

## **CHAPTER-7**

### **Conclusion**

#### **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.

### **Explanations for the Rise of BJP in late 1980s-1990s**

The BJP has witnessed a phenomenal rise during the decade of 1990s. It succeeded in obtaining 85 Lok Sabha seats in the Ninth Lok Sabha elections of 1989, 120 seats in the tenth Lok Sabha elections of 1991 and 160 seats in the Eleventh Lok Sabha elections. The BJP formed the coalition government at the Centre—in 1996 for thirteen days.

It is important to explain the rise of the BJP in the 1990s because in the first Lok Sabha elections of 1952 it obtained only three seats and it was very marginal player in Indian politics. (For detailed see chapter no. 2) It seems paradoxical that the party of Hindutva could not get the support of Hindu voters even when the post-Partition Hindu-Muslim divide was quite deep because of post-Partition tragedy of Hindu-Muslim migrations. It looks quite paradoxical that Hindutva had come to occupy a central position in the Indian public life after four decades of Indian Independence at a time when inter-community relations had improved as compared with the situation of 1947-1950.

The Hindu Sangh Parivaar of RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), and others brought the issue of Hindu identity in a big way in the 1980s. The Hindu Sangh Parivaar launched mobilization Hindus on the basis of their religious and cultural symbols, and Hindu saints and seers were involved in motivating Hindus for asserting their Hindu identity. In a multi-religious country like India, Hindu identity was constructed by targeting other religious communities like Muslims and Christians. The theme of humiliation of Hindu Rashtra by foreign Muslim invaders was brought in public discourse and symbols of humiliation like Ram Janambhoomi or temple at Mathura or Kashi were projected as standing monuments of historical wrongs done against the Hindus by foreign Muslim invaders.

The Sangh Parivaar had created the image of wounded Mother India (Bharat Mata). It formed a Shri Ram Janambhoomi Mukti Jagran Samiti (the committee for the liberation of Lord Ram's Birthplace) and from 1984 the RSS, BJP, VHP, and Bajrang Dal launched a large scale mobilization of Hindu saints and seers for propagating the idea of liberation of the Birthplace of Lord Ram. Dharam Sansad, Sadhu Sammelans and many such movements were launched for the liberation of Sri Ram Janambhoomi at Ayodhya. Every trick of the trade was played and Rath Yatras in the mould of Hindu religious tradition were organized to purify the bricks with holy water for the temple at Ayodhya. L.K. Advani in the tradition of old mythical Hindu kings took a Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya in 1991 and Hindu mobilization became the major political and religious-cultural activity of Hindu Sangh Parivaar from 1984.

Is Hindu mobilization launched by Hindu Sangh Parivaar on Ram Temple an adequate explanation for the rise of BJP in 1990s? Why the appeal of Dr. S.P. Mukherjee of the Jana Sangh or V.D. Savarkar of Hindu Mahasabha or leadership of the Ram Rajya Parishad did not cut any ice with the so-called mythical Hindu voter in the Lok Sabha elections of 1952? Why has the appeal to Hindu religious symbol succeeded only in

the 1990s? Hindu Sangh Parivaar had been consistently taking an aggressive anti-Pakistan stand and it had always projected Muslims as the “Others”, and suddenly they could succeed in these efforts in the 1990-because of Ram Janambhoomi movement. Hansen observes:

“The sharpest edge of the entire Ram agitation, which sought to create a collective Hindu subjectivity as it spoke, by exactly in the constant drawing of the external boundaries of the “Hindu community-becoming-nation”.

It cannot be denied that the rise of BJP and other members of its Sangh Parivaar in the 1990s can be explained on the basis of Ram Janambhoomi movement and other related developments among the Hindu community which were exploited by the forces of Hindutva. At the same time, the limitation of this explanation about the rise of BJP and other Hindu organization in the 1990s also deserve to be noted. The BJP state governments of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh were dismissed in December 1992 after the demolition of Babri Mosque and in the elections of 1993, the BJP got 96 seats out of 200 in Rajasthan, 117 seats out of 320 in Madhya Pradesh and only 175 seats out of 425 in Uttar Pradesh. Why in these elections did the Hindu voter refuse to provide an electoral legitimacy to the party of Hindutva in the state assemblies?

Some of these facts have led Peter van de Veer to argue that religious language and idiom is crucial in India because it brings together very effectively “discourse on the religious community and discourse on the nation” and religious nationalism has played a significant role during India’s anti-colonial struggles.

