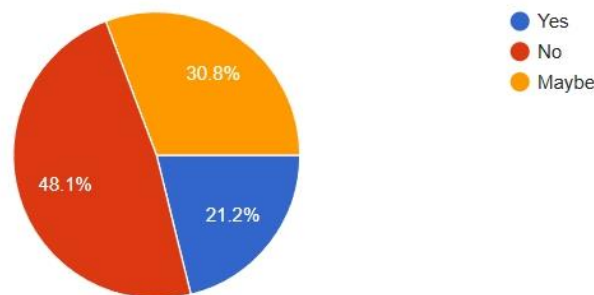
According to the responses, 21.2% of respondents acknowledged that the Mizo National Front's (MNF) pledge to reinstate total prohibition had an impact on their decision to vote. There was a mixed response, though, as 30.8% were unsure and 48.1% claimed their vote was unaffected.

While some voters were swayed by MNF's pledge to reinstate prohibition, the majority (48.1%) did not take this into account when casting their ballots. This implies that although some voters found the MNF's prohibitionist position appealing, the majority of voters did not find it to be the most important consideration.

Was your vote influenced by the Mizo National Front's (MNF) pledge to reintroduce complete prohibition?

 Copy chart

52 responses



## 10. How Public Perception Is Affected by the Church's Opposition

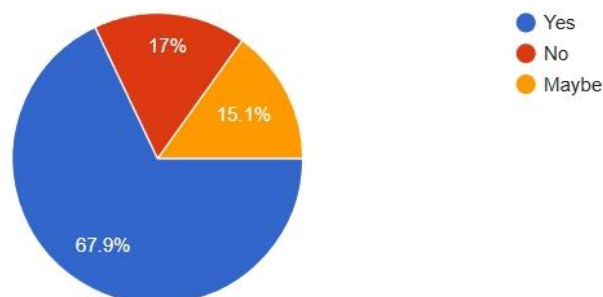
While 17% disagreed and 15.1% were unsure, a resounding 67.9% of respondents thought that the Church's opposition to the liquor legislation affected popular opinion.

Public opinion was significantly impacted by the Church's vehement opposition to the booze policy. Being a very powerful organization in Mizoram, the Church's position greatly influenced public opinion, which in turn impacted the chances of the Congress party winning elections.

Do you believe that the public's perception was impacted by the Church's resistance to the alcohol policy?

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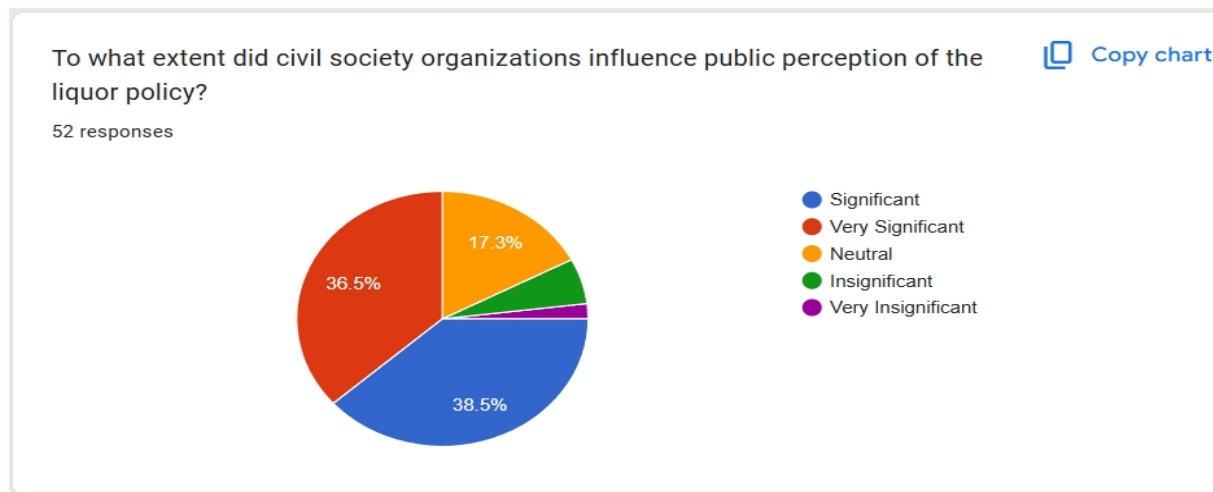
53 responses



## 11. How Civil Society Organizations Affect Public Attitude

The replies emphasize how important civil society groups are in influencing public opinion. Seventy-five percent of respondents acknowledged the influence of these organizations, with 36.5% saying their influence was very substantial and 38.5% saying such. Only a small percentage (7.7% combined) believed their influence was negligible, while 17.3% remained neutral.

