

Rise of BJP as New Congress?
Understanding the Results of 2014 General Elections

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “**Rise of BJP as New Congress? Understanding the Results of 2014 General Elections**” submitted by me for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.)** in Central University of Haryana is my own work. The dissertation has not been previously submitted for another degree of this or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **“Rise of BJP as New Congress? Understanding the Results of 2014 General Elections”** is the record of original work done by Santosh Kumar Bhagat under my supervision. The work of the research presented in the dissertation have not been previously formed the basis of the any degree, diploma or certificate of this or any other university.

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CHAPTER-1

Introduction

Defining a political party is not as easy as it looks. Various definitions of parties highlight their function as instruments to mediate between citizens (voters) and government, their function as a tool to gain power or to focus on the ideological roots of parties. Any definition has, therefore, less explanatory power, and will probably provoke disagreement rather than consensus.¹ It is also difficult to identify the relative position of a political party in comparison to any other political party. However, for the purpose of this examination, it is less important to find a common definition of political parties or to differentiate political parties from each other than to examine a political party's general roles and functions to find out which forces influence the party's behavior and to get a glimpse of the relationship between society, party and government. This examination will help to better understand party behavior and its changes over time.

Roles and Functions of Political Parties in Democracies

Political parties in democracies fulfill various functions. Depending on the type of political party, these functions are revealed differently. In principle, the main function of political parties in a democracy is to serve as a connecting link between the people and the political entities. They serve this function in various ways. First, political parties are a means for representation of the people. Second, they communicate the opinions of the people and social groups to the state and the public realm. Third, they reconcile interests of various social groups. Fourth, they mediate between the people and the political entities. Fifth, they help to select people for official posts. Altogether, political parties finally fulfill a role to ensure legitimacy for democracy and state institutions.²

One of the major functions of political parties in a democracy is representing the people. Who is to be represented and forms in which the representation should occur

¹ John Kenneth White, "What is a Political Party?" Handbook of Party Politics, eds. Richard S. Katz and William Crotty (London: Sage Publications, 2006), p. 5-15.

² Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, "Types and Functions of Parties," Political Parties and Democracy, eds. Larry Diamond and Richard Gunther (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 3-39.

depend on the political system in the country, on the organization and composition of the political party and on the individual delegate. In principle, a delegate can represent a group of the people (based on demographic criteria), an opinion of the electorate, and the constituents by following their direct instructions or acting in the interest of the electorate by using his own judgment, or serve as an ombudsman for the electorate. In the same matter, political parties can serve in various ways as means for representation. But, political parties always represent just a specific part of the electorate. The electorate as a whole is represented by the parliament and the sum of all delegates and political parties.³

By communicating with the electorate and its various social groups, political parties integrate different political opinions, interests and expectations and form a new position which includes major points of all relevant groups and can gain support from the majority of the party's electorate. Therefore, political parties fulfill an important function in the process of opinion forming and participation of the people in a democracy. In contrast to interest groups which represent the interests of different power groups, political parties can serve as a forum for those people who have no access to interest groups or they can bring various groups together. Without political parties, it is probable that poor people would gain no influence in the opinion building process of a country. Their participation in politics would, therefore, be limited to participation in elections.

As shown, the function of political parties in the process of opinion forming is not limited to serving as a vehicle for interests of different social groups. Additionally, political parties serve as a filter to reconcile different interests and find a consensus or a compromise for representation in the ongoing process of opinion forming and decision making. This filter function leads to a marginalization of extreme positions, balances different interests, and helps to make the decision making process on the state level more efficient.⁴ This positive consequence of the process is affiliated with the negative effect that, for example, legitimate claims of minorities often get lost in the process except when the minorities find an independent party for representation of their

³ Richard S. Katz, "Party in Democratic Theory," *Handbook of Party Politics*, eds. Richard S. Katz and William Crotty (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 34-46 and 42-44.

⁴ Ken Kollman, John H. Miller, and Scott E. Page, "Political Parties and Electoral Landscapes," *British Journal of Political Science* 28, no. 1 (January 1998): 139-158.

interests.⁵

With their mediating position between the people and the political entities, political parties are also able to mediate directly between the people and the government. Especially in cases where decisions of a central government may have major impact on specific regions or specific groups of society, political parties play an important role in negotiating between the government and the persons affected. Political parties have more access to the decisive political power institutions than interest groups, know the rules of the political “game” and can balance between the claims of the people and the interests of the government. By taking care of this function, political parties can gain more legitimacy for speaking on behalf of the people.⁶

Because of their special position in the democratic process, political parties are a major resource for the selection of personnel for leading posts in a bureaucracy and the executive branch. One obvious argument for this function is that the government has to rely on loyal obedience in the executive branch. Another argument is that political parties gather a lot of experience with political procedures and are, therefore, particularly suited to selecting the right persons for relevant posts in the political sphere. However, critics of this function of political parties argue that loyalty is less decisive for leading posts than qualifications and knowledge. Additionally, they criticize that the argument about expertise of selection by political parties hides the fact that political parties misuse their opportunities to select people for official posts to establish a kind of patronage system or nepotism.⁷

Political parties are part of the process of formation of political objectives in a democracy. Without political parties, the opportunities of the people to become involved in the process of formation of political objectives are reduced. People would have fewer opportunities to express their opinions and interests and to gain influence. How far political parties fulfill these different functions depends on the country’s individual political system, the individual circumstances of the country and on the

⁵ Peter M. Leslie. “The Role of Political Parties in Promoting the Interests of Ethnic Minorities,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne De Science Politique* 2, no. 4 (December 1969): p. 419-433.

⁶ Hans Keman “Parties and Government: Features of Governing in Representative Democracies,” *Handbook of Party Politics*, edited by Richard S. Katz and William Crotty, (London: Sage Publications, 2006). P. 160-174.

⁷ Marjorie Randon Hershey, “Political Parties as Mechanisms of Social Choice,” *Handbook of Party Politics*, eds. Richard S. Katz and William Crotty (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 75-88.

individual political party and its voter base. In principle, one can argue that political parties have more importance in a parliamentary system than in a presidential system where associations and different interest groups are more involved in the process of opinion formation. In the case of India, this is likewise true for the role and the function of the BJP.

India's Political System

India is the largest democracy in the world. Its constitution provides human and minority rights, freedom of religion, and ensures free and fair elections. India's political system follows the example set by the political system of Great Britain. India's parliament consists of the Council of States or Rajya Sabha and the People's Assembly or Lok Sabha. The Rajya Sabha is a body consisting of not more than 250 members up to twelve of whom are appointed by the president. The remainder is chosen by the elected members of the state and territorial assemblies. The members serve for a six-year term. The Lok Sabha has 545 seats. Two members of the Lok Sabha are appointed by the president. Five hundred and forty three are elected by popular vote in 543 constituencies by a first-past-the-post-system. The members serve for five-year terms. Chief of the state is the President. He is elected by an electoral college consisting of elected members of both houses of Parliament and the legislatures of the states for a five-year term. Chief of the government is the Prime Minister. He is chosen by the members of Parliament (Lok Sabha) after the legislative elections. The cabinet is appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

The political constellation of India differs from the political constellation in Western democracies. Political parties in India have been dominated mainly by political dynasties or interest groups. Inner party democracy is widely uncommon. The construction of and development towards a relatively weak state in India is combined with a highly competitive political party system. Elections are decided by the first-past the post system. Decisive for the success of a party in this system is just the number of votes a candidate receives in a district in comparison to his or her competitors. Only a few parties are represented in all India. Most parties represent individual groups of the society or have just a regional basis. In the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, 230 parties were recognized, of that were six national parties and fifty-one state parties. To win elections and be successful in such a system is just possible if a party is able to mobilize masses

of people. In the case of India, this often means consolidating and mobilizing groupings along cultural, ethnic or linguistic lines. Party identity is therefore often a means to mobilize voters and a precondition for party success in elections on the state level.⁸ As a result, the Lok Sabha consists of over forty parties and is highly fragmented. The emphasis of party identity along fault lines of society in combination with India's federal system has led to a diversification of the political party system in India and strengthens the division of society.⁹ Or, according to Sridharan and Varshney, "Together, the diversity and institutional features of the polity have created an increasingly plural-but not sharply polarized-party system at the national level. They have also led to a wide and often confusing array of political parties."¹⁰

Several reasons were supportive of this trend towards regionalism. Besides the decline of the Congress and the rising self-consciousness of marginalized groups, the economic reforms of 1991 led to a sustainable rise in the multiparty system in India. In principle, they affected the power distribution between the center and the states in India by reducing the role of the national government in the economy. Therefore, industrial development and the shift of responsibility to the individual states marked a major shift in Indian federalism.¹¹ The center lost power and the periphery gained power.

This fragmentation in combination with a trend towards regionalism has led to the fact that most parties do not focus on national interests. Rather, their emphasis lies on representation of regional, sectoral or group interests. To gain political power in the states, group identities become more important than a national identity. Therefore, domestic issues in India are predominant. Under these circumstances, forming a stable government by building a majority coalition is very difficult. Parties in India, which wanted to have a real chance in power participation had to win the support of different social groups, make compromises, and build coalitions. State politics became more important for political parties. Political parties focus more on the situation of the

⁸ Lawrence Sáez, *Federalism without a Center: The Impact of Political and Economic Reform on India's Federal System* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002), p. 43-70

⁹ Chhibber and Kollman, *The Formation of National Party Systems: Federalism and Party Competition in Canada, Great Britain, India, and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) p. 199-208.

¹⁰ E. Sridharan and Ashutosh Varshney, "Toward Moderate Pluralism: Political Parties in India" In *Political Parties and Democracy*, eds. Larry Diamond and Richard Gunther (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 207.

¹¹ Chhibber and Kollman, *The Formation of National Party Systems: Federalism and Party Competition in Canada, Great Britain, India, and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 139

individual state in order to participate in power. Small parties fill key positions in single states by establishing strong regional voter bases. Major parties which contest nationwide have to adjust their behavior according to the public opinion of individual states in order to gain votes in the various states. Moreover, they are often dependent on smaller coalition partners in order to gain power in a state or to participate in power over a state.¹²

The discussed development of India's democracy and its party system shows the increasing difficulties in building social consensus and forming a stable government on the national level. But, according to Gowda, the effects of fragmentation have not been only negative. "This fragmentation of the party system from Congress dominance to multiparty coalition governments in India's regionalized and 'ethnicized' party system has not undermined the basic power-sharing character of the system, and has thus helped to consolidate democracy."¹³ Today, power sharing and the bargaining process for political goals is not only an internal matter of a single party but part of public discourse between different political parties.

However, India's democracy shows some flaws when transferring democratic processes into political practice. Kohli mentions that "Personal rule has replaced party rule at all levels – national, state, and district. Below the rulers, the entrenched civil and police services have been politicized."¹⁴ This judgment of the year 1990 is still true today. Political practice in India is often dominated by a patronage system and populism. Coalitions were not formed along the ideological orientation of political parties, but by the promise of advantages and special incentives. Political decisions often followed the interests of some influential groups but not the necessities of the majority of the population or of the nation-state.

Evolution of the BJP as a Political Party

The rise of the BJP as the major force in Indian electoral politics has been mostly recognized to its Hindu nationalist plank. Although Hindu nationalism is an important part of the rise of the BJP, it is not the entire story. If Hindu nationalism was the only attraction for the electorate, they had another sound choice—Congress.

¹² Sridharan and Varshney, *Toward Moderate Pluralism: Political Parties in India*, 206-237.

¹³ Gowda and Sridharan, *Parties and the Party System, 1947-2006*, p. 21.

¹⁴ Kohli, Atul. "Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability", p. 3.

Although Congress is frankly secular in its policy announcements, it is, and has been, nevertheless a Hindu nationalist party in its own right, even though more modest than the BJS and the BJP. Congress, especially after Indira Gandhi also played the Hindu Card in times of need. It is well known that Congress policy announcements themselves are filled with coded messages targeted towards the Hindu electorate. The key question at this stage is to ask what influenced the Hindu electorate to increasingly vote for the BJP. Although there is no single foundation for this phenomenon, there are noticeable trends and developments that shed further light as to why the BJP was able to gather support in the way it did.

With India's independence in 1947, the Hindu nationalist movement was given an electoral cover by the formation of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), BJP's predecessor. The BJS advocated the ideal of One Country, One Culture, and One Nation. Electorally the BJS was largely overshadowed by Congress from the 1950s to the early 1970s. What made Congress so powerful a party is its ability to control the central government supporting secularism and its control over local level politics. Incumbency provided Congress a powerful means of limiting the rise of communalism.

While it is tempting to attribute the rise of the BJP and other right-wing Hindu nationalist political parties to a shift in public opinion, or some "transformation of the social structure" (Hansen, *The Saffron Wave*) in India, the rapid success of the BJP and its allied factions can only be explained according to their strategies in terms of mobilizing the public to their cause and the reasons that society was receptive to this. Joseph D. DiSilvio stated "I have found three major factors that have served as the fuel for this unexpected and dynamic change from Congress to BJP dominance. The BJP's success, rather than simply a result of a shift in public opinion toward religious nationalism or right-wing politics, has been mostly a result of its ability to accommodate and adapt to society through strategic alliances with other political parties, exploitation of corruption and weaknesses in the Congress party, and programs aimed at social welfare."¹⁵

The rise of the BJP starting in the 1980s is seen as one of the most incisive factor in Indian politics.

¹⁵ Joseph D. DiSilvio, "Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party in India", *The Orator*, August 2015, p. 18.

It can be explained by various aspects. Among others there is the collapse of the hegemony of the Nehruvian Consensus taking place. Because Nehru's middle way between capitalism and socialism had not lead to a wider development in India, there was a deep dissatisfaction in the population about the failed promises of modernization and an ideological confusion attending on this failure. The BJP could benefit from this political and ideological vacuum and place itself as serious alternative to Congress. This was supported by the historic decline of the Congress, which was constantly challenged with accusations of corruption. In times of socio-economic change and ambiguity, the concept of Hindu unity worked as social stabilization. Or as it Aijaz Ahmad in his work "On Communalism and Globalization" articulates in a more polemic way: "an aggressive kind of rightist nationalism [...] takes advantage from the misery of the masses."¹⁶ (Ahmad 2002) But especially the middle classes that witnessed the economic success of other Asian countries, felt left behind and switched support from Congress to the BJP.

Moreover, there were other decisive developments that encouraged the "Saffron Wave" (Hansen 1999). In the 1980s the government employed land reforms that allowed previous bounded peasant to own land and upsurge economically. Besides, the Mandal Commission was established, which guaranteed reservations for Other Backward Castes (OBC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in governments and public institutions. These developments lead to a feeling of threat to their social status in the predominantly Hindu urban middle classes. As a consequence, Hindu nationalist thinking around themes of the endangered nation became attractive. Stories about competition over jobs and education because of Muslim immigrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh fell on fertile ground. However, in the beginning of the 1980s, the BJP tried to keep track of the integration into the center of society by rejecting a radical Hindu nationalist program. To reach wider segments of society, the BJP accepted first detachments between the party and the RSS. Yet, at the same time Congress politicians used a language acknowledged from the Sangh Parivar and therefore contributed to a "communalization" of Indian politics.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ahmad, Aijaz. "On Communalism and Globalization. Offensives of the Far Right", New Delhi, 2002, p. 23.

¹⁷ Hansen, Thomas Blom. "The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India." Princeton, 1999, p. 140.

For the BJP, the, ‘moderate’ did not prove successful on the ballot box. In the 1984 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress won a great majority and the BJP received only 8% of the votes. This poll devastation caused a radical reshuffle of the party towards more rigorous communal politics.

L.K. Advani was elected as party president in the repercussion of the elections and the RSS took over more control again. Consequently, a more “purist” stance as defender of the “Hindu society”, in addition with more populist and anti-Muslim politics, was taken up. A central element in the re-orientated program of the BJP was the Ayodhya campaign. The insistence on building the temple of Ram on his assumed birthplace became part of the official ideological inventory of the BJP from 1989. The Babri mosque in Ayodhya was claimed as a religious Hindu place already since independence. In the course of the, ‘radicalization’ of the party, the issue was pushed forward. In 1990, BJP’s president Advani started the, ‘RathYatra’, a rally through the whole country to agitate for support for the Ayodhya campaign and to call anti-Muslim sentiments in the society. The BJP election manifesto from 1991 comprised the lines: “It [the BJP] seeks the restoration of Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya only by way of a symbolic righting of historic wrongs.”¹⁸ The Ayodhya campaign can not only be seen as “the most radical phase in the party’s evolution in terms of ideological harshness, but also its most militant phase.” Dr. Sebastian Schwecke, a scholar on Indian history states in his work “New Cultural Identitarian Political Movements in Developing Societies: the Bharatiya Janata Party” from 2011, that the campaign helped the BJP to overcome the dilemma, which it faced due to the Mandal report. Traditionally a party with an upper-class Brahmin constituency, the upsurge of OBC’s and Dalits as a political voice, created a challenge for the BJP. Since no political party in India could refuse Mandalism without disadvantages, the Ayodhya campaign and anti-Muslim distress also served as a policy of disruption. The history of Hindus as victims of injustice in their country was told.

Muslims were blamed for destabilization, job snatching and exploitation of “goodhearted Hindus”. (cf. Schwecke 2011, p. 81 and Hansen 1999, p. 159) To make

¹⁸ Schwecke, Sebastian. “New cultural identitarian political movements in developing societies: the Bharatiya Janata Party”, London 2011, p. 81.

a monster out of the Muslim community supposed to facilitate receiving votes from all classes and castes including the lower ones. Hence, the BJP by the end of the 1980s links Mandalism and Ayodhya (Mandal and Kamandal), but also the rise of the middle class, rent scarcity and liberalization within the bounds of a radical Hindu nationalist ideology. This radicalization of the BJP is conveyed by large-scale communal violence throughout most of India culminating in the destruction of the Babri mosque in 1992. The mosque was eventually entirely demolished by large crowd of around 150,000 people without protection from the BJP state government.

The impact of the Ayodhya campaign and the Babri mosque devastation can be evaluated in different ways. On the one hand, the campaign proved successful in electoral terms. The BJP could gain the support of millions of Hindus and win the elections of the 1993's Delhi Assembly and the 1995's Gujarat and Maharashtra state elections. The incident had created a feeling of strength and self-confidence amongst broad sections of the Hindus and "these fragments of Hindu nationalist discourse gained enormous popularity and ubiquity". (Hansen 1999, p. 184) On the other hand, some of the party members were stunned by the magnitude of the violence. And while the VHP was pushing forward the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, a dialogue about the violent actions emerged within the BJP. In contrast to the hardliners in the RSS and the VHP, BJP leaders compromised on a rather, "moderate" way. They agreed on a strategic reorientation which included a new line of divergence of issues, e.g. to promote OBC's, Dalits and Tribals concerns. Therewith, the BJP climbed down its dependence on religious symbolism and a "normalization" of the party took place after 1993. (cf. Schwecke 2011, p. 82f. and Hansen 1999, p. 198) The reorganization of the party towards a moderate orientation proved successful on in electoral terms. In the 1996 elections the BJP became the party with the most seats in the Lok Sabha. Yet, other parties did not want to form a coalition with the Hindu party. But in 1998, the BJP could overcome its isolation (political untouchability) in the political constellation and joined the government of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The Hindu nationalists' party also won the 1999 elections and stayed in government within the NDA until 2004. The consolidation of the BJP in the political mainstream was possible through the assertion of the liberal wing within the party around prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee vis-à-vis the traditional wing around L.K. Advani. The BJP-liberals encouraged liberalization of the economy, reconciliation of the religious communities

and positive relation with the South Asian neighbor states. (cf. Skoda 2005, p. 182) Hence, the 1999 election and following years in government can be seen as consolidation of the Hindu right and a, ‘normalization’ of the BJP. “The, party with a difference” was gradually perceived to be less different from other political parties, especially the INC.” (Schwecke 2011, p. 88)

However, the turn towards moderation was never overt in the Sangh Parivar and the BJP leaders always wavered between centrist politics and commitment to Hindu nationalist ideology. The Gujarat pogrom in 2002 can be seen against this background. The inter-communal riots took place in the federal state Gujarat until May 2002 and led to more than 1,000 deaths. The BJP is claimed to not interfere sufficiently to prevent an escalation of the violence. Furthermore, the party did not show any adequate efforts to pursue the culprits and resisted demands for the resignation of Narendra Modi and his government. Although the Gujarat violence showed, that the radical wing in the BJP and the Sangh Parivar has not vanished over time and is able to employ certain pressure on the modest elements of the party, it can be constituted, that it was incompetent of broadly challenging the moderate’s dominance in the party. After 2002, the party advanced the contradictory agendas by concentrating on development issues, which were predominant in the 2004 election race. (cf. Schwecke 2011, p. 95f.) In this 2004 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP veteran a surprising defeat. In the election campaign, the BJP prided itself on its achievements in development policy. It celebrated the rates of economic growth achieved in the last incumbency with a campaign called “Shining India”. This slogan was supposed to address the “new middle class”. But rural India with its 750 Million people and the lower castes, living in poverty, could absolutely not identify with this campaign. Because also the religious minorities were worried after the Gujarat pogroms, these factors lead to a decisive loss of votes. In 2009, Congress repeated it success in the general elections and got the mandate to govern again. In short, we can say that the period of 2004-2014 was the ‘political eclipse’ for the BJP.

The rise of the BJP began at the end of the 1980s. It developed from an ideological-fundamentalist Hindutva bloc, to a major party with integrative character and elements of Hinduism. The lapse of the Ayodhya campaign led to a reorganization of the party including the assertion of the moderate wing with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as central

figure. The BJP integrated into the political mainstream. Its ‘normalization’ made it possible to form coalitions and enabled the BJP’s rise as governing party from 1998 to 2004. The 2004 defeat came shocking for the BJP leaders. However, it was no fundamental weakening of the Hindu nationalists. The BJP has developed to a nationwide operating major party and the most serious opponent to Indian National Congress.

Understanding the Results of 2014 General Elections

The 16th Lok Sabha elections have made history for more than one reason. 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: 31 per cent. This result comes from the fact that the BJP’s strongholds were all concentrated in the north and the west of India.

India’s sixteenth general election was remarkable for a number of reasons. At nearly 67 percent, voter turnout was the highest ever, and first-time voters, of whom there were more than 100 million, turned out at an even higher rate. The urban middle class, long disenchanted with democracy, returned to vote in substantial numbers. More than anything, however, it was the massive victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Narendra Modi that made the latest elections truly distinctive. For most of India’s post-independence history, the Indian National Congress (INC or Congress party) has dominated national politics. With the partial exception of 1977, no single party other than Congress has ever won a majority of seats. The BJP’s 2014 electoral performance has changed all that. The BJP on its own now controls 51.7 percent of seats in the 545-seat Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament. Congress won a mere 19.3 percent of the national vote, dipping below 20 percent for the first time ever. It now controls only 44 seats (8.1 percent) in the Lok Sabha. It has been virtually wiped out across northern and western India, where the BJP and its alliance partners performed spectacularly well and which account for roughly 60 percent of all seats. Although the BJP holds a majority of seats on its own, it has maintained its campaign coalition, the National Democratic Alliance, after the elections. 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. Although non-Congress political hegemony has long existed in several states, never before has a party other than the Congress exercised such dominance in Delhi.

Yet in 2014, the BJP's vote share exceeded that of the Congress for every key social group, except for Muslims. Although the BJP and its allies won an unprecedented share of the upper-caste vote—roughly 54 percent to the Congress party's 12 percent—what was more surprising was the BJP's performance among groups at the lower rungs of the social ladder. The BJP won 24 percent of the Dalit vote as opposed to the Congress's 18.5 percent; 37.5 percent of the Scheduled Tribes' vote versus the Congress's 28.3 percent; and 33.6 percent of the middle-caste vote to the Congress's 15.1 percent. The BJP also outperformed the Congress among rich voters, middle-class voters, and both urban and rural voters.

Thus, the BJP defied most articles of conventional political wisdom in these elections, with one major exception. The party simply could not win any significant support from India's 170 million Muslims. Although the BJP won a larger share (8.5 percent) of the Muslim vote

in 2014 than in 2009 (4 percent), 91.5 percent of Muslims remained unwilling to put their faith in Modi or the BJP to lead the country. The Congress, by contrast, won almost 38 percent of the Muslim vote. Perhaps one of the biggest questions resulting from this election is how the relationship between the BJP and the Muslim community will evolve. Other minorities, including Christians, view the BJP with suspicion and fear as well. Yet no inter-communal relationship in India is as fraught as that between Hindus and Muslims. That cleavage is a master narrative of Indian politics.

By contrast, the BJP scored remarkably in areas of northern and western India where it was already strong. It won 190 of the 225 seats of the Hindi belt: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and Jharkhand—that is 84 per cent of the seats. That figure increases to 86 per cent if one adds Gujarat. It decreases to 80 per cent if one adds Maharashtra. But if one includes the performance of its allies—including Apna Dal (2 seats in UP), Lok Janshakti Party (6 seats in Bihar) and the Shiv Sena (18 seats in Maharashtra)—the BJP-led coalition bagged 86 per cent of the seats in these 11 states. If the BJP obtained 31 per cent of the vote share nationally, it conquered the Hindi belt states (and Gujarat) with 45 per cent of the average vote share. In Uttar Pradesh it surpasses in vote share its three opponents combined (Congress, BSP and SP) in 22 constituencies and won an unprecedented 71

seats, out of 80 – which means that 25 per cent of its Lok Sabha MPs came from this state.

However, the men who make history are usually the product of their time. They meet more or less latent expectations of society. Certainly, the multi-faceted personality of Narendra Modi was a major factor of the BJP success, but the transformations, frustrations and aspirations of India after years of high rates of economic growth (and a sudden slowdown) have to be analyzed too.

Further, my intention is to address a puzzle 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 think it is very important to the consistently investigation of the causes of the rise of BJP and how this party manage to form the majority government in the era of multi-party coalition system at national level?

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: 31). 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, my intention is to address a puzzle 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 think it is very important to the consistently investigation of 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 will 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.

Rise of BJP as New Congress?

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.

Review of Literature

A turning point in Indian politics is the dramatic rise of the BJP to the national political scene. Expectedly, the efforts made by the BJP to occupy the political center-stage caused a lot of academic interest, as a result of which, a surplus of literature dealing with the ideology, social base, leadership, organization, electoral performance of the BJP saw the light of the day. In order to have a clear understanding on the very topic, it is highly essential to make an in-depth analysis of 'inception, evolution, rise and rise, rise and fall and resurgence of the BJP in Indian electoral politics.

The book "Electoral Politics in India: The Resurgence of the Bharatiya Janata Party", Taylor and Francis Groups, Routledge, (February 2017) edited by Suhas Palshikar, Sanjay Kumar, Sanjay Lodha, gives a scholarly idea on the resurgence of the BJP. The contributors of the book are prominent political scientist in their own field. The general elections held in 2014 India to elect the 16th Lok Sabha brought in dramatic results. This important volume explain not only the amazing victory of the BJP but also the equally surprising debacle of the Congress party. It examines not why BJP won and the Congress lost, but why the scale of BJP's victory and that of Congress's defeat was so very different from the results in the years 2004 and 2009. The volume presents an in-depth analysis of electoral results, state-wise studies, the factors leading up to these outcomes, and the road India has travelled since then. The book explains the resurgence of BJP is explained by the Charismatic leadership in the form of Narendra Modi.

C. P. Bhambhri's book, "Bharatiya Janata Party: Periphery to Centre" critically deals with the ideology, organizational structure, the party in government, strategies,

Partha Ghosh in his book “BJP and the evolution of Hindu Nationalism: periphery to center” deals with the historical background of the BJP, its rise to power, its ideology and political program, foreign and economic policy. The author states the hope that the future of India does not rest with BJP’s Hindutva or on secularism as protected in our constitution but it lies in the hands of people. So long as plurality is there, nobody can harm the Indian society.

Achin Vanaik, in his book, “Communalism Contested: Religion, Modernity and Secularization” gives an analysis of the dramatic emergence of Hindu communalism and the growing skepticism about the importance of the secularism and secularization. Vanaik advocates in his book that a powerful, organized Left and Women’s movement together can only ensure secularism and secularization.

Achin Vanaik, in an article entitled, “Communalization of the Indian Polity” argues critically how the BJP attempted to fill the space left by the Congress through communal politics. Professor Vanaik also highlights the dangers the communal politics poses to the plural democracy in India.

Jayal and Mehta, discuss that Indian politics is shaped by the long term structural features of the society. The social ladders, economic prospects and historical legacies influenced the nature and character of the democracy. The Indian political system did well in various fields particularly voter turnout, turnover of incumbents, empowering new groups, maintaining a set of liberal freedom, civilian control over armed forces and political contestation etc. The volume covers widespread ranging issues from elections to economic reforms, politics to redistribution and social justice, coalition politics to judicial activism and foreign policy. In nutshell, the book contains thirty eight essays contributed by leading political scientist, namely Partha Chatterjee, Atul Kohli, James Manor, John Harrison, Neera Chandhoke and Rob Jenkins etc. These articles are broadly divided into eight parts. The first part devoted to the institutional setting, second deals with social cleavages; identity and politics, third section covers political processes, fourth concerned with ideological contestation in Indian politics, and so on. The two essays-“The Party System” and “Political Parties” analyzed by E. Sridharan and Zoya Hasan, respectively.

Ashutosh Varshney, expresses views on Indian polity, which cover wide range of themes such as federalism, pressure groups, democratization, caste, identity politics, party system and so on. The author brings together the ideas of prominent scholars like Gabriel A. Almond, Lucian W. Pye, James Manor, Kanchan Chandra and Steven I.

Wilkinson etc. The volume is divided into three parts. First part, deals with party politics and democracy. The second covers ethnic politics and diversity with reference to leading dalit/ scheduled caste party of India, particularly the BSP. The last section devoted to political economy.

Baldev Raj Nayar in his article “BJP’s Economic Nationalism in Theory and Practice,” demonstrates that the BJP could not afford to be ideologically pure and did not force an ideologically motivated economic policy on its coalition partners. According to Nayar, the BJP embraced pragmatist approach towards economic policy rather than strict to ‘swadeshi’. More or less, the Congress Party and the BJP after 1991, mostly agreed on liberalization. The papers in the book pay rich acknowledgment to and build upon Weiner’s insight, ideas and arguments about Indian politics.

L.K. Advani in his autobiography, describes various events such as partition of India, Emergency, fall of Janata government and inception and evolution of BJP, problems of Punjab and Kashmir, Ayodhya movement and ‘Rath Yatra’, Kargil war, Gujarat riots, cross-border terrorism, the BJP’s rise to power and its defeat in 2004 polls as well as chaos in party and contentious remark of Advani on Mohammed Ali Jinnah at Jinnah’s Mausoleum in Karachi etc., from childhood to writing of the book. L.K. Advani categorizes his life journey into five broad phases from 1927 to 2007. The book was a calculated effort in pursuit of Advani’s desperate ambition to obtain an image.

Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot, in their book “The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India”, describe the origin and growth of Hindu nationalist, BJP, which emerged as the largest party in national elections of 1996. The dynamics of Indian politics, in general and party system in particular, pointed out that the BJP possibly reached its saturation point in the northern and western states in the late 1990’ and to expand further, in geographical terms, party needs more alliances. The party’s success in Uttar Pradesh, pushed it to repeat the Lucknow tactic in Delhi. It tried to engineer defections, first in Gujarat and then at the Centre. The bid to form Vajpayee led NDA government, by accepting anyone’s support, was a part of a rigorous effort to break the barrier of unacceptability. The shift proposed the BJP’s readiness to compromise the principles, which it pretended to be the very embodiment of and to look for short-cuts to power. The book covers various papers, which analyze from different viewpoints, how it dealt with restraints and compulsions, in different states. In addition, the BJP’s stand on the liberalization policy, the obvious contradictions

between the 'rhetoric' 'swadeshi', and rather pragmatic governance of the economy, also discussed by the scholars.

Partha S. Ghosh in his book "BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism, From Periphery to Centre", studies BJP, which not only brought to the fore, a new idiom of Indian politics, based on the concept of 'Hindutva' (Hinduness), but also challenged, the very idea of secularism. The remarkable rise of the BJP, and corresponding growth of Hindu political resurgence, was variously branded as Hindu fundamentalism, Hindu revivalism and Hindu nationalism. Since religion and communalism was used by the BJP to mobilize its support, it would be useful, if they are introduced conceptually and historically, as well as from, perspectives of recent international experience. Ghosh tries to assess party's future and also to vertically analyze its ideological foundation and intellectual depth.

Ghosh's "The Congress and the BJP: Struggle for the Heartland", opines that, whosoever, controls the Hindi heartland, also known as cow belt, controls the government at the Centre. It constitutes nine Hindi speaking states, namely Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Rajasthan. The Hindu majority or Hindu factor, influences the thrust of national politics. The essay is based on wide-ranging empirical data, historical facts and electoral performance. Ghosh evaluates the relative strengths and weaknesses of both the Congress and the BJP, to dominate the politically important region, during the last five decades. The scholar finds out that decline of the Congress was attributable to the fact, that this balance was shattered. The BJP formed a position for itself in the heartland, largely at the cost of the Congress and reimburse, through the NDA partners. Nonetheless, the larger question is whether the heartland would remain the epic center of power or not. The way technology is moving in other parts of India, most notably, the south and the west, are taking advantage of it.

In their book, Lawrence LeDuc and Jon H. Pammett, "Dynasties and Interludes: Past and Present in Canadian Electoral Politics", (Paperback – August 2016, Second Edition) has analyzed why political parties win elections. This edition includes an analysis of the 2011 and 2015 federal elections as well as an in-depth discussion of the "Harper Dynasty." This book delivers an extensive and exceptional overview of elections and voting in Canada from Confederation to recent flood of minority government. Its prime argument is that the Canadian political landscape has comprised of long period of hegemony of a single party and/or leader (dynasties), interrupted by

short, sharp disruptions brought about by the sudden rise of the new parties, leaders, or social movement (interludes). Change in the configuration of the electorate and in the technology and professionalization of election campaigns are also examine in this book, both to provide a better understanding of key turning points in Canadian history and a deeper interpretation of present day electoral politics. Rightly shows that after one or two elections we can't be sure we're experiencing a dynasty or trend.

In his article, Milan Vaishnav, "Understanding the Indian Voter", (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 2015) states that the 2014 election presents a mix picture. Economic factors played an unusually large role in shaping voting behavior of Indian electorate. Traditional patterns of caste-based voting were much less evident, and regional parties, often thought to be gaining ground, suffered a setback. A slightly deeper look, however, reveals that these changes were not necessarily unique to the 2014 general election. There is an evidence to suggest that many of these trends have been percolating beneath the surface for some time. What 2014 election has done is to bring these trends to the fore of public consciousness. On other dimensions, 2014 elections signaled more continuity than change. Further he reveals myths about Indian voters on the basis of Lok Foundation findings:

- Good economics does not mean good politics
- Vote your caste, not cast your vote
- Regional parties are surging
- Voters are fed up with dynasties
- Lack of information breeds criminality
- Muslim voters vote differently

Pradeep K. Chibber and Susan L. Ostermann in their article "The BJP's Fragile Mandate: Modi and Vote Mobilizers in the 2014 General Elections", (Studies in Indian Politics, 2014 CSDS, Sage Publications) gives a very beautiful analysis of the concept "Vote Mobilizers". Vote mobilizers, a group of individuals who keenly help a campaign but who are often neither party members nor partisans, were important to BJP's 2014 victory. Vote mobilizers were drawn to the BJP in greater numbers than to other parties by the BJP's leader Narendra Modi; they were then to work by the party to motivate other voters, particularly in rural areas. But vote mobilizers, because they were motivated to support the BJP by Modi, because they do not have a long-standing organizational connection with the BJP, and because they are interested in aligning

with the winning party, are a source of future instability for the party. We still have little understanding of why or how Modi was able to draw so many vote mobilizers into active participation in the BJP's 2014 campaign. It may have been ideology, authenticity or any number of other factors, including the fact that Modi and BJP were challengers and not incumbents.

Ashutosh Varshney in his article "Hindu Nationalism in Power?", *Journal of Democracy*, October 2014, makes argument that though the BJP have won 2014 elections unprecedentedly but the BJP could not manage to win a large chunk of votes in minorities. The party simply could not win any significant support from India's 170 million Muslims. Other minorities, including Christians, view the BJP with suspicion and fear as well.

Joseph D. DiSilvio mentioned in his article, "Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party in India" (*The Orator*, August 2015) that "I have found three major factors that have served as the fuel for this unexpected and dynamic change from Congress to BJP dominance. The BJP's success, rather than simply a result of a shift in public opinion toward religious nationalism or right-wing politics, has been mostly a result of its ability to accommodate and adapt to society through strategic alliances with other political parties, exploitation of corruption and weaknesses in the Congress party, and programs aimed at social welfare."

Research Question(s)

- What accounts for BJP's success in forming majority government in the era of multi-party coalition system?
- How do we understand the dynamics of party system in India in the light of 2014 election results?

Hypothesis

- Rise of the BJP in 2014 is explained by the rise of charismatic leadership in BJP in the form of Narendra Modi. Modi filled the leadership vacuum or leadership crisis in this election.
- Rise of the BJP in 2014 is explained by the decline of the Congress party. It was an anti-Congress voting.
- Rise of the BJP in 2014 is explained by the decline of State Parties in national elections. Voters preferred to vote for BJP rather than State Parties in this election.
- Rise of the BJP in 2014 is explained by the polarization of Indian electoral politics based on Hindu Nationalism.
- Rise of the BJP in 2014 is explained by the rise of new demand, especially rapid economic development, which BJP promised to deliver. 2014 general elections fought in the name of ‘Development’.
- A stable “two-national alliance system” or a “binodal system” has established in India.

Methodology

I use case study method to present the case of BJP rising to power in the era of coalitions. This case study would involve the interpretive techniques to analytically disclose why, how or by what means political parties do what they do while showing how this knowledge can be used to understand observable election outcomes.

My data includes qualitative as well as quantitative data. As qualitative data I use anecdotes and as quantitative data I use election results of various national and assembly elections spanning from 1991 to 2014. The election data will be obtained from the CSDS and Election Commission website.

Since my data includes qualitative as well as quantitative data, I will use mixed method approach that is qualitative as well as quantitative analysis. As a part of the qualitative analysis, I will analyze texts, especially commentaries and research-based writings of leading political scientists. As quantitative analysis, I will analyze the trends and fluctuations in the seat share and vote share of the BJP in a comparative context. (i.e., in comparison with the shares of the Congress—its key rival national party)

Tentative Chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: BJP during the years of Congress System

Chapter 3: BJP reinvents itself: 1989-1996

Chapter 4: BJP tastes power: 1998-2004

Chapter 5: Eclipse of BJP: 2004-2014

Chapter 6: The puzzle of BJP's majority: 2014 elections

Chapter 7: Conclusion

CHAPTER-2

BJP during the Years of Congress System

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), BJP's predecessor, or commonly known as Jana Sangh, was a Hindu nationalist party that existed from 1951 to 1977 and was the political arm of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu right-wing organization. In 1977, it merged with several other left, centre and right parties to dislodge Indian National Congress (INC) from power and formed the Janata Party. After the Janata Party split in 1980, it was reformed as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980, which is currently India's largest political party by primary membership and representation in Lok Sabha.

Jana Sangh was a Hindu nationalist party. Modern Hindu nationalism has its ancestry in the British colonial era. More importantly, Hindu nationalism drew its energy from injustices dispensed by the British rule. In this respect, Hindu nationalism gained its structure and direction during British rule. Throughout the early 1900s, Hindu nationalism was given a structure with the creation of the Hindu Mahasabha (Great Hindu Movement) in 1913 by the fusion of two regional Hindu movements: United Bengal Hindu Movement (1907) and the Punjab Hindu Sabha (1907). The Hindu Mahasabha was the overarching umbrella under which Hindu nationalist movement operated. Furthermore, three geographically contrasting traditions merged under a single roof. Before the merger, the Hindu nationalist movements were located in three regions: Maharashtra, Bengal and Punjab. Some members of the Mahasabha were also alongside members of the Indian National Congress party. With the formation of Hindu Mahasabha, two stands of the Hindu nationalist movement, the modernist and western inclination group following Gokhale's legacy, and the Hindu revivalist and Hindu orthodox group following Tilak's legacy, were knotted. Although the Hindu nationalist movement was apparently under the same roof, it was by no means united. Moreover, the radical Hindu groups were not completely incorporated into the Hindu Mahasabha, and these groups in due course provide the backbone of the more radical Hindu nationalist movement.

Of the various radical Hindu nationalist organizations, none is better organized and better staffed than the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) or National Volunteer Association. Founded in 1925 by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar who worked under

Tilak, the RSS volunteers were easily recognized with their khaki colored shorts, a color which was borrowed from the British police. The RSS would later provide the ideological and organizational power to the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), BJP's predecessor, and to the BJP itself. The RSS is organizational structure is widespread both vertically and horizontally. The RSS was mostly composed by Brahmins or members from the upper castes. Therein lay the disagreement of the RSS membership. Although the RSS espouses the principle egalitarianism, its members are enormously, Brahmin in background. Moreover, the RSS' ideology was Brahminical in nature. Many members were from the upper castes of the region of Maharashtra where historically the upper castes served as martial leaders.

RSS espoused the principle of 'Hindutva' or Hinduness and required as its goal 'Hindu Rashtra' or Hindu nation. Hindutva was codified as the ideology of the Hindu nationalist movement by the publication of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's work *Hindutva: Who is Hindu?* In 1923. According to Savarkar, Hindutva is constituted by: geographical unity, racial features and a common culture. Note that Hinduism as a religion is not one of Savarkar's criteria. Scholars have asserted that this was because Savarkar himself was not religious, but that he was only an ideologue or he saw no place for Hinduism as a religion in a diverse society such as that of India's (Jafferlot 1996). With religion relegated to the backburner, for Savarkar, it is race and ethnicity that constitute Hindutva.

With India's independence in 1947, the Hindu nationalist movement was given an electoral face by the formation of Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) in 1951. The BJS espoused the ideal of 'One Country, One Culture, One Nation and Rule of Law.' The formation of the BJS was partly precipitated by the ban of the RSS and the arrest of its members during 1948-49. Until then Hindu nationalist leaders saw the Hindu nationalist movement as less a political organization than a socio-cultural organization. The crack-down of the RSS during 1948-49 made it clear that first, the RSS was vulnerable to politically organized groups, and second the RSS had no political representation, particularly national representation. It is in this context that the RSS lent its support to formation of BJS. It must be emphasized that the RSS never sheds its socio-cultural anchor while supporting the BJS. The influence and diligence of the RSS lie in its non-political shade. As a result, there was a built in disagreement in Hindu nationalist movements such as the RSS. The BJS being a political animal and undergirded by the RSS, was Janus-faced and was pulled in two

different directions. The politicians in the BJS were sensitive to electoral winds while the RSS, who had significant representation in the BJS, was accustomed to Hindu nationalist ideology and principles even at the cost electoral support. This contradiction of the BJS was never resolved and was imparted to the BJP in the 1980s. Electorally the BJS was largely overshadowed by Congress from the 1950s to the early 1970s. This is all the more surprising since the BJS did not follow a tactic solely based on garnering support through ethno-religious planks (Jafferlot 1996). BJS's electoral strategy is not surprising when the political landscape is considered. Congress cast a huge shadow over Indian politics. What made Congress so powerful a party is its ability to control the central government supporting secularism and its control over local level politics. Incumbency provided Congress a powerful means of limiting the rise of communalism. In addition, many of local level Congress leaders were themselves Hindu traditionalist depriving the BJS political space to maneuver. The BJS was, in effect, deprived of one of its attractions- Hindu nationalism.

Furthermore, Nehru's socio-economic development program was much admired with the electorate further restraining BJS's space to maneuver. With little room to maneuver the BJS concentrated on two planks: attacking the state's interfering in the economy and highlighting the importance of national integrity. Note that BJS's anti-state intervention and the national integrity planks are almost identical with the current planks of the BJP.

Geographically, the BJS support base was limited to the northern 'Hindi-Belt' states. The northern states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, and Bihar provided the bulk of BJS's seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies. BJS' geographical limitation is steady with BJP's experience in the 1990s but the mandate of 2014 Lok Sabha general elections and further state assemblies elections are explaining a new phenomenon. It seems that BJP is going to be pan India party in the charismatic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who always advocates for "development for all" and "minimum government and maximum governance." Moreover, (during Congress system) the BJS and the BJP were strongest in the Hindi-belt while the Hindi -belt did not offer Congress with a large support base. The BJS, in effect, drew its support from a geographically narrow base while Congress drew its support from a geographically broader base.

It is fascinating to note that the BJS is the only party that had shown an upward trend in obtaining the popular vote and in capturing parliamentary and assembly seats in

each consecutive general election since 1952 with some exception. In the general election of 1967, the Indian Political system underwent a spectacular transformation. The dominance of the Congress party in the system was unexpectedly shattered and political power was dispersed between many parties on a regional basis. Until then opposition parties in India were not considered a threat to the rule of the Congress. But after 1967, at the state level, the power of opposition parties was no longer a threat, but a reality. The Jana Sangh had been in the forefront of this movement.

BJS's Ideology and Policies

The major sources of information of Jana Sangh party ideology is from election manifestoes, issued prior to the each of the five general elections of 1952, 1957, 1962, 1967 and 1971. The manifestoes reveal not only what the party positions are on various subjects, but also the changing trends in Jana Sangh policy. They also give us an idea about the slogans which are adapted to suit a particular election but later incorporated in party policy. As such manifestoes lean to specify the flexibility in the party ideology, the mood of the leadership at a given election, the target population for party appeal. It should not be understood that the manifestoes are the only sources of information on party ideology as frequently other forms of writings and speeches by the party leaders are also important. For the purpose of analysis, party ideology has been discussed under following.

Very early the Jana Sangh formulated its view on democracy declaring its fundamental philosophy as 'one country, one nation, one culture and rule of law.' Nationalism for Jana Sangh implied complete loyalty to the Bharatiya culture. The Jana Sangh declared that their policy of secularism treats every one equal as against the policy of Muslim appeasement. The party adopted the Deendayal Upadhyaya's concept of Integral Humanism which emphasizes the significance of a complete man comprising of body, soul and intellect. And individuals comprise society and a good system should try to satisfy the needs of an individual, material and spiritual non-material. Nationalism and the individual in a nation should be the deciding factor in a political system. He advocated democracy, yet opposed to both capitalism and communism. Party however also accepted the democratic principle of popular participation of all the citizens in the process of decision making. These policies of Jana Sangh were later adopted by the BJP.

The BJS declared its ideology of building a 'strong and prosperous Indian' nation by drawing inspiration from 'India's ancient culture'; and gave primacy to the establishment of a democratic state with reasonable participation by all members of the society. The Jana Sangh's concept of secularism also intent impartial treatment for all the members of the society. BJS emphasized the equal treatment of members of majority and minority communities; for, according to BJS, very special treatment to religious minorities is the same as to appeasement of religious minorities.

In terms of economic policies the Jana Sangh opposed the notion of a state controlled economy as the principal support base of the Jana Sangh consisted of mostly the private traders and petty industrialist. The Jana Sangh supported the view that greater encouragement and promotion must be given to the small scale and cottage industries. To the Jana Sangh five year plan must emphasize on the development of small scale and consumer sector as they see small entrepreneur as a prelude to get rid of unemployment.

The BJS emphasized on the swadeshi aspect as a significant portion of its economic and industrial policies and programmes. While the party shared the standpoint that the government should promote and encourage the establishment of small scale industries in private sector, but the party advocated for setting up of state controlled industries or public sector undertakings in the field of heavy industries and in sensitive areas like defense. Jana Sangh supported state ownership of defense and strategic industries, state regulation of capital goods and other vital industries.

Jana Sangh opposed the idea of giving special preferential treatment to the minorities, criticised the Congress government for following the policy of pseudo-secularism and advocated the immediate execution of Uniform Civil Code. Jana Sangh which passionately opposed the concept of majority and minority among Indians wanted the introduction of Uniform Civil Code at the earliest. The party was against the idea of giving special preferential treatment to minorities. The party believed that all citizens irrespective of caste, creed and community are equal in the eyes of law, yet reservation to the backward section of the society was acceptable to them.

Jana Sangh stood in favour of making Hindi as an official language as against English. For the Jana Sangh a major issue of disagreement with the incumbent in Uttar Pradesh was that the party did not want that Urdu to be accorded a second official language status in the state. For Jana Sangh Urdu was first and foremost responsible for the propagation of a two nation theory and anti-national sentiment in India.

For the Jana Sangh the abolition of the cow slaughter always remained an important issue. The Jana Sangh tried to organize campaign for the implementation of Article 48 of the Indian Constitution that stand for the prohibition of slaughter of cows, calves milch and draught cattle.

As far as the foreign policy is concerned for the Jana Sangh, Pakistan and Kashmir remained as the most important factor. BJS demanded the complete integration of Kashmir into India by abrogation of Article 370. In fact Shyama Prasad Mukherjee was the first one to oppose the grant of special status to Kashmir under Article 370. The BJS opposed the policy of appeasement towards Pakistan.

Electoral Performance of BJS

Elections reflect the mood of the people. A general election is also a major form of political participation by the masses of the people, who otherwise left out of it all. Elections are a recognized means providing succession in leadership. Elections can also control policy decisions of the government though devises such as initiative, referendum and repeal. Policy decisions of the government may be influenced by the elections. Furthermore, elections also serve to secure the legitimation of a regime or to maintain this legitimacy that may have already been established. It is also posited that elections may help maintain legitimacy by bringing together, in support of a single party, individuals who are otherwise remote from or in conflict with each other on ground of class, status or religion. On the other hand, an election may be functionless if it has no consequence for the political system. This could be possible in the case of a country where elections are unfamiliar, communication poor administration primitive.¹⁹

The above mentioned functional aspects of elections are significant in India. Elections in India can be unifying force, for people from other regions and speaking different language can unite under one party slogan. This has also led to a polarization of forces in a regional context where regional loyalties have been increasingly mobilized. With each successive election the individual voter is learning the meaning of the power of the vote and “increasing number of participants are maneuvering for their place in the system.”²⁰ Elections can also provide an effective channel through which the

¹⁹ Richard Rose and Harve Mossawir, “Voting and Elections: A Functional Analysis,” Political Studies, XV: 2, June 1967, p. 175

²⁰ Paul Wallace, “India: The Dispersion of Political Power,” Asian Survey, VIII: 2, Feb. 1963, p. 88.

Opposition can make its voice heard and can effectively perform as a pressure group, aggregating and articulating the interests of a certain section of the community. Jana Sangh was usually recognized, as the representative voice of the interests of the Hindu majority. It had contested seats in all the General Elections since its inception and had obtained an increased number of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies and an increased percentage of the popular vote.

In India general elections to the Lok Sabha are held every five years. The Lok Sabha represents citizens of India (as envisaged by the constitution of India, currently the members of Lok Sabha are 545, out of which 543 are elected for five-year term and the two members nominated by the president of India who represent the Anglo-Indian community). The 543 members are elected under the plurality (first past the post) electoral system. The Council of States (Rajya Sabha) has 250 members, 238 members elected for a six-year term, with one-third retiring every two years. The members are indirectly elected, this being achieved the votes of legislators in the state and union (federal) territories. The elected members are chosen under the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote. The twelve nominated members are usually an eclectic mix of eminent artists, scientist, sportsperson, journalists and common people. Lok Sabha is composed of representatives of the people chosen by direct election on the basis of the adult suffrage. The maximum strength of the House envisaged by the Constitution is 552, which is made up by election of up to 530 members to represent the States, up to 20 members to represent the Union Territories and not more than two members of the Anglo-Indian Community to be nominated by the President, if, in his/her opinion, that community is not adequately represented in the lower house i.e. Lok Sabha. The Legislative Assembly elections in India are the elections in which the Indian electorates choose the members of the Legislative/State Assembly. They are held every 5 years and the members of the legislative assembly are called MLA. The assembly elections are never carried out in the same year for all states and union territories. The legislative assembly elections are held in all the 29 States and 2 of the 7 Union Territories of India.

The First General Election–1952

As mentioned earlier that the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) came into existence on Oct. 21, 1951 as an all-India political party. It was only just two months before the first General election of 1952. At that time it was assisted by the RSS in all fields—organization of cadres, selection of candidates, donations etc.

The areas of real strength of the RSS were Madhya Pradesh, Madhya Bharat, Vindhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. It was hoped that in “these provinces the Jana Sangh would do reasonably well in the 1952 elections and would build upon the RSS base for greater successes in future elections. In Punjab, the Sikhs distrusted the RSS, but the organization was strong in the urban Hindu areas”.²¹ In the other areas it had much less influence. In Rajasthan and Saurashtra it had penetrated into the princely states. But it was not to the same degree as it was in Madhya Bharat. In Maharashtra and Marathi-speaking parts of Madhya Pradesh, the RSS was mainly a Brahmin organization. In the south and east, the RSS was beginning to organize itself.

Although, the RSS was the main source of organizational power of the BJS, but it was not the only source of its membership. With the foundation of the BJS a considerable number of others came into its camp. Mookerjee, leader of the party and Mauli Chandra Sharma had no RSS background. A number of people, influenced by the policies of Mookerjee, came into the party. This included various former ministers, ex-judges, businessmen, zamindars and jagirdars.

In order to give a tough fight to the Congress, the BJS unsuccessfully attempted to bring other parties under its umbrella. Interestingly, its most natural allies, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Ram Rajya Parishad were also unsuccessful in resolving their differences. The party reached an agreement with the Uttar Pradesh Praja Party in Uttar Pradesh and with the Zamindar Party led by Rao Birender Singh in Punjab (Gurgaon and Rohtak District). Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee was the key campaigner and he addressed people in many constituencies in and out of Bengal. The principal speaker against the party was Nehru himself, who in the 1952 elections in fact feared the nationalistic and reactionary right more than the socialist and communist left. In

²¹ C. Baxter, “The Jana Sangh: A Bibliography of an Indian Political Party”, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, p. 81-82.

a note to the Election Committee of the Congress, he said that they should be careful of any communal element in the Congress and should choose their nominees with great care.²² Mookerjee took care to repudiate such statements and the charges flew back and forth.²³

Results

In 1952 Lok Sabha election, the BJS out of the total 489 parliamentary seats fielded its candidates on 94 seats. The results of the election were disappointing to the Jana Sangh because it had expected to do better at the polls. The Election Commission had set a level of 3% of the total popular vote as the minimum to be polled by a party for it to be accorded recognition as an “all India Party.” The Jana Sangh managed to do this by a very narrow margin; it polled 3.06% of the Lok Sabha vote, and was there by allowed to have its election symbol the Deepak (lamp) reserved for the exclusive use its members. Four others parties obtained all India recognition – the Congress, the Communist Party of India, the Socialist Party and the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (the latter two later merged into the Praja Socialist Party, leaving four national parties in the field.)

The party in this election was quiet aware about its areas of strength and that was also reflected in the effectiveness of its regional campaigns.²⁴ It basically focused in Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, PEPSU, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh. West Bengal was an exception to the general trend.

The party had contested 41 seats (out of 86) in Uttar Pradesh, 9 seats (out of 18) in Punjab, 8 seats (out of 29) in Madhya Pradesh, 6 seats (out of 34) in West Bengal, 4 seats each in Rajasthan (out of 20), Madhya Bharat (out of 11), Mysore (out of 11) and Vindhya Pradesh (out of 6). The party also contested 3 seats in Delhi (out of 4), 2 seats each in Bihar (out of 55), Assam (out of 12), PEPSU (out of 5), Himachal Pradesh (out of 3), Tripura (out of 2) and one seat (out of 2) in Ajmer. In Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh elections the Jan Sangh was effectively helped by the volunteers of the RSS.

²² The Statesman (New Delhi), Sept. 27, 1951. Quoted in “Nehru on Communalism”, (New Delhi, 1965).

²³ The Statesman (New Delhi), Dec. 12, 1951. Quoted in Nehru on Communalism, op. cit., p. 237.

²⁴ Bruce D. Graham, “Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 198.

The party had polled 3.06 percent of the national popular vote. The party had shown significant support in Delhi (25.92%), Ajmer (16.20%), Vindhya Pradesh (12.71%), Himachal Pradesh (10.72%), Madhya Bharat (9.65%) and Uttar Pradesh (7.29%). In the home state of Mookiejee, the party had polled about 6 percent vote.

Table: 1 Electoral Performance of the BJS, 1952 Parliamentary Elections

	State/U.T.	Seats			Vote Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	Jammu & Kashmir	-	-	-	-
2	Himachal Pradesh	3	2	-	10.72
3	Punjab	18	9	-	5.6
4	PEPSU	5	2	-	2.94
5	Delhi	4	3	-	25.92
6	Uttar Pradesh	86	41	-	7.29
7	Madhya Pradesh	29	8	-	4.94
8	Madhya Bharat	11	4	-	9.65
9	Vindhya Bharat	6	4	-	12.71
10	Bhopal	2	-	-	-
11	Bihar	55	2	-	0.4
12	Odisha	20	-	-	-
13	West Bengal	34	6	2	5.94
14	Assam	12	2	-	3.64
15	Manipur	2	-	-	-
16	Tripura	2	2	-	6.14
17	Rajasthan	20	4	1	3.04
18	Ajmer	2	1	-	16.2
19	Saurashtra	6	-	-	-
20	Kutch	2	-	-	-
21	Bombay	45	-	-	-
22	Bilaspur	1	-	-	-
23	Mysore	11	4	-	4.16
24	Hyderabad	25	-	-	-
25	Madras	75	-	-	-

26	Travancore-Cochin	12	-	-	-
27	Coorg	1	-	-	-
	All India	489	94	3	3.06

Table: 2, Electoral Performance of BJS, 1952 State Assemblies Elections

Sr. No.	States	Seats	Contested	Won	Lost Deposits	Votes Polled (%)
1	Andhra Pradesh	241	-	-	-	-
2	Assam	105	3	0	3	0.29
3	Bihar	318	44	0	42	1.15
4	Gujarat	160	4	0	3	0.10
5	Kerala	129	-	-	-	-
6	Madhya Pradesh	339	126	6	68	5.66
7	Madras	198	-	-	-	-
8	Maharashtra	299	36	0	32	1.29
9	Mysore	212	25	0	21	1.21
10	Orrisa	140	-	-	-	-
11	Punjab	186	85	2	59	5.07
12	Rajasthan	189	65	11	35	6.34
13	Uttar Pradesh	430	210	2	153	6.44
14	West Bengal	250	85	9	60	5.31

Union Territories

1	Delhi	48	30	4	4	21.88
2	Himachal Pradesh	36	9	0	8	3.46
3	Manipur	-	-	-	-	-
4	Tripura	-	-	-	-	-
	All India	3283	722	34	488	2.76

Sources: Craig Baxter, "Jana Sangh: A Brief History" in South Asian Politics and Religion, (Princeton, 1966).

From Election Commission of India, Report of the First General Elections in India 1951-52, Vol. II, New Delhi, not dated.

Three Jana Sanghis were elected to the Lok Sabha – among them Syama Prasad Mukherjee. In the assembly elections, Mukherjee's personality and following brought the Jana Sangh success in Bengal which was distinct to its organizational strength. In all, the Jana Sangh won 34 assembly seats and 2.76% of the vote; eight seats were from Midnapur (West Bengal), and there it received 12.68% of the vote.

In the Punjab, the party had the greatest disappointment. The party was founded here and expected to achieve major success. Of the 85 seats contested, two were obtained in the election, and 59 contestants lost their deposits. (i.e., obtained less than 1/6 of vote) It seems that the Jana Sangh and the Akali Dal cancelled each other out.

In Delhi, the Jana Sangh showed signs of strength; three out of four contestants retained their deposits. This initial start would later lead to a near polarization between the Congress party and Jana Sangh in 1962 and by 1967, the Jana Sangh would be in control of the Delhi Municipal Corporation.

In Rajasthan, the Jana Sangh won eleven of the seats and in Madhya Bharat four. Elsewhere in central India the Jana Sangh won two assembly seats in Vindhya Pradesh. In Madhya Pradesh, as then constituted, the party failed to win any seats, but it began the foundations of an organization which would win seats in the future in the Hindi-belt. In the huge expense of Uttar Pradesh the Jana Sangh won but two assembly seats. In other states, the party made a token show. A few candidates managed to retain their deposits. In Mysore, a bare beginning was made in the south. No seats were won, but about 2% of the votes were obtained in the State.

Appraisal

Balraj Madhok writing after the election said:

Viewed in the light of the serious handicaps under which the Jana Sangh contested the election, it was an outstanding achievement. Being the youngest party it hardly had any time to make itself known to the people ...Lack of electoral and political experience in its workers, who were mostly young men, and paucity of resources badly handicapped it. But, perhaps, the greatest factor against it was the concentrated

and systematic attack on it by Nehru whose virulent denunciations of Jana Sangh were echoed by almost the entire press and all the leftist parties in the country...²⁵

The editor of the Organizer said it this way:

A major factor in Jana Sangh's election fight was the inexperience of its workers...

In the case of Jana Sangh, if the candidates were poor financially, the organization was even poorer in that respect.

...taken as a whole they (the Muslim) voted mostly for the Congress... The matter assumed a certain decisiveness by virtue of the fact that Muslims were concentrated in the North were the hope of the Jana Sangh particularly lay.

Another serious difficulty was the absence of supporting sectional organization... It did not have a women's organization... Also there was no Jana Sangh organization on the Harijan front... And above all the Jana Sangh lacked a Labour Front...²⁶

The RSS chief, Golwalkar gave the Jana Sangh a "well done" and said the party should not be pessimistic and "should go ahead with calm confidence in themselves and their mission."²⁷

In 1952 elections Jana Sangh had made a reasonable showing, was recognized as a national party and had its nationally known leader to carry on both in Parliament and in the organization. It also had the significant backing of the RSS and it had drawn in a number of non-RSS people. The party saw its weakness and was prepared to use the following five years to build itself into a stronger force before the next general election. The success of the Jana Sangh in 1952 elections accrued mainly from the North Indian region. This was a reflection of its membership base, and the appeal of its ideology. Its success in West Bengal was a reflection not of the party but of the personality of Syama Prasad Mukherjee. In the Southern parts of the country, the only state where the Jana Sangh obtained the some support was Mysore.

