CHAPTER-6

The Puzzle of BJP's Majority: 2014 Elections

In the history of elections, India has seen both "normal" elections and extraordinary ones. Normal elections follow the routine logic of political competition — how candidates are selected, what caste community calculations go into the strategy, and so on. Extraordinary elections also do accommodate these concerns but there are predominant concerns that finally shape the result. After two consecutive normal elections in 2004 and 2009, India has witnessed another surprising election in 2014.

The 16th Lok Sabha elections have made history for more than one reason. Not only the number of registered voters—814 million—had never been so high, but the number of those who exercised their franchise—554 millions—also broke a new record. Hence an extraordinary turnout (66.4 per cent), partly due to the mobilization of women whose turnout jumped from 55.82 per cent in 2009 to 65.3 per cent and partly due—to a lesser extent—to the introduction of a new button on the Electronic Voting Machines known as (NOTA: None of the above), which endorsed those who did not want to vote for any candidate to take part in the election process (the NOTA voters represented 1.1 per cent of the total votes cast). The number of candidates increased also from 8,070 to 8,251 and that of the parties from 363 to 464—the others were independents.

But for the first time since 1984, a single party won an absolute majority and for the first time in the Indian history, this party was not the Congress but the BJP (with 282 seats). However, for the first time (again!), this party won an absolute majority with less than 40 per cent of the valid votes—and in fact much less than that: 32 per cent. This result comes from the fact that the BJP's strongholds were all concentrated in the north and the west of India.

For the Congress too, these elections were unprecedented. Never before had the party been reduced to 44 seats (with 19 per cent of the votes), that is 60 seats less than in its first defeat against the BJP in 1998. The Congress has even failed to reach the 10 per cent seats bar required to obtain the status of Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. By contrast, the regional parties remained very stable: they won as many seats (212) as in 2009.

The Hindu nationalist BJP secured its first parliamentary majority, although on a platform which professed to foreground economic development and growth over religious majoritarianism. And, in a manner unseen since Indira Gandhi's premiership

in the 1970s, the elections hinged on the candidacy of an individual, projected national leader – Narendra Modi – giving the contest a quasi-presidential feel. The level of election expenditure by the BJP and its omnipresence in the media and cyberspace also made these elections a departure from past experience. It is possible therefore that 2014 may be seen as a 'critical election' with hindsight[197], although whether it marks a longer term realignment of the party system remains an open question.

The Background

The political battleground could potentially have been surrounded by the results of the UPA governments led by the Congress in the 2004-14 legislatures, and the results of the Modi-led BJP governments in Gujarat from 2001 to 2014. But the term 'potentially' is not used by chance: during the election campaign, whereas the results of the Modi governments in Gujarat became a kind of reference paradigm, any discussion of the UPA governments' results was limited to the certainly shocking scandals that had become public domain in the second half of the second UPA government, and to the slowing down of the growth rate and the persistent high inflation, mainly for food stuffs, during the same period. In other words, the Congress Party was unable to lay claim to the UPA governments' achievements since 2004, which were far from unimportant, both economically and from the standpoint of social justice. In its ten years in power, the UPA governments had pushed through a series of neoliberal reforms, counterbalanced by social policies aimed at protecting the weaker social sections and broadening the space of democracy. The neoliberal reforms had converted into steady growth of the GNP, even if that growth had slowed down in the last two years.[198] On the other hand, the UPA governments had implemented laws such as the 2005 National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), giving each rural family the right to 100 days of work; the 2005 Right to Information Act (opening the government's work to the scrutiny of both individual citizens and grassroots organisations); the 2006 Forest Rights Acts, granting land and forest rights to India's adivasis (tribals); the 2013 Food Security Act, granting a certain amount of food at very cheap prices on a monthly bases to some 80 percent of the population; and the 2013

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[197] Suhas Palshikar and K. C. Suri. 2014. "India's 2014 Lok Sabha Elections." Economic and Political Weekly 49 (39): 39–49.

[198] The GDP growth rate was + 8.5% in 2003/04 (the year before the UPA victory); + 7.5% in 2004/05; + 9.5% in 2005/06; + 9.7% in 2006/07; + 9% in 2007/08; + 6.7% in 2008/09; + 8.6% in 2009/10; + 9.3% in 2010/11; + 6.2% in 2011/12; + 5% in 2012/13; + 5% in 2013/14.

Land Acquisition Act (which delivers fair compensation for those whose land is expropriated to favour economic development).

These policies – both the continuation of the liberal reforms and the launching of a set of anti-poverty and/or anti-discrimination laws – could be and have been severely criticised both because they were not rightist enough and, vice versa, because they were not leftist enough. However, in itself, this could be taken as an indication that such policies denoted a balanced approach to the problems they were supposed to solve. This was exactly what Jairam Ramesh, one of the Congress leaders, claimed after the defeat.

There are some people who would say we were not Left enough; some would say we were not Right enough. These are simplistic binary options which I reject. Let us say we were on the right track. We were stressing growth with empowerment. Without growth, empowerment is hollow; without empowerment, growth is meaningless.[199]

However, it is a fact that, during the electoral campaign, Congress appeared unable to highlight the economic and social achievements of the UPA governments. Indeed, Congress' campaign was a "listless and confused campaign",[200] which was ultimately fought on the battleground chosen by Narendra Modi.

On his part, Narendra Modi was able to project Gujarat's economic record during his tenure as Chief Minister as the model of economic development, a model supposedly invented and implemented by Modi and ready to be applied to the whole of India. In doing so, Modi was able to push into the background a number of important elements: Gujarat's development was not unique; other Indian states had been growing faster than Gujarat; the Gujarat model was far from being inclusive; historically, Gujarat had always been one of the wealthiest areas of India; the beginning of the Gujarati economic boom predated Modi's arrival as Chief Minister.[201]

The political army behind Narendra Modi was made up of the BJP, the RSS, and the parties allied with the BJP in the NDA. Moreover, among Modi's supporters were two powerful social groups: what the Indian press likes to call India Inc., and the Indian middle class.

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[199] Frontline, "Out-funded and Out-communicated'. Interview with Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh", 13 June 2014.

[200] IBN 7, "There is a Long List of Congress Leaders behind Narendra Modi's Success", 16 May 2014.

[201] Shariff, 'Gujarat Shining." "Economic and Political Weekly", 2014

However, especially because the central leadership was weak after 2004, a number of influential bosses were able to acquire a position of eminence and a solid following in their respective states. Narendra Modi was one of these influential state leaders; but Vasundhara Raje in Rajasthan, Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Madhya Pradesh, and Raman Singh in Chhattisgarh were hardly less successful, powerful or popular in their own states. This means that the BJP had in-depth political roots in a number of important states.

Much more important support, however, was given Narendra Modi's camp by the two powerful social groups named earlier: India Inc. and the middle class. The first is made up of the limited number of extremely wealthy families which dominate the private economy in India. Historically, the political strategy of its members has been to hedge their bets by supporting all the main parties on the political battlefield, even if not necessarily to the same extent. But already before the 2009 general elections, some key members of the group had started to abandon their traditional position of equidistance, and came out into the open not so much for the BJP as for Narendra Modi. This happened at a time when the BJP official candidate for prime minister was not Modi, but L. K. Advani. After the BJP defeat in the 2009 elections, big business support for Modi consolidated.[202] This pro-Modi preference eventually resulted in the strategic choice by most of the top Indian corporations to massively bankroll the BJP and the BJP only.[203] India Inc.'s support for Modi was also important because of its control of a vast majority of the press and all private television networks. The media projected Modi as an immensely energetic, forceful, intelligent leader, a kind of fearless and blemishless knight, while highlighting and magnifying out of all proportion Rahul Gandhi's weaknesses and gaffes.

The situation of the opposing army was unambiguously different. The Congress appeared at the fag end of a long-term organisational decline. It was a decline that Rahul Gandhi had time and again declared he wanted to reverse. However, nothing solid was done about it. On the eve of the 2014 elections, the Congress Party was characterised by an all-powerful central leadership reigning over a party which, in most Indian states, looked to be in a shambles. The central leadership had intentionally prevented any strong and popular party leader from emerging at the state level. The

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[202] "CEO confidence survey: Almost three fourths back Narendra Modi; less than 10% want Rahul Gandhi as PM", The Economic Times, 6 September 2013.
[203] "Narendra Modi Rode Wave of Money to Indian Victory", Financial Times, 19 May 2014.

Congress could not hope for any decisive help from its allied parties, which were, by and large, lightweights. The only relatively strong allies, the NPC in Maharashtra and the DMK in Tamil Nadu, had been badly tainted by scandals in the second half of the 2009-14 legislature. What was striking, however, was the social isolation of the Congress. Of course, the middle class had never been a supporter of India's 'Grand Old Party'; but India Inc.'s new standing exactly behind Modi was a new and very unwelcome development. Moreover, even the connections with social groups which had traditionally been on the Congress' side in most of India – such as the dalits, the tribals, and the Muslims – looked weak and in a state of flux.

Rahul Gandhi is the successor to a political dynasty that has ruled India for most of its history as an independent nation. He was pushed into the political field by his mother, Sonia, who has been the leader of the Congress Party and the real power behind the throne in the UPA governments since the late 1990s. The problem is that Rahul has always seemed to be both an extremely reluctant political player, and a person empty of any political skills and personal charisma. On the eve of the 2014 elections, the selection of a new Congress campaign leader and a new candidate for the position of prime minister was made necessary by Manmohan Singh's deteriorating reputation and Sonia Gandhi's bad health. Particularly important seems to have been Gandhi's inability to lead the Congress election campaign, due to her weakening physical strength. Sonia Gandhi was an extraordinary campaigner in the 1998, 1999, 2004 and 2009 elections. Specifically, in the 1998 campaign, although she did not lead the Congress to victory, she kept together a party that appeared headed for disintegration, while in the 2004 campaign, she almost single-handedly led the party to a surprising and decisive victory. However, all that changed in the summer of 2011, when she underwent a mysterious operation in the United States, maybe cancer-related, which left her with much less physical energy than before.[204]

There were still some politicians in the Congress who could have faced the challenge mounted by Modi on a level approaching parity, but the problem was that, had one of these leaders been chosen and emerged victorious, the Nehru-Gandhi family's hold on the party would have been broken. Sonia Gandhi's control of the party was based on her ability to use a conspicuous electoral following; that ability gone, the sceptre would

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[204] "Sonia Gandhi puts Son Rahul in Charge as she Flies Abroad for Surgery", The Guardian, 4 August 2011;

pass on to the victorious leader at the polls. Therefore, the only way to keep control over the party was to choose as leader of the election campaign – and as candidate for prime minister – a member of her family.

Sonia's choice of Rahul did not raise any opposition inside the party. In fact, many in the party had been clamouring for Rahul Gandhi's appointment as the new leader, and none had openly opposed it. Ironically, all difficulties came from Rahul himself, who seemed as unenthusiastic as ever at the prospect of actively and seriously playing the role of leader. At the time (19 January 2013), Rahul Gandhi had already been in politics for some ten years, although irregularly. In fact, during the 2009 general elections, the Gandhi scion had played a very active role and led the party to a good placing in the vital state of UP. But that effort was a flash in the pan: no sustained and continuous work to reorganize the party followed.

Equally important and just as negative was Rahul Gandhi's difficulty in connecting with Indian youth. Although a very young politician by Indian standards (in 2014, Rahul Gandhi was 43 years old, while Narendra Modi was 62), and although he had spent an important part of his political career as leader of the Youth Congress and its student wing, young Gandhi was unable "to throw up a big idea that would make him particularly attractive to teenage India".[205] More significant was the fact that he was almost absent during two events that were particularly important for young people: the Anna Hazare-led protests against corruption, which were the prevailing political development in 2011, and the mass demonstrations that shook Delhi following the terrible 26 December 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape case.[206] All of this was compounded by his inability "to reach out to a highly interactive generation which thrives on constant communication". This inability was epitomised by his reluctance to hold press conferences, participate in high-profile college fests, and, last but certainly not least, engage in the social media, not even having a twitter or Facebook account.

To anybody but the Congress rank and file – and, maybe even in his own eyes, judging from some of his statements – Rahul Gandhi looked like a person without qualities, who was propelled into his position as Congress leader only because he was the son, grandson and great grandson of three former prime ministers. On his part, Narendra Modi appeared the exact opposite: a self-made man and skilled social media user, Modi

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[205] "Connecting with Youth: Modi has Edge over Rahul", Hindustan Times, 22 August 2013.
[206] Ibid.

is of humble origins, hailing from "a caste of lowly oil-pressers" and the "third of six children of a poor tea-seller at Vadnagar Railway Station, in Gujarat", who rose up through the RSS and BJP ranks. Inducted into the BJP national executive in 1991, Modi became Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2001, and remained in power there, winning three consecutive state elections.

Far from having an easy path to follow, Modi had to fight all along and overcome considerable hurdles to be chosen as the leader of the BJP election campaign and prime minister designate. He was confronted by the opposition of a strong group of BJP leaders, the most powerful of whom was his former mentor, Lal K. Advani, and the open hostility of Nitish Kumar, the Bihar Chief Minister and leader of the Janata Dal, a key NDA component. On top of all that, for quite some time the RSS leadership appeared far from enthusiastic about the idea of having Modi as the BJP candidate.[207]

In the long struggle that began in 2012, Modi gradually pushed aside the internal opposition, and got the party to back him. While the struggle was still going on, at the beginning of 2013, the RSS leadership changed their attitude vis-à-vis Modi and started to actively support him. From then on Modi's march became unstoppable: on June 2013, he was officially put in charge of the election campaign, and on 13 September he was designated as the party's candidate for the prime ministership. All of this happened in spite of the opposition of Advani and others, and at the cost of an open break with Nitish Kumar's JD (U).[208]

Election Campaign of BJP

BJP's campaign during the 2014 Lok Sabha election was unique in many ways. For the first time the main candidate for the post of Prime Minister was a Chief Minister who campaigned by publicising his past record in his state. Narendra Modi claimed that he would repeat at the national level what he had achieved in Gujarat in terms of development (vikas), and began his campaign for the prime ministership soon after he won the state election for the third time in December 2012. He was appointed to the BJP Parliamentary Board in March 2013, and became Chairman of the BJP's Central Election Campaign Committee in June. In a way, then, Modi's election campaign started within the BJP as early as 2013, even though there were no primaries. The length

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[207] "Why RSS is against Narendra Modi as NDA's PM Candidate?", One India News, 23 October 2012.
[208] "Nitish Kumar Pulls the Plug on NDA", The Statesman Weekly, 22 June 2013.

of his campaign, which therefore lasted one full year, is rather unique. But the BJP's campaign in 2014 was mostly different because, in contrast with those of Vajpayee and Advani from 1999 onwards, the party minimised its collegial character and that of the NDA, in order to promote one man only. The Modi-centric, populist nature of the campaign was evident from the character of its mass communication and the correlative emancipation of Narendra Modi from the party. At the same time, everything was not that new in Modi's campaign. He focused on tried and tested tactics and themes, including anti-corruption, caste politics, and some Hindu nationalist overtones where and when they were relevant. The RSS network, a traditional asset of the BJP, also played a very important role.

The catch-phrase of BJP's campaign was 'development' and 'Ache Din Aane Wale Hain' (good days are coming). It made a lot of sense in the context of an economic slowdown which had almost halved the Indian growth rate in two years and had resulted in fewer jobs. These frustrations – which were enhanced by an almost double digit inflation rate – were especially strong among the urban middle class, which had developed high expectations.[209] In this context, BJP projected Narendra Modi as the 'Vikas Purush', the 'development man', on the basis of his achievements in Gujarat. He promoted the 'Gujarat model' against the UPA's failure immediately after his third electoral victory as Chief Minister in December 2012.

This kind of exagerated self-promotion is not unusual during an election campaign. What was new was the way Modi toured India to contrast the 'Gujarat model' with the situation of the other states of India, making the Nehru/Gandhi family and non-BJP Chief Ministers responsible for socio-economic backwardness. Never before had a Chief Minister showcased his achievements in this manner in order to rule at the Centre. The risk, naturally, was that he appeared 'too Gujarati'. But he made a systematic effort to vernacularise his campaign. He always wore the traditional hat of the state he was visiting when on stage, and his website made no mystery of his sense of regional marketing.

In Bihar, on 27 October 2013, he referred to JP Narayan as a son of the soil, and accused Nitish Kumar of betraying him. On 15 September 2013, in Rewari (Haryana) – one of the recruitment bases for the Indian army – he advocated in favour of the 'one rank,

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[209] Milan Vaishnav, Devesh Kapur, and Nilanjan Sircar. 2014. "Growth is no 1 Poll Issue for Voters, Survey Shows." March 16. Accessed March 16, 2014.

one pension' theme before attacking the Union government by hinting at its corrupt practices in arms deals: 'Delhi is not interested in Army welfare, they are more bothered about the next tender'. In Bangalore, on 17 November, according to narendramodi.in, 'Narendra Modi speaks for urban middle class, asks are they not citizens of India that Congress Ministers should ignore them'. In Guwahati, on February 2014, he thundered: 'Assam has the Brahmaputra but Guwahati does not have water to drink'[210] – again because of Congress misrule. And Modi contrasted the poor situation of the states he visited to the achievements of Gujarat. In Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh), for instance, mocking Mulayam Singh Yadav, he declared:

"Netaji, do you know the meaning of converting to Gujarat? It means 24-hour electricity in every village and street. You can't do it. It requires 56-inch chest (…) This country is not poor. The people of this rich country has been kept poor for the sake of politics…You give me 60 months and I promise you a life of happiness and peace.[211]

In UP, however, the most dramatic speech that Modi gave was in Amethi, the traditional constituency of the Nehru/Gandhis:

"In so many years they have ruined the dreams of three generations. I am here to sow seeds of hope among the youth. I have come here to share your sadness and make your problems mine."