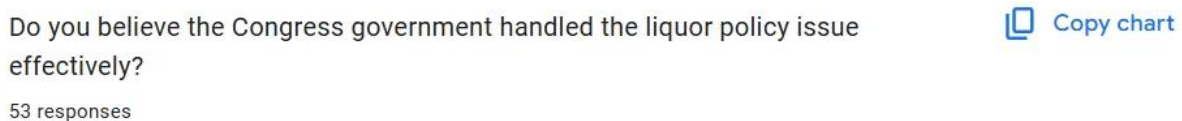
The significant impact of civil society organizations implies that they played a crucial role in galvanizing public opposition to the liquor policy. A significant portion of the populace found resonance in their outspoken resistance.



## 12. How the Public Views Congress's Management of Liquor Policy

The way the Congress government handled the liquor policy was generally seen negatively by the public. 43.4% disagreed, while only 32.1% thought the administration handled the matter well. A lack of information or ambiguity was reflected in the 24.5% who were unsure.

The administration may not have adequately addressed popular concerns, as seen by the unfavourable opinion of the Congress government's handling of the liquor policy. Voters were further alienated by unclear information and poor handling of public dissension.



### 13. Views of the Public on Enforcing Total Prohibition in Mizoram

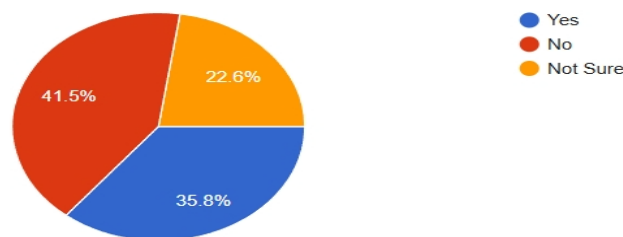
35.8% of respondents supported total ban, 41.5% opposed it, and 22.6% were unsure. This division shows how strongly people still feel about prohibition.

The conflicting viewpoint emphasizes how complicated the problem is. A larger portion of the population seems to favour a more balanced approach, even though a sizable portion supports prohibition. This suggests that future governments should carefully evaluate public mood before implementing legislative changes

Do you believe that Mizoram's government should have imposed complete prohibition?

53 responses

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### 14. Mizoram's Perceived Effects of Lifting Prohibition

Concerns about societal harm were reflected in the 50.9% of respondents who stated that an increase in alcohol-related social difficulties was the most significant effect of repealing prohibition. 15.1% brought up the alienation of religious groups, while 30.2% emphasized a rise in government revenue.

Two viewpoints were proposed by further comments:

According to several responses, the removal of prohibition reduced health hazards by preventing individuals from consuming alcohol of poor quality.

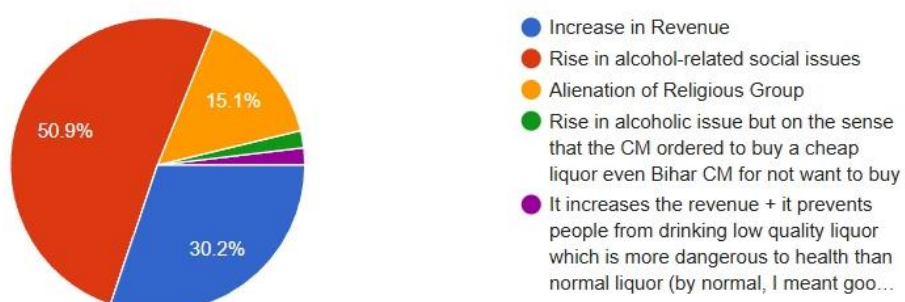
Others expressed disapproval of the move, arguing that the government put profits ahead of the welfare of society.