In other words, the electoral performance of the BJS in this election was more to do with the image of the Mookerjee than the organizational network provided by the RSS. In the areas of RSS strength Madhya Pradesh, Madhya Bharat, Vindhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, the party failed to win any seat. In terms of vote, the BJS showed signs of its strength in Delhi, Ajmer, Vindhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

²⁵ Balraj Madhok, "Political Trends in India", (Delhi, 1959), p. 155.

²⁶ Organizer, V: 29, March 5, 1952.

²⁷ Organizer, V: 29, March 5, 1952.

The Second General Elections–1957

Mookerjee's death in 1953 had left the BJS without a nationally known leader. Consequent upon his unfortunate death, the burden of leadership fell on the younger members of the party. Most of them were from the RSS background. Among them Madhok and Vajpayee were the most important.

However, in the absence of any effective national leader, the party had lost many of its members. The doubtful members, those who could not take the discipline and the disappointments of the period, left the party either voluntarily or by invitation. Many who departed objected to the increasingly strong role of the RSS in the party...But with the departure of the objectors, the RSS could take the unchallenged lead in the party".²⁸ The party, however, continued to welcome non-RSS persons.

The Jana Sangh organizations at the state level were of varying strength and effectiveness. "The Hindi-Speaking area in the north was the heartland of the Jana Sangh. Outside this area the party was either non-existent or very weak. The party undoubtedly strengthened itself in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, in the latter especially in the areas formerly comprising Madhya Bharat. In Delhi the party was effective and provided the leading opposition both in the municipal corporation and in the legislative assembly... In Punjab, the party was most active in the cities of the Punjabi-speaking part of the state. In Rajasthan, too, the party had made its gains in the urban areas. The party in Bihar was in its early formative stages. Of the Hindi-speaking states, it was in Bihar that the RSS was weakest".²⁹

In this election, the BJS was much more careful in the selection of its candidates than what was the case in 1952. Only one of the three Lok Sabha winners was re-nominated. The basic policy of the BJS as declared by Upadhyaya was to oppose national alliance with any party. "He said the party would agree to local adjustments with all parties except the communists and communal parties, e.g., the Akali Dal, the Muslim League, the Dravida Munetra Kazhagam".³⁰

In the campaign of the 1957 general election, the BJS received support from Golwalkar (RSS sarsanghchalak) himself. The 1957 general elections were held after the reformation of Indian states. Nonetheless, that had barely influenced the policy of

²⁸ C. Baxter, op. cit., p. 154.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 154-155.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 160.

the party to focus upon. Deendayal Upadhyaya, General Secretary of the party had announced in June 1956 that “the party would concentrate on Uttar Pradesh, the Punjab, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, which it considered to be its strongholds”.³¹

Results

The Jana Sangh made substantial gains over 1952. It improved its Lok Sabha representations only slightly from three to four seats, but improved its share of the poll from 3.06% to 5.93%. In the contests for state assemblies the party won 46 seats as compared to 34 in 1952. This time all the 46 remained with the party at least until the assembly opened while in the 1952, four abandoned as soon as the votes were counted. In assembly elections the party polled 4.03% of the vote as compared with 2.76% in 1952.

With two Lok Sabha seats and 17 assembly seats, U.P. became the leading state in terms of Jana Sangh representation. In Lok Sabha contests in Uttar Pradesh, the party raised its share of the poll from 7.29% to 14.79%. In the assembly poll in the state, the Jana Sangh raised its vote share from 6.44% to 9.84%.

In the Madhya Pradesh Lok Sabha poll the Jana Sangh contested 21 of the 36 seats, lost deposits on 6, and won no seats. In the assembly seats, the Jana Sangh contested 127 of the 288 seats, won ten, and 64 candidates lost deposits. The party won 9.89% of the vote.

In Rajasthan, the party contested only seven of the 22 Lok Sabha seats, winning none, but losing no deposits, while polling 11.10% of the vote. For the assembly, the Jana Sangh contested only 47 of the 176 seats winning six, losing 26 deposits and polling 5.52% of the vote, a decline in both seats won and percentage of votes in 1952.

Punjab was both a failure and an improvement to the party. Again it failed to do well in Lok Sabha contests. The party contested 16 of the 22 Lok Sabha seats and gained 16.04% of the vote, won none. With the exception of Delhi this was the highest percentage polled in any state by the Jana Sangh. In the assembly seats, the Jana Sangh contested 65 out of 154 seats, won nine, and 31 candidates lost their deposits. The party won 8.6% of the vote.

With the abolition of the Delhi Legislative Assembly, elections were held only for the five Lok Sabha seats. The Jana Sangh contested all fives, won none and lost two

³¹ B. D. Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 198

deposits while polling 19.72% of the vote. Balraj Madhok finished a far-away second to Mrs. Sucheta Kriplani, who was now the Congress candidate.

Table: 3, Electoral Performance of the BJS, 1957 Indian Parliamentary Elections

Sr. No.	State/U.T.	Seats			Vote Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	Himachal Pradesh	4	-	-	-
2	Punjab	22	16	-	16.05
3	Delhi	5	5	-	19.71
4	Uttar Pradesh	86	61	2	14.79
5	Madhya Pradesh	36	21	-	13.96
6	Bihar	53	2	-	0.51
7	Odisha	20	-	-	-
8	West Bengal	36	5	-	1.43
9	Assam	12	-	-	-
10	Manipur	2	-	-	-
11	Tripura	2	-	-	-
12	Rajasthan	22	7	-	11.15

13	Bombay	66	7	2	3.38
14	Mysore	26	5	-	2.48
15	Andhra Pradesh	43	1	-	0.04
16	Kerala	18	-	-	-
17	Madras	41	-	-	-
	All India	494	130	4	5.97

Table: 4, Electoral Performance of BJS, 1957 State Assemblies Elections

Sr. No.	States	Seats	Contested	Won	Lost Deposits	Votes Polled (%)
1	Andhra Pradesh	301	8	0	8	0.11
2	Assam	108	-	-	-	-
3	Bihar	318	29	0	22	1.10
4	Gujarat	133	5	0	1	0.55
5	Kerala	126	-	0	-	-
6	Madhya Pradesh	288	127	10	64	9.89
7	Madras	205	-	-	-	-
8	Maharashtra	263	18	4	7	2.00
9	Mysore	208	20	0	14	1.37
10	Orrisa	140	-	-	-	-
11	Punjab	154	65	9	31	8.60
12	Rajasthan	176	47	6	26	5.52
13	Uttar Pradesh	430	235	17	131	9.84
14	West Bengal	252	33	0	30	0.98

Union Territories

1	Delhi	-	-	-	-	-
2	Himachal Pradesh	-	-	-	-	-
3	Manipur	-	-	-	-	-
4	Tripura	-	-	-	-	-
	All India	3102	587	46	334	4.03

Sources: Election Commission of India, Report on the Second General Election in India, 1957, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1953.

Craig Baxter, “Jana Sangh: A Brief History” in South Asian Politics and Religion, ed. Donald E. Smith, (Princeton, 1966).

Maharashtra presented a special case. The Jana Sangh won two of the seven Lok Sabha seats it contested and four of 18 assembly seats. In the area covered by the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti the party won two of the three Lok Sabha seats and four of six assembly seats and it lost no deposit in this area. The victories for the Jana Sangh were almost solely attributable to the alliance on the unilingual state issues.

In West Bengal the rout of the Jana Sangh was all but complete. The sitting Lok Sabha member did not contest for re-election and only three of the nine elected to the assembly in 1952 stood again. All were defeated, although each retained his deposits. The vote polled for assembly constituencies dropped to 0.98% and for Lok Sabha seats to 1.43%. Elsewhere the party showed little strength. Seats were contested for the Lok Sabha in Mysore (5), Bihar (2), and Andhra Pradesh (1), but with the exception of the candidates in Belgaum, Mysore, all lost their deposits. Assembly seats were contested in these states as well in Gujarat but only in Rajkot District of Gujarat and South Kanara District of Mysore did the party poll more than 5% of the vote.

Appraisal

Malkani, editor of the Organizer assessing the early returns from the election wrote: “The Jana Sangh progress is real but hardly spectacular.”³²

The resolution of the working committee said:

...The committee feels that the Jana Sangh in spite of the odds against it has registered a definite advance both in respect of votes polled and seats won...

In respect of state assemblies the election results in U.P., Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Bombay have quite encouraging...

The Jana Sangh however, had got a set-back in West Bengal, here it had not been able to maintain the position it had secured in the last elections – as also in Bihar and Karnatak...Lack of solid organizational base and lack of resources were found to be the main factor responsible...

The committee feels deeply concerned over the important part played by casteism and communalism, particularly Muslim communalism.³³

The party had obtained its largest measure of support from the state of U.P. and this has continued ever since. It made an important showing in M.P. too. Its success in Maharashtra was temporary, being based on one issue, the formation of the unilingual state of Maharashtra, while in W.B. it was nearly out. In Rajasthan support for the Jana Sangh ideology met intense fight from the most conservatives of Hindu parties the Ram Rajya Parishad. Although the Jana Sangh did obtain a fair representation in the state.

Thus the party had now faced its second electoral challenge. It had increased its seats slightly in Parliament and in the states. Beyond seats, the party had developed a good base from which to expand in some of the states, most notably in U.P. and Madhya Pradesh. It was now all set to refine and develop further in the period between the 1957 and 1962 elections.

In 1958, the municipal corporation of Delhi was elected. The result was a crushing setback for the Congress which lost its majority in the corporation. Of the 80 elective seats, the Congress took 31 and the Jana Sangh 25. (Communist 8, Mahasabha 1, Praja Socialist 1, and 14 Independents)³⁴

Organizer said...

³² Organizer, X: 28, March 28, 1957

³³ Organizer, X: 34, April 29, 1957.

³⁴ Organizer, XII: 26, Sept. 22, 1958.

This election has made it clear that the Congress is very much on the way out in Delhi. Also that it is thriving only on the divided vote of the opposition. In supporting Mirza the Jana Sangh taught Congress quite a few lessons. One of these is that, contrary to Congress propaganda, it has no animus against Muslim priestly class. And thirdly, it has reminded the Congress that it cannot overlook the place of the Jana Sangh in the political life of the Capital.³⁵

The Third Lok Sabha Elections-1962

In 1962 general elections the Jana Sangh ran more candidates both for Lok Sabha and for assembly seats throughout India than any party except the Congress itself. In no state, except Delhi, did the party contest all Lok Sabha seats but it did contest a majority of the seats in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab and half the seats in Rajasthan. No Lok Sabha seats were contested in either Orissa or Assam. The Jana Sangh, as usual, both made a statement that no electoral alliances would be contracted with other political parties, and went about attempting to make local adjustment with several parties. Talks were held with the other Hindu parties—Ram Rajya Parishad, Hindu Maha Sabha and also with the Swatantra Party. The results were few.

Results

The Jana Sangh was delighted with the results of the 1962 elections. This does not mean that there were not some considerable disappointments in certain states and in many key contests. The party however did increase its membership in the Lok Sabha to 14 from the four elected in 1957 and the seven sitting just before the elections. In state assemblies Jana Sangh now filled 116 seats as compared with but 46 elected in 1957. The increase in popular vote was modest: from 5.9% to 6.44% in the Lok Sabha and 4.03% to 6.07% in the assemblies. The party made a gain in the percentage of the poll received in assembly voting in each state contested, except West Bengal, and also in Lok Sabha voting the poll increased except in Maharashtra, West Bengal, Punjab and Rajasthan.

In the Lok Sabha the major disappointment came when all sitting members were eliminated from the house, the contesting six being defeated in the elections. On the other hand the Jana Sangh achieved the status of “official opposition” i.e., the largest opposition party having at least ten percent of the seats in both Uttar Pradesh and

³⁵ Ibid.

Madhya Pradesh. For the first time the party entered the assembly in Bihar; and for the first time it contested seats in Kerala. The seats gained in 1957 in Maharashtra as a result of the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti alliance were lost in 1962.

Uttar Pradesh continued to be the key state for the Jana Sangh. The Lok Sabha membership increased from two to seven and the assembly strength from 17 to 49. Vajpayee contested two Lok Sabha seats. He was defeated in Balrampur, U.P., the seat from which he was elected in 1957 by less than one percent of the total vote, by Subhadra Joshi of the Congress. He was also defeated in the Lucknow seat. The reason for this was that both he and Balraj Madhok, who was also defeated, spent excessive time campaigning for the party outside their respective constituencies. Raghuvira (party president) was also defeated in Benaras. In all, the Jana Sangh contested 74 of the 86 Lok Sabha seats, won seven and lost 33 deposits while polling 17.57% of the vote.

Madhya Pradesh also saw produced a Jana Sangh official opposition in the assembly and sent three Jana Sanghis to the Lok Sabha. In this state, the Jana Sangh received a higher percentage of the vote, 17.86%, than in any other state. The party contested 28 of the 36 Lok Sabha seats, winning three and losing 13 deposits. In another prominent contest a Jana Sanghi, Laxminarayan Pandey, defeated Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kailash Nath Katju, by a small margin. In the previous election the fortunes had been in the reverse.

Rajasthan saw considerable gains by the Jana Sangh in the election for the assembly; the number of seats won increased from 6 to 15, as compared to 1957 and the percentage of the vote rose from 5.42% to 9.15%. The party also won a Lok Sabha seat, although its share of the poll for the Lok Sabha decreased as four of the eleven candidates lost their deposits while none of the seven contesting in 1957 had done so. The southeastern reaches of the state were the strongest areas of the party.

In the Punjab, the Jana Sangh won three Lok Sabha seats where none had been won before and the percentage of votes received was more than 15%; in the assembly, the number of seats dropped from nine to eight while the percentage of votes rose but moderately from 8.6% to 9.7%. The party was badly split after the division of Punjab and Haryana, and was brought together by the personal efforts of Balraj Madhok.

In Delhi, the Jana Sangh sharply increased its share of the Lok Sabha vote from 1/5 to 1/3 and lost the only seat it had before the election. There is no assembly in Delhi, but elections to the Delhi municipal corporation were held simultaneously with the

Lok Sabha polling. Here too, the Jana Sangh increased its share of the vote from 26.36% in 1958 to 30.97% and saw the number of seats held drop from 25 to 8. While the results in terms of seats won were more than disappointing to the Jana Sangh, the expansion of support for the party to new levels and in all areas of the Union Territory were taken as a source of encouragement.

In Bihar, the Jana Sangh had shown almost no progress at all between the 1952 and 1957 elections. The RSS base was comparatively weak, in comparison with other states of the Hindi-belt. Much of the southern part of the state was populated by tribals, many of them Christians, with whom the Jana Sangh was unable to make much progress. The hopes of merger with the Janata Party were dashed, because it merged with Swatantra soon after the latter was launched.

Table: 5, Electoral Performance of the BJS, 1962 Indian Parliamentary Elections

Sr. No.	State/U.T.	Seats			Vote Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	Himachal Pradesh	4	2	-	4.49
2	Punjab	22	17	3	15.18
3	Delhi	5	5	-	32.66
4	Uttar Pradesh	86	74	7	17.57
5	Madhya Pradesh	36	28	3	17.87
6	Bihar	53	13	-	2.34
7	Odisha	20	-	-	-
8	West Bengal	36	4	-	1.05

9	Assam	12	-	-	-
10	Manipur	2	-	-	-
11	Tripura	2	-	-	-
12	Rajasthan	22	11	1	9.28
13	Gujarat	22	5		1.44
14	Maharashtra	44	17		4.4
15	Mysore	26	7	-	2.68
16	Andhra Pradesh	43	8	-	1.17
16	Kerala	18	4	-	0.68
17	Madras	41	1	-	0.04
	All India	494	196	14	6.44

Table: 6, Electoral Performance of BJS, 1962 State Assemblies Elections

Sr. No.	States	Seats	Contested	Won	Lost Deposits	Votes Polled (%)
1	Andhra Pradesh	301	70	0	70	1.04
2	Assam	105	4	0	4	0.45
3	Bihar	318	75	3	61	2.77
4	Gujarat	154	26	0	23	17.47
5	Kerala	126	3	0	3	0.66

6	Madhya Pradesh	288	195	41	91	16.66
7	Madras	206	4	0	4	0.08
8	Maharashtra	264	127	0	100	5.00
9	Mysore	208	63	0	56	2.29
10	Orissa	140	-	-	-	-
11	Punjab	154	80	8	47	9.72
12	Rajasthan	176	94	15	55	9.17
13	Uttar Pradesh	430	377	49	192	16.46
14	West Bengal	252	25	0	24	0.45

Union Territories

1	Delhi	-	-	-	-	-
2	Himachal Pradesh	-	-	-	-	-
3	Manipur	-	-	-	-	-
4	Tripura	-	-	-	-	-
	All India	3122	1143	116	730	6.07

(Total includes Kerala mid-term assembly election of 1960)

Sources: Election Commission of India, Report on the Third General Elections in India, 1962, Vol. II, New Delhi, n.d.

Seminar 94, June 1967.

The gains of the Jana Sangh were modest. The party won three seats in the assembly; of 75 seats contested, 61 candidates lost their deposits. The percentage of the vote received by the Jana Sangh more than doubled, but it was still a tiny 2.77%. The party also contested 13 of the 53 Lok Sabha seats, lost 10 deposits and polled 2.3% of the vote. While the record was not terrific it was a beginning.

In 1957, the Jana Sangh won two Lok Sabha seats and four assembly seats in Maharashtra. In 1962, the party increased its share of the vote 2 1/2 times and won no seats either in the assembly or in parliament. The increase in vote is deceptive for it was attained only by increasing the number of candidates from 18 to 127 for the assembly and 100 of them lost their deposits. The situation is not difficult to explain.

The seats in 1957 had been won on the strength of Jana Sangh participation in the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti. The Jana Sangh withdrew early from the Samiti and in any case, the *raison d'être* of the Samiti disappeared when the object of the alliance, a separate Maharashtra state, was attained on April 1, 1960. Having conceded a popular demand, the Congress both brought increased popularity to itself and fragmented the opposition alliance. The Congress which in 1957 had hardly won a majority of the seats in the areas that were to become Maharashtra swept all before it in 1962 and achieved in Maharashtra the largest victory in India for the ruling party. The Jana Sangh was simply swept aside. The party also continued to pay the penalty in Maharashtra for a large Brahmin membership and for its association with the RSS—"the murders of Gandhi" slogan was still a burden around Jana Sangh necks. In the South Indian states the Jana Sangh had not been very successful. In the state of Tamil Nadu (Madras) the Jana Sangh tends to be identified with a Hindu chauvinism and North India Brahmins. The Jana Sangh lacks the resources, leadership and mass media communication in the state.³⁶ Another factor acting against the Jana Sangh in Madras was the emergence of the Swatantra Party and its respected leader "Rajaji", who enjoys a much respected place in Madras politics.

In Andhra Pradesh, the Congress was very strongly well-established and had been able to soak up the Socialist party and defectors from the Congress party who have returned to its folds and hence there seems to be no room for the Jana Sangh in Andhra politics.³⁷ In Kerala, the Jana Sangh made bold to enter the election contest only in 1962, by contesting 4 parliamentary seats, and 3 legislative assembly seats in the mid-term poll. But the party was totally unsuccessful. The failure of the Jana Sangh was a very interesting phenomenon in the state. Since the Communist Party was powerful in the state, the rightist elements looked for a strong party to represent their interests, and the Congress party has been able to fulfill this need. And hence, the chances for the Jana Sangh being established in the state were not very great.³⁸ In Mysore state, caste worked against Jana Sangh expansion. Though the trading and peasant castes were numerically larger than the Brahmin, and though the Jana Sangh had been able to appeal to trading castes in other parts of India, in Mysore it had failed to do so. The

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Myron Weiner, "Party Building in a New Nation: The Indian National Congress, (Chicago, 1967), p. 155.

³⁸ Jhangiani, *op. cit.*, pp 164-65.

reason being that the Jana Sangh had been identified with the numerically small Brahmins; and there is enmity between the Brahmans and other castes, so the latter do not support the Jana Sangh.³⁹

Appraisal

The party was generally pleased with the results, and commentators and the press were by and large impressed. Upadhaya noted that the “party decided to set up candidates in as many areas as was organizationally possible...”⁴⁰ The Jana Sangh had shown “marked progress in numbers, but was still far behind the strength necessary for the fulfillment of the historic task assigned to it.”⁴¹ The Punjab and Maharashtra units expressed the feeling that had they concentrated on fewer seats they might have done better. The official party line was that as many candidates as possible should be exposed in the belief that this would pay off in the long run, even if it was conducive to a setback in the short run.

The Indian press commented on the increase in Jana Sangh votes and representation. The Times of India said:

Their hard organizational work paid dividends, but their success surely is primarily due to the fact that they voice the political aspirations of a large section of the electorate which is becoming increasingly critical of the economic policies of the Congress... The vote received by these two parties must... be regarded principally as a vote against the Congress Party’s socialism.⁴²

The Hindu also linked the increase in Jana Sangh votes with the emergence of the Swatantra:

If any clear outline is to be traced in this contradictory, and confusing, shift of electoral opinion in the various states, it must be sought primarily in a developing contest between pragmatic socialism of the Congress . . . and the extremism of the Communists, on the one side and, on the other, the progressive liberalism of the Swatantra and Jana Sangh parties, with their emphasis on limits to the State’s incursions in the economic field and greater realism in planning.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 162-64.

⁴⁰ Organizer, 88:4, May 28, 1962.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Times of India (Delhi), March 2, 1962, p. 7.

It is significant that both the Times of India and the Hindu omitted a charge of communalism and the latter coupled the Jana Sangh with the Swatantra Party as progressive and liberal.

The Eastern Economist remarked:

It is the Jana Sangh again that promised, because of its militant and disciplined character, a far greater opposition to the Congress in the years to come. One might or might not like this particular expression of opinion of the Hindi electorate but it is undoubtedly a force of great importance which needs quickly to be evaluated.⁴³

In Uttar Pradesh, it was seen that the Jana Sangh had increased its rural vote, but in the Punjab, it still relied on the urban vote. The Hindu parties opposed each other again in many contests, but the Jana Sangh succeeded to a greater extent than its rivals. To sum up, the effects of the 1962 election were:

First the Jana Sangh made no considerable development outside the Hindi-belt. All of its parliamentary and assembly seats were won in the states of north India. Outside this area approximately 90% of the Jana Sangh candidates lost their security deposits when they failed to poll one-sixth of the vote in their constituencies. Secondly, a study of the assembly constituencies in Uttar Pradesh shows that the Jana Sangh increased its share of the votes in rural areas, though both in rural and urban areas the share increased. Many observers had considered the Jana Sangh a party of the urban Middle-class Hindu. In Uttar Pradesh this seems to be changing, although in Punjab the party remains restrained to the cities and dependent upon the votes of the urbanized Hindu population rather than the rural Sikhs. Thirdly, another theory held that the Jana Sangh would poll best in areas where the number of Muslims was substantial. A study of the districts in Uttar Pradesh shows that there is no obvious correlation between the percentage of Muslims and the percentage of votes received by the Jana Sangh.⁴⁴

The emergence of the Swatantra Party brought a competitor to the Jana Sangh in its role as a conservative party as distinct from the role it plays as a Hindu party. The parties contested mainly in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat. The future alliance of the parties was a question that was very much in the minds of the observers of the Indian political scene. The 1962 election brought a much stronger Jana Sangh

⁴³ Eastern Economist, March 2, 1962, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Craig Baxter, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

prepared to play the role of official opposition in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh and ready to make its voice heard more frequently in the Lok Sabha.

The Fourth Lok Sabha Election-1967

For Legislative Assembly elections, the Jana Sangh contested almost all the seats in U.P. and Delhi. In Haryana the party contested 48 of 81 seats and 30 out of 60 in Himachal Pradesh. In Bihar 265 candidates were set up for 318 seats. In Maharashtra 165 of 270 seats were contested. In all other states the number was less than 50%. In Tripura, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Gujarat and Orissa candidates were selected in only a few constituencies.

Out of 520 Lok Sabha seats, the Jana Sangh contested 249. All the seats from U.P., M.P., Haryana, Punjab, Bihar and Himachal Pradesh were contested except where independents were supported or adjustments were made with other parties. In an interview with Madhok it was learned that the Jana Sangh was expecting victories in U.P., M.P., Rajasthan and Haryana.⁴⁵ The symbol of the party was broadly displayed. Widespread dissatisfaction with the Congress helped the Jana Sangh campaign.

Anti-Congress propaganda was used by all opposition parties to a substantial extent. The economic situation was exploited by all parties as being a remarkable failure of the Congress rule. With the Chinese invasion in 1962, and the war with Pakistan in 1965, national feeling could also be exploited. Even though the people were unhappy with the Congress, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya said,

...it is considered necessary and desirable that instead of basing our strategy on a negative approach to the Congress we would strive to present a positive programme and build an alternative. We therefore decided to keep away from the joint fronts forged with all sorts of combinations by other opposition parties. Instead we decided to contest the elections on our own ticket and programme. The Pratinidhi Sabha however permitted adjustments with national democratic elements.⁴⁶

Such adjustments were made with the Swatantra Party in Gujarat, Odisha, Rajasthan and Haryana. Attempts were made in Bihar and U.P., but they failed. The Swatantra leaders did not want to ally with the Jana Sangh for fear of losing communist support in Madras and Andhra.

⁴⁵ Indian Express, June 9, 1967.

⁴⁶ Organizer, XX: 36, April 3, 1967.

There was considerable debate in the Jana Sangh Pratinidhi Sabha about the party participating in post-election coalition governments. The General Council did approve of such a move, but there were arguments on both sides of the question. The strongest arguments put forth in favor of joining coalitions were that the people's choice ought to be respected and if they had given no clear mandate to one party, coalition government would be the result. When members were stunned about working with the Communists, a reasonable counter-comment was that the ministry could be better controlled by participating inside it.⁴⁷

Results

The results of the elections were broadly much-admired by all opposition parties. Congress had maintained its majority at the Center, but lost its majority in half the states in the Union. For the Jana Sangh, the results showed a general increasing trend in all the states and for Lok Sabha seats too. In the Lok Sabha, the Jana Sangh won a total of 35 seats; compared to 14 in the 1962 elections. They were won in the same states as in 1962 - M.P., Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and U.P. with one seat from Bihar. The popular vote polled for the Jana Sangh in the Lok Sabha seats rose from 6.44% to 9.37%.

In the contest for the Legislative Assembly seats, the Jana Sangh was successful in the North Indian "Hindi-belt" states, and made small progress in some other states as well. In U.P. the Jana Sangh was returned as the official opposition party with 97 seats out of an Assembly of 425 and was soon to participate in the United Front Ministry which followed when the Congress ministry fell on April 3, 1967.⁴⁸ A phenomenal success for the party was the capture of Kanpur city. In U.P. the party had nominated a number of Muslims too.

Table: 7, Electoral Performance of the BJS, 1967 Indian Parliamentary Elections

Sr. No.	State/U.T.	Seats			Vote Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	Jammu & Kashmir	6	3	-	20.35

⁴⁷ Organizer, April 30, 1967.

⁴⁸ Paul Wallace, Asian Survey, p. 10.

2	Himachal Pradesh	6	3	-	19.06
3	Punjab	13	8	1	12.49
4	Chandigarh	1	1	1	48.7
5	Haryana	9	7	1	19.85
6	Delhi	7	7	6	46.72
7	Uttar Pradesh	85	77	12	22.18
8	Madhya Pradesh	37	32	10	29.56
9	Bihar	53	48	1	11.05
10	Odisha	20	2	-	0.55
11	West Bengal	40	7	-	1.39
12	Assam	14	3	-	5.48
13	Nagaland	1	-	-	-
14	Manipur	2	-	-	-
15	Tripura	2	-	-	-
16	Rajasthan	23	7	3	10.27
17	Gujarat	24	-	-	-
18	Dadra & Nagar	1	1	-	4.09
19	Maharashtra	45	26	-	7.36
20	Goa, Daman&Diu	2	-	-	-
21	Mysore	27	5	-	2.25
22	Andhra Pradesh	41	4	-	1
23	Kerala	19	4	-	1.39
24	Madras	39	4		0.22

25	Pondicherry	1	-	-	-
26	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	1	-	-	-
	All India	520	249	35	9.31

Table: 8, Electoral Performance of BJS, 1967 State Assemblies Elections

Sr. No.	States	Seats	Contested	Won	Votes Polled (%)
1	Andhra Pradesh	287	80	3	2.26
2	Assam	126	20	0	1.86
3	Bihar	318	267	27	10.69
4	Gujarat	168	17	1	2.06
5	Haryana	81	47	12	1.35
6	Kerala	133	94	0	0.9
7	Madhya Pradesh	296	265	77	28.28
8	Madras	234	24	7	0.14
9	Maharashtra	270	165	4	8.34
10	Mysore	216	39	4	2.71
11	Odisha	140	19	0	0.54
12	Punjab	104	49	9	9.36
13	Rajasthan	184	63	22	11.61
14	Uttar Pradesh	425	400	97	21.53
15	West Bengal	280	58	1	0.9

Union Territories

1	Chandigarh	-	-	-	-
2	Delhi	-	-	-	-
3	Himachal Pradesh	60	33	7	*
4	Manipur	30	-	-	-
5	Tripura	30	5	-	**
6	Pondicherry	No Election			
7	Goa, Daman & Diu	30	-	-	-
	All India	3477	1575	267	8.74

**Sources: R. Chandidas, Leon Clark, Richard Fontera, Ward Morehouse (Eds.)
India Votes: A Source Book on Indian Elections, (New York, 1968)
Seminar 94, June 1967. Indian Express, Feb. 23, 1967.**

In Bihar the party won 26 seats and had members in the Bihar state Cabinet. This was a significant achievement because in 1962, it had claimed only 3 seats, and none in 1957. In the United Front Ministry there were Jana Sangh members in the state cabinet. Soon there would be Jana Sanghis in the M.P. cabinet and in the Punjab too, after the mid-term poll in February 1969.¹⁷⁹ In Rajasthan the party did not fare as well as was expected though it polled seven seats more than in 1962. This was partly due to the presence of the Swatantra and its support by the Jaipur Royal family.

In Delhi, the Jana Sangh won spectacular success. It won by 7 Lok Sabha seats; 33 of the 56 Metropolitan Council and 52 of the 100 Municipal Corporation. The Jana Sangh became the ruling party in the capital. Its success there is attributed to 2 important factors: its cadre of RSS workers and the people's dissatisfaction with Congress rule, and the exploitation by Jana Sangh propaganda of this disenchantment. Of those on the Metropolitan Council, one was a Muslim - Anwar Ali Delhvi.

Besides its success in the Hindi-belt, the Jana Sangh won seats in some other non-Hindi states as well—three in Andhra, one in Gujarat, four in Maharashtra, three in Mysore and one in West Bengal.