Many scholars specially Jafferlot have maintained that the BJP had come to power because it had deftly and intelligently used the strategy of coalition-formation with many secular parties during 1970s-1990s and it had been the beneficiary of this strategy of coalition-making with secular leaders and secular parties. A few facts may be mentioned to substantiate the argument that BJP had grown in strength on the basis of its capacity to make alliances with others. First, whenever Indian voters failed to give a clear verdict for a single dominant party either during the Lok Sabha or State Assemblies elections, the BJP and its predecessor the BJS was available either to participate in the coalition governments or it supported a party of its own choice by remaining out of power. The BJS participated in the Morarji Desai-led government in 1977 and later on its successor i.e. BJP supported the V.P. Singh-led government in 1989-90 without sharing power with it. Even when the BJP was supporting the V.P.

Singh government by not sharing power with it in a direct manner, the party exercised immense influence over the decisions of the V.P. Singh government. The Lok Sabha elections of 1996 again witnessed that no single party had a majority to form the government at the Centre and the President of India invited Atal Bihari Vajpayee to become the Prime Minister because the BJP had obtained 160 seats and it formed a bloc of 194 with the support of Shi Sena, Akali Dal, HKP etc. Vajpayee failed to receive a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha in 1996 but a point was made that BJP can form coalition government at the Centre and in the States of India. This story repeated by the BJP in 1998 and 1999 and BJP-led coalition governments were formed at the Centre. I will discuss it in detail in next chapter.

The Hindu Sangh Parivaar of RSS, VHP, ABVP, Bajrang Dal had actively participated and supported movements and struggles lauded by opposition parties and opposition leaders. Gujarat and Bihar Movements of 1974-75 were openly and enthusiastically supported by the Sangh Parivaar. The RSS strategists have never missed any opportunity to participate in any mass movement whenever an occasion arose from the 1970s to the 1990s.

It has been suggested that the most important asset of the BJP has been its highly committed and motivated RSS cadre. Since the BJP is a cadre-based party, this asset of the BJP has been loaned to many parties and leaders either during the elections or whenever they decided to launch any anti-government struggle. Anderson and Damle have devoted full attention to the internal organization of the BJP and RSS cadre for understanding the strength of the forces of Hindutva. While many political parties or groups or leaders have refused to enter into any alliance with the BJP, many others have legitimized it by working together with the BJP, BJP has never considered any party or group or leader as “untouchable in politics” and every such association with them has brought political dividends to the party.

Hence any explanation for the rise of BJP on the basis of its strategies of coalition-making has its own limitations because electoral and political strategies are necessary but not sufficient explanations for the rise or decline of parties.

Craig Baxter (1969), Bruce D. Graham (1990), Walter K. Anderson and Damle (1987), Christopher Jafferlot (1996), Peter van der Veer (1996) and T.H. Hansen (1999) have in their scholarly studies offered explanations either by looking into the internal organization and strategies of the BJP and its cadre or they have explained the rise of BJP by linking it with political process and Hindu cultural ethos of India. These

scholarly studies provide lot of insights into the internal dynamics of Sangh Parivaar and they have linked their explanations by bringing out the changing dynamics of India politics which has facilitated the rise of BJP.

Hindus of India did not show any preference for the Jana Sangh in the 1950s and 1960s when memories of Partition and post-Partition events were quite fresh within the country. The BJS, Hindu Mahasabha and Ram Rajya Parishad failed to win public space on the basis of their appeals to Hindus. Hindus were not convinced that they needed a Hindu religion-based party to defend their interests in India.

How could Hindus of 1980s and the 1990s respond positively and enthusiastically to the appeals of Hindu religious-based party and organizations? Why did Hindus embrace politics of Hindutva in the last decade of the Twentieth Century when they had earlier rejected it in the 1950s and 1960s? The so-called Hindu India was not at all threatened by any outside country in the 1980s and 1990s but even in the absence of any threat to the security of India, the Hindu party could create an acceptability for itself by playing on the so-called feelings of insecurity among the Hindus of India. The idea of Hindu identity suddenly became attractive to the Hindus in the 1990s and the party of Hindus succeeded in positioning itself as a great defender and promoter of Hindu identity. The rise of BJP and expansion of Hindu Sangh Parivaar of organizations in the 1990s can be explained by identifying the causes which have made Hindus assert their 'identity' in a Hindu majority country. A community may construct its own identity if it feels threatened by any other community. How have Hindus come to believe that their identity is under threat from other communities? Hansen is the only Western scholar who has attempted an explanation on the rise of BJP in 1990s by referring to the new aspirations and anxieties of 'the large middle class and dominant communities' who have been exposed to new 'global cultural and economic flows' at the end of Twentieth Century. Hansen observes that "...it was the desire for recognition with an increasingly global horizon, and the simultaneous anxieties of being encroached upon by the Muslims, the plebeians, and the poor that over the last decade have prompted millions of Hindus to respond to the call for Hindutva at the polls and in the streets, and to embrace Hindu nationalist promises of order, discipline, and collective strength'.