While the 'Gujarat model' and 'development' were the keywords of Modi's discourse, except in Punjab, he never referred to the policies he would implement and how he would replicate the 'Gujarat model'.

This is also obvious from the BJP Election Manifesto, which had been largely influenced by Narendra Modi's ideas. Development was supposed to find expression in the modernisation of the countryside ('through the idea of rurban, we will bring urban amenities to our rural areas, while retaining the soul of the village') as well as new forms of urbanisation.

While Indira Gandhi claimed that she embodied India through her slogan 'Indira is India and India is Indira!' Modi, as Chief Minister, often claimed that he spoke on behalf of '60 million Gujaratis', as if they had all voted for him. During the 2014

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[210] Narendramodi.in, 8 February, 2014
[211] The Hindu, 23 January, 2014

campaign he tried to establish a similar equation by refusing any division of the nation. In his speech in Mumbai on 22 December 2013, he attacked the vote bank politics of the Congress which fragmented the nation and declared that:

"From the same land where the call Quit India was made, let us make a call for a Congress Mukt Bharat (…) Congress immersed in vote bank politics. They have learnt the 'art' of divide and rule well from the colonial rulers. The nation should unite against the Congress the way it got united during the freedom movement."[212]

But Modi did not only reject the Congress, he rejected any party and said 'In 2014, let us not vote for any party or person but let us VOTE FOR INDIA!', which suggested that since he was candidate to the post of Prime Minister and he did not want parties to play a role in these elections, a vote for India was a vote for him.

Charisma is a rather elusive concept that Max Weber used to define a form of political legitimacy that emerged from the personal qualities of the leader. Modi, besides his organisational skills (inherited from his past role as a Pracharak), is a gifted orator who knows how to galvanise large crowds by resorting to mocking formulas and plays on words. He cultivates his body language in the most expressive manner and systematically, as evident from the way he wore the typical hats of the local culture when he visited different regions of India – not to say anything about the 'Modi kurta' and his sense of colours.

More importantly, his charisma belongs to the category of the 'strong leader', in the manner of Vallabhbhai Patel – the 'iron man' who was presented as his role model during the campaign. In contrast to other charismatic repertoires, including Mahatma Gandhi's whose chest size was never an issue, Modi projects a masculine, decisive image – that of an inflexible man of action. Modi had started to cultivate this image as Chief Minister of Gujarat in opposition to Manmohan Singh – whom he called 'Maun (silent) Mohan.[213] But charisma can also serve a populist project. Populism, another elusive concept, is not only (not even primarily) defined by the untenable promises that demagogues make. It pertains first to the capacity of a politician to relate directly to the people by short-circuiting institutions in order to be perceived as a man of the people and for the people. During the Lok Sabha election campaign, Modi was clear in April 2014 when he was asked by journalists whether he should apologise for the 2002

[212] Narendramodi.in, 22 December, 2013.
[213] The Indian Express, 30 October, 2012.

pogrom. Speaking about himself in the third person he replied that no one but the people should judge him:

"I am convinced that if there is even a grain of truth in the allegations, I feel for India's bright future and traditions, Modi should be hanged in the street square (…) There is a small coterie who think they have worked hard and created a storm. But Modi does not lose, does not die (…) Now, I am in the people's court and I am waiting to hear from them, and their verdict."[214]

Nowhere is the judiciary mentioned. The people are the judges, either they expedite the matter by hanging the guilty man, or they give him a clean chit by their vote.

Narendra Modi has tried to become the man of the people by arranging the most impressive communication campaign India had seen since Indira Gandhi in 1971. Using another development-oriented slogan – Garibi Hatao! – Mrs. Gandhi had short circuited the notables of the Congress in order to relate directly to the people by holding a record number of meetings and resorting to the radio. Modi has used similar techniques – and more modern routes as well. Like Indira Gandhi, he took the country by storm, holding 437 rallies between September 2013 and the election. But he enlarged the impact of these meetings by resorting, by the end of his campaign, to the 3D technology he had already tested during the 2012 election campaign.[215]

Besides, Modi related to thousands of tea stalls across the country for 'Chai pe Charcha'. In 4000 tea stalls spread over 24 states, Modi could interact with Indian citizens thanks to a combination of technologies such as DTH, Video Conferencing, and Mobile Broadband.

These activities were made possible because of the manner in which Modi attracted what Pradeep Chhibber and Susan Osterman call 'vote mobilisers', 'individuals whose support for a particular party goes beyond simple voting and instead involves monetary donations, door-to-door canvassing, leaflet/poster distribution, etc.'.[216] This category of actors plays an important role in a country like India where politicians cannot rely only on media exposure for winning elections. And Modi has been particularly

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[214] Ahmedabad Mirror, 17 April 2014.

[215] Christophe Jaffrelot, 2013. "Gujarat Elections: The Sub-text of Modi's 'Hattrick' – High Tech Populism and the 'Neo-middle Class'." Studies in Indian Politics 1 (1): 79–95.

[216] Pradeep K. Chibber and Susan L. Ostermann. 2014. "The BJP's Fragile Mandate: Modi and Vote Mobilizers in the 2014 General Elections." Studies in Indian Politics 2 (2): 1–15.

effective in the recruitment of 'vote mobilisers' beyond the BJP activists. According to Chibber and Ostermann, only 19% of the 'vote mobilisers' working for Modi were party members. And 32% of them would have voted for another party had he not been the BJP candidate for prime ministership. Chhibber and Osterman have found such a correlation between the number of Modi vote mobilisers and the performance of the BJP in important states such as UP and Rajasthan. This factor needs to be taken very seriously. These 'vote mobilisers' were truly devoted to Modi.

This enormous deployment of communication for campaign of Modi was made possible by the financial resources the BJP could mobilise. According to The Economist's (24 May 2014) estimates, the party spent $1 billion during the 2014 election campaign.

The personalisation of the BJP election campaign was reflected in the moderating of the party apparatus and coalition politics. It found expression in slogans such as 'Har har Modi', 'ghar, ghar Modi' or 'Abki bar, Modi sarkar. In fact, the whole campaign of the BJP concentrated on the qualities of its leader, irrespective of the party's programme. The image that was projected was that of a 'doer' which echoed the skills of a CEO. On one of the posters used during the campaign, Modi was presented as 'Initiator, Innovator, Implementer'. Accompanying this was the decline of the collegial modus operandi of the BJP and the marginalisation of senior leaders. While he promoted Amit Shah, his right hand man in Gujarat, to lead the election campaign in UP, Jaswant Singh was denied a ticket (like Harin Pathak, a close associate of Advani and the sitting MP of East Ahmedabad). Advani himself was 'persuaded' to fight from Gandhinagar (when he wanted to move to Bhopal, whose Chief Minister he trusted more), M.M. Joshi had to leave his Varanasi seat which Modi wanted to contest, and Rajnath Singh himself had to move from Ghaziabad to Lucknow.

The Modi-centric character of the BJP's campaign found expression in one full-page newspaper ad showing Modi telling the Indian citizens: 'Your vote for the BJP candidate is a vote for me.' This personalisation of the act of voting improved an already existing tendency to presidentialise a parliamentary system where MPs have in recent years begun to matter less and less. And as a strategy it did work, since, according to the CSDS exit poll, 27% of BJP voters supported the party because of Modi only. This short-circuiting of the MPs plus the fact that many of them owed their

nomination to the Prime Minister was bound to make them a docile lot, owing direct loyalty to the strong leader.

Besides liberating himself from the BJP decision-making process, which, till then, was known for its collegiality – a legacy of the RSS's way of valorising the organisation above the individual – Modi also tried to emancipate himself from coalition politics, although not with complete success. While the Vajpayee government had been forced to make concessions to the BJP's NDA allies, Modi wanted a clear-cut majority. As a result, the coalition was never projected as a winning card and the BJP prepared a programme of its own. While L.K. Advani longed to keep the JD(U) on board, Narendra Modi did not try to retain this old partner within the NDA. At the same time, the party benefited from seat adjustments with allies that did not necessarily belong to the NDA. Its election campaign would have been more complicated without such a coalition strategy. The BJP and the Shiv Sena shared the constituencies of Maharashtra between them, and the BJP and the SAD did the same in Punjab. Besides, Naidu's TDP and Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party returned to their fold and helped the party to a large extent in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. But smaller, new allies contributed to the BJP's election campaign too. The Rashtriya Lok Samata Party in Bihar and Apna Dal in UP are cases in point. The attachment of the BJP to coalition politics in spite of the Modi phenomenon shows that the party's campaign was not all that new.

Since the 1989 elections, when V.P. Singh used the Bofors affair against Rajiv Gandhi, corruption has played a key role in several campaigns. In 2014, it was bound to be a factor because of the major scandals that had badly affected the reputation of UPA 2, including the 2G scam, 'Coalgate', and 'Common Wealth Games' scam which had triggered off massive mobilisations behind Anna Hazare. These issues remained prominent on the public scene also because they were on the top of the agenda of the Aam Aadmi Party, a party that Kejriwal, Hazare's former right hand man, had created soon before the elections.

During the 2014 election campaign, Kejriwal attacked Modi along similar lines, using the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) which had discovered many 'irregularities' in Gujarat in 2013 (Report No. – 2 of 2013 Government of Gujrat – Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Revenue Receipts 2013). In a very detailed report, it accused the Modi government of causing a loss to the exchequer of about Rs. 580 crore by bestowing 'undue' favours on large companies, including Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), Essar, the Adani group, Larsen and

Troubo, Ford, etc.[217] Land allotment at a throw away price was the main issue, but not the only one:

"This dimension of the 'Gujarat model' did not affect Narendra Modi during the election campaign because he was able to project a clean image, in contrast to the Nehru/Gandhi family. That was partly due to the fact that he presented himself as a bachelor, dedicated to the cause of the nation, when others (including the Nehru/Gandhi family) were part of lineages resulting in corruption, because relatives had to get their 'due'. This discourse found a large echo given the popular rejection, not only of corrupt politicians, but also of 'dynasties' monopolising public offices."[218]

During the Lok Sabha campaign he did it in particular by emphasising his lowly background as a former chaiwala (teaboy). Indeed, his father hailed from a low caste (Ghanchis, or cooking oil manufacturers and sellers) that has been classified as OBC. In the small town of Vadnagar (Mehsana district) he sold edible oil, but also had a tea stall where Narendra used to work as a child.

Modi had never used his class background in that manner before. What was also new for him – but not for others – was its explicit instrumentalisation of caste. As a Hindu nationalist trained in the RSS, he had never mentioned that he was an OBC till he had to canvass in states where this thing mattered more than in Gujarat. In Bihar, during a speech at Muzaffarpur, he mentioned his low caste origin and added 'The next decade will belong to the dalits and backwards'.[219]

In the same manner, the BJP has not only joined hands with low caste-based parties such as the LJP and Apna Dal, but has also attracted low caste leaders: Udit Raj, a Dalit, and Ramkripal Yadav, who had been an OBC champion in the shadow of Lalu Prasad Yadav, have rallied around BJP. Similarly, the party has taken the caste composition of the constituencies into account before nominating its candidates.

Hindutva Card of BJP

Modi's campaign has also tried to exploit majoritarian sentiments by polarising religious communities – after attempting something else. To begin with, his meetings

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[217] The Hindu, 15 April, 2013.

[218] The Congress highlighted the fact that Modi, in fact, was married and that – on top of that – he had abandoned his wife (with whom he had probably never lived). But this move backfired, as Modi blessed her as a Devi and no real investigation was made by the media, given the traditional separation between the public and the private in Indian politics.

[219] Palshikar and Suri, Op. Cit.,

were intended to welcome Muslims (to whom skull caps and burkas were distributed in order to make them more visible in the crowd).[220] These efforts were, however, short-lived. Not only did the BJP give a remarkably low number of tickets to Muslim candidates – 7 out of 428 that is 2% – but gradually Modi gave some Hindutva flavour to his campaign. First, Narendra Modi continued to attack the Congress as a party pampering to Muslims. As Chief Minister of Gujarat, he used to call the Union government 'the Delhi Sultanate' and Rahul Gandhi Shehzada. He also accused the UPA government of providing Rs. 50 crores subsidy for setting up slaughter houses and for promoting meat export in the framework of a 'pink revolution'[221] – both things being identified as 'Muslim'. Second, he associated himself with Hindu symbols and personalities. Moreover wearing saffron clothes in some of the most important occasions of the election campaign, Modi visited many Hindu sacred places before his meetings. For instance, he paid obeisance at the revered Vaishno Devi cave before addressing an election meeting in Jammu and Kashmir. More importantly, he decided to contest from Varanasi, the 'capital' of Hinduism, and not only from Vadodara. His canvassing there was replete with religious references (including the sacredness of the Ganga river that had 'called' him to the city.

As early as December 2013 he had given a speech in Varanasi that showed that in UP, a crucial state, Hindutva would be the 'backdrop' of his campaign. Not only did he visit Kashi Vishwanath and Sankat Mochan before addressing the crowd, but on stage, while the conch shells were blown, he declared that he had 'come from the land of Somnath to seek the blessing of Baba Vishwanath'. He spoke of the need to resurrect the Ganga, 'the lifeline of Varanasi', and 'exhorted the voters of UP to help usher in Ram Rajya'. After him, Kalyan Singh started his speech with slogans such as 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Har Har Mahadev' and declared: 'I do not say that every Muslim is a terrorist. But I ask why every terrorist is a Muslim'.[222]

While he did not go to Ayodhya, Narendra Modi held one meeting in the neighbouring town of Faizabad in May. With the portrait of Lord Ram providing the backdrop, he

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[220] The Muslims who attended the Jaipur meeting of Modi in September 2013 were requested to wear sherwanis and skull caps when they were males and burqas when they were females. According to observers of Rajasthan's politics, 'the dress code idea has been put forward to 'polish' the BJP's pro-Muslim image in the state'.

[221] The Hindu, 3 May, 2008.

[222] Lalmani Verma, 2014. "RSS Magazine Defends Jat Youths, Blames Akhilesh Govt." The Indian Express, January p. 6.

made several references to Lord Ram in his speech without mentioning the building of a temple at Ayodhya. The last section of the BJP Election Manifesto simply mentioned that the BJP would 'explore all possibilities within the framework of the Constitution to facilitate the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya'.[223] Fascinatingly, this section on the 'Cultural Heritage' of India ignored the non-Hindu dimension of this heritage and mentioned only 'Ram Mandir', 'Ram Setu', 'Ganga River', and 'Cow and its Progeny'. The Ayodhya issue was referred to on several occasions during the election campaign. In April, the BJP leader, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi declared: 'we want a Ram Mandir to be built in Ayodhya and will find ways to solve the issue within the constitutional framework after forming the government'.[224]

The BJP's strategy of polarisation relied on more characteristic techniques, as is apparent from the developments following the Muzzafarnagar riot in August 2013. This riot had caused the death of 55 people and the displacement of 51,000 others – a record in UP. Some of the BJP MLAs who had been formally concerned in the riots by the UP police were 'felicitated by the BJP at an Agra rally addressed by Narendra Modi, where they were hailed as "heroes" who had "ensured the safety of Hindus" at the time of riots'.[225] At the time of ticket distribution, the UP BJP asked for the nomination of four of these MLAs. Three of them were nominated and one of them, Sanjeev Balyan, became Minister of State in Modi's government in May 2014 after winning a landslide victory in Muzzafarnagar. Amit Shah himself invited the local citizens to take 'revenge' (of whom?) by voting for the BJP in a riot-hit village near Muzzafarnagar:

Justice is not being done to the people and it's time to take revenge. It was during the Mughal rule that swords and arrows were used to take revenge. But now you have to vote to take revenge. Press the right button to show them their right place.[226]

The Election Commission objected that the use of religious symbols, under Section 123(3) of the Representation of the People Act, is a corrupt practice. Amit Shah

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[223] BJP Election Manifesto 2014.

[224] Khare, Harish. 2013. "Modi, the Man and the Message." The Hindu, April 4. Accessed December 12, 2013.

[225] Ravish Tiwari, 2014. "Narendra Modi as a 'Backward Leader', Nitish Kumar as an Upper-caste 'Hero.'" The Indian Express, April 16, 2013.