Appraisal

The election results were a shock to the Congress Party; the electorate had rejected the party, but its choice of another one party was not clear, primarily because there is no one all-India party of the competence of the Congress. Coalition governments had come into power in Punjab, Bihar, West Bengal, Orrisa and Kerala. The stability of

these coalitions was very much in doubt and it was anticipated that there would be substantial efforts to cause defections and collapse ministries. The Jana Sangh participated in coalitions in Bihar, U.P. and Punjab, In Haryana it was decided to support the government, not to accept any Cabinet positions. In M.P., the Jana Sangh would soon participate in the coalition government that was formed after the Congress ministry fell in July. The situation was enormously fluid and mid-term polls were predicted for many states.

The election results were a victory for the Jana Sangh, and showed the right wing trend of the electorate. The party had enhanced its position in all the states and Union Territories where it participated in the election. The results also showed an expansion base of Jana Sangh support by the seats outside the Hindi heartland. Leaders were beginning to speak of modified policies. Yet the RSS base of the party was strong. As the Indian political experiment entered a new phase portents of trouble ahead and signs of an increasingly effective participatory democracy appear in kaleidoscopic confusion giving an atmosphere of confusion and excitement to the changing Indian scene.”⁴⁹

The Fifth Lok Sabha Elections-1971

Since the 1967 elections there had been various changes on the Indian political scene. After the better performance in the 1967 elections to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, the BJS reverted from its earlier policy and associated itself closely with the Akali Dal and the Communists in several states. However, the party’s alliance with the communists aroused considerable opposition within the party “Golwalkar himself advised the Jana Sangh leadership against working with communists. At the party’s general council meeting at Delhi in April 1967 the leadership was sharply questioned... on the issue”.⁵⁰

During this debate on Jana Sangh’s participation in ministries which incorporated Communists, Atal Bihari Vajpayee (Leader of the parliamentary Wing) emerged as the spokesman of the ‘left’ view point in the party. He preferred to continue the party’s support with the communists and ‘left’ parties and wished-for the party to

⁴⁹ Norman D. Palmer, “India's 4th General Election,” Asian Survey, VIII: 5, May, 1967, p.

⁵⁰ W.K. Andersen and S. D. Damle, “The Brotherhood in India: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism,” Vistaar Publication, New Delhi, 1987, p. 178.

make a more dynamic effort to mobilize the under privileged and dissatisfied voters”.⁵¹ Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, while skeptical of the Communists, supported Vajpayee. In late 1967, Sunder Singh Bhandari (a former RSS pracharak) was elected to succeed Madhok; nonetheless, Upadhyaya himself assumed the position of party president. This reorientation of the party did not go unchallenged. Madhok ferociously resisted the party’s leftward twist. Madhok opposed any form of support with the communists and socialists. During the central government employee’s strike in 1968, he advised the party leaders to resist it, while the Jana Sangh general council had earlier decided to support the strike. There were some other issues also which annoyed Madhok and the conservatives in the party.

Due to lack of common set of policy objectives and ineffective system of mediation, the united front ministries, joined by the BJS, failed. Mid-term state assembly elections were held (Bihar, Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal) in which the BJS leadership, because of its experience with the united front, opted to go alone in most places. However, the party performed “less well in the mid-term elections than in 1967. Some senior figures in the Jana Sangh believed that the party could have done better had it worked out electoral agreements”.⁵² With Deen Dayal Upadhyaya’s mysterious death on 11 February 1968, Atal Bihari Vajpayee became party president. He formulated policy and favored to avoid making alliances with other parties unless there had been a prior agreement on principles. Unofficial talks were held in March and April 1969, between leaders of the BJS, the Bharatiya Kranti Dal (BKD), Swatantra and the Praja Socialist Party (PSP). Vajpayee insisted that any merger or alliance must be followed by a common accepted set of principles.

After the party’s annual session at Bombay in 1969, the leaders of the BJS, Swatantra and BKD resumed their meeting. However, the same could not be materialized and the BKD and Swatantra continued their talks without the BJS. “While Vajpayee and most of the working committee members were moving away from participation in any “grand alliances”, Madhok and his supporters argued for a merger with other conservative parties”.⁵³ The party leadership, however, refused to attention his advice. Madhok compared his differences inside the BJS with the differences between Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel. He branded himself with the “nationalist”,

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 179.

⁵² Ibid. p. 180.

⁵³ Ibid. p. 181.

“democratic” and “conservative” Patel and his opponents to Nehru. The Jana Sangh parliamentary board met in Delhi in September, 1969, censured Madhok for his comments.

In spite of pressures from the right, Vajpayee remained unwilling on the issue of grand alliance. However, the circumstances had changed when, on 27 December, 1970, leaders of the Congress (O), Swatantra and the BJS met in Delhi to consider an electoral alliance. About a week later the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP) also joined the meeting. The state units of these parties were instructed to set up committees to distribute the seats among the candidates of these four parties. The main point of agreement among these four parties was the issue of their resistance to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Nonetheless, there were grass roots apprehensions to fight the election against a prime minister, whose catchphrase was “garibi hatao”. The catchphrase had the power of cross-cutting different socio-economic cleavages and benefited the Congress.

Results

In this parliamentary election, the BJS contested 157 seats out of 518 seats and managed to get 7.35% vote share. The party in this election had contested 92 seats less than the preceding election and received a negative swing of 1.96 percent.

The party had contested all the seats in the union territories of Chandigarh and Delhi. The party had also contested 37 seats (out of 85) in Uttar Pradesh, 28 seats each in Madhya Pradesh (out of 37) and Bihar (out of 53), 13 seats (out of 45) in Maharashtra, 7 seats (out of 23) in Rajasthan, 5 seats each in Punjab (out of 13), Gujarat (out of 24) and Andhra Pradesh (out of 41), 4 seats (out of 40) in West Bengal, 3 seats each in Jammu & Kashmir (out of 6), Haryana (out of 9) and Kerala (out of 19), 2 seats each in Himachal Pradesh (out of 4) and Mysore (out of 27) and one seat each in Orissa (out of 20), Assam (out of 14), Tripura (out of 2) and Tamil Nadu (out of 39).

In this election, the party had polled 7.35 percent of the national popular vote. There were seven states (Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar) and two union territories (Chandigarh and Delhi) where the party has polled above the national percent vote. The party had much better support base in terms of vote percent in the states and union territories of Madhya Pradesh (33.56%), Delhi (29.57%) and Chandigarh (23.31%). In other states,

the party had polled more than 10 percent in Rajasthan (12.38%), Uttar Pradesh (12.23%), Jammu & Kashmir (12.23%), Bihar (12.1%), Haryana (11.19%) and Himachal Pradesh (10.64%).

In this mid-term poll, the party had contested 157 seats and won only 22 seats with 7.35 percent vote. The party experienced a loss of 13 seats than the preceding election. Out of the 22 seats won by the party, 11 were from Madhya Pradesh, 4 each from Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, 2 from Bihar and one from Haryana.

In Madhya Pradesh the BJS won 11 seats and polled one-third of the vote with the help of former rulers of Gwalior.⁵⁴ The party managed to win 4 seats from Rajasthan, one more than in 1967.

Table: 9, Electoral Performance of the BJS, 1971 Indian Parliamentary Elections

Sr. No.	State/U.T.	Seats			Vote Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	Jammu & Kashmir	6	3	-	12.23
2	Himachal Pradesh	4	2	-	10.64
3	Punjab	13	5	-	4.45
4	Chandigarh	1	1	-	23.31
5	Haryana	9	3	1	11.19
6	Delhi	7	7	-	29.57
7	Uttar Pradesh	85	37	4	12.23
8	Madhya Pradesh	37	28	11	33.56
9	Bihar	53	28	2	12.1
10	Odisha	20	1	-	0.22
11	West Bengal	40	4	-	0.85

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 183.

12	Assam	14	1	-	2.46
13	Nagaland	1	-	-	-
14	Manipur	2	-	-	-
15	Tripura	2	1	-	0.49
16	Rajasthan	23	7	4	12.38
17	Gujarat	24	5	-	2.22
18	Dadra & Nagar	1	-	-	-
19	Maharashtra	45	13	-	5.23
20	Goa, Daman&Diu	2	-	-	-
21	Mysore	27	2	-	1.9
22	Andhra Pradesh	41	5	-	1.57
23	Kerala	19	3	-	1.4
24	Tamil Nandu	39	1		0.02
25	Pondicherry	1	-	-	-
26	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	1	-	-	-
	All India	518	157	22	7.35

Maharaj Kumar Brij Raj Singh and Raja Hemendra Singh, members of the Kota and Udaipur princely families respectfully, won 2 of the party's 4 seats".⁵⁵

"Jana Sangh lost very badly in Delhi and U.P., two of its major strongholds, but managed to with stand the Congress wave in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, where its percentage of votes increased. In the latter two states, however, the Jana Sangh increase was due to the support of the princes rather than to any stable social base and party organization. In these two states it is the princes who were strong, not Jana Sangh, and a change in the political loyalty of the princes would be at the expense of Jana Sangh".⁵⁶ The electoral grand alliance between the BJS, Congress (O), Swatantra and the Samyukta Socialists (SSP) proved to be a failure.

With 22 seats in the parliament, the BJS was one of the largest opposition parties. Among the opposition parties, only the Congress (O) with 10.43 percent of the popular vote out-pollled its 7.35 percent.

Table: 10, BJS Lok Sabha Seats Distribution

Year	Congress	BJS	BJS Seats from Hindi-belt
1952	364	3	3
1957	371	4	2
1962	361	14	14
1967	283	35	35

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 183

⁵⁶ Mynor Weiner, "The 1971 Elections and the Indian Party System", Asian Survey, Vol. XI, No. 12, p. 1161.

1971	352	22	22
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Source: Election Commission of India (ECI) and David Butler, Ashok Lahiri and Prannoy Roy. 1995. India Decides: Elections 1952-1995. New Delhi: Books and Things pp. 114 - 115.

Sixth Lok Sabha Elections-1977

After imposing the internal emergency in the country in June 1975, Indira Gandhi dissolved the Lok Sabha on January 8, 1977. Jayaprakash Narayan welcomed the PM's decision to hold the general election. He thought it a good opportunity for the opposition parties to fight unitedly against the Congress party. He said "I hope the opposition will rise to the occasion and come together and fight the elections unitedly as one party."

It is because the efforts of Jayaprakash Narayan that the four non-Congress and non-Communist oppositions i.e. the Jana Sangh, Congress (O), Bharatiya Lok Dal and the Socialist Party came together under the banner of Janata Party. Thus, the Janata Party was launched in New Delhi on January 23, 1977, with Morarji Desai as chairman and Mr. Charan Singh as Deputy Chairman. The Janata Party's manifesto promised to restore democracy and civil liberties, to remove all the anti-democratic laws, to promote economic development, to ensure decentralization of economic and political power etc.

Jayaprakash Narayan and other leaders of the party went round the important centers of the country encouraging people to vote for the Janata Party and put an end to the authoritarianism of Indira Gandhi. Having ascertained the fair chances for the win of Janata Party, Jagjivan Ram resigned from the government and the Congress party. He launched Congress For Democracy (CFD) on February, 1977. The leaders of Janata Party and CFD agreed to an adjustment of seats in Lok Sabha Election. Apart from this, the Janata Party also made the seat adjustment with other political parties i.e. the Communist Party of India (M), Akali Dal, Republican Party, Revolutionary Socialist Party, the Forward Block and the Peasants and Workers Party etc.

In fact nobody really expected that the Janata Party would be voted for power. The most optimistic expectation was that the party would emerge as strong opposition to the Congress party. But the election results showed that the Janata Party with its ally CFD secured 298 seats. The Congress party got only 153 seats. In this way, the Janata

Party assumed the power at the centre on March 24, 1977 and Morarji Desai became the PM.

Having captured the power at the centre, it was the duty of Janata Party to fulfill the promises made in the election manifesto. But the fact cannot be denied that the Janata Government had very limited time at its disposal and much of its time was spent in the beginning in holding the state assembly elections etc. Although inter-group rivalry surfaced within the party from the very beginning but the victory of the Janata Party in the state assembly elections further accelerated inter-group competition for electing state party leaders.

In spite of the group rivalries within the party, the Janata Party put into practice some of its election promises. The rights and civil liberties of the people were restored. But some the black laws still remained in the statute book. Moreover, the Janata Government had restored freedom of expression to a large extent but its action against the editors of various news-papers showed that the Janata Party leaders also shared some of the dictatorial traits of Indira Gandhi.

The Janata Party had carried on propaganda of the 42nd Amendment during the 1977 Lok Sabha election. But after coming to power, the party, instead of scraping the whole Amendment Act, chose to deal with different provisions of the Act on by one.

Table: 11, Electoral Performance of the Janata Party/BLD, 1977 Parliamentary Election

Sr. No.	STATE/UT	Seats			Votes Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	42	37	1	32.33
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2	-	-	-
3	ASSAM	14	11	3	35.78
4	BIHAR	54	52	52	64.98
5	GOA DAMAN & DIU	2	2	-	14.7
6	GUJARAT	26	26	16	49.54
7	HARYANA	10	10	10	70.35
8	HIMACHAL PRADESH	4	4	4	57.19

9	JAMMU & KASHMIR	6	2	-	8.23
10	KARNATAKA	28	28	2	39.89
11	KERALA	20	3	-	7.2
12	MADHYA PRADESH	40	39	37	57.9
13	MAHARASHTRA	48	31	19	31.39
14	MANIPUR	2	2	-	8.58
15	MEGHALAYA	2	-	-	-
16	MIZORAM	1	-	-	-
17	NAGALAND	1	-	-	-
18	ORISSA	21	20	15	51.77
19	PUNJAB	13	3	3	12.5
20	RAJASTHAN	25	25	24	65.21
21	SIKKIM	1	-	-	-
22	TAMIL NADU	39	-	-	-
23	TRIPURA	2	1	1	17.83
24	UTTAR PRADESH	85	85	85	68.07
25	WEST BENGAL	42	15	15	21.46
26	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	1	-	-	-
27	CHANDIGARH	1	1	1	66.13
28	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	1	1		31.82
29	NCT DELHI	7	7	7	68.15
30	LAKSHADWEEP	1	-	-	-
31	PONDICHERRY	1	-	-	-
	TOTAL	542	405	295	41.32

The fiscal policies of the Janata Government were inflation-oriented. The burden of extra taxes fell on the poorer sections of the urban and rural population. The rise in indirect taxation became a part of cost of production and of the prices of goods which are consumed by the large number of the people. The policy badly affected the standard of living of the people belonging to low and middle income groups.

It is well known fact that the Janata Party was a hotchpotch combination of contrasting groups and parties subscribing to opposing ideologies and led by men of incompatible temperaments. Due to this, after the declaration of 1977 Lok Sabha elections, the Janata Party leaders were unable to agree among themselves about who should head the government. This continued to be a bone contention throughout the Janata rule. It ultimately caused a split in the party.

Within the Janata Party there were advocates of two different kinds of organizations. The Jana Sangh group wished to have an organization the membership of which would be restricted to ideologically committed people. The other group in the party wanted to follow the Congress model in building up the Janata Party. The view of the latter group prevailed.

This inter-group struggle led to the resignation of Charan Singh from the cabinet on June 30, 1978. However, Charan Singh's exit from the cabinet proved damaging to his group. The group rivalry widened day by day in spite of Charan Singh's reentry in the cabinet.

The failures of the Janata Government were not the main factors for its collapse. The main cause of the breakup of Janata Party and the collapse of the Janata Government was the keen desire of some of its leaders for the post of Prime Minister and mindless strengthening of group policies to serve their individual interest.

Charan Singh carefully nursed the ambition of becoming the Prime Minister. He master-minded the defection of himself and his followers at a time when the Janata Government was facing a resolution of non-confidence in the Lok Sabha. He accepted the support of the Congress led by Indira Gandhi and on the basis of this support, he managed to satisfy the President that he enjoyed a larger following in the Lok Sabha than Morarji Desai.

It can be concluded that the Janata Party had come to power with the pledge that it would oppose dictatorship by all means. But after defecting from the Janata Party, Charan Singh and his supporters accepted the support of the Congress (I). Like Congress party leaders they were also not respectful of mandate of people. Had the defectors been respectful of people's mandate, they would have explained to the electorate the reasons for their defection. But this did not happen. The electorate had voted for them as members of a political party. But without seeking the opinion of the electorate they had defected from the party for which they voted. This was betrayal of the trust reposed by the people in their representatives.

The Eighth Lok Sabha Elections-1984

The Bharatiya Janata Party participated in electoral politics as a new party in May 1980. But it suffered the electoral setback during the formative years. The deep ideological crisis and the dilemma over the inheritance of the historical legacy of the BJS, kept the BJP worried adversely affecting its electoral performance. The “first past-the-post” system of elections became helpful to the Congress because of the divisions in the non-Congress votes. Towards the latter part of 1980s, the BJP restructured its ideological commitments with the new leadership of L.K. Advani. The party clearly inherited the legacy of the BJS and openly played the ‘Hindu Card’. This change stand paid good political dividends to the party in subsequent elections.

The Eighth Lok Sabha election provided the opportunity for the BJP to contest the election at the national level. It put up as many as 224 candidates in the different Lok Sabha constituencies of the country. It fielded large number of candidates, in those states where it had led the government or shared the power during the Janata phase. As such the party contested all the 40 seats in Madhya Pradesh, 24 seats in Rajasthan, 3 out of 4 seats in Himachal Pradesh, 5 out of 7 seats in Delhi, 32 out of 54 seats in Bihar, 50 out of 85 seats in Uttar Pradesh, 11 out of 26 seats in Gujarat, and 20 out of 48 seats in Maharashtra.

In its electoral manifesto, the BJP assured the voters to build up a new polity in India based on value based politics, democracy, positive secularism and Gandhian economy. The party expressed its commitment for fair elections; fighting against corruption; providing justice to the people: villagers, townsman, pensioners, woman, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes... enriching the culture... building up national economy on the basis of agriculture, industry, finance, full employment and energy; and enhancing national security through foreign policy measures and defence mechanism. The BJP promised to defend the unity and integrity of India.

The party entered into selective seat adjustments with non-Congress parties. It shared seats adjustment with Lok Dal in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi. It made electoral adjustment with Telugu Desham in Andhra Pradesh, with Janata Party in Gujarat, and with Congress (S), Janata Party, Peasants and Workers Party in Maharashtra. During the electoral campaign the party emphasized the urban

anarchy and the rural negligence, which had degraded the quality of life, the erosion of moral authority and a total decline of the ruling party in the wake of the shocking assassination of late Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi., break down of law and order, and alarming poverty, aggravated by increase prices. The BJP called for a new polity, a new government and a new leadership which could be clean, effective and representative of the rich diversity of India.

But a sympathy wave swept the country in the wake of the assassination of Prime Minister Gandhi. Her son Rajiv Gandhi led the Congress (I) to a deciding victory in this election capturing a record number of 415 seats out of 518. The Congress party secured 48.1% votes polled. The entire opposition suffered the greatest ever setback with the division of their votes. However, the BJP could secure 7.74% of votes but seized only 2 seats. In reality the defective electoral system had caused the BJP to suffer a severe inconsistency so far as the gap between the percentage of votes it had polled and seats it had won, was concerned. In the 1984 election the BJP stood next to Congress by securing 7.74% of popular votes. With this percentage the party should have secured nearly 40 seats but it could get only 2 seats, i.e. less than 0.2%.

The BJP's performance in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and Gujarat was decent. The party secured more than 18% of votes in these states and only few candidates lost their security deposits, showing a significant support base of the party in many constituencies. In Maharashtra it polled 10.07% of votes and 5 candidates out of 20 lost their security deposits. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar the party suffered its worst setback. It secured 6.42% votes in U.P. and 6.92% votes in Bihar. In Haryana also the party made a miserable performance securing 7.54% of votes and loosing security deposits in 4 seats out of 6 seats contested. The BJP's poor performance in its strongholds was mainly due to the halfhearted cooperation from the RSS cadres. Nonetheless, the prominent leaders of the party lost the election still it could emerge next to the congress party. Its success in mustering popular support by polling 29.99% of votes in Madhya Pradesh, 23.69% in Rajasthan, 23.27% in Himachal Pradesh, 18.85% in Delhi, 18.64% in Gujarat (see Table 13) encouraged the leadership to a great extent for fighting the subsequent election.

The most horrible performance of the party in 1984 Lok Sabha election frustrated its workers. The miserable results led the party to change its leadership and venture for retrospection and reconstruction of the party.

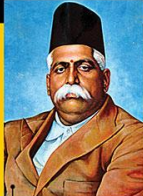
Table: 13, Electoral Performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party, 1984 Lok Sabha Elections

Sr. No.	STATE/UT	Seats			Votes Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	42	2	1	2.22
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2	-	-	-
3	BIHAR	54	32	-	6.92
4	GOA DAMAN & DIU	2	2	-	3.04
5	GUJARAT	26	11	1	18.64
6	HARYANA	10	6	-	7.54
7	HIMACHAL PRADESH	4	3	-	23.27
8	JAMMU & KASHMIR	6	1	-	1.71
9	KARNATAKA	28	6	-	4.68
10	KERALA	20	5	-	1.75
11	MADHYA PRADESH	40	40	-	29.99
12	MAHARASHTRA	48	20	-	10.07
13	MANIPUR	2	1	-	6.96
14	MEGHALAYA	2	-	-	-
15	NAGALAND	1	-	-	-
16	ORISSA	21	4	-	1.18
17	RAJASTHAN	25	24	-	23.69
18	SIKKIM	1	-	-	-
19	TAMIL NADU	39	1	-	0.07
20	TRIPURA	2	1	-	0.77
21	UTTAR PRADESH	85	50	-	6.42
22	WEST BENGAL	42	9	-	0.4

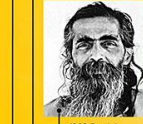
23	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	1	-	-	-
24	CHANDIGARH	1	1	-	5.6
25	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	1	-	-	-
26	DELHI	7	5	-	18.85
27	LAKSHADWEEP	1	-	-	-
28	PONDICHERRY	1	-	-	-
	TOTAL	514	224	-	7.74

Source: STATISTICAL REPORT ON GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1984 TO THE EIGHT LOK SABHA, VOLUME I Election Commission of India

A PARTY FOR ALL INDIA, A PARTY OF ALL INDIANS



September 27, 1925: Inspired by the public service and patriotism of among others, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Lokmanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Keshav Balaram Hegde (Doctor) founded the Sangh. The name 'Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh' was formally announced in April 1926.



1934: Mahatma Gandhi visited the RSS winter camp in Wardha in December 1934.



1947: Organised 3,000 relief camps for Partition refugees and victims of violence in Punjab and Bengal. RSS stands by Mahatma Gandhi's view that: "There is in Hinduism room enough for Jesus, as there is for Mohammed, Zoroaster and Moses"

October 17, 1947: Gunaj flew to Srinagar to persuade the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir to accede to the Dominion of India. On October 31, Gunaj briefed Sardar Patel that the Maharaja was ready.

January 30, 1948: Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated. RSS expressed shock and grief.

February 1, 1948: Gunaj and 7,000 RSS workers were arrested by the Congress government. On February 5, the RSS was banned.

1940: Period of consolidation begins under guidance of second RSS chief, Mahatma Swami Vivekananda (Shri Guru). Sangh social service network starts to expand across India.

NATIONALIST MOVEMENT TAKES SHAPE AS RASHTRIYA SWAYAMSEVAK SANGH (RSS)...



July 12, 1949: As all charges were proven to be baseless and untrue, the Congress government unconditionally lifted the ban on the RSS and released Gunaj from custody.

BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY (BJP)

BJP's rising trend continues...

Eleventh Lok Sabha (1996)
BJP was CLEAR WINNER
161 Seats

Twelfth Lok Sabha (1998)
BJP 102 Seats

Thirteenth Lok Sabha (1999)
BJP 102 Seats

Fourteenth Lok Sabha (2004)
BJP 138 Seats

Fifteenth Lok Sabha (2009)
BJP 116 Seats

Sixteenth Lok Sabha (2014)
BJP 31 Seats

Seventeenth Lok Sabha (2019)
BJP 234 Seats



May 1996: For 13 days, India got its first taste of a prime minister from a non-Congress political tradition as Atal Bihari Vajpayee took power.

May 11 & 13, 1998: BJP-led government overruled the controversial nuclear tests and governed the nation.

October 13, 1999: Faced a grave, fresh intransigent period in a year of turmoil for the BJP and the Vajpayee.

March 19, 1998 (For 13 months): Faced a period of pain in Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the BJP for election.

July 25, 2002: BJP showed its commitment to meet and scientific temperament by releasing D.A.P.U. Abdul Kalam was elected as 11th President.

2004: BJP led short of majority, despite its success in winning Atal Bihari Vajpayee's leadership and legacy.

December 1990: Atal Bihari Vajpayee presided over the BJP's first meeting.

1984: BJP had the second largest vote share but won a mere 16 seats. Serious about introspection, the party formed a High Powered Working Group to recommend action for remedy and renewal.

Party streamlined its organisation: It adopted a "Highly Humanised" and decided to remain a "New party". It highlighted long ignored issues such as demographic change caused by illegal migration in eastern India.

September 1990: L.K. Advani was the first BJP leader to take a national tour. He visited Karnataka, Bihar, Orissa, Goa, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

1995: BJP led by Advani, (BJP) won a government in Uttar Pradesh, giving India its first Dalit prime minister.



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Fourteenth Lok Sabha (2004)
BJP 138 Seats

Fifteenth Lok Sabha (2009)
BJP 116 Seats

Sixteenth Lok Sabha (2014)
BJP 31 Seats

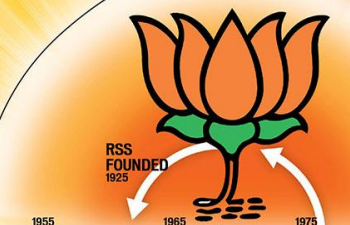
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RSS FOUNDED 1925

BJS ERA 1951-1960

BJP SINCE 1980

Bharatiya Jana Sangh

October 1951: Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) was formed by Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, a well-regarded public leader who had been part of free India's first cabinet in 1947.

First Lok Sabha (1952)
BJS (Bharatiya Jana Sangh)
3 Seats

The long journey starts...
BJS took up issues of territorial integrity in Kashmir and Kutch, and argued against the feudal landlord and caste systems.

June 23, 1953: Dr. S.P. Mukherjee was martyred for the cause of integrating Kashmir with the rest of India. He was detained for 45 days for violating Article 170, which required Indians to seek a permit to enter Kashmir. His death in prison shook the country and the Permit System was ended. A slogan of the period was "Nahi challengey ek desh mein do wihans, do pradhan aur do wihans".

Second Lok Sabha (1957)
BJS (Bharatiya Jana Sangh)
4 Seats

1957: Atal Bihari Vajpayee became MP for the first time. L.K. Advani moved to Delhi to assist him, and began a long partnership. The two sat in the same rooming, generations of BJP workers and leaders.

1962: When the Chinese invaded India, RSS-BJS took up civic and police duties at government request. Pandit Nehru invited RSS to march in 1963 Republic Day parade.

Third Lok Sabha (1962)
BJS (Bharatiya Jana Sangh)
14 Seats

1965: Sangh volunteers helped in civilian duties during the war with Pakistan.

1969: Atal Bihari Vajpayee chosen BJS president.

April 1970: Lal Krishna Advani was elected to the Rajya Sabha.

1971: The BJS election manifesto under Atal Bihari Vajpayee was titled 'War on Poverty'. The slogan was lifted and plagiarised by the Congress, which used fire branding.

Fifth Lok Sabha (1971)
BJS (Bharatiya Jana Sangh)
22 Seats

1973: Lal Krishna Advani became the BJS president.

1977: Janata Party, consisting of BJS, BLD, Cong (O), Socialists and GFD and wedded together by Jayaprakash Narayan, defeated Indira Gandhi's Congress and restored democracy in India.

Sixth Lok Sabha (1977)
Janata Party (BJS + OTHERS)
285 Seats

1977-1980: India Gandhi's Congress government imposed the Emergency, abolishing civil liberties and imposing political opponents. Tens of thousands were arrested and detained without trial. Eighty per cent of them were from the RSS/BJS.

1979-1980: The Janata Party experiment lasted within 31 months. The government fell because of internal differences and personal ambitions of coalition members.

NEW ERA BEGAN IN INDIAN POLITICS AS BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY WAS BORN...

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1995: BJP led by Advani, (BJP) won a government in Uttar Pradesh, giving India its first Dalit prime minister.

Ninth Lok Sabha (1989)
BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party)
05 Seats

1989: The B.P. and the Communist parties supported the Janata Dal government, with V.P. Singh as prime minister.

1988: The B.P. president supported the local movement in Andhra state.

1990: L.K. Advani was the first BJP leader to take a national tour. He visited Karnataka, Bihar, Orissa, Goa, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

1995: BJP led by Advani, (BJP) won a government in Uttar Pradesh, giving India its first Dalit prime minister.

Tenth Lok Sabha (1991)
BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party)
103 Seats

1991: The B.P. and the Communist parties supported the Janata Dal government, with V.P. Singh as prime minister.

1988: The B.P. president supported the local movement in Andhra state.

1990: L.K. Advani was the first BJP leader to take a national tour. He visited Karnataka, Bihar, Orissa, Goa, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

1995: BJP led by Advani, (BJP) won a government in Uttar Pradesh, giving India its first Dalit prime minister.

Source: www.bjp.org

CHAPTER 3

BJP REINVENTS ITSELF: 1989-1996

NINTH LOK SABHA ELECTION – 1989

By the time of Ninth Lok Sabha Election, BJP had already started to pursue ‘Hindutva politics’. Its support to VHP’s ‘Ramshila Pujan Programme’ as well its final endorsement to construct Shri Ram Temple at Ayodhya made the party popular in North India. Meanwhile the non-Communist opposition party formed National Front under the leadership of V.P. Singh to fight against the Congress. The parties like Janata Dal, Assam Gan Parishad, Congress (S), Telugu Desham, and DMK fought the Lok Sabha election in 1989 under the banner of National Front. They worked out an electoral alliance with the BJP in spite of their reservations about its pro Hindu posture, for avoiding any division in the non-Congress votes. However due to political reasons the National Front and BJP could not enter into a comfortable electoral alliance. Although, they could successfully worked out seat adjustments in many constituencies of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi still they fought against each other in some constituencies. While in Maharashtra the BJP shared seats with Shiv Sena, in rest of India it contested the elections independently.

In its election manifesto for 1989 Lok Sabha election, the BJP was strongly committed to the unity and integrity of India. It expressed its commitments to the uplift of the poor and downtrodden. Its promises to the electorate were: formation of a Human Rights Commission with the expansion of the Minorities Commission; free fair and regular elections; cleaning of public life on priority basis; speedy development of the agriculture and rural sector, total ban of the slaughter of the cows; formation of the smaller states for making them economically and administratively viable, and eliminate regional imbalances; introduction of the Uniform Civil Code; deletion of Article 370 of the constitution which provides special status to Jammu and Kashmir; extension of the reservation policy to the economic backward castes/classes; Fundamental Right to Work to be incorporated in the Constitutions; improvement of the quality of the life of the people; preservation and spreading of the Indian culture; and welfare of women, scheduled caste and scheduled tribes.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Manifesto of BJP, 1989

In this election the party contested total 226 Lok Sabha seats (election held to 524 seats), won 86 seats and lost the security deposits in 88 seats and managed to poll 11.4% votes. It made no secret of its Hindu character and took advantage of the Hindu fundamentalism in the wake of Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy which resulted in its sizeable ever presence in the Lok Sabha. The remarkable electoral outcome provide electrifying jubilation for the party leadership as well as cadre.