A few salient features of politics and economics of 1990s may be briefly mentioned to show that this was a decade of special crisis for India. First, V.P. Singh was involved in a factional conflicts with some leaders of his own party and to divert public attention,

he announced the acceptance of the Mandal Commission recommendations on reservations in public services in August, 1990. If on the one hand, the V.P. Singh governments' action on Mandal Commission led to serious caste versus caste conflicts in North India, on the other the BJP and every members of the Sangh Parivaar jumped into public activity to protect united Hindus identity by launching mobilization for Ram Janambhoomi. The ideologues of Hindu Sangh Parivaar launched a counter offensive against the divisive caste politics of V.P. Singh and other supporters of Mandal Commission by mobilizing the Hindu Samaj on a common platform of liberation of Ram Janambhoomi with a programme for the construction of Ram Temple at Ayodhya. Politics of identity is always based on the concept of the "other" and for the Sangh fraternity the "others" was Muslim and Christian and also Hindu caste system. The Hindu organizations were involved in the manipulation of Hindu identity for maintaining the inner unity of Hindus by focusing on their "Other" i.e. Muslims and Christians. Mandal versus Mandir, or Reservations versus Ram occupied public space in the beginning of the 1990s.

Particularism and fractionalization of society became a distinctive feature of the politics of the 1990s. Political mobilization on the basis of caste or religion or region in the 1990s disintegrated and fragmented party system and caste-based parties on the basis of sectional representation emerged on the scene in politics. The construction of all-India Hindu identity which transcended fragmented caste identities assumed great significance for the BJP, and the Sangh Parivaar rallied Hindus on the slogan of Hindu unity against Muslims and Christians.

Hindu religion-based politics with a goal to establish a powerful Hindu identity replaced an all-India secular democratic politics in the 1990s because secular parties could not create a powerful united movement of the exploited classes which could be perceived by the peoples as an alternative to the social goals offered by the believers of Hindu Rashtra. The decade of 1990s had witnessed the deepening of social and economic disparities in India and neither globalization nor Hindu or caste identity can offer any solution to the basic problems of the marginalized strata of society. The Hindu Sangh Parivaar had acted as a dream merchant by providing a religion-based slogans for mass mobilization during the elections. The dream of great and powerful Hindu India had been effectively and successfully sold by the Hindu nationalist party to the upcoming rural and urban middle and upper middle classes who on the one hand have global aspirations and on the other they aggressively identify themselves with Hindu



rituals, temples, and other religious symbols. Hindu nationalist party had given a common social goal to different strata of Hindu society and it had succeeded in rallying Hindu groups for the protection and promotion of Hinduism in India.

### **Decline of BJP**

2004 Lok Sabha election indicates a watershed election that completely surprised and nullified the dominant belief and the popular perception generated by the media and pollsters that BJP will again come back to power. Very few people thought that there were chances of a NDA defeat. Even the Congress leadership, initially, during the first phase of election was not confident enough for its victory. But this drummed-up ‘Hegemonic Prophecy’ projecting the wish fulfilment of the vocal, powerful and the rich proved to be wrong.

There was a prevalent ‘India-shining’ and ‘Feel Good’ campaign perpetrated by the BJP, which did not appeal to common people. Interestingly, in 2004, BJP was also routed in its traditional strongholds of urban centres. Nobody could ever think that Congress would emerge as the single largest party with 145 seats in this election. On the other hand, the NDA got only 189 seats with BJP lowering its tally from 182 seats in 1999 to 138 seats in 2004—a loss of 44 seats for BJP and 89 seats for NDA. By contrast, the Congress and its allies together got 222 seats, a gain of 69 seats from 1999 for the alliance and a gain of 31 seats for the Congress.

The election analysis of 2004 raised hue and cry among the political analysts, commentators and the media. The outcome of this election was almost puzzled. The verdict also reveals the fact that the common people of our country do not take the mainstream media very seriously at least in the case of ‘predicting’ elections. Moreover, this verdict reflects the political assertiveness and matured political consciousness of the Indian electorate. In a comfortable political environment, the BJP preponed this election by 5 months in April-May that was scheduled in October 2004 after winning the assembly elections of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in December 2003.

The verdict of 2004 was fundamentally different from the 1996 when neither the Congress nor the BJP could form the government. It was different from the 1996 United Front alternative because the BJP at that time was still a rising force and had the potentiality to reckon with which was proved in the successive elections of 1998 and

1999. Though BJP had a dismal performance in 2004; it was still the chief opposition party in the Parliament at least in numerical terms.