[226] CNN-IBN, 5 April 2014.

apologised but did something very similar one month later when he described Azamgarh – an important place for Muslims – as 'the base of terrorists'.[227]

RSS Support

The relationship between Narendra Modi and the RSS had not been very easy in Gujarat. The RSS had been forced to mediate between other components of the Sangh Parivar and Modi a number of times when he was Chief Minister, but it usually failed to fashion compromises. For instance, the BKS had to accept the new power tariffs that Modi introduced for the peasants in 2003 after a bitter battle. As Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay pointed out, the bone of contention was a hierarchical matter – who was senior – Modi or the RSS' top brass in the state? RSS leaders felt that since Modi had been a relatively junior functionary when he was deputed to the BJP, he should be reporting to them as in the RSS, seniority is determined by the last position held. Modi in contrast felt that after the RSS deputed a Pracharak to one of the affiliated organisations where they have to adhere to rules and a style of power-politics, it is wrong to expect daily briefings.[228] Narendra Modi has been both a windfall and a problem for the RSS: on the one hand he has repeatedly demonstrated a capacity to reach out to people and win supporters, including among the Sangh Parivar; on the other hand, he has repeatedly by-passed the organisation in the process. In Gujarat, he did not even submit the list of candidates nominated by the BJP to RSS state headquarters, as state party leaders would routinely do in such circumstances.[229] In spite of this, the RSS's top leaders have generally supported him. This is partly due to the fact that the Sangh Parivar grassroots have become increasingly supportive of Modi. This is especially true of the young Swayamsevak and pracharaks. Second, for some time there was no clear alternative (at least until December 2013, before Chouhan won in Madhya Pradesh for the third time). L.K. Advani not considered as an effective leader because of his age and his two previous defeats. Third, the RSS leaders recognised in Modi a true, loyal Hindu nationalist. In fact, his style helped the RSS to overcome some of the organisation's past inhibitions. He dared to say – and to do – things RSS old-timers would have hesitated to articulate, partly because they had

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[227] The Indian Express, 5 May 2014.
[228] Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, 2013. Narendra Modi. The Man, the Times. New Delhi: Tranquebar Press.
[229] The Times of India, 8 November 2007.

experienced state repression under Nehru and Indira Gandhi. He has, for instance, openly declared being a 'Hindu nationalist'.[230]

Election Manifesto of BJP, 2014 – "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat"

Riding on a wave of popularity, BJP released its manifesto smartly late on 7 April, after the polls had begun in the Northeast. Originally drafted by Murli Manohar Joshi, the manifesto was re-edited by Modi for "greater clarity and sharper focus." The ban imposed on airing the manifesto on the electronic media, in accordance with the rules of the Election Commission, only curved it into a greater talking point. It arrived as the grand-finale to BJP's campaign, in which Modi had served as 'a walking manifesto,' providing his message in various segments and selling the Gujarat model in practice. The BJP manifesto shows a mix of corporatist and socialist elements, replicating a 'congressification' of policies particularly in the continuation of welfare and pro-poor schemes. On paper, there is little substantial difference in the economic agenda of the two parties, save semantics and the issue of FDI in multi-brand retail that BJP opposes in order to protect the livelihood of small shopkeepers. Both manifestoes promise the creation of 100 urban cities or clusters.[231] On the issue of taxation, BJP promises the simplification and rationalization of the tax regime, whilst curbing the 'tax terrorism' of the previous UPA regime. On the issue of governance and administrative reforms, however, nuances of difference can be seen between the two documents. BJP makes a special mention of leveraging IT and e-governance in order to fight corruption, whereas also generating IT-based jobs in rural and semi-urban areas. Among other administrative reforms, BJP promises the digitization of government records and the opening up of expertise from industrial, academic and other social circles in congruence with its aim of "People-centric Policy," "Time-bound delivery," and "Minimum government, maximum governance."

The major points of departure within the BJP manifesto were in the sociopolitical and cultural domains. These relate to the construction of Ram Temple over the disputed site of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution that gives special provisions to Kashmir, the endorsement of Uniform Civil Code at the expense of personal laws, and the legislation to "protect and promote cow." While explicitly

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[230] Deepshika Ghosh. "Narendra Modi's 'Hindu Nationalist' Posters Should be Banned, says Samajwadi Party." NDTV.com, July 24 2013.
[231] BJP Manifesto 2014.

this may suggest a resurgence of Hindutva agenda, a comparative look at previous BJP manifestoes reveals a relatively diluted tone on paper. The construction of Ram Temple in the manifesto was mentioned under a seemingly benign heading of "Cultural heritage," and with a follow-up clause that the possibilities will be explored "within the constitutional framework." This contrasts with the strident tone of the 2009 manifesto, in which BJP stated its commitment to the Ram Temple construction under the pretext of "defending its civilization." In relation to "Cow and its Progeny," the 2009 manifesto reads, "Cow protection is an article of faith with the BJP. This will be pursued relentlessly," whereas the 2014 manifesto refers to the clause within the broader context of "agriculture, socio-economic and cultural life of the country." Similarly, while BJP repeats its commitment to Uniform Civil Code in the interest of "modern times" and "gender equality," it simultaneously puts forward a number of clauses for the Muslim community in a break from its previous manifestoes. For instance, it aims to strengthen minority educational institutions in the light of modern requirements, and initiate a national madrassa modernization programme. It further stipulates the empowerment of Waqf boards in consultation with religious leaders, taking steps to remove unauthorized occupation of Waqf properties. In another token gesture, the manifesto promises to set up a permanent inter-faith consultative mechanism to promote harmony under the auspices of religious leaders.

Major Concerns of BJP's Manifesto

"Decade under the UPA - I and II can rightly be summed in one line, the 'Decade of Decay', in which India had a free fall on all fronts - be it governance, economy, diplomacy, foreign policy, border safety, etc. At the same time, corruption, scams and crime against women have reached to unacceptable levels. There has been gross misuse and total denigration of government and institutions. There has also been erosion of authority of the office of the Prime Minister. The Government dithered by each passing day, casting gloom and doom on the country that was once under the NDA regime called the 'Emerging Superpower'. In 2004, NDA left the Government with a near double digit growth. The Congress led UPA could not even maintain that growth and mismanaged the country so badly, that the growth rate declined to 4.8%, resulting the country falling in a deep mess. We have lost a wonderful opportunity and have pushed the country 20 years behind and rendered millions of men and women jobless. Critical and urgent challenges facing the nation have been left unaddressed. Beyond impacting

the immediate short-term, this is corroding the long-term potential of the nation. People feel frustrated and have lost hope in the system. Things must change, and they must change now. BJP will take immediate and decisive action to address these issues on a priority basis."[232]

Price Rise

"Runaway food inflation has crippled household budgets and contributed to the overall inflationary trend under the Congress-led UPA's watch. Even worse, the food and nutritional security of millions is threatened. However, the Congress-led UPA government has remained insensitive and indifferent to the plight of the people; tying itself into knots with short-term, mis-directed steps. The committee of Chief Ministers, headed by Shri Narendra Modi, has already submitted a report on food inflation in 2011. The report was unfortunately not acted upon by the Congress-led UPA Government. The BJP-led NDA Government's record of holding the prices is a demonstration of our commitment to break the vicious cycle of high inflation and high interest rates. Our immediate task will be to rein in inflation by several steps, such as:

- Put in place strict measures and special Courts to stop hoarding and black marketing.
- Setting up a Price Stabilisation Fund.
- Unbundle FCI operations into procurement, storage and distribution for greater efficiency.
- Leverage on technology to disseminate Real time data, especially to farmers - on production, prices, imports, stocks and overall availability.
- Evolve a single 'National Agriculture Market'.
- Promote and support area specific crops and vegetables linked to food habits of the people."[233]

Corruption

"Corruption is a manifestation of poor Governance. Moreover, it reflects the bad intentions of those sitting in power. All pervasive corruption under the Congress-led

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[232] BJP Manifesto 2014.
[233] Ibid.

UPA has become a 'National Crisis'. We will establish a system, which eliminates the scope for corruption. We will do this through:

- Public awareness
- Technology enabled e-Governance - minimizing the discretion in the citizen-government interface.
- System-based, policy-driven governance - making it transparent.
- Rationalization and simplification of the tax regime - which is currently repulsive for honest tax payers.
- Simplification of the processes and procedures at all levels - bestowing faith in the citizens, institutions and establishments."[234]

Black Money

"By minimizing the scope for corruption, we will ensure minimization of the generation of black money. BJP is committed to initiate the process of tracking down and bringing back black money stashed in foreign banks and offshore accounts. We will set up a Task Force for this purpose and to recommend amendments to existing laws or enact new laws. The process of bringing back black money to India what belongs to India, will be put in motion on priority. We will also proactively engage with foreign Governments to facilitate information sharing on black money."[235]

Decision and Policy Paralysis

"The country has suffered a decade of maladministration and scams in addition to decision and policy paralysis; thus bringing growth and development to a grinding halt leading to a 'Governance deficit'. This situation will be changed and the engine of Government will be ignited again with strong willpower and commitment to public interest. We will also encourage the bureaucracy to take right decisions and contribute their might in building a modern India."[236]

Jammu and Kashmir

"Jammu and Kashmir was, is and shall remain an integral part of the Union of India. The territorial integrity of India is inviolable. BJP will pursue an agenda of equal and

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[234] Ibid.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid.

rapid development in all the three regions of the state - Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh."[237]

SCs, STs, OBCs and Other Weaker Sections - Social Justice and Empowerment

"The BJP is committed to bridge the gap, following the principles of Samajik Nyay (social justice) and Samajik Samrasata (social harmony). This social justice must be further complemented with economic justice and political empowerment. Instead of pursuing identity politics and tokenisms, we will focus on empowering the deprived sections of society. Steps will be taken to create an enabling ecosystem of equal opportunity - for education, health and livelihood. We will accord highest priority to ensuring their security, especially the prevention of atrocities against SCs & STs."[238]

Minorities - Equal Opportunity

"BJP believes that in India's 'Unity in Diversity' lies India's biggest strength. We cherish the depth and vibrancy that the diversity in Indian society adds to the nation. BJP is thus committed to the preservation of the rich culture and heritage of India's minority communities; alongside their social and economic empowerment. It is unfortunate that even after several decades of independence, a large section of the minority, and especially Muslim community continues to be stymied in poverty. Modern India must be a nation of equal opportunity. BJP is committed to ensure that all communities are equal partners in India's progress, as we believe India cannot progress if any segment of Indians is left behind."[239]

Uniform Civil Code

"Article 44 of the constitution of India lists Uniform Civil Code as one of the Directive Principles of state policy. BJP believes that there cannot be gender equality till such time India adopts a Uniform Civil Code, which protects the rights of all women, and the BJP reiterates its stand to draft a Uniform Civil Code, drawing upon the best traditions and harmonizing them with the modern times."

To conclude, Manifesto of BJP states "We aim to build a modern, prosperous and vibrant India - Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat, based on our ethos and values. We have

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[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid.

to convert ourselves into a knowledge based society and economy, powered by experience, tools of technology and energy of our people. BJP commits itself to this task and promises to work relentlessly towards this goal, for which we are seeking sixty months. … This is not the time to sit back. This is the time when each of us has to get up and contribute our might to bring the change."[240]

In nutshell, the spectacular triumph of the BJP in the 16th Lok Sabha elections in 2014 gives us an opportunity to revisit the thesis of 'normalization of the system of political competition' in India. After the uncertain and unstable nature of coalition politics from 1989 to 1999, political competition in India gained a degree of stability from 1999. Three successive governments completed their full terms, namely the NDA government from 1999 to 2004 and the UPA I and II from 2004 to 2014. Based on this experience, it was felt that a system of competition between the two fronts has stabilized in the polity, and notwithstanding the decline of the Congress, power will oscillate between the two alliances, one led by the Congress and other by the BJP. In an emerging system, featured by the weakening of Congress, states were looked upon as the principal arena of political contestation with various shades of competitive politics and two large and loose federal coalitions battling it out at the union level. The essential components of this 'normalisation' were 'ideological' convergence' between the principal contestants and also a settling down of their respective social support constituencies. 'Inevitability of coalitions' seemed to have become a deciding characteristic of governance system in India.

As the country approached the 16th Lok Sabha elections in 2014, there was a general perception that a change of guard was a distinct possibility, and keeping the logic of coalition in perspective, an alliance led by the BJP was likely to assume power at the federal level. The Congress-led UPA II government was in a very shaky position due to a number of alleged scams and corruption deals as well as a popular perception of indecisive governance plaguing the system. In marked contrast to this was the positive picture of the BJP, which was brimming with confidence after the declaration of Narendra Modi as the prime ministerial candidate in September 2013. The first outcome of this sentiment was evidenced when the party won crucial assembly elections in few major states in December 2013 defeating its principal opposition party,

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[240] Ibid.

the Congress. The BJP retained power for the third successive period in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, winning handsomely in both the states; it trounced the Congress in Rajasthan by securing more than four-fifth of the seats; the BJP also got maximum seats in Delhi where elections were held simultaneously. Its victory in the north-eastern state of Mizoram was a poor consolation for the Congress. These unexpectedly overwhelming victories were just the boost the BJP needed to place itself in the driver seat for the forthcoming general elections. More than that, these electoral successes established the primacy of Narendra Modi within the party, who was principal campaigner for the BJP in these state assembly elections.

The outcome of the state assembly success was the belief expressed in the election slogan Ab ki bar Modi Sarkar (this time Modi government) "Ache din aane wale hain" (good days are coming). Arguably this most vociferously used election slogan by the campaign managers of the BJP in the run-up to the 16th Lok Sabha elections sums up the content and context of the outcome of the elections. Ever since the declaration of Narendra Modi as the prime ministerial candidate of the BJP, one of the most high-profile and high-voltage election campaign was initiated at the behest of some of the best individuals and agencies in the field. The prime ministerial candidate himself engaged in an unprecedented public relation drive addressing 437 public rallies across 25 states covering 3 lakh kilometres besides 1,350 rallies through 3D technologies from September 2013 through the end of the campaigning period. Complementing the election blitzkrieg by Narendra Modi was the massive campaign launched by the 'vote mobilizers' of the extended RSS family and also the aggressive use of the audio-visual and print media. Together these had a tremendous impact on the electorate, which gave one of the most decisive mandates in a span of three decades. Besides, the impact of the sustained campaign on social media remains a critical factor to be investigated further.

Results of the 2014 Elections

The results of 2014 Lok Sabha elections were dramatic, perhaps even epochal. The electoral patterns of the last quarter-century have experienced a sea change, and the world's largest democracy now has what seems to be a new party system led by a newly dominant party. The political center of magnitude had shifted. The Lok Sabha, the 545-seat, now has its first single-party majority since 1984. Back then, eight elections ago, that majority went to the Congress. Now it goes to the BJP, led by Narendra Modi.

Though the BJP controls a 282-seat (51.7 percent) majority on its own, it is governing at the head of a coalition (NDA) formed with its preelection allied parties.

The BJP recieved its Lok Sabha seat majority with a vote share of just 31.1 percent of all votes polled, sufficient for a plurality but far short of a vote share majority. That huge seat bonus works out to a "conversion factor" of 1.67 percent of the seats for every 1 percent of the vote—the highest such ratio ever seen in an Indian general election. Congress, which had been running a minority-coalition government with external support since 2004, underwent massive voter rejection. It won its lowest-ever vote share (hardly more than 19 percent) and now has just 44 seats (its poorest previous showing was 114 seats in 1999). For the first time since 1977, besides, it was not the single largest party in terms of vote share. (See Figure 1)

Figure-1. The BJP's Expanding Electoral Footmark
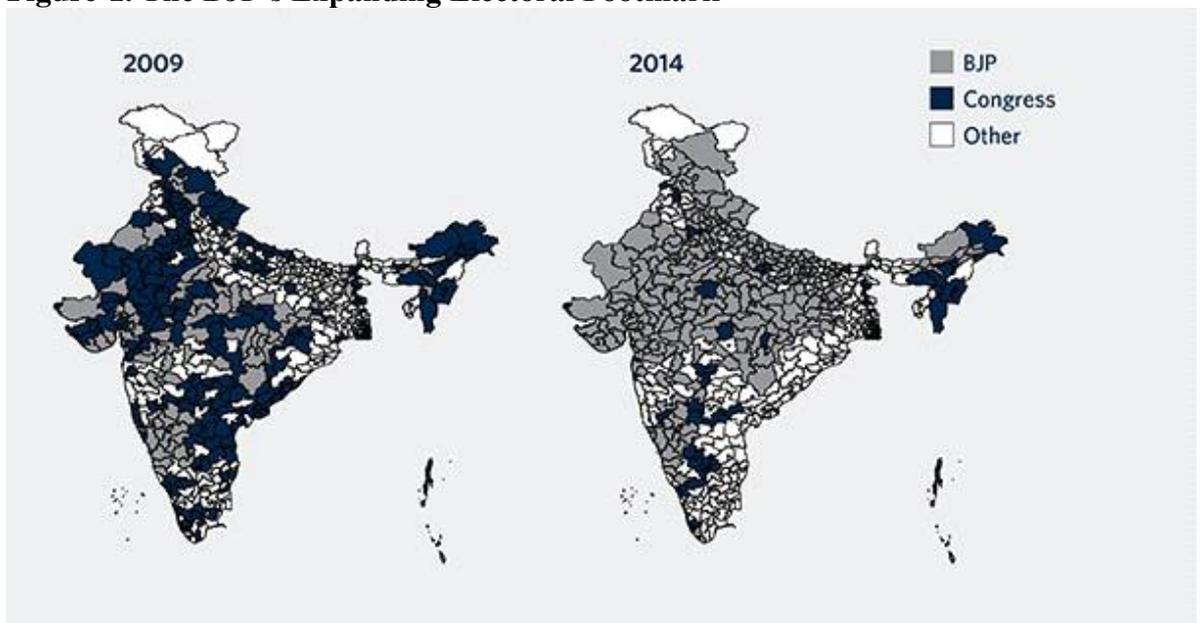
Since the election, there has been a landslide of investigation. Sifting through it can help us to understand how the BJP could win (and Congress lose) on such a scale (see

Table 22 showing only key allies of the BJP). The BJP itself fielded candidates in 427 of the Lok Sabha's 543 seats. The BJP's allied parties at the Lok Sabha level numbered ten, six of which were major players in their own states. The BJP had added a total of eight new preelectoral partners since 2009, and had seat-sharing agreements in ten states. Congress contested in 464 seats and had a dozen preelectoral coalition partners (mostly negligible parties) across eight states.

The BJP's 51.7 percent seat share represented a massive swing of 12 percentage points in its vote share (to 31.1 percent) compared to 2009. Almost reflecting it was Congress's decreasing vote share, which leaped by 9 points from the previous election to this most recent polling. Parties other than Congress or the BJP (whether allied with one of them or not) form a highly diverse group that contains overwhelmingly of parties (many of them left of center) whose appeal is limited to a single state or region. These parties, taken as a whole, won 49 percent of the vote and 217 seats, just four seats less than their collective 2009 total. Remarkably, the pro-BJP swing was deeply concentrated in the populated and largely Hindi-speaking states of northern, central, and western India, leading to sweeping victories in these states (see Table 23).