A state wise performance of the BJP reveals that it received massive support in Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi. In Gujarat it contested 12 seats and won all of them, polling more than 50% of the votes. Similarly in Rajasthan it won 13 out of 17 contested seats. In Madhya Pradesh its candidate were elected in 27 constituencies out of 33 contested. Further in Himachal Pradesh and Delhi the party won 3 seats out of 4 contested and 5 out of 4 seats contested respectively. In terms of the percentage of the votes it secured 30.5% in Gujarat, 45.3% in Himachal Pradesh, 39.7% in Madhya Pradesh, 29.6% in Rajasthan and 26.2% in Delhi. (See Table - 14)

The party received mixed responses in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra. In Maharashtra its alliance with Shiv Sena produced good results with considerable expansion of the support base in rural Maharashtra. It won 10 Lok Sabha seats out of 33 contested and captured 23.7% of the popular votes polled in the state. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar its alliance could not work properly with Janata Dal. In several constituencies of these two states both the party pitted their candidates against each other which led to a considerable division of non-Congress votes. In Uttar Pradesh, it contested 31 seats, in alliance with Janata Dal in 20 seats, but won only 8, forfeiting security deposits in 13 constituencies. In Bihar, the party performed marginally better by winning 9 out of 25 seats contested. It shared 7.6% votes in Uttar Pradesh and 13% votes in Bihar. Thus it could not get any spectacular results in these two populous states of North India.

Its performance in Southern and North Eastern states was remarkably poor. In the states like Karnataka, Kerala, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, it fought the election alone but could not secure a single seat. Rather out of its total 56 candidates in these states, one could save his security deposits. In none of these it could poll more than 5% of the votes.

BJP's emergence in Indian politics, particularly in the Hindi heartland is considered by the political analysts as accidental and instantaneous. As a Bala Shankar described "From untouchability to stardom in the power game, from the frayed political fringe to

full glare of flood lights, from uncertain sideways glances to resolute and hawkishly intent state, strait at the target, the magical

Table: 14, Electoral Performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party, 1989 Parliamentary Election

Sr. No.	STATE/UT	Seats			Votes Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	42	2	0	1.97
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2	-	-	
3	BIHAR	54	24	8	11.72
4	GOA	2	1	0	0.71
5	GUJARAT	26	12	12	30.47
6	HARYANA	10	2	0	8.31
7	HIMACHAL PRADESH	4	4	3	45.25
8	JAMMU & KASHMIR	6	2	0	7.15
9	KARNATAKA	28	5	0	2.55
10	KERALA	20	20	0	4.51
11	MADHYA PRADESH	40	33	27	39.66
12	MAHARASHTRA	48	33	10	23.72
13	MANIPUR	2	1	0	2.27
14	MEGHALAYA	2	-	-	
15	MIZORAM	1	-	-	
16	NAGALAND	1	-	-	
17	ORISSA	21	6	0	1.28
18	PUNJAB	13	3	0	4.17
19	RAJASTHAN	25	17	13	29.64
20	SIKKIM	1	-	-	
21	TAMIL NADU	39	3	0	0.29
22	TRIPURA	2	1	0	0.58
23	UTTAR PRADESH	85	31	8	7.58
24	WEST BENGAL	42	19	0	1.67

25	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	1	-	-	
26	CHANDIGARH	1	1	-	12.26
27	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	1	-	-	
28	DAMAN & DIU	1	-		
29	DELHI	7	5	4	26.19
30	LAKSHADWEEP	1	-	-	
31	PONDICHERRY	1	-	-	
	TOTAL	529	225	85	11.36

Source: STATISTICAL REPORT ON GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1989 TO THE EIGHT LOK SABHA, VOLUME I Election Commission of India

88 victories in the November Lok Sabha elections, having infused in it a new life and new confidence, Bharatiya Janata Party is out to consolidate its conquest annex new avenues and demand and get its due, perhaps more”.⁵⁸ But in a realistic analysis of the BJP’s consolidation in Indian politics is not a chance happening in Indian politics rather a gradual rise in its strength. No doubt the BJP had suffered a severe inconsistency so far as gap between the percentage of votes it had polled and the seats it had won is concerned, due to the effective system i.e. “first-past-the-post system”.

The unprecedented success of the BJP in the November 1989 Lok Sabha election heightened its hope to emerge as a national alternative to the Congress. The party leadership considered the success as a measure of acceptance by the electorate its principles and stand on the issues of national importance like abolition of Article 370, enactment of a common civil code, restoration of Ramjanmbhoomi at Ayodhya and also its outright rejection of ‘Minorityism’.⁵⁹

Tenth Lok Sabha Election – 1991

Differences in outlook of the two supporting parties of the National Front government, the BJP and the CPI-M, became apparent in the drama played by the Janata Dal leaders when they were electing a leader to fill of prime ministership. The event contained in it the seeds of premature dissolution of the ninth Lok Sabha, and subsequent events amply proved these apprehensions. The struggle for power and self-aggrandizement of

⁵⁸ R. Bala Shankar, ‘For its Pound of Flesh’, The Week, February 11, 1990, p. 30.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

the Janata Dal leaders, leading to a hasty decision on the Mandal Commission's recommendation to reserve twenty-seven percent of the government jobs for "other backward classes," hastened the disintegration of the Janata Dal. It also sent alarming signals to the other parties to withstand the onslaught of the game plan of the pro-Mandal leaders.

The BJP, anticipating the negative results of its association with the V.P. Singh government and threatened by the consolidation of the backward castes through the Mandal politics of the Janata Dal, perhaps had no option but to return to its old source of identity, Hindutva, and went all out to agitate, organize, and mobilize Hindus to ensure their support. Encouraged by the rich dividends it received from the Ram shila puja ceremony during the previous Lok Sabha elections in 1989, the BJP launched Advani's Ram Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya, during which the party symbol was prominently displayed to increase religious fervor among the Hindus and to mobilize their support for the party. With the overwhelming response to the Rath Yatra, on the one hand, and efforts of the other parties to brand the BJP a communal party on the other, the BJP hardened its stand on the temple issue still further. Unlike in the 1989 Lok Sabha elections, this time the party firmly promised to construct the Shri Ram Temple at Ayodhya.

By the time the elections to the tenth Lok Sabha were announced, the BJP was well set to exploit its Hindu identity. Accordingly, it entitled its manifesto *Towards Ram Rajya*. The BJP extensively mentioned its commitments to a 'Clean Political System', 'Economic Growth with Social Justice', 'Vibrant Social Order' and 'World Fraternity'.⁶⁰ On the whole the party was committed to "Usher in a New Political Culture", a "new era of hope and prosperity" and a "value based politics". Most of the commitments and programmes outlined in the manifesto in nutshell were welcome and non-controversial. However, the pronouncements on 'positive secularism', its views on the Ramjanambhoomi – Babri Masjid issue, on Kashmir, the Minority Commission, Uniform Civil Law, Hindutva and its modus operandi to achieve the overall goal of a 'Hindu Rashtra' had generated acrimonious controversy and agitated the minds of all thinking Indians who hold the country's interests most dear to their hearts.

⁶⁰ Pratap Chandra Swain, "Bharatiya Janata Party: Profile and Performance", A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, p. 209-210.

The party president, Murali Manohar Joshi, also promised that the temple would be constructed at the Ram Janambhoomi in Ayodhya as soon as the party came to power. As the campaign progressed, the BJP coined slogans such as “Jo Hindu hit ki baat karega, wahi desh par raj karega” (Only those will rule the country who would look after the interests of Hindus) and “BJP ko lana hai, ram rajya banana hai” (To bring the Ramrajya in the country, bring the BJP to power) to encourage the Hindutva feeling of the majority community. While these campaign promises echoed the feelings of Hindu fundamentalists, its slogan, “Sabko dekha baar-baar, hamko parkhen ek baar” (You have tested all others many times; why not test us only for once?), appealed to all the sections of the society. As the campaign progressed, the BJP outsmarted all other parties on almost all the fronts. Three video tapes—one on Advani titled *The Man India Awaits*, a second on the BJP titled *The Right alternative*, and the third, and an edited version of the controversial video prepared by the Jain Studios on the events at Ayodhya in October-November 1990—were extensively circulated.

Tactically, while the party’s religious cards were blatantly being played by leaders like Ahok Singhal, Uma Bharati, Sadhavi Ritambhra, and many more at regional and local levels, the star campaigners of the party, Vajpayee and Advani, were propagating the party’s ideology and program to present the BJP as the right alternative. For example, Advani, while welcoming 1500 Muslims who joined the BJP in April 1991, explained in a public meeting at Bilaspur, Madhya Pradesh that “the problems of all Indians, irrespective of caste and religion, were identical and his party’s ideology was to solve them as humanitarian problems without adding political or communal overtones to them.”⁶¹ The top-ranking BJP leaders also made their stand clear on the construction of the Sri Ram Temple. Vajpayee, for example, explained that “Ayodhya is not a poll issue, but a matter of faith.”⁶²

The BJP contested over 400 Lok Sabha seats, which it never had before, not even during its Jana Sangh days. Of the 468 seats it contested in the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, it won 120 of them. Its popular support had also increased; compared to the mere 11.5 percent in 1989, it won 20.11 percent of the votes in 1991. The proportion of candidates losing their security deposits, however, remained the same, about thirty-nine percent. But because the number of contestants in the 1991 elections had almost

⁶¹ Indian Express, April 15, 1991, p. 1.

⁶² Indian Express, April 20, 1991, p. 1.

doubled, its performance showed an improvement. In addition to the 120 seats won, in as many as 167 constituencies the BJP polled more than 16.33 percent of the votes, indicating a potential increase in popular support in many Lok Sabha constituencies. A statewide analysis of the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, as presented in Table no. 15, would suggest that excluding Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra, where it lost both seats and votes, the party gained at least in votes in all other states. That is to say, even though it lost a few seats in some of the states, its overall share of votes increased. For example, its members from Bihar decreased to five in 1991 from 9 in 1989, but its share of votes increased from thirteen to sixteen percent. Similarly, it lost one seat in Rajasthan, but its poll percentage went up from a mere 29.6 in 1989 to 40.9 percent in 1991. Even in Madhya Pradesh, where it lost heavily in seats, it gained in votes. The party achieved the distinction of getting over fifty percent of the votes in Gujarat, where it also won twenty of the twenty-six Lok Sabha seats and no lost deposits. The case was similar in Uttar Pradesh, where despite stiff competition, the BJP polled 32.82 percent of the votes and won

Table: 15, Electoral Performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party, 1991 Parliamentary Election

Sr. No.	STATE/UT	Seats			Votes Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	42	41	1	9.63
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2	2	0	6.11
3	ASSAM	14	8	2	9.6
4	BIHAR	54	51	5	15.95
5	GOA	2	2	0	15.61
6	GUJARAT	26	26	20	50.37
7	HARYANA	10	10	0	10.17
8	HIMACHAL PRADESH	4	4	2	42.79
9	KARNATAKA	28	28	4	29.28
10	KERALA	20	19	0	4.61
11	MADHYA PRADESH	40	40	12	41.88
12	MAHARASHTRA	48	31	5	20.2

13	MANIPUR	2	2	0	8.1
14	MEGHALAYA	2	2	0	6.89
15	MIZORAM	1	-	-	
16	NAGALAND	1	1	0	3
17	ORISSA	21	21	0	9.5
18	RAJASTHAN	25	25	12	40.88
19	SIKKIM	1	-	-	
20	TAMIL NADU	39	15	0	1.65
21	TRIPURA	2	2	0	2.99
22	UTTAR PRADESH	85	84	51	32.82
23	WEST BENGAL	42	42	0	11.66
24	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	1	1	0	4.85
25	CHANDIGARH	1	1	0	28.8
26	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	1	1	0	35.39
27	DAMAN & DIU	1	1	1	31.88
28	DELHI	7	7	5	40.21
29	LAKSHADWEEP	1	-	-	
30	PONDICHERRY	1	1	0	1.97
	TOTAL	524	468	120	20.11

Source: STATISTICAL REPORT ON GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1991 TO THE EIGHT LOK SABHA, VOLUME I Election Commission of India

Fifty-one of the eighty-five Lok Sabha seats while only four of its eighty-four candidates lost their security deposits. In Delhi, too, it polled over forty percent and won five of the seven seats. Similarly, it captured the lone seat of Daman and Diu Union Territory and polled over one-third of the total valid votes. In Dadar and Nagar Haveli, although it did not win, it polled 35.39 percent of the votes.

The party expanded its base in south as well, winning four seats in Karnataka and one in Andhra Pradesh and polling 29.28 percent and 9.63 percent of votes, respectively. Three major states of the eastern zone—Assam, West Bengal, and Orissa—where the party had a weak support base in the past also contributed to the BJP's success. While it won two of the fourteen seats in Assam, it also made inroads in West Bengal, the

bastion of the left front, by polling 11.7 percent of the votes. In Orissa, too, it polled about ten percent of the votes (see Table 15).

In brief, in the tenth Lok Sabha elections the BJP not only increased its seats from eighty-six to 120 but also garnered support from one-fifth of the total electors in the country who voted in the 1991 elections. Notwithstanding the setbacks of seats lost in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra, its popular support base, measured by the percentage of votes polled, either increased or remained the same. It may be noted that most of the seats lost by a very narrow margin in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra were those in elections in the second phase, i.e., after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. And, finally, the substantial gains the BJP made in the southern as well as eastern zones of India amply proved that the party had potential to emerge as a national alternative to the Congress.

Ramjanmbhoomi-Babri Masjid Controversy

The demolition of the Babri mosque was justified by Hindu zealots as an attempt to rid India of a relic of Muslim domination.⁶³ While proponents of Hindutva continue to advocate for the construction of a temple where the mosque hitherto stood, several Indians view the events of 1992 as an onslaught on Indian secularism and democracy.⁶⁴

Precursors to the Demolition: Shah Bano and the Uniform Civil Code Debate

Sensing the heightened insecurity among Muslims following the Partition in 1947, the Congress government under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru sought to assure members of the community that they were an integral part of India. It did so, ironically, by excluding them from what was to have been a uniform civil code (UCC).⁶⁵ Accommodation of religion became a matter of intense controversy with the enactment of the Hindu Code Bills in 1950.⁶⁶ While the Bills replaced Hindu personal law governing marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance with a uniform civil code, they left Muslim customary law unchanged. This infuriated Hindu nationalists, who claimed that the proposed directives undermined traditional Hindu practices.⁶⁷

⁶³ Robert E. Frykenberg, "Hindutva as a Political Religion," in *The Sacred In Twenty-First Century Politics*, ed. Roger Griffin, Robert Mallett, and John Tortorice (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p. 189.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Frykenberg, *Sacred In Twenty-First Century Politics*, 189.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

Through the 1960s and 1970s, proponents of Hindutva decried the government's pampering of minorities, and denounced pseudo-secularism—state policies that accorded special rights to Muslims in matters pertaining to personal law. The issue reemerged in a 1985 Supreme Court Case involving a seventy-three-year-old Muslim woman, Shah Bano, who was divorced by her husband after forty-three years of marriage. By requiring that Shah Bano receive monthly maintenance from her husband, the Court's decision broke with the legal precedent of adjudicating Muslim family disputes under the Islamic Personal Law Application Act.⁶⁸ Hindu nationalists opposed the Supreme Court's decision, maintaining that it was unnecessarily sympathetic towards Indian Muslims. They were equally critical of the Congress Party, which was in power at the time.

Indian Muslims found their own set of religious rationales for opposing the Bills. Islamic clerics condemned the decision as an interference with *Sharia* law, and a step towards a uniform civil code that would deny Muslims the right to profess their faith. In an attempt to stem the withdrawal of Muslim support from the Congress Party, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi announced his support for the Muslim Women Protection of Rights on Divorce Bill. The Bill became law in 1986, despite widespread agitation by conservative Islamic clerics, progressive Indian Muslims (who genuinely desired Hindu-Muslim cohesion), and Hindu nationalists (whose communal agenda was severely compromised due to the law).

The Shah Bano controversy provided proponents of Hindutva with a tailor-made opportunity, for it dramatized the dilemma of instituting democracy in a multicultural, multi-religious society. The courts bolstered Hindu nationalist aims by situating the issue of women's rights in the conflict between a monogamous Hindu society and a polygamous Islamic tradition. Appeals to gender problematized the debate on personal law within an intensely religious setting.⁶⁹

Recognizing the benefits that would accrue from cashing in on these events, Hindu nationalists used the consensus in favor of a national civil code to their advantage. They repeatedly emphasized that the Congress response to the Shah Bano case proved that

⁶⁸ Thomas Blom Hansen, "Democracy, Populism and Governance in India in the 1980s," in *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 147.

⁶⁹ Flavia Agnes, "The Supreme Court, Media and UCC Debate," in *Religion, Power and Violence: Expression of Politics in Contemporary Times*, ed. Ram Puniyani (New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Lmt., 2005), p. 234.

the party was courting the Muslim vote. This affirmed, in their view, that Indian secularism was a sham, that it was, in fact, anti-Hindu. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), by contrast, stood for a “positive secularism” that embodied a uniform civil code—albeit a Hinduised version. By framing the Shah Bano case as one involving the sentiments of a Muslim woman, the BJP expressed a clear move against womanhood and Islam. In reality, the UCC debate reflects the communal tendencies of the Hindu right-wing. Proponents of Hindutva deliberately overlooked the persistence of personal law in other communities, among the Indian Parsi community, for instance. That they consciously appealed to the structural patriarchy in Islamic society indicates how Hindu nationalists used the Shah Bano case, and the related debate on personal law, to promote their anti-Muslim agenda.⁷⁰ The BJP was forced to return to its militant roots in the wake of its electoral defeat in 1984. L.K. Advani, who possessed closer ties with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), replaced the more moderate A.B. Vajpayee as party president. This change in the BJP’s leadership, the aforementioned Hindu Code Bills controversy, and the Shah Bano episode were events that crystallized the Hindu revival movement of the 1980s. In search of an outlet to express their grievances against Congress pseudo-secularism and the Muslim minority, the BJP-RSS-VHP⁴⁷¹ triad launched the Ramjanambhoomi movement: The drive to erase the Babri mosque at Ayodhya encompassed the gambit of fears that plagued votaries of Hindutva.

The Historical Background of the Ayodhya Case

The Babri mosque was built, probably in the sixteenth century, by order of the first Mughal emperor of India, Babur. The Hindus believe that the Babri mosque was built on the ruins of a Hindu temple which had been destroyed by a Muslim commander in chief. Many Hindus believe that the temple was built to commemorate the birthplace of *Rama* the king of Ayodhya.⁷¹ Ayodhya is one of the seven holy towns of India, lies in the Indian State of Uttar Pradesh has a many mosques and Hindu temples. The Babri mosque was the largest mosque in Ayodhya. In the past, it had been used as a house of worship by Muslims and by Hindus as well. Between 1853 and 1855, the first riots between Muslims and Hindus were noted when Hindus wanted to occupy the mosque

⁷⁰ Upendra Baxi, “Citing Secularism in the Uniform Civil Code: A Riddle Wrapped Inside an Enigma?,” in *The Crisis of Secularism in India*, ed. Anuradha Dingwaney Needham and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007), 284-286.

⁷¹ Pradeep K. Chhibber, Subhash Misra and Richard Sisson, “Order and the Indian Electorate: For Whom does Shiva Dance?” *Asian Survey* 32, no. 7 (July 1992), 610-613.

and its terrain. After this, the British colonial administration mediated a compromise between Hindus and Muslims. Hindus were prohibited from accessing the inner area of the mosque, but they were allowed to worship in its courtyard. In 1883, the British colonial administration dismissed a request by some Hindus who wanted to build a Hindu temple on the mosque's terrain.

In 1934, Hindu riots led to damage of one of the domes of the mosque. In 1949, someone placed idols of *Ram* and *Sita* (the wife of *Ram*) inside the mosque. As a result, the police administration gave the order to remove the idols. Instead of this, the council of the district of Fayzabad asked the Imam to leave the mosque, and closed it. Only Hindu priests and a limited number of Hindu believers were allowed access to the mosque. In the aftermath of this, Muslims took legal action in order to overturn this decision. Hindus also tried to change the situation by taking legal action as well, but the courts decided to keep the situation unchanged.⁷²

The Ayodhya Campaign since the 1980s

In 1984, the Hindu nationalists, namely the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) started their Ayodhya campaign. They were looking for a new symbol for their political campaigns and found it in the person of Ram. Even when nobody could prove the truth of the story, the legend of Ram and the story of the temple of Ram in Ayodhya were very popular and widespread in India. For the Hindu nationalists, both the fight against the use of the Babri mosque as a mosque, and for construction of a Hindu temple at the birthplace of Ram, was a logical continuation of a centuries old fight of Hindus against Muslims. Because of this, Ram was the ideal figure for Hindu identification. The religious diversity of Hinduism was reduced by making *Ram* a symbol of Hinduism and national unity.⁷³ Yet, this Hinduism was different from the peaceful Hinduism offered by Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru. According to Corbridge, it was the kind of Hinduism which Savarkar had propagated, "... a Hinduism which could defend the

⁷² Jaffrelot, "The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India", 91-96. And Peter van der Veer, "God must be Liberated! A Hindu Liberation Movement in Ayodhya," *Modern Asian Studies* 21, no. 2 (1987), 283-301.

⁷³ Thomos B. Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, 172-181. Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, 363-368 and 388-392.

timeless glories of Indian civilizations.”⁷⁴ And, in addition, by defining the Muslims as the “Others,” identification of Hinduism had another cornerstone. First, the campaign was one of processions and pilgrim parties, but in 1986, a district judge decided to open the gates of the mosque in order to allow Hindus to worship there. This decision led to reactions by Muslim organizations, which started to organize peaceful marches to Ayodhya. But, the Muslim planning did not lead to coordinated actions because the Muslims were more focused on the case of Shah Bano, its discussion in public, and the consequences for Muslims in India.

However, the VHP used the opportunity to use this Muslim lack of coordinated action as a signal for expanding the VHP campaign. The VHP emphasized the importance for all Hindus of the birthplace of Ram on this holy ground and expanded the campaign to get more support. And, they declared that marches of Muslims to Ayodhya were to be judged as an attack on Hindu society which would lead to counter measures. The leader of the BJP, Lal Krishan Advani, argued in 1989 that the Ayodhya issue was not simply a dispute, but a symbol of pseudo secularism and appeasement of the minorities.⁷⁵

Although local Muslim and Hindu leaders declared that they could find a peaceful agreement for the use of the area of the Babri mosque, the VHP provoked a confrontation and spread the dispute all over India. The VHP planned to lay the foundation for a new Hindu temple on the site of the Babri mosque in September / October of 1989. This date was planned purposely because elections for the Lok Sabha were also scheduled for the end of 1989. By choosing this date, the VHP carried the dispute into the political arena and put the Indian government under pressure. The VHP thought that it was now a matter for the government to avoid any clash on the site of the Babri mosque by taking a position pro Hinduism. By doing so, the Indian government, and hereby the Indian National Congress (Congress), could prove their efforts in doing something for the Hindu majority, and thus for the majority of the voters of India.⁷⁶

The government of India finally permitted laying the foundation for a Hindu temple about sixty meters from the Babri mosque, but still on the disputed site of the mosque. The VHP promised that no further action would be taken. With this agreement on

⁷⁴ Corbridge, ‘The Militarization of all Hindudom’? The Bharatiya Janata Party, the Bomb, and the Political Spaces of Hindu Nationalism, 235.

⁷⁵ Malik and Singh, *Hindu Nationalists in India: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party*, 83. 61.

⁷⁶ Hansen, *op. cit.*, 181-185.

November 09, 1989, the foundation for a Hindu temple was laid on the site of the Babri mosque. The soft attitude of the Indian government led to further development of the Ayodhya campaign as a cornerstone of the Hindu nationalist movement. In October 1990, the situation escalated again when the VHP announced the beginning of the temple's construction. Prime Minister V.P. Singh made a speech on television and explained that the VHP and BJP rejected his wish for a court decision about the Ayodhya case. The BJP Minister Advani was arrested because of his participation in the Ayodhya campaign. As a result, the BJP withdrew its support for the Janata party ruled government.

Between October 30, 1990, and November 1, 1990, approximately 10,000–40,000 Hindu nationalists tried to reach the site of the Babri mosque. Officially, they wanted to begin the construction of the Ram temple. Probably, they wanted to destroy the mosque in order to build the Ram temple on the former site of the mosque. In a first rush, the Hindu nationalists were able to destroy one dome of the mosque. But, on the following day, the security forces which protected the mosque were able to set the Hindu nationalists back by using armed fire. Because of the ten to one hundred deaths during these incidents, the Hindu nationalists decided to break off the attacks on the mosque. The events on October 30, 1990 and November 01, 1990 were the prelude for the demolition of the Babri mosque on December 06, 1992.

Explanations

The Ayodhya campaign was part of a process to define Hinduism in a new way and to transform it. Ram and the dispute with the Muslims in Ayodhya were in this sense only symbols for the awakening of a new Hinduism. The Ayodhya movement was part of the Hindu nationalist's campaign to reaffirm the nation's cultural identity and a signal to other political parties to end, in the sense of the BJP, their pseudo secular politics which favored minorities for the sake of a Western style secularism. Yet, BJP officials argued that the Ayodhya campaign was not an anti-Muslim campaign because Hindu nationalists were not per se anti-Muslim.⁷⁷ The argument offered by Van der Veer after the beginning of the Ayodhya campaign in 1985 is highly applicable. Religious feelings

⁷⁷ Gurdas M. Ahuja, "BJP and the Indian Politics", (New Delhi: Ram company, 1994), 317-340. Gurdas is a supporter of the BJP.

and values do matter, but “... they cannot be divorced from the political processes in which they are produced and managed.”⁷⁸

The political processes were the struggle between the Congress and the BJP to gain Hindu votes. Malik argues, “By pitting Ram against Babur, the BJP changed the context of Indian politics. For the majority of Hindus Ram represents the tradition (*maryada*) of Hindu culture; now he became a national symbol. Babur, on the other hand, was an invader and conqueror who expressed dislike for both the people and the country which he had conquered.”⁷⁹ This shows not just the political dimension of the Ayodhya case, but the underpinnings of the emotional importance for India’s Hindus as well.

Additionally, the explanations of the Hindu nationalists show the power of symbols and the way Hindu nationalists combine religion with politics. Religious symbols, for example in the processions of Hindu nationalists, had a tremendous emotional effect on the Hindu population. Due to the combination of ideology and religion, it was not easy for the authorities of the state to intervene because this could have been judged as being against the religion of the Hindus. In addition to this, the processions had another effect on the connection between Hindus and Muslims. Even in areas where Hindus and Muslims lived normally together in peace and harmony, processions created tensions, and in some cases were the reason for riots between Hindus and Muslims.⁸⁰ So, even when the original aim of the processions could not be reached, they led to another result which was in the interest of the VHP, Hindus seeing Muslims as “different” citizens.

In combination with the rhetoric of Hindu nationalists, the processions addressed different groups of Hindus due to political and religious reasons and formed a desire for solidarity among the Hindus.⁸¹ Yet, the Hindu nationalists did not just use traditional religious symbols and religious means like processions. They used modern media, such as videos, as an instrument for political transformation of religious symbols and for manipulation of the people as well. With this combination of religious symbols and modern media as a means to connect the realm of religion with the realm

⁷⁸ Van der Veer, ‘God must be Liberated!’ A Hindu Liberation Movement in Ayodhya, 300.

⁷⁹ Malik and Singh, op. cit., p. 83.

⁸⁰ Jafferlot, op. cit., 392-398

⁸¹ Banerjee, *Hindutva – Ideology and Social Psychology*, 98.

of politics, one aim of the Hindu nationalists became clear. This was the superseding of the secular Indian state by a non-secular Hindu state.

In addition to the religious reasons for the rise of Hinduism, the VHP was able to push this process of transformation and to use the symbol of Ram because since the case of Shah Bano the Muslims had been fragmented into two factions. One was the faction of modern Muslims. The other faction supported traditional Islam under the rule of Sharia. In contrast to the weak and loosely organized religious community of the Muslims, the Hindu nationalist ideology and its network consisting of Hindu nationalist organizations and a Hindu nationalist party had existed since India's independence. According to Crawford, the VHP was able to transform "... cultural identity into political identity"⁸² Without having a strong and united opponent, the division of the

Muslims made it easier for the VHP to pursue its goals.

The above-mentioned reasons were not, however, the decisive ones for the successful mobilization of the masses and the outbreak of riots beginning in the late 1980s. The decisive factor was the weakness of the state in combination with a weak ruling party. Indian nationalism was key for the founding and developing of a modern Indian state. But, Indian nationalism was a construct based on the ideas of the leadership of the Congress in order to overcome the difficulties and complexities of the multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-caste and multi-religious society of India. And this concept of a secular nationalism competed, from the beginning, with another concept of religious Indian nationalism, the Hindu nationalism.⁸³ The further development and existence of democracy and peace within India was dependent on India's leadership and its ability to bring all groups together, to balance interests and demands and to find acceptable compromises. Snyder shows the importance of elites for the development path of democratizing, but his theoretical explanations end when a country reaches one of four types of nationalism.⁸⁴ The case of India shows that the process does not end with establishing one type of nationalism. In India, the Ayodhya case shows that civic nationalism may be change to ethnic nationalism. Civic nationalism can change when

⁸² Beverly Crawford, "The Causes of Cultural Conflict: An Institutional Approach" In *The Myth of 'Ethnic Conflict,'* eds. Beverly Crawford and Ronnie Lipschutz (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), p. 19.

⁸³ Ashotosh Varshney, "Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India", 55-86.

⁸⁴ Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*, 45-91.

elites lose their ability to persuade people of their ideas. Any nationalism, created by elites as a unifying idea to establish democracy, needs an unchallenged and acknowledged leadership to survive during times of crisis in the marketplace of ideas.⁸⁵ In India, one could argue, it was the elite who lost the ability to protect civic nationalism. And indeed, this would have been true if one could identify such an elite. During the first thirty years of India's history (after independence), the elite could be identified within the Congress. The Congress was equal to the state, ran the country and was the stabilizing factor during the first thirty years of the country. But, the Congress weakened from the first voting out of Indira Gandhi and never regained its old unlimited strength.⁸⁶ After 1977, it became clear that the Congress could not any longer be the sole guarantor of a peaceful India.