The public's fear of the unforeseen repercussions of repealing prohibition is highlighted by the predominance of worries about emerging societal difficulties. Nonetheless, the fact that higher revenue and less cheap booze were consumed suggests that the policy had both beneficial and detrimental effects.

In your opinion, what was the most significant effect of the prohibition's lifting?

 Copy chart

53 responses



### 15. Prospects for Reintroducing Total Prohibition in the Future

A plurality (52.8%) said that the choice should be based on popular opinion, while 17% supported a total ban and 30.2% opposed it.

The preference for public consultation implies that future governments should address liquor policies in a participatory manner. Because the subject is so divisive, officials must strike a balance between socioeconomic factors and public opinion.

### Survey Conclusio

The results of the poll demonstrate how the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014, significantly impacted public opinion and the results of the 2018 Mizoram Assembly elections. With broad knowledge of the policy and conflicting opinions on whether lifting prohibition was the proper move, public opinion was sharply split. Voters were deeply dissatisfied with the program because of its perceived detrimental effects on society as well as the Church's and civil society organizations' adamant opposition. Since many saw the program as a departure from the moral and cultural ideals of the state, this discontent played a significant role in the electoral defeat of the Congress party. A sizable portion of the electorate remained unconvinced, despite the Mizo National Front's (MNF) pledge to restore total prohibition influencing some votes. Overall, the results indicate that the Congress government's approach to the liquor policy was criticized, and that public opinion will likely be a deciding factor in how Mizoram's liquor policy develops in the future.

### Political Repercussions and the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee's Demise

The political backlash caused by the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014, was a direct cause of the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee's (MPCC) defeat in the 2018 Assembly elections. The influential Church, especially the Mizoram Presbyterian Synod, fiercely opposed the move to repeal the 18-year-old ban, repeatedly denouncing the policy as morally detrimental to Mizo community. The Synod said that "lifting prohibition is not only against the teachings of the Church but also against the sentiments of the Mizo people," according to a report published in *The Hindu* in 2015. Major civil society organizations such as the Young Mizo Association (YMA) and Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) echoed this opposition, claiming that the partial elimination would increase accidents, domestic violence, and crimes related to alcohol. Their worries were not unjustified, as a survey conducted by the Mizoram Excise and Narcotics Department revealed an increase in events involving alcohol after 2015. Critics also noted that the Congress government did not sufficiently address the public's general concerns and attitudes, even though it had spoken with NGOs and the Church prior to implementing the policy.

The Mizo National Front (MNF) was able to develop a compelling political narrative that connected with the public thanks to the issue over the liquor policy. A key promise in the MNF's election campaign was to reinstate total prohibition in the event that they were elected to power. The MNF positioned itself as the protector of Mizo identity and Christian values by capitalizing on the Mizo people's strong religious feelings. MNF leader and current Chief Minister Zoramthanga reportedly said, "The Congress government disregarded the voice of the Church and the will of the people," according to *The Indian Express* (2018). Restoring prohibition and preserving the moral foundation of our society will be our top priorities". Voters responded favorably to this message, particularly those who are religiously conservative and live in rural areas. A significant portion of the populace was further alienated by the



belief that the Congress government had put income generation ahead of social peace. Voter attitude underwent a dramatic change as a result of the MNF's pledge to reinstate prohibition, social pressure, and moral resistance. As a result, in one of the most significant electoral turnarounds in Mizoram's political history, the Congress, which had won 34 seats in the 2013 elections, was lowered to just 5 seats in 2018, while the MNF surged to power with 26 seats.

### **The 2018 election victory of the Mizo National Front and the emergence of the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM)**

A major political shift occurred in the 2018 Mizoram Assembly elections when the Mizo National Front (MNF) regained power after a ten-year absence. Using the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act, 2014, the MNF successfully took advantage of the general discontent with the Congress government's decision to repeal the alcohol ban. Religious organizations, civil society organizations, and a sizable portion of the electorate who were fed up with the Congress's apparent contempt for popular opinion and religious principles found resonance in the MNF's promise to restore total prohibition. Furthermore, shortly before the 2018 elections, two prominent Congress figures, Minister Mr. Lalrinliana Salo and then-Home Minister Mr. R. Lalzirliana, switched to the MNF, giving the MNF a clear advantage. Their exit damaged the Congress and increased the MNF's legitimacy, which helped it gain support and draw in unsure voters. The MNF's electoral approach, which combined a powerful organizational structure with an appeal to religious sensibilities, finally resulted in a landslide win, pushing the Congress to the periphery.