Table-22. National Democratic Alliance's Electoral Performance, 2014 Lok Sabha Election

Coalition/Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Seat Share	Vote Share
National Democratic Alliance				
BJP	427	282	51.93	31.1
SHS	58	18	3.31	1.85
TDP	30	16	2.55	2.95
SAD	10	4	.74	.30
LJP	7	6	1.10	0.04

Table-23. Result for BJP Stronghold* and Rest of India

Coalition	Party	BJP Stronghold (304seats)				Rest of India (239 seats)			
		Seats Contested	Seats Won	Seat (%)	Vote (%)	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Seat (%)	Vote (%)
NDA	BJP	266	244	81	44	161	38	16	19
	BJP Allies	38	29	10	5	75	18	8	11

*Includes the states and Union Territories of the Hindi Belt plus Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, and the two Union Territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu.

Behind the party's overall success rate of 66 percent (282 seats won out of 427 contested), we can distinguish the outlines of its regional stronghold. Its strength lies in the so-called Hindi Belt—the nine northern and central states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Chattisgarh (alongside with the Union Territories of Delhi and Chandigarh) where that language prevails—plus the three western states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Goa, as well as the Union Territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu. These areas, which include India's biggest state (Uttar Pradesh) with its two hundred- million people, gave the BJP 84 percent (or 244) of its 282 seats. The BJP won a majority of all votes cast in, respectively, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand. BJP also took 27 percent in Maharashtra even while fielding candidates in just half the state's Lok Sabha seats.

The BJP's 2014 showing extended and strengthened a pattern seen in earlier elections, mostly those of 1996, 1998, and 1999. In those races, the BJP won more seats than Congress in spite of gaining a smaller share of the total vote—a circumstance that owed much to the geographically focused nature of the BJP's northern, central, and western base and the amazing success rate that the party was (and is) able to accumulate there. The regionally concentrated pro-BJP swing of 2014, and the stratospheric success rate

flowing from it, also lies behind the high conversion factor of 1.67 percent of the seats for every 1 percent of the vote, and hereafter the BJP's seat bonus.

None of this is to say, nevertheless, that the pro-BJP swing was restricted to the party's traditional stronghold. Definitely, signs of it were apparent in eastern and southern states which, Karnataka in the southwest aside, have never been areas of BJP strength. The BJP won its first-ever plurality in Assam in India's northeast, taking 36 percent of the vote and half the state's fourteen Lok Sabha seats. In West Bengal, where a communist party had been electorally dominant for more than three decades prior to 2011, the BJP made its robust showing ever by receiving 17 percent of the vote, nonetheless this was not sufficient to win more than 2 of the state's 42 seats. In Kerala and Tamil Nadu at India's southern tip, the BJP's vote share hit 10.45 and 5.56 percent, respectively. In Kerala this was not enough to win a seat, though the BJP did take one of the seven seats it contested in Tamil Nadu—the first time that it won a seat there since 1999. (See Table 24)

At an aggregate level in 2014, the electoral performance of regional parties actually remained resilient. Regional parties maintained their vote and seat share, with the majority of seats changing hands within the national party category (See Figure 2 and 3). This does not mean that most seats directly

Table-24, Electoral Performance of the BJP, 2014 Parliamentary Election

Sr. No.	STATE/UT	Seats			Votes Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	42		3	8.52
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2		1	46.62
3	ASSAM	14		7	36.86
4	BIHAR	40		22	29.86
5	GOA	2		2	54.12
6	GUJARAT	26		26	60.11
7	HARYANA	10		7	34.84
8	HIMACHAL PRADESH	4		4	53.85
9	JAMMU & KASHMIR	6		3	32.65
10	KARNATAKA	28		17	43.37

11	KERALA	20	0	10.45
12	MADHYA PRADESH	29	27	54.76
13	MAHARASHTRA	48	23	27.56
14	MANIPUR	2	0	11.98
15	MEGHALAYA	2	0	9.16
16	MIZORAM	1	-	
17	NAGALAND	1	-	
18	ODISHA	21	1	21.88
19	PUNJAB	13	2	8.77
20	RAJASTHAN	25	25	55.61
21	SIKKIM	1	0	2.39
22	TAMIL NADU	39	1	5.56
23	TRIPURA	2	0	5.77
24	UTTAR PRADESH	80	71	42.63
25	WEST BENGAL	42	2	17.02
26	CHHATTISGARH	11	10	24.83
27	JHARKHAND	14	12	40.71
28	UTTARAKHAND	5	5	55.93
29	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	1	1	48.19
30	CHANDIGARH	1	1	42.49
31	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	1	1	49.77
32	DAMAN & DIU	1	1	54.66
33	NCT DELHI	7	7	46.63
34	LAKSHADWEEP	1	0	0.43
35	PUDUCHERRY	1	-	-
	TOTAL	**543**	**282**	**31.1**

Source: Election Commission of India

shifted between Congress and the BJP, but that the net effect of seats won by the BJP from, and lost by Congress to, a multitude of regional competitors was to maintain the overall balance between national and regional parties in the Lok Sabha. There was, however, a shift in the type of regional parties represented in the Lok Sabha. The poorer

performance of caste-based regional parties in northern India was compensated for by the stronger performance of regional parties in the southern and eastern states of West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. There has also been a marked decline since 2004 in the effective number of parties winning Lok Sabha seats, and the gap between the effective number of parties by vote and seat share has widened successively since 2004. This suggests that the disproportionality of electoral outcomes in India's First Past the Post electoral system has increased across the last two general elections.

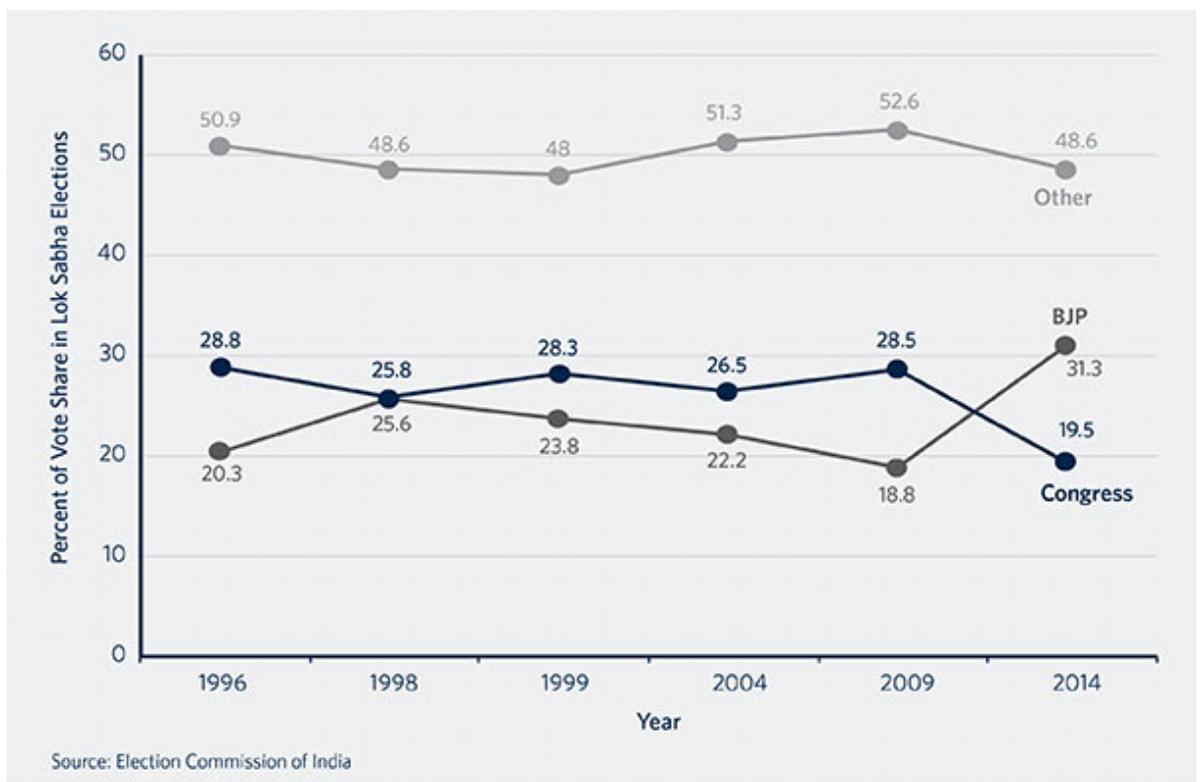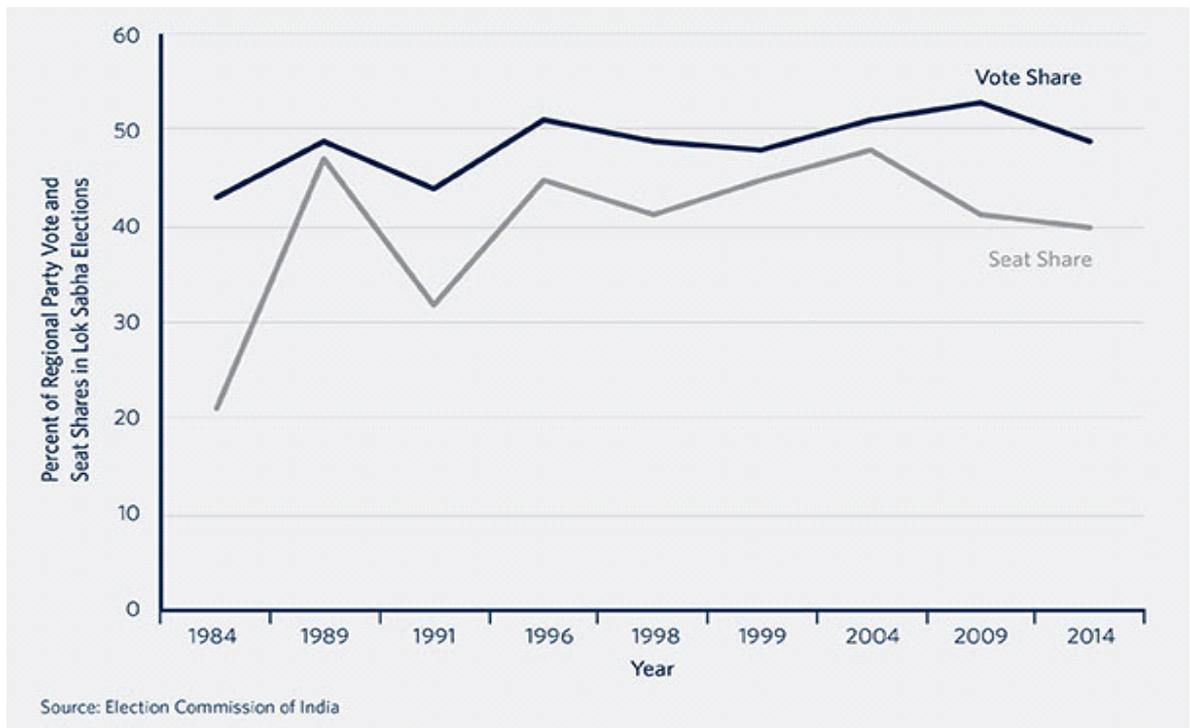**Figure -2. Equilibrium Between National (BJP + Congress) and Regional Parties**

Source: Election Commission of India

Figure-3. Imperfect Translation of Votes and Seats of Regional Parties

Source: Election Commission of India

States that Brought Victory to BJP

Uttar Pradesh

The BJP victory would not have been so massive, had the party not taken the key northern state of Uttar Pradesh, the core of the Hindi belt. What makes Uttar Pradesh interesting case study is that the Congress was a minor player in Uttar Pradesh, as the political landscape was dominated by a number of powerful regional parties: the SP and BSP.

In the previous decade in UP, the Samajwadi Party and the BSP appeared to have successfully marginalised the two all-India parties: The Congress and the BJP. In turn, this had left the political arena free for a long-drawn out duel between the two regional parties. The Samajwadi Party's main constituency was made up of the alliance between the Yadavs, the most powerful of the local OBCs, and the Muslims. On the other hand, the BSP's core constituency was made up of the dalits. The two parties were able to gain the absolute majority of UP assembly seats – the BSP in 2007, the SP in 2012 – by extending their social base to include all the OBCs, in the case of the Samajwadi Party, and the bulk of the Upper Castes in the case of the BSP.[281]

On the eve of the 2014 election campaign, however, the public mood in UP appeared to be general disillusionment with both the BSP and the Samajwadi Party. In fact, their terrible record in power had led to a "deep sense of alienation", particularly among the non-Yadav OBC supporters of the Samajwadi Party and the non-Chamar/Jatav dalits followers of the BSP.

Against this background, communal tension, which after 1992-93 had been on the wane, resurfaced in August-September 2013 when, in the northern UP district of Muzaffarnagar, a violent confrontation pitted the Jats (the locally dominant Hindu caste) against the Muslims. This resulted in the death of over 50 people, mostly Muslims, and the displacement of the entire local Muslim community. The Muslims felt betrayed by the SP government, which had failed to protect them and was slow in assisting them. On the other hand, the BJP, led by Amit Shah, which had been reorganizing itself in UP for many months already, was ready to capitalise on the riot. It projected the Jat-Muslim clash as "a broader battle between Hindus and Muslims", persuading "the Jats, as also other non-Muslim social groups, that they had been discriminated against not because they were Jats, but because they were Hindus". At that point, a video was put online showing what was allegedly the brutal beating of two people, supposedly Hindus, by a Muslim mob. The video – which was filmed in Pakistan, and had no connection with the Muzaffarnagar clash – helped to make the situation even tenser. At that point, the BJP, in a successful effort to portray itself as the only party willing to fight against the alleged injustices suffered by the Hindus, organised a ceremony in Agra to celebrate the Jats who had been implicated in the riots. In UP as in the rest of India, the BJP election campaign worked like a Swiss timepiece, making use of both the most advanced IT technologies and the time-tested and capillary ground propaganda carried out by the RSS. During the UP campaign, the developmental theme was integrated by two others: the first was Narendra Modi's low caste origin, aimed at seducing the OBCs; the second, which became prominent in the closing days of the campaign, were some of the traditional topics of the Hindu Right: the ban on beef export and the building of the Ram temple on the site of the Babri Masjid, the mosque destroyed to the ground by Hindu activists in 1992. Thanks to the communal tension caused by the Muzaffarnagar riots and their inept handling by the UP government, the strategy paid off handsomely. As briefly summed up by Ajaz Ashraf: "It wouldn't be wrong to say that the politics of religion and caste comprised the cake, while development was the cherry on top."

The 16th Lok Sabha election results were significant for two reasons: first it gave the BJP a massive mandate and clear majority to govern the country for the first time, and second it registered a massive win in UP, winning 71 out of 80 seats. Both wins were the first of its kind; never had BJP won a clear majority at the centre nor ever won in UP on such a huge scale. UP contributed over 26 per cent seats to BJP's national tally (71/272).

Bihar

In a way, the case of Bihar is more difficult to explain. For quite a long time, Bihar had been considered, and rightly so, the most backward, crime-ridden and corrupt state in India. Then, following the 2005 state elections, a new government, expression of the alliance between the BJP and the Janata Dal (United) came to power. Led by Nitish Kumar, the JD(U) started quite spectacularly to turn things around: the rampant crime and widespread corruption which had affected the state were effectively curtailed and, also as a consequence of the new and more favourable law and order situation, the economy started to grow rapidly. In the 2010 state elections, the BJP-JD(U) alliance was returned to power, even if the relative strength of the two parties was reversed in favour of the JD(U). By that time, Bihar had already become the second fastest growing state in India, averaging an annual growth rate of 11 percent in the five years from 2004/05 to 2008/09 (which put Bihar "just a shade behind Gujarat's well-publicized growth of 11.05%"). During the second BJP-JD(U) government, Bihar's growth rate accelerated further and conspicuously, making it the fastest growing state in India. In 2012/13, Bihar's rate of growth reached 15.05 percent, which put it well ahead of Gujarat (which was only sixth, with 7.96 percent).

Unlike in Gujarat, while actively promoting economic growth spearheaded by infrastructure construction and the rapid rise of the tertiary sector, Nitish Kumar advocated "caution on land acquisition for urbanization or industrialization" and would not "have the state intervene on behalf of big money". Again unlike in Gujarat, Nitish Kumar put a great deal of effort, particularly since 2009, into promoting socially inclusive growth, by empowering the weakest sections of society, particularly the EBCs (Extremely Backward Classes), the mahadalits (the most backward among the scheduled castes), and women. For some eight years, beginning in 2005, Nitish Kumar ran one of the most 'trouble free' coalition governments in India, maintaining good working relations with the local BJP. However, already during the 2009 general

elections and the 2010 Bihar state elections, it became clear that his relationship with the BJP's rising star at the national level, Narendra Modi, was not good. He prevented Modi from campaigning in Bihar; in June 2012, he made it clear that he would not accept Modi as the NDA leader. When, in spite of his warnings, Modi was chosen by his party as the campaign leader, on 16 June 2013 Nitish Kumar left the NDA and broke his alliance with the BJP in Bihar (where he was able to remain in power thanks to the support of some independent members of the legislative assembly).

The break was not unexpected, and the BJP was ready for it. In the propaganda battle that followed, the BJP claimed that Bihar's phenomenal growth was due less to Nitish Kumar than to the BJP state ministers and the economic support from the central government. But the real ace up the BJP's sleeve was that Modi belonged to an "extremely backward caste". BJP strategists anticipated that this alone was bound to attract at least a part of those EBCs that had previously been one of the key social blocs supporting Nitish Kumar. Consequently, BJP strategists actively began to build an electoral front which, in addition to the high castes traditionally represented by the BJP, included both EBCs and dalits. The ensuing election campaign rapidly demonstrated two things: the first was that, at least in Bihar, eight years of unprecedented and uninterrupted economic growth coupled with social peace and a constant effort to make growth as inclusive as possible hardly had any impact at the electoral level; the second was that, at least in Bihar, what really counted was caste arithmetic. In turn, caste arithmetic implied the distribution of (promised) rewards to the several castes, but, firstly and most importantly, to their leaders. It was through such promises that social support was consolidated behind the BJP and party alliances were put in place.