The Janata party, the successor of the Congress as the ruling party, was not a cohesive party coalition primarily founded in order to beat the Congress. The Congress, which came to power again between 1980 and 1989, was hampered by economic problems, the state government ruled by the BJP, and a bribe affair. Additionally, the Congress acted weakly and unfortunately in religious matters when in power to rule India. According to Banerjee, there was "... a marked contrast between the Indian state's intolerance and suppression of ideas and activities (mainly pursued by minorities – ethnic or religious) that are suspected to be 'secessionist' on the one hand, and its permissive – almost deferential – treatment of propaganda and acts carried out openly by self-proclaimed revivalists of the majority community, which incite violence on religious issues."⁸⁷ However, sixty per cent of the Hindu supporters of the destruction of the Babri mosque felt that the Congress-ruled government showed preference for some groups (Muslims) over others (Hindus).⁸⁸ This result, shown in a survey, may be interpreted in two ways. First, it can be interpreted as evidence for the preference of the government for the Muslims, and therefore as a sign for state weakness, because the government was not able to ensure a neutral position towards religion. Second, it could be interpreted as an indicator for the success of the campaign of the Hindu

⁸⁵ Ashutosh Varshney, *op. cit.*, 74-78

⁸⁶ Maya Chadda, *Ethnicity, Security, and Separatism in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 102-122

⁸⁷ Banerjee, *op. cit.*, 97.

⁸⁸ Pradeep K. Chhibber and Subhash Misra, "Hindus and the Babri Masjid: The Sectional Basis of Communal Attitudes," *Asian Survey* 33, no. 7, South Asia: Responses to the Ayodhya Crisis (July 1993), p. 670-671.

nationalist network to make the Hindus feel threatened by a government which supported minorities.

One additional indicator for the weakness of the state is given by a survey of Chhibber, Mishra and Sisson. In 1991, after the election, they asked voters to identify the two most important problems confronting the locality, the state and the nation. As the major recent problem on all three levels, they identified the problem of order / community (47% of the voters on the national level, 50% on the state level and 32% on the local level), and problems of economics ranked on the national level and on the state level in second place (30% on national level, 26% on the state level).⁸⁹ Maintaining order and ensuring the security of its citizens is one of the main tasks for any government. The results of the survey show that even in the eyes of Indian voters, the state was weak.

But the detailed evaluation of the data shows that in the state of Uttar Pradesh (where Ayodhya is located), economic/infrastructural problems ranked in place one (45%) and the problem of order and community ranked in place two (45%). Additionally, consensus among religions in Uttar Pradesh was relatively weak with just 64%.⁹⁰ This result could lead to the conclusion that economic reasons were one driving factor for religious tensions and the eruption of riots in Ayodhya. But such an argument is too superficial because economic problems in other states also ranked in place one but did not lead to a lack of consensus among religions or riots between religious groups. The reason for this is that economic problems are not the decisive independent variable for religious tensions. Economic problems, only in combination with a problem of order, lead to tensions among religions.⁹¹

Economic problems hampered the Janata Dal government which ruled India from 1989 until 1991, as well, and reached their height during the Congress rule between 1991 and 1996. And, in combination with the force to liberalize the domestic market, they changed the circumstances for the traditional “social contract” of society. But social contract in this case meant that the state had for many years protected its own industries by opting for an import-substituting industrialization (ISI) after independence. The reason for this was that Indian business dominated the government. According to Chhibber, “Indian capitalists in the years immediately after Independence refused to

⁸⁹ Chhibber, Mishra and Sisson, *op. cit.*, 606-616.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 612.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 612-613.

countenance a state with wide-ranging regulatory and interventionist powers, and organized effectively against it.”⁹² For Indian industry, it was not necessary to become competitive because the ISI protected Indian industry from foreign imports. But, with the economic crisis of the late 1980s, a change in Indian policy became necessary. In the eyes of the classes with lower economic status, concerns about economic problems were high⁹³ but globalization became more a threat for the ruling elite. Thus, economic reasons were not necessarily decisive for the increasing tensions between Hindus and Muslims. They were, however, one reason for the increasing support of the BJP by capitalists and landowners. These property-owning classes felt threatened by free markets and were attracted by the BJP’s rhetoric of national self-reliance because measures for self-reliance would strengthen their market position.⁹⁴

Additionally, economic problems and globalization led to reforms in India, which weakened the power of the center and strengthened the power of the states. Together with the rising self-consciousness of marginalized groups, this led to fragmentation of India’s political system and to the development of new parties which had their strongholds in different states.

Altogether, this political context prepared the stage for the success of Hindu nationalists between the Ayodhya campaign in 1992 and the BJP’s success in 1996 when the BJP seized power. As Jaffrelot argues, the political context and the weakness of the state were the opportunity for the Hindu nationalist network to mobilize the masses and show the power of Hindu nationalism.⁹⁵ Between 1980 and 1992, one can find factors in India, identified by Tarrow as key dimensions for evoking a mass movement: “... (1) the opening of access to participation for new actors; (2) the evidence of political realignment within the policy; (3) the appearance of influential allies; (4) emerging splits within the elite; and (5) a decline in the state’s capacity or will to repress the dissent.”⁹⁶ With this came the opportunity during this time period allowing the rise of Hindu Nationalism.

⁹²Vivek Chibber, *Locked in Place. State-Building and Late Industrialization in India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 9.

⁹³ Chhibber, Misra and Sisson, *op. cit.*, 615.

⁹⁴ Radhika Desai, “Culturalism and Contemporary Right – Indian Bourgeoisie and Political Hindutva,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 12 (1999), 704.

⁹⁵ Jaffrelot, *op. cit.*, 8.

⁹⁶ Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 76.

What was decisive for the increase of violence in Ayodhya was the combination of two sets of elements.

First, representatives of the Hindu nationalistic network were able to mobilize the masses by provoking the Hindu majority's fear of the Muslim minority. They presented the people with a mix of historical memories, myths and emotive issues which built up the framework for the polarization of society. In addition, they were able to gain the support of capitalists and landowners. Finally, actions of one side in the conflict provoked counteractions by the other side. "Together, these inter-group and intra-group interactions combine ... to create a vicious cycle that threatens to pull multi-ethnic societies into violence."⁹⁷ And the only power which could theoretically break through this vicious cycle was the state.

Second, the Indian state and its institutions were weak and often used the same symbols and codes of behavior which were being used by the Hindu nationalists to mobilize the masses. And there "... has never been any dispute between the state and the Hindu communal leaders over the sacrosanctity of these components of Hindu symbolism and behavioural pattern." With this, the state became unable to arbitrate between Muslims and Hindus and powerless to react vigorously in any case of provocation and violence. According to Basu, the accommodating Indian state radicalized, with its actions, the demands of religious nationalists. "Hindu nationalists are likely to gain a sympathetic hearing from the state because their core supporters, upper-caste Hindus, are so heavily represented within it."⁹⁸ And hereby, the stage for increasing violence was set.

In sum, with the Ayodhya movement, the Hindu nationalist network used the institutional flaws of India's political system and the favorable situation of a weak Congress to gain political advantages by mobilizing the masses and provoking violence between Hindus and Muslims. According to Brass, "It should be clear enough by now, therefore, how valuable Hindu-Muslim opposition, antagonism, and violence have been for the fortunes of the BJP."⁹⁹

1996 Lok Sabha Election

⁹⁷ David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (Autumn 1996), 44.

⁹⁸ Amrita Basu, "The Transformation of Hindu Nationalism?" In *Transforming India*, eds. Francine R. Frankel and others (Berkeley: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 397.

⁹⁹ Paul Brass, "The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India", p. 8.

The 1996 Lok Sabha election was held amidst the shadow of a number of Scams Security Scam, Sugar Scam, Hawala Scam alleged MP's purchase scam, and the House allotment scam etc. This election experienced the eclipse of the so called 'National Constituencies' syndrome which dominated the national politics in the past two decades. The nation's voice in the election did not reflect any majority choice. It was split election that generated little voter enthusiasm and hung parliament. The political parties participated in the election by identifying themselves in three different combinations. The congress (I) and its partner in Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK along with certain minor allies like Kerala Congress (M) and Indian Union Muslim League in Kerala constituted the first political combination. The BJP and its Maharashtra based partner the Shiv Sena along with Samta Party and the Haryana Vikas Party (HVP) became the second political formation. The United Front emerged as a Third Force comprising of the Janata Dal, CPI, DMK, and Tamil Manila Congress.

BJP's performance in 1996 elections: Despite all odds, the BJP's success in 1996 elections was enviable. In the 1996 elections the BJP proved that its support base was not entirely dependent on a wave in its favour. One most astounding aspect of the BJP's performance was its success in substantially increasing its representation in parliament compared to the last election without any increase, in its vote share. Its national vote share remained stagnant. In 1996 the party polled 20.29 per cent of national votes compared to 20 per cent in 1991. Congress (I) stood ahead of the BJP with its tally of 28 per cent of national vote. In UP, the party won 52 of the 83 seats contested and thus added one seat to its 1991 tally. The party made an impressive gain in Bihar by winning 18 out of 32 seats contested. This was a big improvement over its performance in 1991 when it won only five out of 51 seats contested. In Gujarat on the other hand the party won only 16 out of 26 seats contested. In the 10th Lok Sabha elections, the party had won 20 of the 26 seats contested in Gujarat. The party also showed its muscle in Haryana by winning four seats out of only six contested. This was impressive compared to none in the last election. Its gains in Madhya Pradesh were equally impressive with a win of 27 out of 39 contested seats. In the last election it had emerged victorious in only 12 of the 40 seats contested. The party continued to advance in Karnataka winning six seats against four seats it won in 1991. In both elections the party contested 28 seats in Karnataka. In Rajasthan the party, as in the last election contested 25 seats, and won 12 seats.

Another noteworthy aspect of the BJP's performance was the strengthening of its vote share in various states. For example, in Arunachal Pradesh the party polled an impressive 17.41 per cent of the votes over only 6 per cent that it received in the previous election. It also made impressive gains in Assam and Orissa where it polled 15.92 and 13.42 per cent over its 1991 tally of 9 and 1 per cent, respectively. In the absence of any wave in favour of the BJP, two factors were mainly responsible for the BJP's impressive seat gains. First, the ability of the party to forge pre-election alliances with other parties, i.e., the Samata Party in Bihar and Haryana Vikas Party in Haryana and Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. Secondly, the party also succeeded in consolidating its support among the upper castes while fracturing the votes of the OBC. The success of BJP-Samata combine in Bihar was the best example of this delicate strategy.¹⁰⁰

Another factor enabling BJP's success was the concentration of BJP's votes. BJP's votes were concentrated both in terms of region, i.e., in the Hindi belt and in terms of caste. The average national share of the BJP of 21 per cent does not tell anything about its regional concentration. The BJP and its allies had an average vote share of 36 per cent compared to 23 per cent for the Congress (I) in the Hindi belt where the BJP was strong. BJP also performed exceptionally well among a small group of forward castes and highly educated Hindus. The BJP and its allies secured about 52 per cent of the votes among these groups. Such concentration of votes combined with the plurality system effectively translated its vote concentration into seats. With almost the same percentage of votes as the last election the party gained an additional 40 seats. Tough competition for non-BJP votes was another factor that worked in favour of the party. For example, the Congress commanded 28 per cent of Muslim votes, 18 per cent less than in 1991. Congress's loss became windfall for the NF-LF parties which came to have a greater share of the Muslim votes than Congress.¹⁰¹

BJP's impressive electoral gains notwithstanding, the party's influence in the south remained negligible. The party thus failed to extend its support beyond what is known as the Hindi belt. In fact in 1996 elections the party even lost already insignificant level of support that it had in the coastal regions. The BJP thus showed no sign of success in overcoming its major limitation of being limited to the Hindi heartland, a weakness characterised by Graham as the "limitations of its origins" (1990: 253). As Graham

¹⁰⁰ Tilak D. Gupta, 'News Analysis', India West, November 10, 1995, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ India Today, May 31, 1996, p. 25-26.

points out, the party's identification with issues and concerns of the Hindi belt and its support for an activist role of Hindu nationalism drawing more on the values of Brahmanism has continued to limit the party's appeal beyond the Hindi belt. Graham argues that this was why the party failed in 1950s and 1960s to fill the space that the left leaning orientation of Congress had created for a right wing party. By successfully combining the elements of Hindu traditionalism with mild form of social conservatism and political and economic liberalism, the Jana Sangh could have made it into the mainstream of Indian politics (1990: 253-54). Instead, the RSS dominated Jana Sangh chose to follow a strategy of building strength in isolation. On the positive side, this enabled the party to emphasize discipline and maintain internal cohesion and maneuverability. However, the party lost many sympathisers who did not want more internal democracy in the Jana Sangh (1990: 257).

The critical role being played by caste in the electoral arena was undercutting the strength of BJP's Hindutva plank. The BJP's attempt to counter caste politics had been the cult of Ram. It pushed Ram as the ideal Indian, pious yet militant royal but able to mix easily with all classes. BJP's hopes to submerge caste antagonism with this kind of appeal encountered challenge from leaders like Kanshi Ram and Mulayam Singh Yadav.¹⁰² Even the BJP campaign for the construction of a huge

Table: 16, Electoral Performance of the BJP, 1996 Lok Sabha Election

Sr. No.	STATE/UT	Seats			Votes Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	42	39	0	5.65
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2	2	0	17.41
3	ASSAM	14	14	1	15.92
4	BIHAR	54	32	18	20.54
5	GOA	2	2	0	13.75
6	GUJARAT	26	26	16	48.52
7	HARYANA	10	6	4	19.74
8	HIMACHAL PRADESH	4	4	0	39.62

¹⁰² Hanish McDonald, 'Revivalist Retreat', Far Eastern Economic Review, December 9, 1993, p. 18 and 20.

9	JAMMU & KASHMIR	6	5	1	19.04
10	KARNATAKA	28	28	6	24.85
11	KERALA	20	18	0	5.61
12	MADHYA PRADESH	40	39	27	41.32
13	MAHARASHTRA	48	25	18	21.81
14	MANIPUR	2	2	0	5.25
15	MEGHALAYA	2	2	0	9.13
16	MIZORAM	1	-	-	
17	NAGALAND	1	-	-	
18	ORISSA	21	20	0	13.42
19	PUNJAB	13	6	0	6.48
20	RAJASTHAN	25	25	12	42.36
21	SIKKIM	1	-	-	
22	TAMIL NADU	39	37	0	2.93
23	TRIPURA	2	2	0	6.5
24	UTTAR PRADESH	85	83	52	33.44
25	WEST BENGAL	42	42	0	6.88
26	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	1	1	0	24.25
27	CHANDIGARH	1	1	1	39.05
28	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	1	1	0	42.42
29	DAMAN & DIU	1	1	0	40.45
30	DELHI	7	7	5	49.62
31	PONDICHERRY	1	1	0	4.42
	TOTAL	523	471	161	20.29

Source: STATISTICAL REPORT ON GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1996 TO THE EIGHT LOK SABHA, VOLUME I Election Commission of India

Ram temple during the assembly elections in 1993 at the disputed site failed to neutralize the “earthy populism” of Mulayam Singh and Kanshi Ram.

The BJP’s decision to accept the president’s invitation to form a government was apparently a calculated risk. BJP and its allies’ tally of 194 seats was far from the 272 seats needed to prove its majority. The BJP failed to add even a single seat after it

formed the government. In retrospect, the BJP appeared to have made several wishful assumptions. The party hoped to be able to enter coalition with regional parties such as Asam Gana Parishad (AGP), Tamil Desam Party (NTR). The party also hoped that it might be able to lure some of the estranged MPs from the troubled Congress (I). None of these happened. Another development that took the BJP by surprise was the formation of the United Front and even more the support of Congress (I) to this Front from the outside.

The yearning that the BJP showed to stabilise its government and its desperate search for entering into coalition arrangement with anyone willing to do so exhibited the party's pragmatic rather than dogmatic posture. Vajpayee was on record saying that he would not form the government unless his party had about 220-225 seats.¹⁰³ Any coalition partner in this arrangement would certainly have had quite a moderating impact on the policies of this government. Some in the party foresaw this limiting impact of entering into coalition and cautioned against it. However, the party went along with those who thought the moment propitious for the BJP to stake its claim to power. The failure of the BJP to put together a coalition was not caused by the lack of compromise on its part. Instead, it was owing to the reluctance of anyone else to enter into coalition with the party. The BJP even appeared ready to enter into a deal with Congress (I) for a coalition arrangement. Vajpayee and Advani's calling on Rao on May 17, 1996, led to speculation about a secret deal. The rumour had it that the BJP would ensure the re-election of Congress's Shivraj Patil as speaker in lieu of Congress's support to minority government.¹⁰⁴ The BJP also appeared ready to sidetrack its contentious campaign issues such as the Ram temple in Ayodhya, abolition of Article 370 on the status of Kashmir and the question of a uniform civil code.

The main reason why the BJP failed to secure the support of any regional parties was the lack of credibility on the part of the party to live up to its agreement. With its proven track record of making political expediency the prime consideration in its decisions, the other parties felt they would be spared any time by the BJP. The DMK and TDP (N), for example, suspected dismissal of their state governments. For Mulayam Singh Yadav against whom the BJP conspired in UP in collusion with BSP, a BJP government would be a "nightmare come true".¹⁰⁵ The national parties like Congress (I), the CPI

¹⁰³ India Today, June 15, 1996, p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ India Today, May 31, 1996, p 14.

¹⁰⁵ India Today, May 31, 1996, p 19.

and CPM, Janata Dal had campaigned on an anti-BJP platform and had wooed the Muslim voters on that ground. Hence, their entering into alliance with the BJP was apparently risky. In the little time that it had the BJP did try to leave its mark on policy. Two main decisions that it took were related to Maharashtra, a state that the party rules in alliance with Shiv Sena. The decision to reinstate the Sri Krishna Commission investigating the post-demolition Mumbai riots, was an attempt to moderate its adverse impact on the Muslim community.

In brief, in 1996, the BJP won 161 seats, as against 136 of the Congress, but in terms of valid votes its progress was negligible: it received the support of about 20.7 per cent of the electors, while the Congress (I) retained 29.7 per cent of the valid votes. The BJP also remained a predominantly urban party since 32 per cent of the urban electorate voted for it as against 19 per cent of the rural electorate as a whole. If one considers the upper-caste graduates living in towns and cities, 52 per cent of this category opted for the BJP in 1996.⁹⁰ The social profile of the BJP's electorate is an asset in as much the elite plays an important part in the shaping of the public opinion, but it is also a drawback in a country where 74 per cent of the population lives in villages, where the OBCs represent 52 per cent of the society and where the literacy rate is little over 50 per cent. Most of the new seats it won came from the states where it was already strong, such as Madhya Pradesh. In terms of seats, the real breakthroughs were in Bihar, Maharashtra and Haryana, but they were largely due to alliances with regional parties. In traditional or recent strongholds such as in Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat, respectively, the party declined or experienced stagnation. The usual distortion, between the results in terms of valid votes and the results in terms of seats because of the first-past-the-post electoral system, was especially important this time because of the extreme concentration of the BJP votes in the northern and western states. In fact, the BJP won more seats than the Congress exactly because its votes were more concentrated: it gained seats in only nine states and most of them were in the 'Hindi belt' like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Delhi and Chandigarh, and in Gujarat and Maharashtra in the west. In this vast zone, it polled 36 per cent of the valid votes (as against 23 per cent to the Congress). Similarly, the BJP remained marginal, below 9 per cent of the valid votes, in the east and the south, except in Assam, Orissa and Karnataka where it obtained a large share of valid votes but it did not make a big difference in terms of seats. At the same time the BJP experienced decline in

Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal and overall the party received only 6.8 per cent of the valid votes in the south and the east (as against 8.5 per cent in 1991).

BJP's Strategical Shift from Moderation-Radicalization-Moderation...

As a result of the “dual membership controversy”, most Jana Sanghis left the Janata Party in 1979 and the party largely disintegrated a year later. The ex-Jana Sanghis then formed a new party called Bharatiya Janata Party (Party of the Indian People). Its trajectory contrasted with its predecessor's in the sense that it adopted a moderate agenda first and then became radical before becoming more moderate once again, at least at the national level, following an inverted U-curve which was on a par with its election results. Despite this variation, the factors accounting for the BJP's changing approach to politics are surprisingly similar to those characterizing the Jana Sangh.

The BJP as a moderate party (1980–1989)

After the demise of the Janata Party, the BJP leaders were apprehensive about returning to the niche status to which the Jana Sangh had been confined. Retaining the word “Janata” in its name, the BJP aspired to keep some of the aura of the Janata Party, which had embodied a consensus force of the opposition. BJP president A.B. Vajpayee was keen to abandon most of the Hindutva-based identity of the Jana Sangh and introduced two new concepts which did not echo the Hindu nationalist legacy: “Gandhian socialism” and “positive secularism”. The former referred to the Gandhian development model, with its strong emphasis on the village as the basic unit of the Indian economy. The old social basis of the BJP, composed of shopkeepers, artisans, and professionals was likely to be responsive to the anti-capitalist overtone of this slogan, but not the new middle class emerging from the liberalization measures Indira Gandhi, back in office in 1980, had introduced. “Positive secularism” was an implicit critique of the Congress' “pseudo-secularism”, a phrase coined by the Hindu nationalists to denounce the way the ruling party “pampered” the minorities to get their votes. However, the term was also an explicit endorsement of the secular nature of the state, something the core electorate of the Jana Sangh and the RSS had never reconciled themselves with.

The moderate discourse of the BJP was intended to facilitate electoral alliances and, once again, it might have been tactical or genuine. What matters is what kind of

concrete decisions were made to demonstrate that moderation had taken or at least was taking place. In 1984, the BJP formed a National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with the party of Charan Singh, but Singh withdrew from the NDA just before the December 1984 elections. The BJP leaders therefore made an ad hoc and limited electoral pact with what was left of the Janata Party.

The RSS was explicitly displeased with the BJP's strategy, suggesting that the "politicians" were emancipating from the social movement. RSS cadres were not asked to support the BJP during the 1984 elections. The new RSS strategy was different. It consisted of promoting a militant use of religious symbols in order to create a Hindu vote bank through which the Hindu demographic majority would be turned into a political majority. RSS supreme leader Deoras, who had succeeded Golwalkar in 1973, argued in 1979:

Hindus must now awaken themselves to such an extent that even from the elections point of view the politicians will have to respect the Hindu sentiments and change their policy accordingly. [. . .] If others put up demands, they are accepted, but even genuine demands by Hindus are ignored. This is because Muslims and other minorities usually vote en bloc while Hindus are divided. Once Hindus get united, the government would [need to] start caring for them also.¹⁰⁶

The RSS relied on the VHP to achieve this end. In 1984, the RSS and the VHP launched a new mobilization campaign focusing on a powerful Hindu symbol: Lord Ram. They demanded that the temple that once allegedly stood above the supposed birthplace of the god Ram in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh should be rebuilt. The Hindu temple was said to have been replaced by a mosque in the sixteenth century. This issue was well chosen, given the popularity of Lord Ram among Hindus, particularly in the north of India. The VHP immediately rallied several religious figures whose prestige further amplified its capacity for mobilization. Together they demanded that the current Babri Mosque be replaced with a "rebuilt" Ram temple.¹⁰⁷

At the beginning, the BJP tried to abstain from this agitation, fearing it would not be in a position to make allies if it returned to extremist politics. Eventually, however, the party gave up its moderate stance, bowing to the pressure coming from the RSS or

¹⁰⁶ Hindu Vishva 14, nos. 7–8, 92, March 1979.

¹⁰⁷ Van der Veer, Peter. "God Must Be Liberated! A Hindu Liberation Movement in Ayodhya." *Modern Asian Studies* 21, no. 2 (1987): 283–301.

simply out of convenience as the politicians saw that there might be “votes” to be garnered in taking a “Hindu stand” on the issue.

First, the RSS requested the BJP to return to the doctrinal purity of Hindutva politics and warned the party that its network of volunteers would not canvass for its candidates if the party remained adamantly moderate. Second, the electoral context was conducive to Hindu nationalist radicalization. On the one hand, no significant opposition party had accepted to partner with the BJP in spite of its moderation and therefore the party was looking for votes. On the other hand, the ruling Congress had not maintained the impeccable secularism of the 1950s–1970s. Rajiv Gandhi communalized Indian politics. In 1985, he tried to woo the Muslim opinion leaders by reasserting the role of sharia as the personal law of their community, and four years later he played the Hindu card by invoking the name of Ram in Faizabad – the headquarters of the district where Ayodhya is located – from where he launched his election campaign. The erosion of secularism as one of the key normative rules of the Indian polity legitimized the use of religious language by the Hindu nationalists. Third, in the 1980s, Hindus felt vulnerable. On the one hand, minorities developed militant strategies: Sikh separatists attacked Hindus, Islamists were accused of converting Dalits and by the end of the decade Kashmir had become the new battleground for jihadists. On the other hand, the Congress government laid itself open to the critique of “pseudo-secularism” by cultivating the Muslim “vote bank”, which prepared the ground for a Hindu backlash.

The radical phase of the BJP (1989–1998)

During the 1989 election campaign, RSS activists, VHP religious figures, and BJP candidates canvassed thousands of towns and villages to consecrate bricks stamped with Ram’s name and destined to be used to “rebuild” the Ram temple. The bricks were carried in processions imitating those organized for religious celebrations in which idols are carried along a precise itinerary.¹⁰⁸ In several places these processions resulted in riots when militants entered the Muslim neighborhoods chanting slogans such as “there are only two places for Muslims, Pakistan and the cemetery” [Pakistan aur Kabristan].

This pre-electoral sectarian violence was a clear component of the new strategy of the BJP, which wanted to polarize the electorate along religious lines and thus deepen the

¹⁰⁸ Dainik Bhaskar, November 11, 1989, p. 3.

Hindu group identity so that its members would end up finally “voting Hindu”. Recourse to so-called religious processions proved crucial for mobilizing people. The Ayodhya temple campaign contributed to bringing the score of the BJP from two seats (out of 543) in 1984 up to 85 seats in 1989 in the Lok Sabha.

Immediately after the 1989 elections, the BJP became part of a coalition which comprised many different parties, including the Janata Dal of the new Prime Minister, V.P. Singh. As in 1967, Hindu nationalists combined an ethno-religious radical electoral campaign with a post-electoral coalition with parties that did not share its ideology. And, like in 1967, they proved the moderation thesis wrong because coalition politics did not lead them to dilute their ideology: indeed, they continued to mobilize support on the very divisive Ayodhya issue. In the midst of a new wave of riots, the BJP withdrew its support for Singh’s government in 1990 and the latter collapsed as a consequence. When mid-term elections were held the following year, the BJP jumped from 85 to 120 seats in the Lok Sabha, indicating that radicalism had paid off. This radical phase of the BJP culminated in the demolition of the Babri Mosque by Hindu nationalists on 6 December 1992.

The radicalization of the BJP in the late 1980s–early 1990s stemmed from the interplay between three variables. First, the RSS, whose leader had decided to promote a Hindu vote bank through the instrumentalisation of the Ayodhya issue, remote-controlled the party, whereas the VHP provided the party with religious leaders who bestowed additional – sacred – legitimacy to the movement. Second, the BJP could cash in on a deep sense of Hindu vulnerability. Third, the political context allowed the party to pursue its radical agenda. On the one hand, its coalition partners of 1989 had not seriously objected to its political use of the Ayodhya issue during the election campaign and the government of V.P. Singh waited until the last minute to deal with the issue. On the other hand, the Congress, after it returned to power in 1991, did not prevent Hindu nationalists from attacking the Babri Mosque and the organization that had been responsible for its demolition was never indicted. The RSS and the VHP were banned intermittently, but only for a few months and only on paper. The BJP eventually returned to the path of moderation in 1996, not because of the attitude of other parties, but because it realized that it had to woo potential allies to form a ruling coalition after it had become the largest Indian party with 160 seats in the 1996 elections. This oscillation between a moderate and radical strategy clearly indicates a tension within the party, and specifically between the orientation towards building a moderate catch-

all party (or coalition), and the party's dependence on the RSS social movement, anchoring it to a strategy focused on the emphasis on the Hindu identity. The latter has apparently prevented the party, so far, from achieving a stable moderation, which finds evidence in the persistence of an identity-based strategy and a confrontational repertoire of mobilization at the state level if not the federal one.

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 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 Privaar 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.

CHAPTER-4

BJP TASTES POWER: 1998-2004

It's Rise under Bajpai's Premiership

Hardly twenty months (but three Prime Ministers) after the May 1996 general election, India again went to the polls in February/March 1998. The brief life of the eleventh Lok Sabha was marked by political grandstanding and manipulation, leading to two changes of government in quick succession.

In the last election, BJP won 161 seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha, making it the single largest party but short of a majority. The BJP leader, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was sworn in as Prime Minister, but resigned 13 days later, when it became clear that he would lose a vote of confidence in the House. A 13-party coalition, the United Front, assumed power, supported (from outside government) by the Congress Party, which had ruled India for 45 of the 49 years since independence. The Front consist of the Janata Dal (which had been in power from December 1989 to November 1990), the Left Front and various left-leaning regional parties. After some difficulty, the Front chose the newly elected Chief Minister of Kamataka state, Mr. H. D. Deve Gowda, to be Prime Minister. Mr. Deve Gowda's government however fell in April 1997, when the Congress withdrew support, in a deceptive bid by its President, octogenarian Sitaram Kesri, to capture power. He was unsuccessful, and another United Front nominee, Mr. I. K. Gujral became Prime Minister. Congress support to his government was equally indecisive, and was withdrawn in November 1997, after an inquiry report suggested that the DMK party of Tamil Nadu (part of the United Front), was responsible for security lapses leading to the May 1991 assassination of its former leader, Rajiv Gandhi. The Congress demanded their removal from government, but the United Front instead chose to dissolve the Lok Sabha, and call fresh elections.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND ISSUES

In four phases, spread over 19 days, between February 16, 1998 and March 7, 1998, an electorate of around 600 million went to the polls, by most accounts relatively fairly and peacefully. The elections, covering 539 of the 543 constituencies in the country, were conducted under the supervision of the three-member Election Commission, which maintained its recently acquired activist profile.

In the Lok Sabha Elections, 1998, the BJP gave the slogan of “stable government and able leadership”. It continued to project the social, economic, cultural, national and regional issues during the election. In the 1998 elections the BJP leadership again tried not to use its Hindutva platform during the campaign. Contentious issues were kept aside by senior leaders and there was an emphasis on economic issues such as swadeshi.¹⁰⁹ The party put forth Atal Bihari Vajpayee, perceived as the moderate face of the BJP, as its prime ministerial candidate and adopted the slogan of “stable government, able PM.” In six election meetings, Vajpayee gave speeches in major Uttar Pradesh towns in late January in which he made no reference to the Ayodhya temple issue. Instead, he focused on the price of onions, the problems of sugarcane farmers, the Bofors bribe scandal, and attempted reassurances to Muslims that they had nothing to panic from the BJP.¹¹⁰

During his campaign speeches, Advani emphasized stability as the main plank of his party, with concern over corruption in high places coming a close second. He pointed out that such contentious issues as the construction of the Ram temple, a common civil code for all communities, and the Bofors problem were raised by Sonia Gandhi, and that the BJP-unlike in 1989 and 1991-would not have done so. He also argued that for the first time there was a positive attitude toward his party on the part of the electorate despite having been labeled by the INC as anti-secular.¹¹¹ The party manifesto mentioned that the BJP planned to build the Ram temple but would achieve this goal by exploring consensual, legal, and constitutional means. However, Advani mentioned that this issue, along with the demand for a common civil code and other items, could be dropped after achieving victory if a coalition had to be formed, and the party’s basic program would rest upon consensus. In an election meeting held in Ayodhya, Advani repeated that the temple would be built but emphasized that there had been a change in attitude toward this issue among the minority community and the public at large.