At the same time, a new political party called the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), led by former Indian Police Service (IPS) officer turned politician Pu Lalduhoma, emerged in the 2018 elections. Disillusioned voters and the younger generation were drawn to ZPM's demands for transparency and reform as an alternative to the major political parties. ZPM set the stage for its ascent to prominence in politics even though it failed to win a majority in 2018. This momentum reached a peak in the general elections of 2023 in Mizoram, where ZPM, led by Pu Lalduhoma, won a resounding win and took power. In a sudden turn of events, the Congress, which had previously held sway over Mizoram, was reduced to just one member of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Ngunlianchunga. The sharp fall in the Congress begs the important question: Was the Congress's liquor policy the only factor in its demise? Although the Congress's base of support was significantly eroded by the MLPC Act, the party's declining standing was also a result of its incapacity to adjust to shifting political conditions and popular unhappiness. The political shift in Mizoram serves as a reminder of how policy choices, especially those that go against deeply held cultural and religious beliefs, can have unanticipated effects on the political landscape.

### **Conclusion**

The study's conclusion emphasizes how the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act (MLPC Act), 2014, has significant political, social, and electoral repercussions. In a culture steeped in Christian principles, the partial removal of the liquor ban, which sought to raise money and lower the consumption of dangerous alcohol, caused great controversy. Prominent organizations with significant moral and social sway over public opinion, such the Young Mizo Association (YMA) and the Mizoram Presbyterian Church, strongly opposed the idea. These organizations vehemently opposed the relaxation of prohibition, saying that it would weaken Mizo society's moral foundation, along with other civil

society organizations. Their tenacious opposition was essential in influencing public opinion against the Congress administration and ultimately leading to the party's defeat in the 2018 elections. The electorate, which saw the Congress government's move as a departure from Mizo social values, found great resonance in the moral and ethical opposition spearheaded by these powerful organizations.

Furthermore, there is still controversy in Mizoram on the necessity of supplying alcohol vs upholding total prohibition. There is still a strong divide in society between those who contend that controlled liquor sales can deter the use of dangerous alcohol and bring in money for the government and those who think that easing prohibition would compromise the moral character of the Mizo people. A larger conflict between economic realism and commitment to firmly held religious and cultural beliefs is reflected in this on-going discussion. The difficulty of striking a balance between societal expectations and governance is reflected in the liquor policy issue, which continues to divide opinions with opposing factions.

In addition to changing the political landscape of Mizoram, the MLPC Act, 2014, opened the door for the rise of new political forces like the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM). Under the leadership of former IPS officer Pu Lalduhoma, the ZPM rose to popularity by promoting policies that reflected popular opinion and eventually won a historic victory in the 2023 Mizoram Assembly elections. The electorate's thirst for change and their rejection of policies that ignored popular feeling were further highlighted by this win. In the meantime, the Congress party, which had previously dominated Mizoram, was diminished to just one MLA, Mr. Ngunlianchunga, underscoring its sharp fall and diminished significance in state politics.

The study's policy ramifications are obvious: future administrations in Mizoram and elsewhere must understand how crucial it is to base policy choices on popular opinion, especially when handling delicate matters with social values at their core. To make sure that policies represent the goals and moral compass of the populace, policymakers must have thorough discussions with important stakeholders, such as the general public, civil society groups like the YMA, and churches. The Congress government has shown that failure to do so can result in electoral repercussions and political disengagement. A transparent, inclusive, and participatory approach to policymaking is necessary going ahead in order to avoid similar political repercussions and preserve public confidence in government. The Mizoram example is a potent reminder that policy choices must be morally and culturally acceptable to the people they are intended to serve, in addition to being good economically.

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