Two things made the BJP's promises alluring: the first was that, at the all-India level, the BJP was clearly on a roll, while the Congress was just as clearly in difficulty; the second was Modi's caste origin, plus his newly found attention for dalits. Joining Modi meant jumping on the bandwagon of the very probable winner at the all-India level, while staying with Nitish Kumar meant sticking with a leader who, even if victorious at the state level, could hardly hope to have any decisive political leverage at the national level and, consequently, could not offer the same rewards as Modi. Not surprisingly, the Bihar BJP soon found that it had an almost irresistible gravitational force: some politicians who had previously belonged to the JD(U) now entered the BJP or founded their own party in order to form an alliance with it; others who, had the situation been different, could have allied with the JD(U), now sought an alliance with

the BJP. In a situation in which caste arithmetic was crucial and party alliances indispensable, Nitish Kumar showed himself incapable of building a strong anti-BJP party coalition. He had to face the competition of that same old enemy which he had ousted from power in 2005: the Rashtriya Janata Da. Led by Laloo Prasad Yadav, the RJD has its potential electoral base among the Yadavs, the most numerous and powerful of the Bihari backward castes, and the Muslims. In the lead-up to the general elections, Nitish Kumar worked to reach an alliance with the Congress, but eventually failed; likewise, he failed to gain the support of the Muslim community. The latter decided that the RJD remained a more effective weapon against Modi, possibly because Laloo Prasad was eventually able to stitch together an alliance with both the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party. Some weeks before the elections, it became clear that in most of Bihar the real struggle was between the BJP-led alliance and the RJD-led alliance, whereas the JD (U) was isolated and, as far as voters' intentions were concerned, trailing well behind either alliance. In fact, at the polls the BJP took the absolute majority (22 seats out of 40), while its two allies, the LJP and the RLSP got respectively 6 and 3 seats. On its part, the JD(U) crashed down from 20 to 2 seats, ending up behind the RJD (which won 4 seats, while its allies, the Congress and the NCP won 2 and 1 seat, respectively).

Andhra Pradesh

In this election, the BJP won three Lok Sabha and nine assembly seats (four in AP in five in Telangana), with 8.52 per cent vote share. It alliance partner TDP won 16 Lok Sabha and 117 assembly seats (102 in AP and 15 in Telangana), with 29.36 per cent of votes. The regional outfit TRS won 11 Lok Sabha and 65 assemble seats in Telangana. AIMIM won 1 Lok Sabha and 7 assembly seats. In Seemandhra, before the election the contest was as if it was a triangle, but the results revealed that the Congress was not at all a significant player in the electoral fray as it was reduced to zero due to the anti-establishment wave at the national level in general and anti-bifurcation mood in particular. But it was a dividend for the regional parties in the two states.

Maharashtra

The parliamentary election outcome was a one-sided affair in which the then ruling Congress-NCP alliance was completely routed. Compared to that, the assembly elections saw a moderate success for BJP in multi-cornered contest. The state unit of BJP, which had gone weak due to internal rivalries among top leaders and due to

significant losses in the round of elections to local bodies in 2012, could ride high on the Modi wave in the Lok Sabha elections, and the party secured 24 out of 26 seats that it had contested. 'The Grand Alliance' of the BJP, Shiv Sena and the other smaller parties like the Swabhimani Shetkari Paksha, Republican Party of India (Ramdas Athwale faction) and Rashtriya Samaj Paksha1 clinched 42 out of 48 seats and also claimed more than half of the vote share (over 51%) to emerge as outright winners. The BJP-Shiv Sena alliance could add a whopping 16 per cent votes and 22 more seats to their kitty since the 2009 election.

Explaining the BJP Swing

Among the causes of the big pro-BJP swing was the party's absolute success at mobilizing its voters. This can be seen in the overall turnout, which hit 66.4 percent of all registered voters, a noteworthy improvement over the 58 to 62 percent showings seen in recent national elections. In constituencies that the BJP won, its average margin of victory was 18 percentage points, as compared with an average winning margin of 12 points for its allied parties and just 8 points for Congress. The winning BJP candidate topped 50 percent in 137 constituencies, and finished between 40 and 50 percent in an additional 132. As one might expect, most of the severely pro-BJP constituencies were located in the Hindi speaking states as well as Gujarat and Maharashtra.

In order to understand how effective, the BJP's mobilization efforts were, one need only consider that, of those seats where turnout improved by more than 15 percentage points as compared with 2009, 96 percent went for the BJP. Where turnout rose by 10 to 15 points, the BJP's success rate was an only marginally less stunning 86 percent. By contrast, less than half (46 percent) of the constituencies that saw a 10 percentage-point or less increase in turnout went for the BJP, while constituencies that observed flat or falling turnout brought the party just a 34 percent success rate. The strong correlation between higher turnout and BJP victories shows that the BJP's efforts to mobilize voters won the party large rewards at the polls.

The BJP did more than just improvement its share of the vote within its "traditional" urban, middle-class, and upper-caste base. The party also made deep inroads into the large group of the Other Backward Classes, as well as the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. In most states of the north, center, and west, these latter two groups had long been known to vote mostly for Congress. Postelection surveys carried out by

the CSDS, show that 54 percent of upper-caste voters, 34 percent of OBC voters, 24 percent of those from Scheduled Castes, 38 percent of those belonging to Scheduled Tribes, and 8.5 percent of Muslims voted for the BJP. Within the ranks of all these groups save Muslims (who gave Congress 38 percent of their votes), support for the BJP far surpassed that for its key rival. And even among Muslim voters, the BJP doubled the 4 percent that it won in 2009. If we analyze the results in rural-urban terms, BJP dominance again becomes apparent: Congress secured 19 percent of the rural and 20 percent of the urban vote, whereas the BJP won 30 and 33 percent, respectively. (See Table 25)

Table-25. Voting preferences of socio-economic groups by party and locality

	BJP		Congress	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Social Groups				
All	30	33	19	19
STs	37	38	28	29
SCs	24	28	18	18
Hindu general	47	48	13	11
Hindu OBCs	34	37	15	14
Muslims	8	8	38	44
Others	19	22	23	23
Economic Classes				
Poor	23	26	21	18
Lower	30	35	19	20
Middle	32	33	20	20
Rich	39	37	16	18

Note: Figures are in percentage.

Source: NES 2014.

The CSDS survey organized respondents into one of four income-based categories. In each, the BJP won more votes than Congress: Those who were identified as "rich" voted 32 to 17 percent for the BJP while "middle- class" Indians went BJP by 32 to 20 percent. For the time being, "lower class" voters fragmented 31 to 19 percent against Congress, and "poor" electorates favored the BJP by 24 to 20 percent. The BJP's lead narrows as we go down the income hierarchy, but at no level, even the poorest, did voters prefer the traditionally social-welfare–oriented Congress to the more free-market–favoring BJP. The picture of not only a more active and excited, but a broader and deeper BJP support base surfaces evidently. Among each caste and class of voters, and in rural and urban areas alike, Congress found itself overwhelmed. Regardless of the BJP's comparatively weak performance across the east and south, its impressive leads among nearly all voter sections in its traditional northern, central, and western stronghold were sufficient to provide a clear countrywide edge and arch it into power at the center.

The Class Factor in 2014 Lok Sabha Elections

Class played a more important role than before in the 2014 election—and contributed to the success of Narendra Modi. The BJP prime ministerial candidate was able to massively attract the support of the middle class. That was already true in 2009. What was new and more significant in terms of numbers was the rallying around the BJP of additional sections of the 'lower' class. This 'lower' class formed the core of an emerging 'neo-middle class' which constituted an aspiring social category born out of the economic growth of the previous decade.

The manifestation of this class has put the very notion of the OBCs (that was already divided along caste—jati—lines) in question, in particular in the Hindi belt, the crucible of quota politics. Members of the OBCs are now differentiated in socio-economic terms to such an extent that their voting pattern has further lost its homogeneity. The BJP has benefitted from this process in the sense that the OBCs who have joined the somewhat upwardly mobile layer—and who are not poor any more—vote more for Modi's party, expecting from him what they long for the most: jobs and 'development' in more general terms.

The growing importance of this class element has affected the relevance of the OBC politics of yesterday—that had already been very much weakened anyway. But it does

not mean that caste politics is over at the jati level, at least in the Hindi belt states. Some of these caste groups may not be very sensitive to class differentiation—or may not be sensitive the same way as the OBCs as a whole. Members of dominant OBC jatis like the Yadavs do not vote more for the BJP the richer they are because their elite groups stick to parties (the SP, the RJD) to which they owe their political clout. Second, members of upper-caste groups like the Brahmins and the Rajputs vote for the BJP whatever their class is almost, because to be associated with this party is part of their political ethos and goes along with the status they claim. Third, Dalits continue to reject the BJP because of its political culture and social agenda. The resilience of identity politics is even more evident from the way Muslims voted in 2014. Looking for the best manner to counter the rise of Narendra Modi, they tended to support the Congress whatever their class was, which does not mean that there was no class factor at play, as evident from the attractiveness of BSP over poor Muslims and that of the SP over 'upper' class Muslims.

The Upper Middle Class and Middle Class Voted for BJP

A significant difference between 2009 and 2014 was upper middle- and middle-class turnout, both in terms of the higher proportion of the population and hence the total vote constituted by these two classes (47% from 26% in 2009, Table *) and in terms of overall turnout increase from 58% to 68% (Table *).

This is partly due to the definitional effect of the cut-offs for class definitions remaining the same and hence for a much larger percentage of the sample falling in these two classes. Turnout by the poor at 60% is significantly less than the 68% turnout by the two richer classes (Table *), this pattern resembling the pattern in western countries where the better-off and more educated turn out at higher rates than the poor. Turnout by the upper middle and middle classes is equal to that by the lower class and much higher than the poor class regardless of rural, town/city or metropolitan location (Table *) except for the upper middle class in towns/cities compared to the lower class (but still higher than the poor).

Also, a larger proportion of metropolitan votes compared to 2009 were accounted by the upper middle and middle class due to their higher turnout and higher proportion. Higher turnout by the upper middle and middle classes in metros could be a sign of things to come in the future as India urbanizes rapidly and as the middle classes, holding cut-offs constant, grow in relative size. Since the upper middle and middle

classes are disproportionately upper caste we would expect mutual reinforcement in terms of pro-BJP party preference (36% and 25%, respectively), of the upper middle- and middle-class voters were upper caste, 27% of upper-middle and middle classes taken together, compared to 22% of all voters, from Table 26. Of the total pro-BJP vote, 52% came from the top two classes (Table 26).

The age group within classes does not seem to have made a big difference overall but it is noteworthy that first-time voters (40% pro-BJP in middle class) and under-35 age groups in upper middle class (Table 27) were disproportionately pro-BJP. This younger age group's relatively greater orientation towards the BJP could possibly be a sign of things to come in the future as this generation rises and the older generations fade out. The upper middle- and middle-class preference for the BJP (38% and 32%, respectively) was more marked than that of the rest of the sample, being 31% for lower and only 24% for the poor, and this is still more marked in the case of the upper-caste component of these two classes (46% middle and 55% upper middle pro-BJP. While in 2009, the BJP led the Congress only among the upper castes (36% to 26%, Table 27), in 2014 it led the Congress in all castes/communities except Muslims and Christians but most particularly among the upper castes.

Therefore, the data shows a strong affinity for the BJP among the upper middle and middle classes, and among the upper castes who have a disproportionately high share in these classes, as well as the younger age groups among the upper middle and middle. Among the upper middle class in the metros, there is a seeming emergence (Yadav Kumar Heath 1999) of the loose "new social bloc" of economic and social privilege after 15 years of high growth, rising incomes, and greater urbanisation by historical standards. This also seems to fit with the top-middle affinity postulated by Iversen and Soskice for majoritarian electoral systems without a corporatist organisation of the economy.

To sum up, the erosion of caste politics needs to be qualified but class has become a more influential factor and has significantly contributed to BJP's success. Now, the manner in which the BJP referred to class-related issues during the 2014 election campaign has been somewhat self-contradictory.

Table-26. Party preference of votes by different classes and caste/community

Caste / Community	Poor		Lower		Middle		Upper	
	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP
Upper caste	13	37	11	48	15	46	13	55
OBC	15	28	15	37	16	33	14	37
SC	17	22	18	22	20	27	17	25
ST	28	33	31	36	25	39	26	53
Muslims	41	4	34	10	42	11	27	7
Others	19	17	23	18	22	24	31	16
Total	20	24	19	31	20	32	17	18

Source: Election Commission of India.

Table-27. Class-wise party preference, 2009 and 2014

Class	Congress		BJP	
	2009	2014	2009	2014
Poor	27	20	16	24
Lower	29	19	19	31
Middle	29	20	20	32
Upper	29	17	25	38
Total	29	19	19	31

Source: NES 2009 and 2014

Modi and the BJP are well known for their Hindu-nationalist ideology and track record. The BJP for the most part kept silent about Hindu nationalism and concentrated instead on what it said was the Congress-led government's corruption and poor performance, specifically the slow growth, unemployment, and inflation that had determined its watch. There were anti- Muslim words by BJP leaders at times: Modi said while campaigning in West Bengal in late April that illegal immigrants from Bangladesh should "be prepared with their bags packed" after May 16 (in February, he had drawn a difference between Muslim and Hindu immigrants, suggesting that the former were not welcome). But there was nothing comparable to the violence and hysteria that had attended the BJP's rise to national prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The most disreputable incident related with this phase of BJP activism had been the televised demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, by a BJP-mobilized mob in December 1992 (for detail see chapter 3). Almost ten years later, while Modi was a few months into his first tenure as chief minister of Gujarat, the state was stunned by anti-Muslim violence that left about a thousand people dead and many more homeless in the first half of 2002. There were charges that Modi's government had allowed or even conspired in the attacks. Keen to leave such memories behind, Modi focused his 2014 campaign on economic development and good governance. He

stressed Gujarat's strong economic growth during his long tenure as its chief executive, promising that he would make such attainments possible for the nation as a whole. The BJP's appeals to growth and effectual governance— "Good days are coming!" went the party's catch phrase—and not Hindu nationalism or anti-Muslim temperament, are what drew voters to support the party's candidates.

The BJP found plenty fodder for criticism in the economy's recent travails. Measured over its entire arc from 2004 to 2014, the two-term UPA government led by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was in office during the best single decade for economic boom in Indian history. However in India as in most democracies, voters care most about the recent past. The years since 2011 had been rough. The country's growth rate had fallen from 9 to 4.7 percent, whereas unemployment rose as young people's numbers exceeded available jobs. Inflation also little hard, mainly in the area of food prices (over the past three fiscal years, it has averaged 7.4 percent). In 2007, Congress had endorsed a rural employment-guarantee program for the poor that drove rural real wages to a peak right around election time in 2009. In 2013, nonetheless, the annual rate of real wage growth had decelerated to 3 percent after hitting double digits in 2011 and 2012, sowing widespread disappointment.
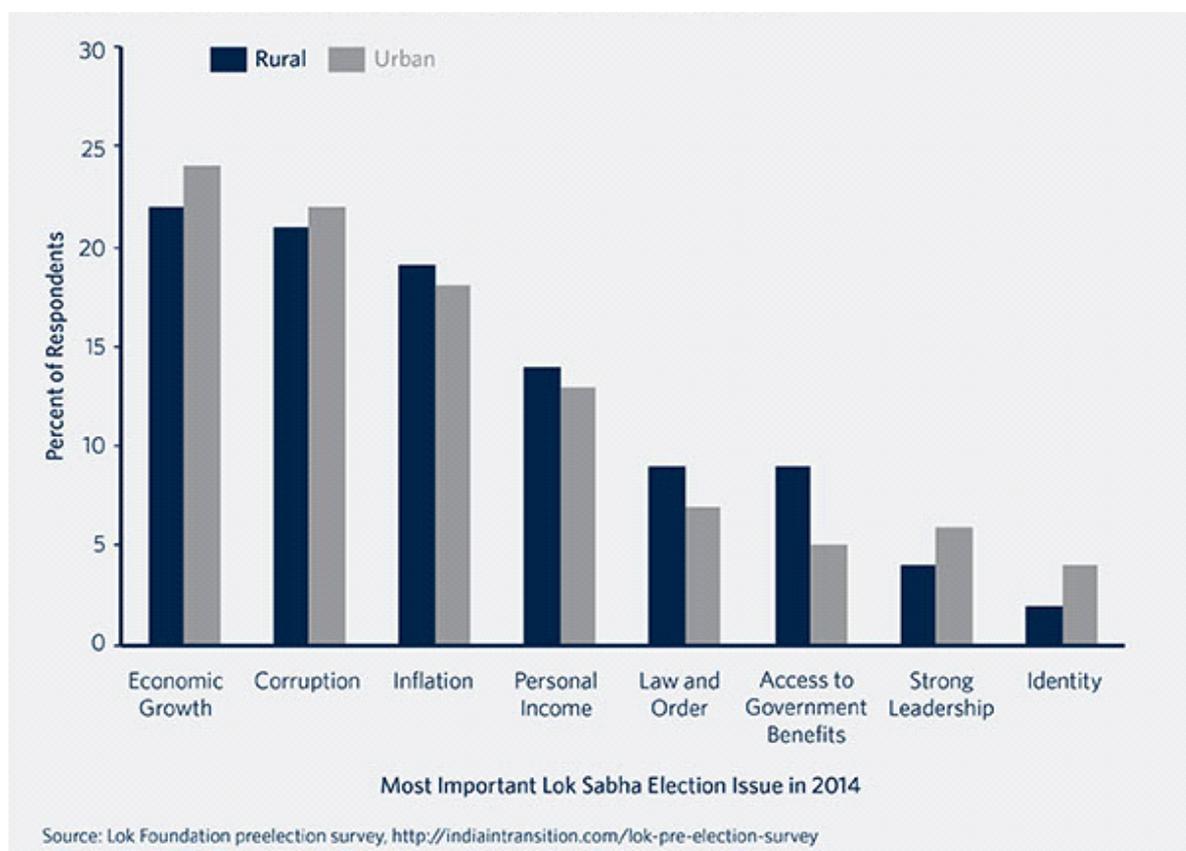
The effects of these developments showed up in preelection polling, which between July 2013 and March 2014 exposed a stable rise in prospective voters' support for the BJP and for Modi as prime minister. The Lok Foundation's survey for the University of Pennsylvania's Center for the Advanced Study of India found that voters' top concern was slow economic growth, followed by corruption and inflation, with issues of leadership quality and identity politics carrying little weight (See Figure 4). In the March 2014 CSDS survey, more than half the respondents said that the UPA should not be given another chance. When asked to name the single most important issue, those polled named rising prices, corruption, lack of economic development, and unemployment in that order.