The BJP continued its efforts to moderate its ideology after the elections. At the party’s April 1998 National Executive meeting in New Delhi, Advani asked party members to abandon the core idea of Hindutva in the interests of producing a stable coalition government and creating a “new, softer BJP.” This meant that hereafter stability would

¹⁰⁹ In the context of globalization it means “self-reliance,” particularly protection of domestic producers’ interests

¹¹⁰ Sudha Pai, “New Political Trends in Uttar Pradesh: The BJP and the Lok Sabha Elections 1998,” EPW (July 11-17, 1998), p. 1841-45.

¹¹¹ “Choice Between BJP and Instability,” Hindu, January 23, 1998.

be more important than any ideological issue, and the national agenda the BJP formed with allies would prevail over its own election manifesto. Advani's speech changed the party's definition of nationalism-until now synonymous with Hindutva and building of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya-to one of building a "Rashtra Mandir" (National temple), meaning creating a prosperous and secure country for all citizens. It also indicated the need for a new national consensus and the healing of any divisions that may have appeared in the body politic.¹¹²

It was in its 1998 election manifesto that the BJP tried to take a clearer view on economic issues. "It sent out signals to Indian industry that the Party shares their perception on development of national industry with gradual reform, first by opening the domestic market and then creating a competitive environment. Only in the second phase, were doors to foreign competition to be opened."¹¹³ It was further stated in the manifesto, "The BJP is fully aware that, when it comes to power, it will be inheriting a badly managed economy and a badly directed reform process. The broad agenda of the BJP will be guided by Swadeshi or economic nationalism."¹¹⁴ According to the manifesto, "Every nation advocated free trade in all global force, but in practice, they compulsively resort to quotas, tariffs and anti-dumping measures to protect their national interests. ...while the declared agenda is free trade, the undeclared but actual agenda is economic nationalism. India, too, must follow its own national agenda."¹¹⁵

Like other issues the BJP utilized Article 370 too to gain electoral mileage. In its 1998 Election Manifesto, it was stated by the Party that "The BJP will abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution".¹¹⁶

The BJP has throughout nurtured the belief that cow protection is the living symbol of Indian culture and is inseparably linked with the economy of the country since ages. In its 1998 election manifesto it was stated that "it is on the patient back of the cow and its progeny that entire structure of Indian agricultural rests. Over seven crore animals are employed in farming operations in Indian villages; more than 80 per cent of the rural transports needs are met by the bullock carts. Our live stock is also an effective protection against environmental degradation."¹¹⁷

¹¹² "Advani Promises 'New' Softer BJP," Indian Express (New Delhi), April 12, 1997.

¹¹³ Partha Ghosh, *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism: from periphery to centre*, p. 258.

¹¹⁴ Election Manifesto, BJP, 1998, p. 10.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 10-11.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 5.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. p. 28.

Although the campaign focused mainly on the personalities of the pre-eminent political leaders, and on the rival planks of a “stable government” (promised by the BJP) or a “secular government” (promised by everyone else), most polls suggest that other issues equally concerned the average voter. These concerns, like rising prices, law and order, and the lack of civic amenities, were however hardly reflected in political discourse or in the media. Perhaps because of the recent spread of the electronic media, voters’ skepticism with the electoral process, and with politicians’ promises, was articulated. However, turnout of voters was unaffected by this skepticism, rising from 58% in 1996 to 62% in 1998, the second-highest in Lok Sabha elections. Turnout varied widely from state to state as it often does, but significantly, did not drop, as in past mid-term elections.

The advent of distinct state party system at regional level, separated but closely linked to national party system. The regional parties were dominant players at state level, national and state parties contended for power. By and large, with the breakdown of the dominant party system, Indian polity entered into transitional period, characterized by fluid, fragmented political formation and unstable coalition governments, on one side and the multi-party system at national level, moving towards federalization, on the other.¹¹⁸

The results from the 12th Lok Sabha in 1998 confirmed the overall tendency towards “regionalization of Indian politics”, and prolonged construction of Vajpayee’s thirteen parties’ coalition government in late March 1998, demonstrated that Indian Prime Minister would be made and unmade in state capitals, rather than in Delhi. Most of the political parties recognized the importance of pragmatic electoral alliance, except INC, which subsequently strengthened the range of regional political formations.¹¹⁹

The parliamentary elections of 1996, produced as much fragmented and polarize picture, as previous elections in the party system. The complex pattern of inter-party alliance continued as a ‘patchwork’ quilt at the Centre as well as state levels. Three major contenders as the Congress, the BJP, and the UF were in the electoral contest in

¹¹⁸ Sudha Pai, “Transformation of Indian Party System: The 1996 Lok Sabha Elections”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXVI, No.12, December 1996, p. 1170.

¹¹⁹ Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot, “The Rise to Power of the BJP”, in Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot (eds.), *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*, New Delhi: OxfordUniversity, 2001, p. 14.

1998 national elections.¹²⁰ The UF lacked unified leadership as its leaders, such as Jyoti Basu, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Deve Gowda and G.K. Moopanar etc., were much busy to strengthen their own regional support base, rather than work for unity and integrity of the United Front. None of them came forward to save the sinking boat of the United Front in 1998 mid-term elections. The BJP vigorously searched for new friends because, party tried to avoid previous humiliation, as no one extended support to the Vajpayee government in 1996 except, pre-poll partners.

The BJP forged number of pre-poll arrangements with various regional parties, such as Samata Party, Lok Shakti Party, AIADMK, Trinamool Congress, Biju Janata Dal etc. and also matured post-poll alignments with TDP. Three regional parties and few independents, added twenty two seats in NDA kitty, which led to slight parliamentary majority to BJP.¹²¹ The BJP moderated its own ideology and tried to accommodate the demands of its allies during and after the elections. BJP abandoned the core idea of *Hindutva* and turned to a “new softer BJP.” That is, the party was moving towards ‘*Ram Mandir*’ (Lord Rama Temple) to ‘*Rashtra Mandir*’ (national temple), meaning thereby, creating a prosperous and secure country for all citizens.¹²² In contrast, the Congress failed to learn the importance of alliance politics early in the electoral campaign. The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), Kerala Congress (Mani) and few smaller groups allied with INC, as they had in 1996 polls.

Paul Wallace summarized the alliance system as a ‘bi-model party system,’ by which, two major or national parties were maneuvering within a larger vortex of smaller regional parties. According to the scholar, bi-model term was accurate, because both the BJP and the Congress were capable of forging a majority coalition or were in a position to bring down the government, given favourable circumstances.¹²³ Sudha Pai also repeated same idea as ‘two-polar situation.’ The BJP went to the voters with slogans’ of ‘majboot’, ‘swachcha’, and ‘sthir sarkar’ (strong, clean and stable government), that is, stable regime and good governance. The BJP nominated Atal

¹²⁰ M. P. Singh and Rekha Saxena, “India at the Polls: Parliamentary Elections in Federal Phase”, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2003, p. 124.

¹²¹ Sudha Pai, “The Indian Party System under Transformation: Lok Sabha Elections 1998”, Asian Survey, Vol. XXXVIII, No.9, September 1998, p.838.

¹²² Ibid. p. 843-846.

¹²³ Paul Wallace, “Introduction: India’s 1998 Elections—Hindutva, The Tail Wags the Elephant and Pokharan”, in Ramashray Roy and Paul Wallace (eds.), Indian Politics and the 1998 Elections: Regionalism, Hindutva and State Politics, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999, p.17.

Bihari Vajpayee as prime ministerial candidate, seemingly to capitalize on liberal outlook and national image.

The results of 12th general elections revealed that BJP and its allies captured 255 seats in the Lok Sabha, which reflected its extended territory beyond the Hindi belt bringing the party into the center of power. The Congress and its partners got 170 seats only. The United Front (UF) was totally washed away in the elections and was reduced to just eighty three seats.

The outcome of the elections was another hung Parliament. Although the BJP won more seats than any other party, it (with its allies) was able to muster only 251 of the 539 seats. The Congress and its allies came in second, with 167 seats. The United Front fared badly, dropping from 174 seats to 100. Interestingly, although 40 distinct political parties found place in the new Lok Sabha (in addition to six independents), all but 21 of the new MPs fell into one of the three main pre-election coalitions.

The electorate delivered a strong anti-incumbent verdict. Almost half the seats changed hands, and half the sitting members seeking re-election lost. In most states, the party in power in the state government performed badly in the Lok Sabha elections. Alliances were generally successful, particularly the BJP's alliance with four regional parties (led by a former Chief Minister, MS Jayalalitha of the AIADMK party) in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. This alliance won 30 of the state's 39 seats, up from zero in 1996. (This performance was a significant humiliation for most pundits and pollsters, who did not predict such gains.)

Extraordinarily, the BJP and its allies demonstrated good electoral performance in each of the four regions of the country. They secured 86 out of 151 seats in Northern region, 61 out of 118 seats in Western region. 53 out of the 142 seats in Eastern region and 50 seats out of 132 in Southern region. The first ever increasing performance of the BJP in Southern and Eastern coastal belt can be definitely credited to its new partners like TrinMool Congress (TMC) of Mamta Banerjee in West Bengal, BJD of Naveen Patnaik in Orissa, AIADMK of J. Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu and Lok Shakti of Ram Krishna Hegde in Karnataka.

Besides the BJP and its allies did well among the cross sections of the Indian voters. They secured maximum percentage of votes from upper castes Hindus (56%), OBC (42%), Uneducated (31%), Lower educated groups (37%), Middle educated groups (42%), Higher educated groups (49%), Rural section (35%), Urban section (41%), Males (39%) and Females (33%) of votes. Thus, the BJP and its allies crossed their

traditional barricades mostly. But they had not performed well so far as the Muslims (secured only 7% of votes) and Scheduled Tribes are concerned. Again the big anti-incumbency swings in Rajasthan, Haryana and Maharashtra affected the party adversely.

In the elections of 1998, the BJP's share of the national vote was 25.5 per cent, or 5.2 percentage points more than its national vote share in 1996. It won 182 seats, up only 21 seats from its national total in 1996. Yet the party comes to the twelfth Lok Sabha at the head of an alliance of 252 Members of Parliament, with hopes of being able, in the words of its spokesperson, to "rope in" even more members. It had done so despite substantial losses in States of relative strength, such as Maharashtra and Rajasthan, and relative stagnation in the two States that give it 42 per cent of its MPs, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. (See Table 17)

A combination of factors brought the BJP and its allies to the Lok Sabha in such large numbers. Of them, the most important is undoubtedly the alliances the BJP struck in different parts of India after the elections were announced. And of these, the most important new alliances were with the AIADMK and its allies in Tamil Nadu, the Lok Shakti in Karnataka, the Biju Janata Dal in Orissa and the Trinamul Congress in West Bengal. It added these alliances to its longer-term ties with the Samata Party in Bihar (extended to Uttar Pradesh in 1998), the Haryana Vikas Party, the Shiromani Akali Dal (the alliance was established after the 1996 election) and with the Shiv Sena, its most natural ally, in Maharashtra. The BJP in 1998 was a substantial beneficiary of the splits in the Janata Dal and the nationwide decline of that party, particularly in two States in which the Janata Dal had a substantial presence Karnataka and Orissa. In some States the BJP benefited directly from disunity among the forces opposed to it. This was the case, most importantly, in U.P., and also in Gujarat.

In establishing electoral alliances, the BJP was in a class of its own. In its bid for government, it decided that it would not be constrained by any inhibitions of principle with regard to whom it chose as allies. Thus, in Tamil Nadu, it allied with the leader of what was arguably the most corrupt State Government in independent India, in Karnataka it allied with a person who was steering simultaneous negotiations with the Congress (I), and in Orissa it allied with a party named after a secular politician who consistently opposed the BJP.

These alliances did, however, bring instant electoral advantage. In the southern States, out of 50 seats won by the BJP alliance, only 20 were won by the BJP itself. The

alliance's vote share in these States was 33.9 per cent; the BJP's individual share was 16.6 per cent. (The South here refers to Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh; Kerala remains the only major State never to have sent a BJP candidate to the Lok Sabha.) In the East (Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar), of 53 seats won by the BJP alliance, only 27 were won by the BJP. (Of them, 19 were won in Bihar alone.) The vote share of the BJP and its allies in this region was 37.4 per cent; the vote share of the BJP alone was 16.6 per cent.

The most unexpected gain for the alliance came, of course, in Tamil Nadu, where it won 30 out of 39 seats. The victory of the alliance here was also perhaps the most serious reversals suffered by the U.F. in the elections. (Indeed, Jayalalitha can well be considered the major victor of Elections 1998, with Sharad Pawar as runner-up.)

At the national level, the seats the BJP won through alliances in the South and East were crucial compensation for its losses in Maharashtra and Rajasthan and its relative stagnation in U.P. Apart from gains in terms of seats for the alliance as a whole, the alliances brought other political gains for the BJP. Thanks to its alliances, it had established political and organisational footholds in new regions, particularly in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal. And it had gained, through shared campaigns, access to sections of the Indian people to whom it had no such access even a few months ago.

The decline of the Janata Dal at the all India level had, of course, damaged the United Front, and the BJP had moved in to benefit from this decline in Karnataka and Orissa. The data on the three States Bihar, Orissa and Karnataka in which the decline of the Janata Dal had been most noteworthy after its many splits were interesting. In 1996 in Bihar, the vote share of the Janata Dal was 32 per cent. In 1998, the Janata Dal's vote share was 7.9 per cent and the vote share of the RJD 24.1 per cent, a combined total of 32 per cent. In Orissa, the Janata Dal's vote share in 1996 was 13.0 per cent; in 1998, this fell to 5.0 per cent, with the BJD winning 27.8 per cent of the popular vote.

In Karnataka as well, it was clear that the alliance with the Lok Shakti was crucial for the BJP. The Janata Dal's vote share in Karnataka was 34.9 per cent in 1996; in 1998, the Janata Dal's share fell to 21.7 per cent, while the Lok Shakti won 11.5 per cent of the vote (the combined total, 33.2 per cent, was again very close to the 1996 vote share of the Janata Dal). While the Congress' vote share increased from 30.3 per cent in 1996 to 36.2 per cent in 1998, the BJP's vote share rose only marginally, from 24.8 per cent in 1996 to 27.0 per cent in 1998. Once it had formed the alliance with the Lok Shakti,

however, a fragmented vote ensured that it won the single largest block of seats in the State. (If, on the other hand, Ramakrishna Hegde had chosen to jump from the fence to the Congress, the Karnataka scene was likely to have been very different.)

The decline of the Congress had been identified as a major factor in the BJP's electoral gains of the 1996 elections. In 1998, although this factor did (or may have) come into play in certain States for instance, in U.P., Bihar, Orissa, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh it was perhaps a less significant factor than in 1996. Significantly, Congress consolidation in Maharashtra and Rajasthan, predominantly the former, handed out the most serious reversals of Elections 1998 to the BJP. In Maharashtra, the joint vote share of the Sena-BJP combine remained close to stagnant (38.6 per cent in 1996 and 41.6 per cent in 1998). Holding its ground, however, was not enough for the alliance. Sharad Pawar worked early to bring the Republican Party of India and the Samajwadi Party into alliance with the Congress, and the Congress fought the election with a degree of unity rare in the Maharashtra unit of the Congress. The party's vote share rose from 34.9 per cent in 1996 to 43.5 per cent in 1998, and it dealt the Hindutva combine a setback whose strength few would have dared to predict.

In Madhya Pradesh, although the BJP enhanced its position in terms of its share of the vote (41.3 per cent in 1996 and 45.9 per cent in 1998) and seats (27 in 1996 and 30 in 1998), its gains were small and were not based, as in the past, on a decline of the Congress vote. The Congress' vote share in Madhya Pradesh improved from 31.0 per cent in 1996 to 38.4 per cent in 1998. (See Table 17)

In Gujarat, despite the split from its ranks of the Rashtriya Janata Party, the BJP's vote share fell only slightly, from 48.5 per cent in 1996 to 47.7 per cent in 1998. The BJP's gains in the election were obviously helped along by the division of votes between the Congress and the Rashtriya Janata Party. The Congress share of the vote remained almost the same 38.7 per cent in 1996 and 37.9 per cent in 1998 and the RJP, a new entrant in the 1998 elections, won 9.4 per cent of the popular vote.

Uttar Pradesh was at once the BJP's strength and its weakness. It was its strength because it had 55 MPs from the State, nearly a third of its total in the Lok Sabha. It was its weakness because, first, despite all its efforts and the decline of the Congress, its vote share was relatively stagnant (33.4 per cent in 1996 and 36.4 per cent in 1998). Secondly, the BJP remains utterly vulnerable if non-Congress non-BJP unity were to be achieved. The combined vote share of the S.P. and Bahujan Samaj Party in 1998 was 49.6 per cent (28.7 per cent and 20.9 per cent respectively). The data in this context

are quite dramatic: the combined total of the votes polled by the BSP and S.P. were higher than the votes polled by the candidates of each other party in about 64 constituencies in the State. The BJP gained more votes than the combined total of the S.P. and BSP in 19 constituencies. Quite clearly, if the electoral unity between the S.P. and BSP that had been urged by the Left before the elections had been achieved, U.P. would have seen very different results.

Bihar was another fascinating case of BJP vulnerability. Unlike Orissa and Karnataka, Bihar was not a State where the BJP took away the winnings when the Janata Dal split. In point of fact, BJP's vote share had been stagnant (20.5 per cent in 1996 and 21.3 per cent in 1998); so too had been the share of its allied the Samata Party (14.4 per cent in 1996 and 14.6 per cent in 1998). Although both parties had made gains in the number of seats they had won, there can be little doubt that the BJP's performance in the State fell well below its expectations.

Table: 17, Electoral Performance of the BJP, 1998 Parliamentary Election

Sr. No.	STATE/UT	Seats			Votes Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	42	38	4	18.3
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2	2	0	21.75
3	ASSAM	14	14	1	24.47
4	BIHAR	54	32	20	24.03
5	GOA	2	2	0	30.04
6	GUJARAT	26	26	19	48.28
7	HARYANA	10	6	1	18.89
8	HIMACHAL PRADESH	4	4	3	51.43
9	JAMMU & KASHMIR	6	6	2	28.64
10	KARNATAKA	28	18	13	26.95
11	KERALA	20	20	0	8.02
12	MADHYA PRADESH	40	40	30	45.73
13	MAHARASHTRA	48	25	4	22.49
14	MANIPUR	2	1	0	12.61
15	MEGHALAYA	2	2	0	9.01

16	MIZORAM	1	1	0	2.94
17	NAGALAND	1	-	-	-
18	ORISSA	21	9	7	21.19
19	PUNJAB	13	3	3	11.67
20	RAJASTHAN	25	25	5	41.65
21	SIKKIM	1	-	-	6.86
22	TAMIL NADU	39	5	3	6.86
23	TRIPURA	2	2	0	8.19
24	UTTAR PRADESH	85	82	57	36.49
25	WEST BENGAL	42	14	1	10.2
26	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	1	1	0	35.33
27	CHANDIGARH	1	1	1	42.36
28	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	1	1	1	53.73
29	DAMAN & DIU	1	1	1	41.96
30	DELHI	7	7	6	50.73
31	PONDICHERRY	1	-	-	-
	TOTAL	543	388	182	25.59%

Source: STATISTICAL REPORT ON GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1998 TO THE TWELFTH LOK SABHA, VOLUME I Election Commission of India.

The 1998 election results indicate that, for all its public announcements that it was a party whose time had come, the BJP was, electorally speaking, a strong but peculiarly vulnerable party. Its strength in the twelfth Lok Sabha was based, first, on alliances with parties whose reasons for allying with the BJP were at least as self-seeking and opportunist as the BJP's reasons for allying with them, and, secondly, on seats won in States U.P. was the prime example where its strength seems to have peaked and where it was dependent on the disunity of its opponents for sustenance.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee, emerged as a leader of largest party/coalition in the popular House, and he was invited by K.R. Narayana, President of India to form the government and win a 'vote of confidence', on the floor of the House. Vajpayee government did it, when TDP accepted the post of Speaker in Lok Sabha and G.M.C. Balayogi was elected for same, on 24 March 1998. The BJP worked hard and succeeded in putting together

eighteen parties' coalition known as the NDA since then. After coming into power, the Vajpayee ministry conducted 'Pokharan-II nuclear tests', in May 1998, which brought unity to fractious coalition and enabled the BJP to avoid substantive debate within the government on economic and political issues that were more troublesome and potentially dangerous to the existence of the NDA.¹²⁴ Right from the beginning, the NDA ministry was weak and it faced various restraints. The 'trident demands' of NDA allies such as Trinamool

Congress, Samata Party and AIADMK wanting to removal of West Bengal, Bihar and Tamil Nadu state governments, respectively. The SAD (B) and INLD demanded to roll back in oil prices and certain essential commodities, respectively increased the vulnerability of the central government.¹²⁵ Under the pressure of its allies, the BJP tried to impose 'President's rule' in Bihar and to some extent rolled back the prices of petroleum products to appease Samata party, INLD and SAD (B), to make sure continued support for government.

The AIADMK leader Jayalalitha wanted removal of DMK ministry in Tamil Nadu and also dropping of corruption cases against her. When her demands were not accommodated by NDA, she withdrew its support from the ruling coalition. Even then, the NDA leadership confidently believed to survive, but story changed with a last minute withdrawal of support by the BSP, in apparent revenge for BJP's machinations in bringing down Mayawati government in Uttar Pradesh when she was the Chief Minister. In a way, Union Cabinet fell by rarest of margins of single vote 269 votes in favour of the NDA government and 270 votes against it. It was Pyrrhic victory for the Congress Party and the Left parties, preparing to bring down Council of Minister, but they failed to fulfill the complete modalities for forming the next coalition government.¹²⁶

The 12th Lok Sabha had special features to its credit. (I) BJP tried to transform itself into a 'responsible national party,' that was, seen as less untouchable or anti-secular. (II) There was emergence of bi-polar inclination which created a fragile and transitory coalitional government. (III) The changes occurred in state level party system, the regional parties, allied either with the BJP or the INC tried improving their political

¹²⁴ Shaila Seshia, "Divide and Rule in Indian Party Politics, The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party", Asian Survey, Vol. XXXVIII, No.11, November 1998, p.1048.

¹²⁵ Yogesh Atal, The Mandate for Political Transition: Re-emergence of Vajpayee, Jaipur: Rawat Publication, 2003, p.23.

¹²⁶ Devesh Kapur, "India in 1999", Asian Survey, Vol. 40, No.1, January-February, 2000, p.195-196.

position, in their respective states and increased their bargaining power with Centre. However, these alliances were neither ideological nor did they have common objective to strengthen them together. These were merely short term strategic arrangement developed by ambitious politicians that were entrenched in the exchange of shared benefits and the compulsions of power. Consequently, regionalization of politics in state level was important and continuing factor in determining present national party system.¹²⁷ (IV) It was the first time; a government was based on pre-poll adjustments and headed by a larger political party as BJP. (V) Almost all partners shared power with the BJP, unlike previous governments, except, Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress.¹²⁸

The Indian polity jumped into the 'post-Congress era.' It did not mean that Congress come to an end to be a major player; indeed, it continued to be a major player in all but in few states. In simple words, it was 'post-Congress polity', in the sense that the party come to an end to be the pole around which the political competition was structured.¹²⁹

1999 LOK SABHA ELECTION

The general election to the Lok Sabha called in April 1999 was the third in as many years. The general election results in March 1998 produced a hung parliament in which the BJP was the largest party. The BJP was able to form a coalition government with the support of a number of regional parties but stability eluded it. The government was a minority administration in which a number of individual parties were in a crucial position. These parties, though supporters of the coalition, held enough seats to tip the balance in a no-confidence vote. One party in particular, the AIADMK from Tamil Nadu, misused this position of strength and made a series of demands to which the BJP would not allow. The government fell in April 1999 following a confidence vote in which the AIADMK opposed the BJP coalition. The election was scheduled for September 1999 and it was decided that a number of state assembly elections should held at the same time. These included elections in the important states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The election established the regionalization of national politics in India that had been deceptive for a number of years. The elections also

¹²⁷ Sudha Pai, op. cit. p. 849-851.

¹²⁸ Kushal Pal, "Coalition Government at Centre", Third Concept, Vol. 12, No. 138, August 1998, pp.16-17.

¹²⁹ Anthony Heath and Yogendra Yadav, "The United Colours of Congress: Social Profile of Congress Voters, 1996 and 1998" in Hasan, p.128.

delivered useful evidence with which to evaluate the character and strengths of the two leading parties: the BJP and the Congress Party.

FORMATION OF NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE

The political scene in 1999, seemed to be as fragmented as in the previous elections during 1990s. The 13-party BJP-led NDA alliance stayed reasonably cohesive despite the fall of its government. One alliance partner the AIADMK, abandoned it, but AIADMK's main rival in Tamil Nadu, the DMK, compensated the loss by joining the BJP alliance. During the course of the tenure of the Vajpayee government, the AIADMK had lobbied for dismissal of the DMK government in Tamil Nadu. The smaller allies of the AIADMK-the PMK, MDMK and TRC in the BJP-led coalition and later, in a shift of loyalties, allied with the DMK. Nonetheless, the DMK's former ally in Tamil Nadu, the TMC, broke its ties with the DMK after DMK general council formally resolved to join the NDA. Karunanidhi later clarified that party's joining the NDA did not mean its endorsement of that '*Hindutva* concept will continue to be committed to minority community'.¹³⁰ The DMK thus strengthened the secular block in the NDA, which consisted of, informally, the Samata Party, TDP, National Conference, BJD, etc. Beside the BJP-DMK and Congress-AIADMK alliances in Tamil Nadu, the TMC leaders - G.K Moopanar, K. Krisnnasamy with Puthiya Thamilagam, an independent leader, formed a third front in the states. The Progressive People's Front included the JD (Secular), RPI and Dalit Panthers. The main plank of the front was its campaign against religious fundamentalism and corruption.

The BJP-led federal alliance had included three regional parties in the north-west: the National Conference, Akali Dal (Badal), and Indian National Lok Dal. Akali Dal and National Conference stood confidently with the BJP-led coalition government. The presence of these two parties, both ruling in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, strengthened the BJP-coalition government in New Delhi. In July 1999, the HVP government in Haryana led by Bansi Lal all of a sudden fell because of the withdrawal of Congress support and because of a split in the HVP. That offered an opportunity to Chautala to form an alternative government as a joint candidate of INLD, BJP and HVP

¹³⁰ Indian Recorder, 2-8 July, 1999, p. 4587.

rebels. But relations between INLD and BJP were not without problems. Chautala was inclined to vote against the Vajpayee government in the crucial confidence motion on the issue of the withdrawal of subsidies to farmers, but, he finally joined at the eleventh hour and contested the midterm polls as an ally of the NDA.

The BJP-led allies met on 15th May, 1999 and gave their alliance a formal collective name, the National Democratic Alliance. The constituents retained their distinct identities but decided to contest the upcoming elections using a common manifesto under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee of BJP. The Telugu- Desam, Trinamool Congress and National Conference were concerned about the impact of their alliance with the BJP on their significant Muslim electorate in their respective states. Nonetheless, they were not present in this meeting but they in due course stuck to the alliance.

Moreover the DMK, another major group to join the NDA in July, 1999 was a major faction of the Janata Dal. The JD chief minister of Karnataka, J.H. Patel, individually decided to join the NDA. The move was opposed by the majority in National Political Affairs Committee of the party, but Sharad Yadav faction in the committee rebelled and joined forces with the majority faction in the Karnataka Janata Dal in their move to build bridges with the NDA. Indeed, the NDA allies, the Samata Party and Lok Shakti, also merged with the rebel Janata Dal and formed a new party, Janata Dal (United). The main Janata Dal under H.D. Deve Gowda now became the Janta Dal (Secular). It stayed out of the NDA.

The NDA still remained a confederal inter-party formation. There was no move to form a federal party like the Janata Party in 1977. The constituent parties had formally merged into the Janata Party. Composition of the NDA was much more diverse in regional and cultural terms than the Janata Party, which was essentially a north-Indian phenomenon. The NDA has become an all-India affair.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND ISSUES

The BJP re-nominated nearly 62 per cent of the sitting MPs of the dissolved Lok Sabha. 59 percent of the Congress candidates were new. Splits in the Congress Party had increased the number of regional parties. The slow breakdown of the Janata Dal since 1989 had also added to the ranks of the regional parties. The rise of the BJP and the emergence of the regional parties on the national stage define the context of the 1999

general election. Taken together they demonstrate the collapse of the dominant Congress party system.

Superficially the 1999 election can be seen as a contest between two national parties, the BJP and Congress, each at the head of their own alliances. However, the proliferation of political parties and the partial nature of the two main alliances had complicated the matter. The outgoing parliament in 1999 contained no less than 37 parties and six independent MPs. Neither of the two national parties was in a position to win a national mandate in 1999. The BJP was the largest party after the 1998 election but even so it was 90 seats short of a majority in a 545 seat house. The notion of what it is to be a national party in India needs clarification. The BJP and Congress described themselves as national parties but in both cases the claim required critical treatment. It was true that a concept of the nation was an important part of their organizational identity. However neither party fielded a full quota of candidates in 1999. Congress was ahead in this category with 453 out of a possible 543 candidates. The BJP only contested 339 seats. In terms of votes won these parties together won 51.4 per cent of the vote in 1998 and there was no reason to anticipate a major change in 1999. The Congress Party gathered support in pockets across the country but was especially weak in the large northern states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. These two states elect 54 and 85 MPs respectively. In contrast the BJP could not win votes without allies in southern and eastern India. Nevertheless both parties won sufficient seats to stand apart from the variety of smaller parties that make a technical claim, under rules set out by the Election Commission, to be national parties.

One consequence of the fragmentation of the Indian party system was that it became ever more difficult to talk of a meaningful national campaign. Outcomes were dependent on particular electoral alliances and a variety of local issues. The states acted as fairly self-contained political systems each with a divergent political configuration. Regional parties, now so important in the Indian party system, organized their campaigns on a regional basis. They also mobilized voters by promoting regional identities and issues. It was in the interest of the BJP and the Congress Party to keep the notion of a national political ground alive. They endorsed the idea of the nation over the region and hoped to move the focus to national issues that will make the regional parties appear irrelevant, though the BJP had to approach this issue with care. The Congress Party made the issue of a stable national government by one party a central plank of its campaign strategy. The party vacillated on the key issues of secularism and

the economy. Before the campaign it was suggested that the party was prepared to dilute its commitment to pro-market reforms and favour stronger pro-poor policies. However Congress also gave parliamentary support to the BJP's attempts to deepen the reform process a few months before the election. Congress made a campaign pitch for the minority vote claiming that, unlike the BJP, it was a sincerely secular party that could be trustworthy to protect the minorities. However it was put forward in January 1999 that support for secularism would not destabilize the interests of the Hindu majority.¹³¹

The issue of leadership was given a high profile by both national parties. The Congress Party pursued to project Sonia Gandhi as a national leader. Following the assassination in 1991 of her husband and former Prime Minister, Rajiv, Sonia remained detached from politics. She finished her isolation by participating in the Congress general election campaign in 1998 and became leader of the party later that year. It was expected that the association with the Nehru–Gandhi family would work in the party's favour. The choice of a political beginner as leader provided further indication of the Congress decline. Rather than aiming for reelection on the basis of a robust party organization it was expected that dynastic appeal would provide a convenient shortcut to power. The BJP claimed that Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the serving Prime Minister, was an exceptional leader. Vajpayee had sophisticated the image of a liberal statesmanlike figure, which was deployed to full effect in public events and campaign advertising. His reputation for moderation was used to endorse the impression that the BJP, having foregone its contentious policies, was now a trustworthy mainstream party. The emphasis on leadership meant that Sonia Gandhi's citizenship became an issue. She was an accepted, rather than a native born, Indian citizen. It was claimed that Sonia Gandhi was not qualified to become Prime Minister should Congress form a government after the election. The issue was raised again and again in the campaign by a variety of figures within the BJP alliance though Vajpayee himself did not wish to be accompanying with such negative strategies.