However, there was an argument given by some political commentators that the 2004 verdict was definitely a protest-vote against BJP but it was not a mandate for any particular party. Secondly, this verdict cannot be seen as a verdict against Hindutva and economic reforms as argued by Pratap Bhanu Mehta. It is true that this election was not a single-issue election but it would be rather amateurish to say that 2004 verdict was a fractured mandate because it does not present a comprehensive picture of political reality. To say that “2004 election was not a vote against Hindutva or economic reforms”—this argument only complicates things which is otherwise very crystal clear. To some extent, this election was a socio-political response towards economic reforms. The whole India Shining Campaign, which showcased the BJP, was only meant for upper and upper middle classes. The neo-liberal economic policies which were implemented for over a decade only benefited the dominant alliance of ruling classes in India and contributed to mass misery, unemployment, regional disparities, class-income disparities and agricultural crisis leading to farmer’s suicides. The key issue for BJP was economic growth and not economic development for the vast majority. BJP had a vision of 2020 to build India as a superpower. For BJP, the Sensex became the parameter for judging India’s prosperity. But the social reality only reflected a prosperous India for the top 20% of the Indian population while the rest were doomed in hopelessness. All these factors culminated in the form of a popular anger against the ruling establishment and the ‘Feel Good Factor’ turned out to be a flop show for the BJP.

Apart from being a protest vote against the BJP, this vote was also a reaction to the process of economic reforms that can be further proved by the results of both Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha polls in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, which were held simultaneously. The IMF-World Bank poster boy Chandra Babu Naidu and his party were completely routed both in Assembly and Parliamentary elections in 2004. In Andhra Pradesh Assembly, out of total 294 seats the TDP got 47seats while its alliance partner BJP secured only 2 seats making the NDA tally of only 49 seats.

It is also hard to say that Hindutva did not make a difference to the electoral outcome, simply because in Gujarat, within one and a half year the BJP faced serious problems. The December election that followed the Gujarat pogrom in 2002 witnessed a two-third majority for the BJP. In 2004 Lok Sabha, in an Assembly segment’s leads the Congress

was in a majority, leading in 92 out of 182 seats. Even in the Lok Sabha, out of 26 seats there was a neck to neck fight as Congress got 12 seats while the BJP managed to get 14 seats: 6 seats less than that of 1999 tally. Moreover, the BJP got tremendous setbacks in its traditional bastion of Hindi speaking North India. Barring Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh BJP and its allies had lost a good number of seats and vote share that became a costly affair for them. In eight important states of North India namely, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand and Uttaranchal; BJP and its allies lost 58 seats. Thus, out of 89 seats that the NDA lost in this election, the North India contributed to a loss of 58 seats (in percentage terms a loss of over 65% seats) and a loss of almost 7% of votes on an average. This can be interpreted as a declining tendency of the Hindutva forces in the Hindi heartland from where the Hindutva movement itself was launched. In recent past, there had been growing ideological polarization between the BJP led NDA and the rest on the issue of secularism. BJP was currently seen as an anti-system party as it is opposed to secularism—a foundational principle of the Indian political system. Thus, 2004 election marked an election for tolerance and pluralism apart from the verdict against both economic reforms and communalism.

BJP did not make Hindutva an important issue in this election may be because they were too pre-occupied with 'India Shining' campaign or maybe they had a fear of losing some votes if Hindutva and Gujarat became the issue. This trend of moderate line on the part of BJP was questioned by the important elements of Sangh Parivar like the VHP and some senior leaders like Uma Bharti who knows well that extremism had always given richer electoral dividends for BJP.

The role of identities like caste and religion that previously set the agenda of Indian politics had also shown a minimizing tendency after this election. In fact, the most significant outcome of 2004 election had been the shift in the foci of India's electoral politics from identitarian mobilisation towards a politics of issues and interests. These identity blocked in the name of upper caste consolidation behind BJP, Dalit mobilisation under Mayavati's BSP and Yadav-Muslim combination in favour of Mulayam's SP became very evident in the Parliamentary elections of 1996, 1998 and 1999. This type of caste and religion based mobilisation is more seen in north India than any other parts of the country, although a minimalist degree or intensity of caste alignment with specific political parties and its appendage symbolic issues centering on the factors of caste and community can be also observed in southern, western and

north-eastern India. But, after 2004 verdict, the issues of the day were neither Mandal nor Mandir. Material issues and economic interests centering on State vs. Market debate were making the headlines. A resurgence of class issues was being noticed after the 2004 verdict.

Thus, it can be said that a secular space for interest and issue based politics was in the making which can show a glorious destiny for Indian politics. Therefore, the 2004 election can be viewed as a changing discourse from identity based politics which was dominant in the 1990s to a more issue and interest based politics with the changing political reconfigurations. No doubt, the dimensions of caste and religion are still haunting the battleground of electoral politics in India, but the verdict of 2004 compels us to think positively about the possibility of an alternative that goes beyond the aspects of identities.

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 Uttar 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 with its junior allies emerged triumphant in as many as four-fifth of the seats (146/168 seats). At the same time benefitting from the support 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 as 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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 reverses 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 Uttar 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 Uttar 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.