Table-28. Preferred choice for prime minister – 2004-2014

	April-May 2014	March 2014	January 2014	July 2013	2011	2009
Narendra Modi	36	34	34	19	5	2
Rahul Gandhi	14	15	15	12	19	6
Sonia Gandhi	3	3	5	5	10	16
L.K. Advani	-	-	-	-	-	15

Source: NES conducted by Lokniti-CSDS, 2004; 2009; 2013; 2014

Figure-4. Evidence of Economic Voting Among Rural and Urban Voters

Source: Lok Foundation preelection survey, http://indiaintransition.com/lok-pre-election-survey

Further dragging the UPA down was a quirk of the post-2010 slowdown's timing: It came just as the lid was being blown off a swing of disgraceful public-corruption scandals that enraged countless millions of Indians. The scandals involved gross misdealings linked to the allocation of the 2G telecom spectrum, certain coal-mining concessions, and construction contracts related to the 2010 Commonwealth Games. The common thread was crony capitalism at its worst, containing regulatory favors done for politically linked businesses and UPA cabinet ministers. The government never succeeded to explain these away, nor was it seen to be deal with corruption. Instead, it appeared to be covering up and soon found itself playing defense as a popular anticorruption movement gained steam in mid-2011. The double whammy of stagflation (slow growth plus rising prices) and corruption kept the UPA off balance and endorsed the BJP to shift the focus away from Hindu nationalism toward economic development and good governance.

While acknowledging how dissatisfaction over corruption and the economy created space for the BJP, we must also note that party's higher ability of electoral leadership (call it the "Modi factor") and contrast it with Congress's unskilled and reactive campaign. With India having ridden out the post-2008 global economic slowdown in apparently good order, Congress seemed intellectually unready to deal with the halving of the national growth rate after 2010. The flagship UPA programs—antipoverty initiatives, subsidies for both the poor and nonpoor, new entitlements—all appeared to assume that the policy framework for continued high growth was already in place, leaving redistribution (to be carried out in ways meant to maximize the UPA's vote share) as the main task. Although the octogenarian Manmohan Singh was retiring, Congress failed to name a candidate for prime minister, leaving the decision till after the election.

Economists have argued that huge public spending (all those subsidies) generated so much inflation that people found themselves merely running in place. Bringing growth back would have required the Congress-led government to cut back subsidies in favor of long-term infrastructure upgrades while also implementing market-friendly reforms (including public-sector privatization and labor-market flexibility) meant to revive foreign and domestic investment. Sonia Gandhi, the party's president, and her son Rahul either remained ideologically committed to subsidies and populist welfare spending, or else simply calculated that the election was so close there would be no point in approval market-oriented reforms likely (in the short run at least) to bring

nothing but pain and unpopularity. Manmohan Singh and his finance minister were given no scope even to talk about a new round of reform. Congress's informal practice of having two top figures—a party president and an uncommunicative prime minister—made the latter look ineffectual.

In this background, Modi put out a message that he would bring growth and jobs by pushing through major infrastructure and industrialization projects, as he had been doing in Gujarat for more than a decade. Smartly, his campaign sounded this theme without binding itself to specific policy commitments of any kind, even as the BJP was voting for such UPA-sponsored populist measures as 2013 laws guaranteeing subsidized food to the poorest two-thirds of the population and substantial compensation to villagers or farmers whose land was acquired for development.

Surveys suggest that the Modi factor was key to the BJP's success. Half the CSDS survey's respondents said that leadership was important, and as many as a quarter of NDA voters told the CSDS postelection survey that had the alliance not put Modi forward as its candidate for the premiership, they would not have cast their ballots for it. Without them, the NDA would have been stuck at 29 percent of the vote, almost certainly not enough for a seat majority. In this sense, the 2014 election can be said to have been quasi-presidential. Starting in late 2013, an apparent Modi wave began to build. Large pluralities of those surveyed said that he was their number-one choice to be India's next prime minister. In September 2013, when the BJP declared that Modi would be its candidate for the premiership, 19 percent of respondents said that they preferred him above all others for this post. By March 2014, he was leading Rahul Gandhi 36 to 14 percent in preference polling (See Table 29).

Table-29. Preferred choice for prime minister – 2009-2014

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Source: NES conducted by Lokniti-CSDS, 2004; 2009; 2013; 2014

The BJP campaign was well-funded and better organized than Congress's lackluster, defensive effort. Total spending by all parties on the 2014 election touched an estimated US$5 billion, with the BJP massively outspending Congress. The BJP not only put more activists on the ground, but also achieved a higher profile than did its rival on television as well as on social media and the Internet generally. Helping to make this possible were India's big business interests. These settled in to back Modi after the BJP beat Congress conveniently in four major states' late-2013 state assembly elections, and after the passage of the land-compensation and food-security laws (although the BJP had voted for both, possibly reluctantly). Increasingly, business had been coming to see Congress as too committed to government regulation of the economy, too opposed to further economic liberalization, and too given to populist social spending, not to mention lacking in clear leadership and credible ideas for bringing back investment and growth. A large part of the print and electronic media also appeared to have swung in favor of the BJP or at least against Congress, giving the former relatively favorable coverage and criticizing the latter, especially as represented by Rahul Gandhi.

The rise of new demand, especially rapid economic development

Promise of prosperity is a major reason why "new" (untested) parties win elections across the world. The rival congress or UPA for that matter could not make that promise credibly enough since it has ruled for most of the period so far. BJP could claim that it never had a chance to demonstrate its competence 'on its own', i.e., without the constraints of the coalitions. In politics perceptions are more important than reality. The BJP under Modi's leadership could colour 'perceptions' of the people by credibly claiming that BJP can deliver on economic development and good governance. Modi often cited Gujarat Model during election campaign. The Gujarat experience in terms of economic growth became one of his major assets that granted him and his words a huge credibility.

In a democratic competition for power, message matters. Modi asserted—and voters agreed—that what India needed was a strong, decisive, personally incorruptible, and credible leader who could brought back growth, with jobs and prosperity to follow. Without making specific policy promises, his message stressed the Gujarat experience of high growth based on massive infrastructure development and business-friendliness, particularly in the form of round-the-clock electricity (something that cannot be taken

for granted in all parts of India). Modi and the BJP generally left the subject of antipoverty programs alone, not promising more but at the same time taking care to avoid open attacks on those of the UPA.

The BJP was far less quiet about the UPA government's economic policy failures, the corruption that had occurred on its watch, and the quality of Congress party leadership, which Modi whipped as effete, indecisive, weak, and dynastic. Modi particularly enjoyed drawing a distinction between himself, the son of a tea-seller, and Rahul Gandhi, who as a scion of the Nehru-Gandhi clan is the son, grandson, and great-grandson of Indian prime ministers. Modi taunted the relationship between Sonia and Rahul Gandhi as "mother-and-son government," and dismissed Rahul as a "prince."

In response to all this, Congress was left to highlight its antipoverty programs—in effect, promising "more of the same" in a situation where to most voters this meant more slow growth, unemployment, and inflation. Then too, Congress may have been a victim of its own success. Since 2004, it had elevated 140 million Indians out of poverty, and with those improved circumstances had come improved aspirations even (and perhaps especially) on the part of the rural poor. They now wanted not just welfarism, but something a step beyond that. They—and especially the many among them who were under the age of 40—were looking to move to the next level. The BJP had a message that echoed with this changed, more aspirational mood of a youth-heavy electorate tired of a apparently corrupt, nonperforming Congress (see Table 30). The BJP's promise of a better future struck a chord and gained credibility as the campaign went on.

Congress had no answer, and its appeal distorted. It slipped from January's projection of a 27 percent vote share to a CSDS-predicted 25 percent in March and then to an actual result of just 19 percent in May. The BJP's echoing message and Modi's can-do image curved them first into the lead and then into office.

Table-30. The making of anti-Congress sentiments (%)

Indicators	Option categories	2009 (May)	2011 (July)	2013 (July)	2014 (January)
Satisfaction with	Dissatisfied	21	31	40	50
the performance	Satisfied	64	49	38	35

15	of the UPA II government	No opinion	15	20	22
43	Satisfaction with the	Dissatisfied	17	24	32
41	Performance of	Satisfied	69	56	49
16	Prime Minister	No opinion	14	20	19
	Manmohan Singh				
45	How corrupt is	Very corrupt	-	28	34
36	The UPA II	Somewhat/	-	47	46
	Government?	not at all corrupt			
19		No opinion	-	25	20

Source: NES 2009, State of Nation Survey, 2011 (July), Tracker I (July 2013) and Tracker ii (January 2014).

A Fundamental Shift

Over seven elections covering the last quarter-century, the trend in India has been toward hung parliaments where the game is to eke out a government by means of horse-trading and logrolling with a congeries of smaller regional parties. The 2014 results represent a sharp deviation from that pattern and give grounds to wonder whether the single-party majorities prevalent before 1989 may have made a lasting comeback. The rivals faced each other in 189 head-to-head contests, and the BJP won 166 of these—a stunning 88 percent success rate that produced 59 percent of the BJP's 282 seats. But these head-to head races formed hardly more than a third (35 percent) of all contests and gathered in the two-party states of central, western, and northern India—the epicenter of Congress's breakdown. In eastern and southern India, electoral politics is typically a matter of Congress versus some robust local opponent, typically either a regional or a leftist party (in Karnataka and Assam, this local opponent is the BJP).

In a first-past-the-post system, the BJP's seat majority is fragile. It rests on a vote share of just 31.1 percent, the lowest such share in Indian history to have produced a seat majority. And behind everything stands the BJP's extraordinary sweep in a limited area—the Hindi Belt and the three western states, which altogether hold 738 million people or just over three-fifths of India's population. (The Congress vote is geographically much more spread out but not clearly dominant anywhere except for

Kerala in the south). In order to decrease its intense dependence on its existing stronghold, the BJP will need to find a way to consolidate itself nationally by expanding its base and becoming a contender for the plurality vote share in a number of southern and eastern states. Its ability to do this is very uncertain. Much will depend on how well it performs in her rest tenure, and also on what Congress and the regional parties do. We should also bear in mind that the BJP's single-party majority of just ten seats has not meant the end of coalition politics. The BJP picked up 57 of its 282 seats thanks to vote-pooling deals with allied parties in Maharashtra (23 seats), Bihar (22), Haryana (7), Punjab (2), Andhra Pradesh (2), and Tamil Nadu (1). Technically, the BJP is now heading a "surplus" majority—that is, it could formally put together a government on its own, without allies—but in reality it is going to keep on requiring its partners for their capacity to transfer votes to BJP candidates via preelection coalitions. By standard measures based either on seats or on vote shares, India still has a multiparty system. If one reckons by vote shares, there were about seven "effective" parties in the 2014 election—a higher number than in any election during the period of Congress party domination before 1989. Going by seat shares, the 2014 effective-parties figure was 3.5, but again that is higher than anything seen before 1989. It is too early to say that the BJP has become a new hegemonic party.

The demise of the Congress party's dominance vacated a political as well as an ideological space. However, no single party could occupy that space till 2014. The sudden (and unexpected) rise of BJP initially led some observers to wonder whether the BJP, which has indeed occupied the political space (being the majority party) will occupy the ideological space as well? This assumption was based on the moderate tone the BJP had assumed while leading the NDA coalition during 1999-2004. However, the anecdotal evidence since 2014 shows that the BJP seeks to create Congress style dominance, not via centrist, all-inclusive politics, but via less inclusive, rightist (Hindu nationalist) politics. The BJP has risen as a dominant party, a status enjoyed by the Congress till 1989. The PM Modi is replicating the style of Indira Gandhi, especially installing the Chief Ministers from above. Modi invented a new narrative of developmentalism which struck a chord with people. So far the party has maintained its winning streak through assembly and municipal elections (except one loss in Bihar). The dominance of the BJP has the same "form" as that of the Congress party during its dominance, however, the "substance" of this dominance is poles apart.

The emerging situation combines the promise of faster growth and poverty reduction (in a more market-oriented economy) with the danger of Hindu majoritarianism. Congress's resurgence prospects will hinge partly on how well it accomplishes to reinvent itself organizationally. There are leadership and succession issues that cry out for resolution. Yet Congress will also need to come up with a new message and new policies that get past welfare populism and patronage politics in order to show how economic growth can be made steady with social equity. The left-wing parties, now down to a historic low of just eleven Lok Sabha seats, face the same challenge. So do the lower-caste–based parties of northern India, which the BJP defeated conveniently in this election. All must plan and communicate credible and sustainable ways to balance market-oriented reforms with redistributive measures (politically necessary in what remains a low-income country with massive poverty) that do not choke growth. Do the 2014 election results tell us that India is pivoting away from the politics of religion and caste, patronage and populism, toward a Western-style, left-right debate over economic policy? The BJP's success at employing a message of market-friendliness against Congress's desire for populism might seem to suggest this, though voter surveys cannot as yet be said to confirm it. Large segments of respondents from a cross-section of classes show little knowledge of economic policy regarding matters such as government spending or foreign investment; yet it is noteworthy that a large segment in each of the above voter categories, including the poor, says that it prefers government infrastructure spending over antipoverty subsidies. At this point, it appears safest to say that if there is a shift in the works that favors market-based economic reform, the change is emerging and complex, and its intensity and effects will vary from state to state in a diverse federal economy. The BJP has won, not on the basis of explicit appeals to economic liberalization or (still less) Hindu nationalism, but rather due to a general promise to a more aspirational electorate that better days are coming.

REALITY OF GUJRAT MODEL

Narendra Modi's experiment with Gujarat has been at the heart of a debate between social scientists. Jagdish Bhagwati and Arvind Panagariya consider what they call the 'Gujarat Model' to be 'the metaphor for a primarily growth and private-entrepreneurship driven development'. Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze contend that Gujarat exemplified fast growth slow development (to use Jean Dreze's formula), a

syndrome that prevailed throughout India in the first decade of the twenty-first century, but which was particularly pronounced in Gujarat.

In fact, the political economy of Gujarat has traditionally relied on a growth-oriented close association between the capitalist milieu and a business-friendly state. Already in the 1990s, the Gujarati recipe for growth was based on supply side-oriented public policies (including in fiscal terms). The social implications of this orientation were twofold: first, the state had little to spend (and little inclination to spend) on education, health, and so on; and second, wages remained low (and the state did not do much to remedy this situation). Therefore, while Gujarat was known for its communal polarisation—which culminated in the 2002 riots —it was also the state of social polarisation par excellence.

The collaboration between the state and the corporate sector gained momentum under Modi: businessmen, for instance, could acquire land more quickly and at a better price, and could obtain more tax breaks, etc., than in many other states. This 'business friendly' policy has culminated in the creation of Special Economic Zones where labour laws barely apply.

While the 'Gujarat model' cultivates inequalities in the name of growth, Narendra Modi was able to win state elections three times mainly for two reasons. First, most casualties of this political economy have been Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis, who do not represent more than 30 percent of society. Second, the beneficiaries of this 'model' were not only the middle class, but also a 'neo-middle class' made up of those who had begun to be part of the urban economy or who hoped to benefit from it—the 'neo-middle class' is primarily aspirational. These groups were sufficiently numerous to allow Modi's BJP to win elections in Gujarat: although the BJP got more than 50 percent of the votes only once, in 2002, the main party can have an absolute majority with a smaller share of the vote in a first-past-the-post system. While the BJP is known for its expertise in religious polarisation, this is clearly a case of social polarisation, in which the ethno-religious identity quest of the middle and neo-middle classes continues to play a role.

In the 2014 general elections, many voters supported the BJP, hoping that Modi could replicate the 'Gujarat model' in their states. When they were asked by the Lokniti-CSDS in a post-poll survey the question, 'In your opinion, which state in India is doing best on development indicators? interviewees in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat placed Gujarat first. This was clearly a reflection of the formidable propaganda of the BJP—which was helped by the media. Whether the Modi

government will fulfil this promise will largely depend on its capacity to create jobs for the neo-middle class. This is what drives Modi's emphasis on the 'Make in India' scheme and his determination to make land acquisition easier for industrialists.

Rise of BJP as New Congress?

The denationalization of the Indian multilevel party system is related to the electoral demise of the Congress Party and the incompetence of an alternative polity-wide party to assume its place (party system nationalization expresses the degree to which a party system is territorially integrated). After the 1980s, however, the BJP emerged as a new 'national political force' to be reckoned with, although its territorial spread of the vote was lower than that for the rival Congress Party. The 2014 general election result is remarkable insofar as it produced only the second election result in which the BJP's electoral support was spread more evenly than the Congress Party's. This had happened only once before (in the 1998 general election). At the same time the more even geographic spread of the BJP replicates a long-term trend. A decision to contest more seats in general and state elections since 1991 facilitated the party to break out of its initial strongholds in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Coupled with its 'Mandir' mobilization politics, the BJP established (temporary) strongholds in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Himachal Pradesh, among others. Furthermore, the inability of the BJP to craft a majority on its own after the 1996 general election contributed to the party's realization that it could not govern the centre without programmatic (toning down its Hindutva agenda, for instance) and strategic adjustments (for example, by forging seat-sharing or coalition alliances with a range of regional parties across India ahead of and following these elections). Hence, in the 1998 general elections, the BJP alliance consisted of 13 pre-election and 10 post-election allies (parties). Combined, the BJP strengthened its influence in south and east India, areas that had been mostly outside its reach in the 1996 elections (Sridharan 2010: 125). In 1999 (following early elections after the withdrawal of the AIADMK, the BJP entered the federal elections as a coalition (National Democratic Alliance) consisting of 20 pre-election allies and a common national platform. Congress suffered two further Lok Sabha election defeats (1998, 1999) before it recognized the same difficulty (Yadav and Palshikar 2009). Although in time state parties have swapped costly pre-election seat-sharing

arrangements for more profitable post-coalition deals, it is striking that in the build-up to the 2014 general elections, 22 small or state-based parties entered seat-sharing arrangements with the BJP, against only 10 with Congress (Sridharan 2014). This not only accelerated the Congress Party's electoral losses, but it also made Congress support more territorially concentrated – confined to those states where the party could still win (more or less) on its own.

Further, I have addressed a puzzle in my study that is the formation of one-party majority government in the era of multi-party coalition system. The BJP has entered into pre-electoral alliances with its partners and fought elections as NDA. The theoretical standpoint is that one party majority can be formed either in a one-party dominant system or in a two-party system but not in a fragmented and regionalized multi-party coalition system. But it has happened in India and what we have witnessed that the BJP got the full majority on its own. So, this is a puzzle. I have consistently investigated the causes of the rise of the BJP and how this party manage to form the majority government in the era of multi-party coalition system at national level. Further, I had put emphasis on how BJP is expanding itself from its traditional strongholds i.e. Hindi-heartland (Cow-belt) to Southern, Eastern and North-Eastern part of India. Moreover, BJP came to power on the promise of development and governance, but now promoting polarisation based on its militant Hindu nationalist agenda. The party is gradually drifting the attention of voters towards more sustainable political tool (imaginary feeling of nationalism, Hinduism). Polarization was not the cause of BJP's coming to power, but is a consequence of its being in power (to polarize the society based on certain emotive ideas (based on nation, race or religion) is an integral feature of any right wing party such as BJP.

The formation and functioning of the majority party under BJP, after 2014 General election, where pre-election coalition partners have no voice at all. Although the BJP holds a majority of seats on its own, it has maintained its campaign coalition, the National Democratic Alliance, after the elections. Some alliance members even gained prominent positions in Modi's cabinet. For all practical purposes, however, it is a BJP government. If necessary, the party can abandon its alliance partners and yet the government can last its full term.

At present the party system is once again in a state of flux. The party is functioning more like a dominant party, rather than a leading party in the coalition (NDA). It is functioning in a way the Congress party functioned during the Indira era and expanded

itself apart from its traditional stronghold i.e. Hindi-heartland. That's why it looks like the rise of BJP as new Congress. So nothing can be said regarding the emerging nature of party system in India based on the developments in the past 3 years only (2014-17). The 2019 verdict and the assembly elections till then will clarify whether or not we are really heading towards another era of one-party dominance.

"Rise of BJP as New Congress?" This is a puzzle. The demise of the Congress party's dominance vacated a political as well as an ideological space. However, no single party could occupy that space till 2014. The sudden (and unexpected) rise of BJP initially led some observers to wonder whether the BJP, which has indeed occupied the political space (being the majority party) will occupy the ideological space as well. This assumption was based on the moderate tone the BJP had assumed while leading the NDA coalition during 1999-2004.

However, the anecdotal evidence since 2014 shows that the BJP seeks to create Congress style dominance, not via centrist, all-inclusive politics, but via less inclusive, rightist (Hindu nationalist) politics. Thus the answer would be yes and no. Yes, because of the two reasons: (a) the BJP has risen as a dominant party, a status enjoyed by the Congress till 1989 (b) The PM Modi is replicating the style of Indira Gandhi, especially installing the Chief Ministers from above. No, because, it does not seek to be an all-inclusive party. Nehru's narrative of Modern India (secular developmentalism-based on the mixed economy) carried forward to some extent by Indira lost appeal by the end of the 1980s. There was no alternative "grand narrative" in the 1990s which could inspire people to vote for one party and one leader (like voters did during Nehru—Indira era). Modi invented a new narrative of developmentalism which struck a chord with people. So far the party has maintained its winning streak through assembly and municipal elections (except one setback in Bihar).

So the dominance of the BJP has the same "form" as that of the Congress party during its dominance, however the "substance" of this dominance is poles apart.

Conclusion

In nutshell, securing 31.1 per cent of the votes, BJP won 282 seats in the Lok Sabha, which was a clear majority of the total strength of the house. It added 12.3 per cent votes and 166 seats to its performance in 2009 elections. The allies of BJP, on their

part, added another 7.2 per cent of votes contributing 54 seats, taking the final tally of the NDA to 336 in a house with a maximum strength of 543. Notable partners of the BJP included the Shiv Sena and a few smaller groups in Maharashtra, Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in Andhra Pradesh, Lok Janashakti Party and Rashtriya Lok Samata Party in Bihar, Shiromani Akali Dal in Punjab and Apna Dal in Uttar Pradesh. For the first time since its inception the BJP established itself as a party with nationwide influence. Which a vote-seat multiplier of 1.65. The magnitude of the 2014 mandate thus was truly dramatic and unexpected.

The party strongly consolidated its domination in the northern, central and western parts of the country. More than three-fourth of its total tally of 282 parliamentary seats came from these three regions. The staggering nature of BJP's victory is further vindicated by the fact that the party won more than 50 per cent votes in 137 constituencies and more than forty per cent votes in another 132 constituencies. In states marked by two-party Political competition the BJP captured 50 per cent of the total votes polled and percent seats in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh. In Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Haryana and Jharkhand the party emerged victorious in most of the places. Without belittling the significance of BJP's resounding triumph in these states, we can argue that these have been the traditional strongholds of the BJP described as 'primary states' of the party's influence.

What makes the mandate of 2014 Lok Sabha elections unusual as compared to previous elections in the remarkable outcome in state like Bihar, Maharashtra and Utter Pradesh which together account for more than 30 per cent of the total seats in the Lok Sabha. A few of these states fall in the category of 'secondary states', where the influence of BJP has been not as emphatic as it has been in the primary states. In these states which are featured by multi-party competition the BJP in tandem which junior allies emerged triumphant in as many as four-fifth of the seats (146/168 seats). At the same time benefitting from the supporter of its allies, the BJP performed well in states like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. No less impressive was the performance of the party in states where till these elections, its presence was marginal and which falls in the category of 'peripheral' or 'tertiary' influence. Thus, it won a few seats and large share of votes in states like Jammu & Kashmir (36.4% votes), West Bengal (16.8%), Assam (36.5%), Odisha (21.5%), and Kerala (11%). The BJP also expanded its influence in the north-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh. Nagaland and Mizoram by winning seats and considerable support. It won all but one of the 14 seats in the seven union territories

of the country. In states like Kerala, Odisha, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Telangana, the BJP raised its vote share although it could not win too many seats. It was only in Punjab that the party and its long-time ally, the Akali dal, suffered a reverse, losing both votes and seats compared to the 2009 elections.

The 2014 outcome resulted in a severe setback for the oldest political party of India, the congress. The party was reduced to its lowest tally of 44 seats, receiving only 19.3 per cent of the votes cast. It suffered an erosion of 9.3 percent votes and a loss of as many at 162 seats over the 2009 election outcome. The humiliating defeat of the party is proved by the fact that it failed to open its account in 13 states and all the 7 union territories. Its debacle was a phenomenon experienced all over the country so much so that almost 40 per cent of the party's official candidates forfeited their security deposits. Thus, the outcome of the 16th Lok Sabha elections has further consolidated the post-congress polity in India. But the congress is not the only party that was vanquished by the BJP onslaught. The political 'untouchability' of the party became evident as all its major allies suffered huge revers in their respective states.

In a similar manner, the 2014 elections hardly changed the fortunes of the lefts as the combined strength of the communist parties went below 5 percent (4.83%) and its seats were reduced to 12 from 24 in 2009. The Samajwadi party managed to win 5 seats in Utter Pradesh but in the process lost 18 seats over its last performance. Even worse was the fate of Bahujan Samaj party which drew a cipher in Utter Pradesh, suffering a loss of 21 seats since 2009. Thus, most of the regional political parties that connected against the BJP and its allies suffered heavy losses in parts of north and west India.

The only state based political parties that showed enough resilience to check the BJP juggernaut were the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in Odisha, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) in the Tamil Nadu, and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in west Bengal, the Telangana Rashtra Samiti in Telangana and to some extent the newly formed Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Punjab. The BJD continued to hold its fort strongly in Odisha securing more than 44 per cent of the votes. The TRS secured nearly 35 percent votes and 11 of the 17 seats. Contesting Lok Sabha elections for the first time, the AAP won four seats and nearly one-fourth of the votes polled in Punjab. But compared to its nearly one-fourth of the votes polled in Punjab. But compared to its promise, the party achieved too little. The TMC in west Bengal again stumped all the other political parties, winning 34 of 42 constituencies and almost 40 percent of the votes. Together these states make an interesting analysis as the state based political

parties zealously protected their spheres of influence. The BJP increased its votes share in most of these states, but the social alliances that it sought to cultivate were not strong enough to convert into seats.

There can never be a single-factor explanation of the mandate. A multiplicity of variables worked in tandem to unleash the final outcome. One cannot deny the strong anti-incumbency sentiment prevailing among the people against the poor performance of the UPA II government. There was double anti-incumbency in states where the Congress was in power. A series of scams and corrupt deals, inefficient delivery of welfare services, rise in the prices of the essential commodities and an ineffective leadership worked together to make the central government extremely unpopular.

Sensing the anti-UPA mood of the people, the BJP puts its best foot forward a little before the elections by projecting Narendra Modi as its prime ministerial candidate. This made the election plebiscitary in nature goading people to make a choice between two brands of leadership: Narendra Modi as a successful CM of 'a model state' on the one hand and Rahul Gandhi as a leader who had yet to establish his political and administrative credentials. The two leaders had diametrically opposite impact on their respective party machineries. Narendra Modi, helped by a very effective publicity campaign, infused fresh blood in the BJP cadre and various organisations of the Sangh Parivar, making it a high voltage election campaign all over the country. The BJP presented a better and credible alternative to the Congress. Its state governments were perceived as better performers than Congress-led governments; the party had a better organizational machinery and a political programme that appeared to be vigorous, and above all these was the dynamic leadership of Narendra Modi, who could galvanize people by his oratorical skills infusing hopes and aspirations. The slogan "Achhe din aane waale hain" (good days are coming) jelled well with the electorate. Another campaign ploy that enabled Modi to reach out the people through 3D projection was the chai pe charcha programme. The Congress had no convincing answers to these electoral strategies of the BJP. Over the years and especially since the smooth running of the NDA government from 1999 to 2004, as an organization the BJP had clearly understood the logic of expanding its social base from a political party dependent on upper caste and urban rich class to the socially backward and underprivileged groups. Its majoritarian framework was held sacrosanct to keep its traditional vote bank intact. But to reach out to the OBCs the party successfully crafted out new social coalition through promise of protective discrimination and policy mechanisms. To include the

Dalits under its umbrella, BJP changed its stance towards the biggest Dalit icon of India, that is Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. No one could have been a better craftsman to do this than Narendra Modi, who discovered his backward class roots during the parliamentary elections. These election ploys helped the party in clinging on to its traditional votes bank while reaching out to new social groups among the backward, Dalits and tribals. Narendra Modi's reach experience of developmental politics in the state of Gujrat enabled the BJP to make use of the development card to enlist the support of growing class of Indians, mostly youth who wanted to benefit from the triumvirate of liberalisation, privatization and globalization. For the youth and middle class, Gujrat was a model of industrial growth as well as in trade, business and the service sector. Not only this, the corporate houses were also impressed by Modi's no-nonsense approach while dealing with the bureaucracy to push industrial development.

Thus the BJP under the stewardship of Narendra Modi had something to offer to everyone. Neither the Congress nor any other well established political party was in a condition to match this package and its brand ambassador. The media for a long time had nothing like this to capture. All its arms lapped up Narendra Modi and his campaign trail, making him a heavy draw across the length and breadth of the subcontinent. In the event, the mandate was obvious.

Appendix

Figure-5. The Swing in Votes by for BJP and Congress in Key States from 2009 to 2014
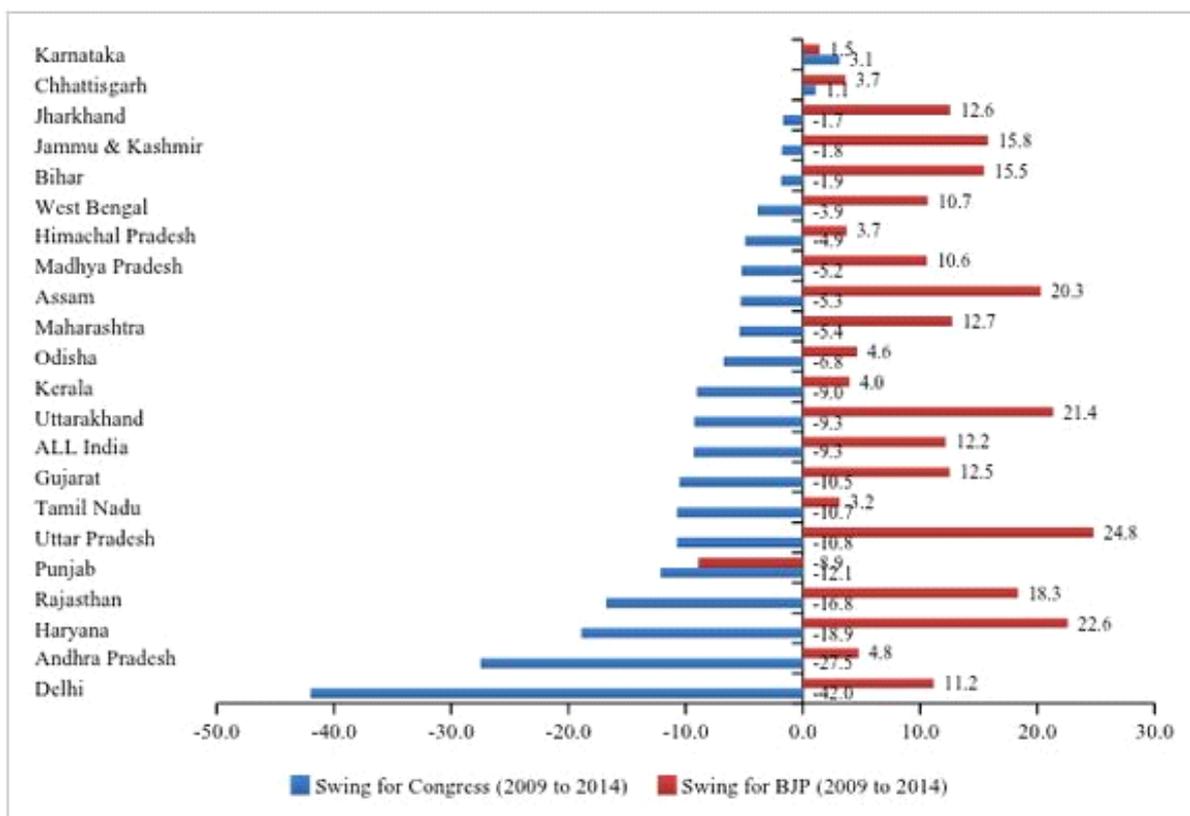
Source: Election Commission of India and

Table-31. The Congress' Performance in Key Elections since 1977

Lok Sabha Election Year	Seats Contested	Won	Number of seats Forfeited Deposit	Vote Share (in %)
1977	492	154	18	34.5
1989	510	197	5	39.5
1996	529	140	127	28.8
1999	453	114	88	28.3
2009	440	206	71	28.6
2014	464	44	178*	19.3

Table-32. Congress Decline in Various States of India

Congress in Power at the State Level	Name of the States	No. of Seats (All India = 543 seats)
Congress has not been in power at the state level in last 25 years	West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Sikkim, Tripura, Nagaland	205
Congress has not been in power at the state level more than 10 years	Gujarat, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh,	87
Less likely that Congress will be able to win power in state without an ally.	Andhra Pradesh (Telengana and Seemandhra), Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Jharkhand	117
Congress still in striking distance for power at the state level	Punjab, Himachal, Haryana, Kerala, Karnataka, Assam, Goa, Rajasthan, North Eastern States and Union Territories	134

Source: Election Commission of India.

Figure-6. Seats Won by the BJP, Congress and Other Parties in Lok Sabha Elections

Source: Election Commission of India
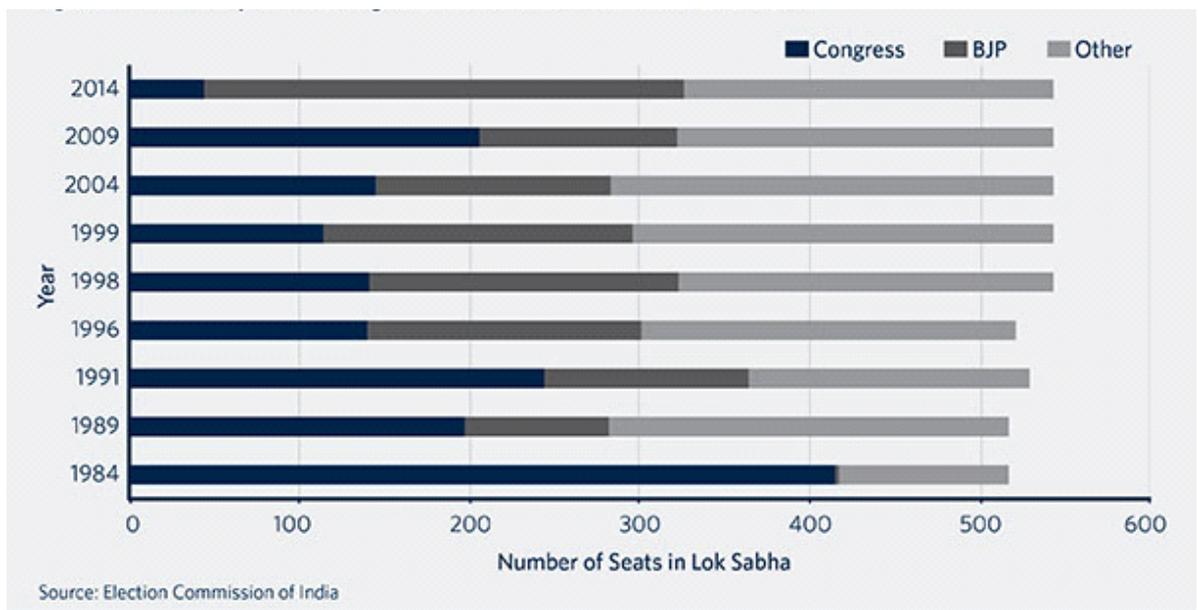
Figure-7. Weak Evidence of Economic Voting in the Aggregate

Note: Growth rate refers to the growth in net state domestic product. Each dot represents a unique state election.

Source: Milan Vaishnav and Reedy Swanson, "Does Good Economics Make for Good Politics? Evidence From Indian States," *India Review* 14, no. 3 (2015)
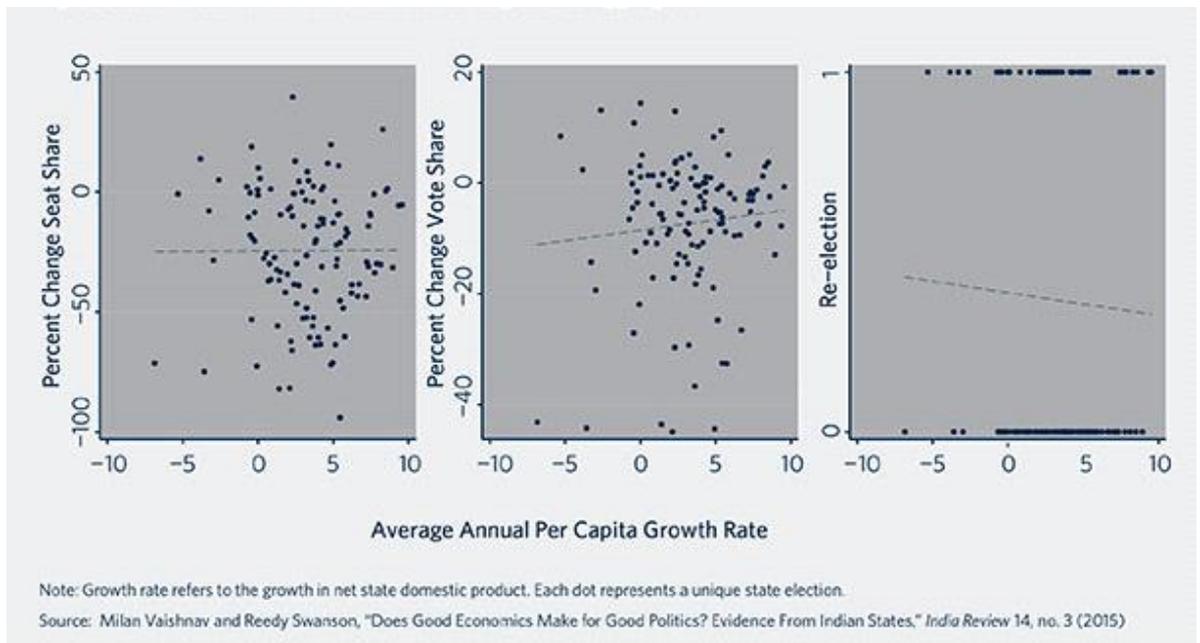
Figure-8. A Shift Toward Economic Voting Since 2000

Note: Growth rate refers to the growth in net state domestic product. Each dot represents a unique state election.

Source: Milan Vaishnav and Reedy Swanson, "Does Good Economics Make for Good Politics? Evidence From Indian States," *India Review* 14, no. 3 (2015)
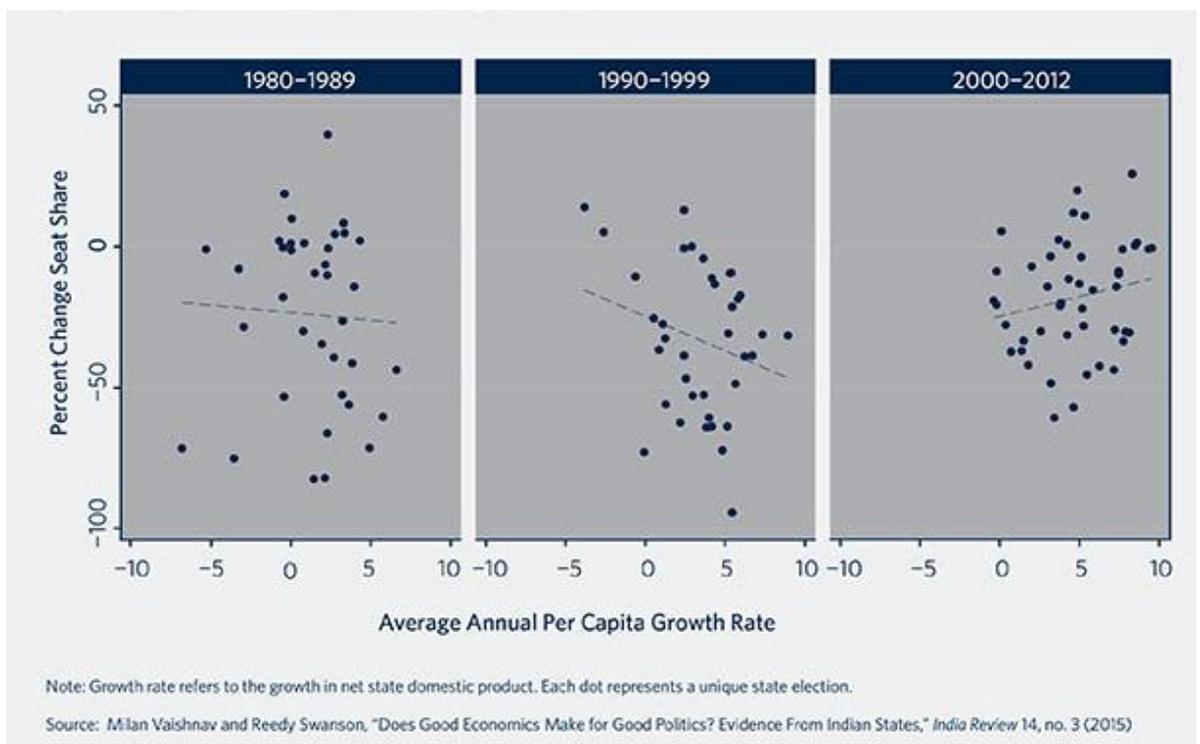
Figure-9. Increasing Presence of Parliamentarians Facing Criminal Cases

Source: Association for Democratic Reforms
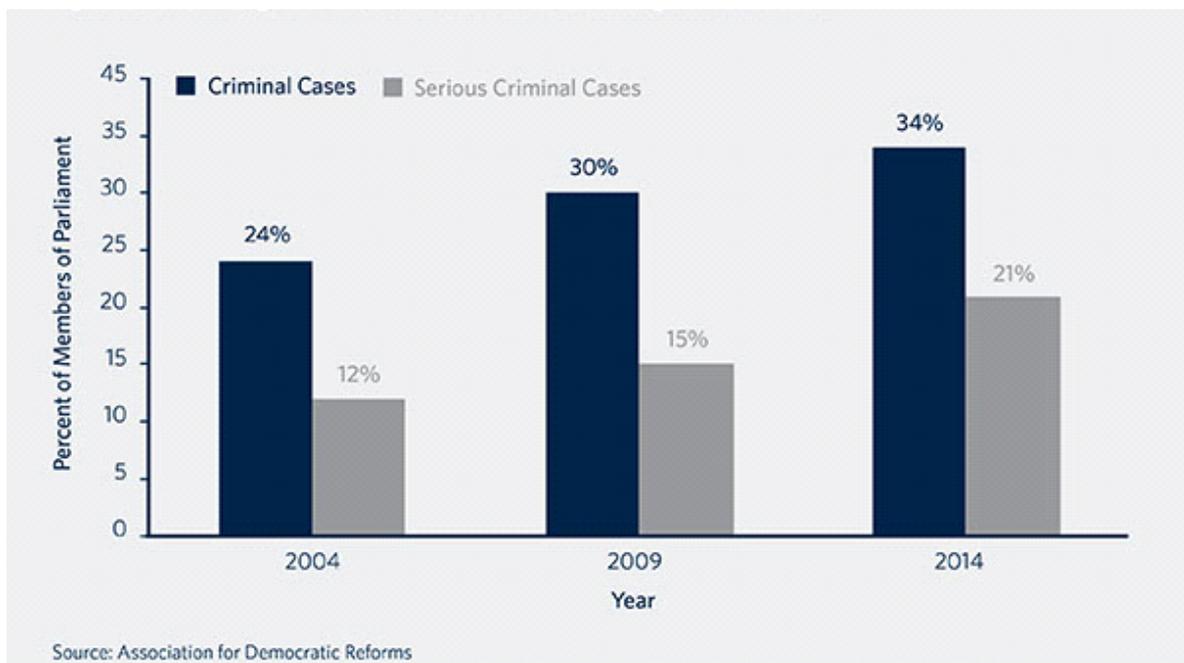
Figure-10. Broad Support for BJP Among Non-Muslims in North India in 2014

Source: Center for the Study of Developing Societies, *India National Election Study 2014* (New Delhi: CSDS, 2014)
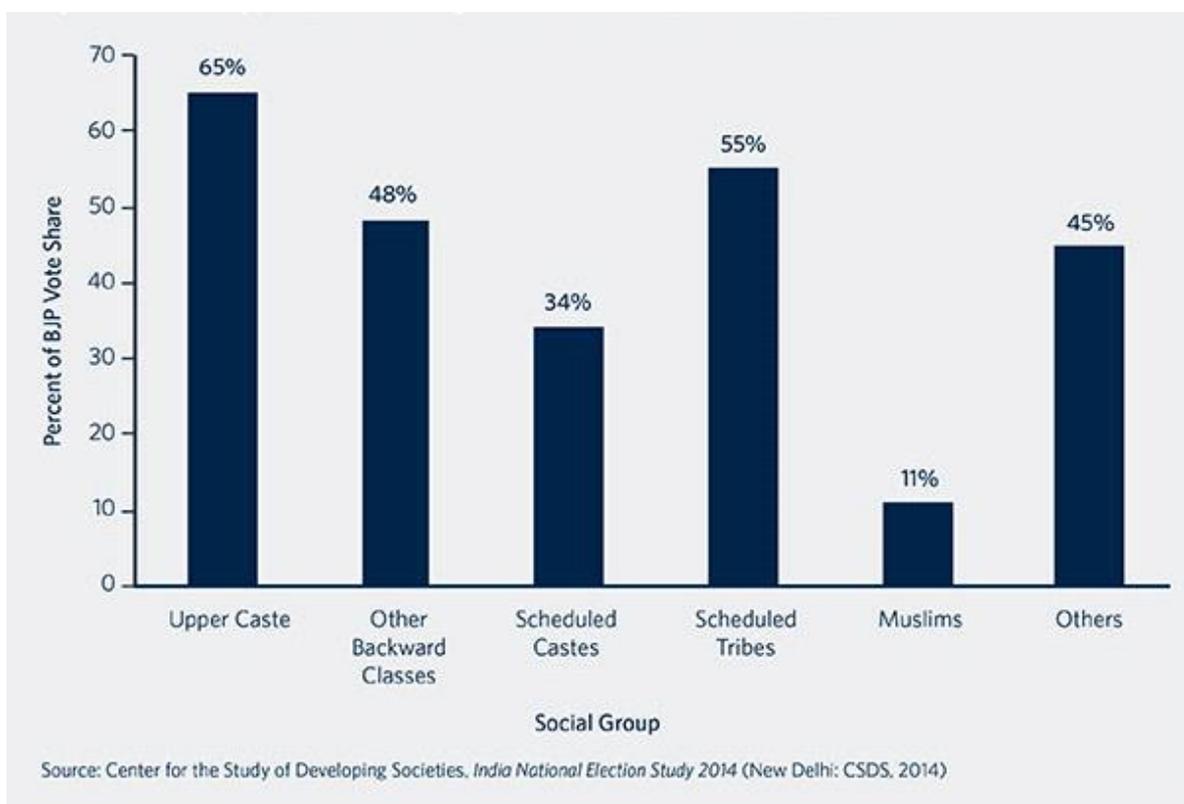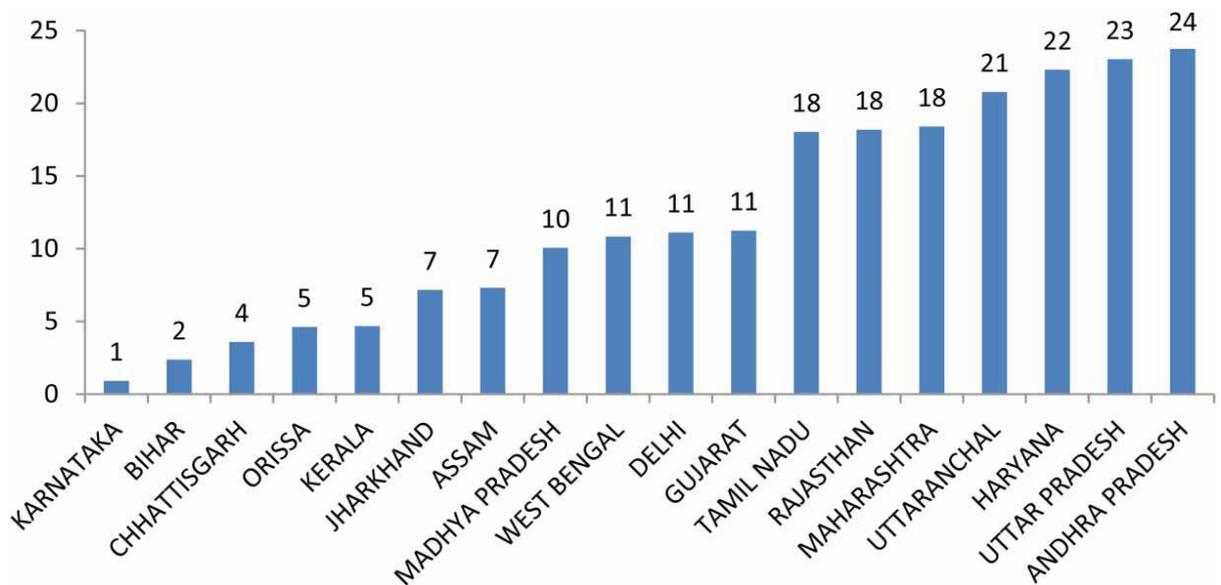
Figure-11. BJP's swing by state.
Notes: Analysis based on states where BJP contested five or more seats in both 2009 and 2014. Total number of constituencies = 359.

Table-33. The BJP's performance in the Hindi-heartland

Regions	Total seats	Lok Sabha 2014		Lok Sabha 2009	
		Seats won	Vote share (%)	Seats won	Vote share (%)
All India	**543**	**282**	**31.1**	**116**	**18.8**
Hindi-heartland States	225	190	43.7	63	25.8
Rest of India	318	92	22.3	53	14.7

Source: Election Commission of India.

Table-34. BJP was a more popular choice among the young voters in 2014

Parties	2009			2014		
	All voters	Youth	Others	All voters	Youth	Others
Congress	29	28	29	19	19	20
BJP	19	20	18	31	34	30

Source: NES, 2014.

Table-35. Class-wise party preference, 2009 and 2014

Class	Congress		BJP	
	2009	2014	2009	2014
Poor	27	20	16	24
Lower	29	19	19	31
Middle	29	20	20	32
Upper	29	17	25	38

	29	19	19	31
Total	29	19	19	31

Table-36. Party preference of votes by different classes and caste/community

Caste / Community	Poor		Lower		Middle		Upper	
	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP
Upper caste	13	37	11	48	15	46	13	55
OBC	15	28	15	37	16	33	14	37
SC	17	22	18	22	20	27	17	25
ST	28	33	31	36	25	39	26	53
Muslims	41	4	34	10	42	11	27	7
Others	19	17	23	18	22	24	31	16
Total	20	24	19	31	20	32	17	18

Figure-12. Various Lok Sabha Elections.

THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA
CAME INTO FORCE ON JANUARY 26, 1950

April 1951-52
First general elections
First elected Parliament
First Lok Sabha

April 1957
Second Lok Sabha

April 1962
Third Lok Sabha

March 1967
Fourth Lok Sabha

March 1971
Fifth Lok Sabha

March 1977
Sixth Lok Sabha

January 1980
Seventh Lok Sabha

December 1984
Eighth Lok Sabha

December 1989
Ninth Lok Sabha

June 1991
Tenth Lok Sabha

May 1996
Eleventh Lok Sabha

March 1998
Twelfth Lok Sabha

October 1999
Thirteenth Lok Sabha

May 2004
Fourteenth Lok Sabha

April 2009
Fifteenth Lok Sabha

May 2014
Sixteenth Lok Sabha

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