Since 1991, when the Congress government accelerated the process of liberalisation of the economy, there had been a growing conjunction of ideological perspectives, at least, among the larger parties and alliances. Thus, both the NDA and Congress and its allies were broadly in favour of neo-classical, pro-market economic reforms, without

¹³¹ Asian Age, 16 January 1999

fully writing off the role of the State in the economy and providing with protectionist policies for domestic industries. The common manifesto of the NDA, was mostly recycled from the National Agenda for Governance 1998, which was issued before the polls.

The old leftists wanted the complete control of state on industry while the rightist wanted to leave it to the market. But the NDA rejected both the approaches. According to it government and industry must work together to achieve main objectives. It will enrich the vitality of the market with effective and efficient control of the state. The NDA was neither in favour of capitalism nor in favour of socialism completely but it aimed at to establish society in which the citizens could demand and obtain all sorts of public goods.¹³²

The congress repeated its strong assurance to faster economic reforms with a human face. It pronounced that higher growth was possible only if we invested more in physical and social infrastructure and only if the pattern of public expenses at all levels reflected persistent socio-economic priorities and needs of the poor, the unemployed, the depressed, the malnourished and the disadvantaged of India.¹³³

The differences among parties on economic and cultural identity issues largely overlapped. The division among parties on economic issues expressed itself between neo-liberal market reforms and economic nationalism public welfarism. The cultural difference was between Hindu nationalism and Indian secularism. Nonetheless, the ruling NDA coalition effectively put an end to the debate of secular-communal conflict by dropping the contentious issues of the Ram temple, Common Civil Code and Article 370 of the Constitution in relation to Jammu and Kashmir, from the common parties, even though the Janata Party manifesto of the pre-1999 elections had been included by them. The BJP did not issue a separate manifesto in 1999. Yet, the parties which were not in the NDA continued to allege the BJP of admitting and practising Hindu communalism to the disadvantage of the minorities.

On India's foreign policy, the national unanimity on non-alignment and nuclearisation for peaceful purposes tended to break down in the post-Cold War and post- Pokharan-II periods. Neither the NDA nor the Congress manifesto mentioned non-alignment in

¹³² NDA, Agenda for a Proud, Prosperous India, Lok Sabha 1999, An Agenda for a Proud, Prosperous India, NDA, 11 Ashoka Road, New Delhi, 1999.

¹³³ Indian National Congress (I), General Election Manifesto 1999, Congress (I) Publication, 1999, New Delhi, AICC, 24 Akbar Road. 1999.

the recent elections. The NDA manifesto, however, was dedicated to make the voice of India as the voice of the developing world.¹³⁴ There was no attempt to develop India's nuclear doctrine in changed context of both India and Pakistan going nuclear. Not even the Congress manifesto mentioned it which in 1999 underlined the need for the foreign policy to be supported by the enormous majority of the people. Foreign policy must have strong domestic roots and must reflect domestic priorities and concerns.¹³⁵ The Congress and BJP appeared to display themselves as nationalist while in opposition, and globalist when in government. They came to power in the 1990s only in a minority. Hence, there was an obligation to act on a multi-party consensus or create one when required.

Recent electoral trends had shown that the incumbency factor had emerged as a good predictor of elections in the sense that a party in power was hardly returned to office in the following elections. This was the advent of mature voter assessing the performance of governments in office. The 1999 mid-term polls were held in an unusual atmosphere. Although the previous election had been under normal conditions and the inflation rate had been below two per cent for many years, the Kargil war was thrust upon the nation unexpectedly between the fall of one government and the holding of the subsequent polls. This was both a bane as well as a boon for the government.

Kargil created nationalist passion in the face of blatant aggression. Almost all parts of the country sorrowed deaths of officers and jawans on the front. There was, exceptional diplomatic support from the international community, including, the USA. Finally, India succeeded in its limited military objective of preventing invaders from the Line of Control. The nationalist rise came to the rescue of Vajpayee government.

The BJP tried to win over the voters through a sympathy wave. Its election campaign mostly reflected this wave. For example, one of its election pamphlets had specified: What wrong did this man do? Kya Kasoor Tha Iss Aadmi Ka?

He recognized India's self-respect by conducting the Pokhran blasts, extended a hand of friendship with the bus ride to Lahore, and took the economy back on the rails? Provided farmers with credit cards, resolved more than 100 years old Kaveri water dispute, ensured free education for girls up to the university level.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ NDA Agenda for a proud, prosperous India, Op. Cit. p.8.

¹³⁵ Indian National Congress (I), General Election Manifesto 1999,

¹³⁶ The Times of India, 17 April, 1999.

Another pamphlet said ‘as a friend, he can travel far to shake a hand. When betrayed, he can crush it with a Kargil. In just 17 months, he transformed recession into growth. Imagine what he will do in five years.’¹³⁷ BJP in this way pursued to woo the voters through the sympathy wave created by the Kargil as well as the Congressional disloyalty. Thus the party had been very active in endorsing alliances all over the country. Its tactic finally paid and the party returned to power with a strength of 300 seats in the Lok Sabha in 1999.

Notwithstanding the long shadow cast by Kargil on the mandate of 1999, political parties stepped up an energetic campaign spread over almost two months owing to the five-phase polling in different parts of the country. Indeed, it was a swift shift of the scene from the war front to the hustling. Elections moved in three different knocks conducted mainly by different sets of personnel: national, regional and local. The national circuit, this time, was almost entirely monopolized by the BJP’s Atal Bihari Vajpayee and from the Congress, Sonia Gandhi’s son Rahul, daughter Priyanka.

The regional campaigning was dominated in different states by regional leaders. They campaigned hard in their home states, many of them, especially the larger regional players, were contesting in alliance with one or the other major national parties, but these alliances were largely loaded in favour of the regional partners, especially, when it came to the division and sharing of Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha seats. This situation can be judged from the fact that Jayalalitha kept Sonia Gandhi waiting during the campaign for nearly an hour at a joint Congress-AIADMK rally in Tamil Nadu before finally regretting her absence. This indicated the relationship between national and regional parties before the 1999 polls. The emphasis was on the local issues, clusters of village settlements and urban colonies.

As in the recent previous elections, the Election Commission of India played a great role in ensuring a free and fair poll. It again worked out schedule of campaign broadcasts and telecasted on the government managed electronic media by the recognized political parties free of cost. However, it prescribed paid advertisements by parties on private TV channels to diminish the influence of money power during elections and ensure parity for all parties. The commission made sure the implementation of the model code of conduct and did not hesitate in curbing even the big leaders of land. Also the presence of the three chiefs of the armed forces at a

¹³⁷ The Times of India, 26 August, 1999.

meeting addressed by the prime minister in Haryana was an obvious exploitation of the Kargil war for electoral gains.¹³⁸

The commission also attempted to stop the broadcasting of exit-poll results conducted during the early phases of the polls till the completion of the last phase of voting so that early voting trend do not influence the voting behaviour of the latter voters. However, the commission's order to this effect was challenged in the Supreme Court and overturned which deceived the institutional rivalry of the judges against the commissioners.¹³⁹

In short, the NDA fought elections on the issues like Kargil War, Pokhran-11, sympathy with Vajpayee, National Agenda for Governance and Foreign origin of Sonia Gandhi. The nuclear explosion at Pokhran in May, 1998 paved the way for India to enter into an elite nuclear club. Similarly the Kargil War also created nationalist fervor in the face of blatant aggression. Almost all parts of country moaned officers and jawans on the front. There was exceptional diplomatic support from international community. Finally, India succeeded in its limited military objective of preventing the invaders from LoC. The impact of these events appeared to be a sort of boost to Indian nationalism which the NDA tried its level best to exploit. The NDA also tried to win the votes through a sympathy wave. Its election campaign mostly reflected this wave when it showed pamphlet about Vajpayee that what wrong did this man do? *Kay Kasoor tha Iss Aadmin Ka?* Why the government of Vajpayee was made to collapse in thirteenth months? The issue of foreign origin of Sonia Gandhi was also highlighted by the party to increase votes. The elections were, predominantly, marked by a hot controversy regarding Sonia Gandhi as a Prime ministerial candidate both within her party and outside.

ELECTION RESULTS AND OUTCOME

The electoral outcome in 1999, manifest a continuity as well as a departure from the political patterns established in 1998. The continuity lays in the coming to power again of a right-centrist coalition led by the BJP. The departure was that for the first time in the decade, a coalition government was voted to power that was no longer dependent on support from *outside*. All the coalition partners joined the cabinet, except TDP

¹³⁸ Election Commission of India, Press Release during the Pendency of the poll, Indian Recorder, 1999, p. 4554.

¹³⁹ Indian Recorder, 10-16 September, 1999, p.4792.

whose representative, G.M.C. Balayogi, became the speaker of the Lok Sabha. This was, thus, not a minority government reliant on on parliamentary support of parties that were half inside and half outside the coalition. This was, indeed, the factor that had brought down all the previous coalition governments in the decade. With this vital destabilizing factor out of the way, the NDA government could look to the future with a greater degree of confidence. Yet, for the leading party in the coalition there was not much to delight about. For, even though the BJP overlooked over other allies, its parliamentary seats registered an increase of only two seats i.e.182 seats against 180 in the previous Lok Sabha. Its vote share percentage declined from 25.47 to 23.75. However, its main opponent, the Congress, suffered a major decline in its number of seats from 141 to 114 even though its vote stood at 28.30 per cent, that is, 4.55 per cent higher than that of the BJP. The Congress increased its vote percentage from 25.88 to 28.30.

While comparing the electoral performance of the two largest single parties leading the two major coalitional blocs, it was observed that the congress captured over 30 per cent votes in 16 states and six union territories. In terms of its parliamentary seat share, it was on or above the 40 per cent mark in seven states and four union territories. The BJP crossed the 30 percent mark in terms of vote share in six states and four union territories. In terms of seat share, it won over 40 per cent mark in eight states and two union territories. None of the other national parties captured even six per cent of the national votes or seven percent of the parliamentary seats. The best performance among these minor national parties was that of the CPI (M) with 5.4 per cent of votes and 6.1 per cent of seats nationally.

Among the major regional parties, counting the largest ones in their respective states, it got nine state parties with their seats shares in their respective states ranging between 69 per cent TDP in Andhra Pradesh and 13 per cent RJD in Bihar. Their respective vote shares in the limited arenas of their states ranged between 39.9 per cent TDP and 16.9 per cent Shiv Sena in Maharashtra.

The BJP and its Alliances

For the BJP, the idea of being the biggest and the most influential partner in the NDA was a better bet than single handedly contesting the elections with slighter chances of winning and forming the government. Though the reasons for entering into such an alliance were many such as incentives of power sharing, common issues, ideological

similarly in the case of BJP-Shiv Sena alliance, etc., yet the binding thread appeared to be anti-Congressism.

In the southern region, the BJP, with its allies, won 74 out of the 130 seats, which was an incredible enhancement over the 50 seats captured in 1998. If one excludes Kerala, where the BJP was not a major force, then the party and its allies captured as much as 71 out of 110 seats.

In Andhra Pradesh, the BJP-TDP alliance proved to be equally advantageous for both. In a state where politics moved around the competition between the TDP and the Congress, the BJP benefitted in the absence of an anti-incumbency mood against Chandrababu Naidu and won 7 seats as against 4 in 1998 general elections. Naidu, on the other hand, enmeshed Vajpayee's notable national ratings and romped home with a remarkable tally of 29 seats in Lok Sabha elections as against 12 in 1998 and won 180 of the total 293 assembly seats.

In Karnataka, in 1998 general elections an alliance with R.K. Hegde's Lok Shakti and the anti-incumbency vote against the Janata Dal government of J.H. Patel brought rich dividends to the BJP. The Lok Shakti-BJP alliance won 16 of the 28 seats with Lok Shakti 3 and BJP 13.

But in the early days of campaigning for 1999 Lok Sabha Elections, the strategy of Hegde to rope in his all-time friend J.H. Patel thus forming Janata Dal (United)-comprising Patel's faction and Hegde's Lok Shakti-shocked and agitated the local state BJP workers as well as the national leaders. The result was a disaster for the BJP-JD (U) alliance in Karnataka with the BJP secured just 7 seats. Some of the more important reasons for this disaster were: anti-incumbency vote against J.H. Patel, factionalism in the party, misunderstanding regarding seat sharing result of a last minute decision to form an alliance unlike in 1998 and pro-Lingayat posture of Patel and B.S. Yediyurappa.

In Tamil Nadu, in 1998 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP-AIADMK alliance seized 30 of the total 39 seats out of which the BJP had just 3 seats as against none in 1996 general elections. The AIADMK's role in destabilising the 1998 BJP-led government compelled the BJP to enter into a difficult alliance with AIADMK's political rival in the state—the DMK. The alliance with DMK a party which was not only very much critical of the BJP's various moves during NDA's 13 months term but was still voicing its anger till the date of confidence vote in 1999 improved BJP's tally from 3 to 4 but reduced the alliance tally to 25 from previous year's 30.

In Punjab the BJP-SAD alliance could win only 3 seats out of a total of 13. The main reasons for such a debacle were an agitated mood against the Badal Government, split in the Akali Dal which led to the creation of All India Shiromani Akali Dal (AISD) under the leadership of former Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) President Gurucharan Singh Tohra, a substantial shift of the Dalit votes from the BSP to the Congress and comparatively poor selection of candidates by Akali Dal and BJP. Haryana perceived a vertical caste polarisation between the Jats and non-jats. A state mostly characterised by feudal politics was clean swepted by the BJP-INLD combine. The victory in Kargil war was the trump card which landed them safely gaining all the 10 parliamentary seats. The main reason for this remarkable performance was that apart from being a largely agrarian state, major source of employment in Haryana was the armed forces.

Table: 18, Electoral Performance of the BJP, 1999 Parliamentary Election

Sr. No.	STATE/UT	Seats			Votes Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	42	8	7	9.9
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2	1	0	16.3
3	ASSAM	14	12	2	29.84
4	BIHAR	54	29	23	23.01
5	GOA	2	2	2	51.49
6	GUJARAT	26	26	20	52.48
7	HARYANA	10	5	5	29.21
8	HIMACHAL PRADESH	4	3	3	46.27
9	JAMMU & KASHMIR	6	6	2	31.56
10	KARNATAKA	28	19	7	27.19
11	KERALA	20	14	0	6.56
12	MADHYA PRADESH	40	40	29	46.58
13	MAHARASHTRA	48	26	13	21.18
14	MANIPUR	2	1	0	1.02
15	MEGHALAYA	2	2	0	9.45
16	MIZORAM	1	-	-	-
17	NAGALAND	1	1	0	5.12
18	ORISSA	21	9	9	24.63
19	PUNJAB	13	3	1	9.16
20	RAJASTHAN	25	24	16	47.23
21	SIKKIM	1	-	-	-
22	TAMIL NADU	39	6	4	7.14
23	TRIPURA	2	1	0	12.82
24	UTTAR PRADESH	85	77	29	27.64
25	WEST BENGAL	42	13	2	11.13
26	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	1	1	1	52.74
27	CHANDIGARH	1	1	0	45.07

28	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	1	1	0	20.83
29	DAMAN & DIU	1	1	0	43.13
30	DELHI	7	7	7	51.75
31	PONDICHERRY	1	-	-	-
	TOTAL	543	339	182	23.75%

Source: STATISTICAL REPORT ON GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1999 TO THE THIRTEENTH LOK SABHA, VOLUME I Election Commission of India.

In Maharashtra, the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance was the only one which had performed well despite their vigorous differences on Hindutva and nationalism. The triangular contest between the five-party Progressive Democratic Front comprising Nationalist Congress Party, two factions of RPI, Swatantra Bharat Paksh, Samajwadi Party and Janata Dal – Secular, the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance and the Congress not only divided the Congress votes, mostly in southern Maharashtra, but also made it difficult for the party to field good candidates, thus making it easy for the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance to secure 28 of the 48 Lok Sabha seats.

The fact that the BJP got 50 seats as against 75 of the Congress in a 288 seat state assembly elections and 12 seats as against 11 of the Congress out of 48 Lok Sabha seats indicates that people voted for the NDA in national elections while they rejected the same alliance, i.e., the BJP-Shiv Sena, in the state assembly elections.¹⁴⁰

West Bengal observed a triangular contest between three main formations- the CPI (M)-led ruling left front, the TMC-BJP combine and the Congress. With the only aim of cutting into Congress' vote share, Sharad Pawar's NCP also fielded six candidates though it didn't expect to win any seat. TMC's leader Mamta Banerjee made an unreadable move by staying out of the BJP- led NDA and also avoided joint campaign with the BJP but had a seat-sharing arrangement with the BJP as the party left 3 out of 42 seats for the BJP and contested the remaining 39 all alone. She desired to join the ministry in case the BJP comes to power¹⁴¹ and had consistently voiced her opinion in favour of the BJP. The manifesto of the TMC did not seek to bring in legislation that will ensure a full term for a government as suggested by other NDA partners and was silent on Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin which showed that the so-called unconditional support to the government had some hidden objective. The NDA succeeded to increase

¹⁴⁰ Frontline, August 13 1999, p. 44.

¹⁴¹ Outlook, 6 September, 1999, p.19.

the tally of 1998 to Lok Sabha seats in 1999. Though the BJP-TMC combine succeeded in making a dent in some communist dominated areas of West Bengal yet the rural West Bengal still remained detached and almost out of the reach of anti-left forces.

In Bihar the entire Hindi speaking belt (still) was believed to be a stronghold of the BJP. In this election the party managed to carve in roads in areas, which were the traditional vote banks of Yadavs and Jats, by managing seat sharing arrangements with state level political parties. In Bihar, BJP's alliance partner Samata party was ideologically different but the common anti-Laloo feelings had helped the two to come together.

Nitish Kumar has said 'I am the biggest opponent of the BJP but in Bihar they are the strongest anti-Laloo force. So enemy's enemy is a friend. If today I decide to wear a garb of ideology then Laloo says there is no communal-secular divide in Bihar. It is only Laloo versus anti-Laloo'¹⁴²

The anti-incumbency mood, various allegations against Laloo Yadav, erosion of the traditional support base of dalits, and also the arithmetic of the alliance helped the BJP-JD (U) combine to increase their tally up to 40 from 30 in 1998 elections.

The state of Orissa which, until two elections ago, was not even familiar with saffron power witnessed an extraordinary victory of the BJP-BJD combine as they won 19 out of 21 parliamentary seats. The BJP's emergence as a third force in Orissa was the result of its response to the regional sensitivity in Orissa. The traditional socio-economic divide between the region was again politically relevant which the BJP expected to exploit³⁸. Thus the BJP-BJD alliance gained acceptance not only as a role only viable alternative but also as a combined force to counter the misrule of the Congress in the state. Kargil War, Vajpayee's rating as the prime minister, and the issue of tribal conversions in north Orissa also contributed to the victory for the saffron alliance.

The north eastern states had either been the stronghold of the Congress or the split groups of the Congress, viz., Arunachal Congress and Manipur State Congress. Realising the need to enter into politics of the north-east, the BJP, in the election campaign, worried their stand against insurgency, infiltration and separatism. They even tried to enter into an alliance with parties like Assom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Tripura Upajati Sangh (TUJS). But they could not make any considerable gain and were able to increase only one seat in 1998 to 2 in 1999 elections.

¹⁴² Nitish Kumar's interview in the Frontline, 23 November, 1995.

To sum up, in southern region, the NDA won 74 out of 130 seats, a tremendous improvement over the 50 seats in 1998. In north, the NDA got 13 seats out of 23 seats with its alliance with SAD (B) and INLD. In west, it got 28 out of 48 seats in Maharashtra due to the defections in Congress party and the issue of Sonia's foreign origin. In eastern states the NDA won 69 seats out of 107, whereas West Bengal witnessed a triangular contest between three major formations-the CPI (M) led ruling front, TMC-BJP combine and Congress. In Bihar, the entire Hindi speaking belt is believed to be a stronghold of BJP. The BJP's emergence as a third force in Orissa was the result of its response to the regional sensitivity in Orissa. Hence, NDA got a tremendous victory by exploiting its election issues successfully.

BJP-Led NDA Government Participation and Portfolio Allocation

The BJP-led NDA Government distributed ministerial portfolios at the time of government formation. The leading position of the BJP in the Lok Sabha after the 1998 and 1999 elections, both as the biggest party and because of its electoral alliances with most of the parties which supported it, meant that it was able to control the distribution of ministerial posts. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was presented as the Prime Ministerial candidate in both campaigns, and held the post from 1998 until the NDA's electoral setback in 2004. As Prime Minister, Vajpayee was in charge of distributing portfolios between the BJP and supporting parties.

Allocation of power between the members of a coalition government had important consequences both for the cohesiveness of the government and the policy direction it adopted. Two rival models of portfolio allocation had been developed, one which proposed that government offices would be distributed respectively among coalition partners¹⁴³ and other, which anticipated that the distribution would replicate the bargaining power of each of the partners. Further deliberation could be given to the nature of specific portfolios; their relative importance and relation to specific policy areas.

The situation became complex by the disposition of some parties such as the TDP to support the NDA government, but refusal in accepting office. Other parties, such as the Lok Dal shared this watchfulness, whereas leaders such as Mamata Banerjee wavered

¹⁴³ Bueno De Mesquita, Strategy, Risk and Personality in Coalition Politics: The Case of India, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 26.

between accepting office and remaining apart over the course of the parliament. For the TDP, refusal of government office was partly offset by the selection of one of its party members (G.M.C. Balayogi) as Speaker of the Lok Sabha¹⁴⁴ In the initial allocation of portfolios, following the 1998 elections, 22 Cabinet ministers were selected with 21 Ministers of State.

Out of the cabinet posts half were occupied by members of the BJP, well under their fraction of the Lok Sabha representation of the NDA. In the Council of Ministers, this discrepancy was slightly rectified, with 14 out of the 21 Ministers outside the Cabinet being from the BJP. The allocation of cabinet and ministerial posts was approximately in accordance to the size of the membership of the governing coalition, the picture was somewhat distorted because the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) leader, Jayalalitha, negotiated on behalf of the group of parties (including the PMK, MDMK, TRC and JP) elected from Tamil Nadu.

Important ministries in the government, especially the Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Finance, were controlled by the members of the BJP.¹⁴⁵ Other ministerial appointments could be seen to have fitted the particular interests of the particular parties within the coalition. The BJP retained control of the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, portfolios which were central to the party's concern with the promotion of a cultural agenda in line with the Hindutva ideology. Alliance partners were allocated portfolios which tied in with the interests of the parties or states which they represented. Jayalalitha was facing legal allegations of corruption and her concern was served by the appointment of Thambi Durai, a prominent AIADMK leader, to the Law, Justice and Company Affairs portfolio. Naveen Patnaik's control of the Ministries of Mines and Steel reflected the particular interests of Orissa politics.

As party became balanced in 1998, the Prime Minister had to consider other aspects of regional, communal and political balance. The distribution of ministries reflected the general distribution of the coalition across the country, Tamil Nadu and Bihar were over-represented because of the importance of the AIADMK and Samata Party to the coalition and West Bengal and Haryana were not represented because of the Trinamul Congress and Lok Dal's decision to support the Government from outside. The BJP

¹⁴⁴ Katharine Adeney and Lawrence, Saez, (ed.) *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism*, New York, Routledge, 2005, p.24.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

claimed to have given sufficient representation to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and appointed some non-Hindu Ministers.

In 1998 and 1999 the Government representation of coalition partners inclined to be balanced with the appointment of BJP members from matching states; and Cabinet members from alliance parties were always accompanied by a Minister of State from the BJP. This meant that even when the BJP was a subordinate partner in a state alliance, it could often claim that the state had one BJP Minister, and ensure that coalition partners were not able to dominate any one area of policy.

In 1999 the BJP was in a solid position, and this was echoed in a greater share of government portfolios. The Janata Dal (U)/Samata combine was over-represented in the 1999 NDA Cabinet as a consequence of the incorporation of Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan into the NDA coalition. The 1999 Council of Ministers was much larger than that of 1998, with 69 Ministers appointed, compared to 43 in 1998. The size of the Government continued to grow; by 2002 the Cabinet had grown to 32 Ministers, and the Council of Ministers to 77.

Working and Achievements of National Democratic Alliance

National Democratic Alliance was first formed in 1998 and again came to power in 1999 under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The NDA was an alliance of various national and regional political parties led by the BJP. The NDA assured to end political instability created between 1996, 1998 and 1999 elections. Its common manifesto in the 1999 elections was an agenda for a proud and prosperous India.

The NDA Government was the first national coalition government in India to complete a full, five year term in office. The ability of the 24 party NDA to govern the whole term is one of the most extraordinary contemporary events in the history of post-independence politics in India. In the 1999 NDA government came in Centre with its alliance and worked upto 13 May, 2004.

The NDA was not reliant on outside support of any political party to carry out its programme. It was at the mercy of smaller allies within the coalition and hence, its internal coordination mechanism had to be strong. The alliance put in place the most widespread and elaborates mechanism to coordinate between partners within and outside the government. The NDA had a two dimensional coordination device, which was not limited simply to the political domain alone but also included inter-ministerial

collaboration. In the political domain, it formed the National Agenda for Governance (NAG) and the Coordination Committee (CC) moreover this, the alliance began to use broadly the all-party meetings and Chief Minister's conferences for discussion. At the governmental level it used the device of Group of Ministers (GOM) not only for administrative motives and formulation of policy matters but also to resolve the issues of political significance. The working of NDA coalition can be studied under two main heads maintenance of coalition and breakdown of coalition's government. Maintenance of coalition has been labelled at four points (1) National agenda for governance (2) Coordination committee (3) All party meetings (4) Government level-group of ministers.

The National Agenda for Governance (NAG) like the Common Minimum Programmes (CMP) of the UF made the first base on which the alliance revolved. The NAG echoed a commitment from the key alliance partner, the BJP obeyed to a moderate agenda not confirming to religious programmes only. This commitment aloof the untouchability label that the BJP carried, and allowed the allies to join hands with the party to form the alliance. Thus the NAG continued to be a significant part of daily political discourse and vital torchbearer for the alliance. At the second level, the NDA had a Coordination Committee (CC). Unlike the Steering Committee of the UF, the CC met more regularly and frequently. Considering the fact that the smaller parties held the key to the stability of the alliance, the CC played a key role in the maintenance of the alliance. The CC made it a point to meet before each parliamentary session to make sure floor coordination among the allies. The institution of all-party meetings brought together all political parties on a common platform. The all-party meeting route was used by government to prompt the opinion or make some elucidations to political parties on some legislation or projected legislative measures, and to discuss matters of national and international importance among other things. The benefit of this mechanism was that it gave the government a sounding board and most notably allowed discussion to take place in a relaxed and informal way as compared to parliament or any other such formal setting. This permitted parties to spontaneously express their opinion and reach compromises, which was not possible in parliament, where winning and losing, are recorded and publicized.

The NDA coordination machinery was not limited to political level only but also took place at the governmental level. The NDA federal coalition began to make use of inter-ministerial groups, which like the all-party mechanism, helped multiple purposes. The

GoM's helped the purpose of coordination within a coalition ministry, it facilitated to minimise differences of opinion and conflicts within the cabinet. It also facilitated in making important policy decisions and selection other policy and programme recommendations. This device was also used for the purpose of looking into matters of concern to different allies of the coalition. These groups popularly called Group of Ministers (GoM) usually composed of three to four members of the union cabinet. Thus coalitions grown newer and stronger mechanisms of coordination.

Though there is no single cause that has led to the breakdown of federal coalitions, there were many factors accountable. Competition at the state level the key reason for the breakdown of an alliance. Another reason for the breakdown of alliances could be outlined to the absence of an appropriate institutionalized consultation mechanism within the coalition. The game of power sharing was also accountable for breakdown of coalition. In the Indian system, this process of power sharing is largely done by the allocation of portfolios such as that of Cabinet Ministers, Ministers of State, Deputy Ministers; arrangement of important positions of authority, Constitutional posts of Governors, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Legislative posts such as headship and membership of parliamentary committees, consultative joint committees and others where nominations made by the Prime Minister. A weak organisational structure of the core party within the alliance was also a basis of breakdown of coalition. But the NDA handled competently with all these blockades responsible for breakdown of the coalition and provided a good performance during its tenure.

Moreover all pulls and pressures, the NDA did well in the areas of contentious legislations and reforms. It passed many Acts and Bills like Insurance Regulatory Development Authority Bill and Securities Laws (Amendment) Bill. Numerous legislations in conformity with government's policy of globalization and economic liberalization were also passed, for example, Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), Trade Marks Act, Copyright Amendment Act, etc. The government effectively introduced Information Technology Bill, 1999 to deliver legal recognition for e-commerce. Many inventive schemes were introduced by the government in areas like tourism, civil aviation, agriculture, law and justice, information and broadcasting, railways, power, surface transport and human resource development. Though, the government was frequently stunned by the controversies created by the hidden agenda of the BJP or the alliance partners as they sought to retain their position in the government and were to satisfy the home constituencies as well.

It competently managed to elect A.P.J. Kalam for the office of the President of India as a consensus candidate of the NDA and Congress which replicated the collective asset of the NDA allies. The office of the Vice President also went to Bharion Singh Shekhawat supported by the NDA. It also validated its strength by making reforms. It successfully made three new states-Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttranchal.

Thus NDA made admirable achievements to its credit in the arenas of Production and Development. In the domain of Production and Development number of achievements were made a note in the sectors of agriculture, industry, petroleum and natural gas, power, science and technology, steel, and water resources. Various welfare schemes were also started. In the fields of social justice and employment, tribal affairs, urban development and poverty alleviation, the achievements were up to the mark during the tenure of NDA.

The greatest political jolt to face the NDA was the Gujarat pogrom of 2002. The disaster of the BJP Government in Gujarat and the leadership in New Delhi to take decisive action against rioters can be seen to have been a major factor in the growth of communal violence in that state. This was a clear violation of the manifesto commitment of the NDA, yet there was only muted protest from the coalition partners of the BJP. While the TDP leader, Chandrababu Naidu, called for the elimination of the Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi, and Mamata Banerjee boycotted a meeting of the NDA Co-ordination Committee, there was only one resignation from government over the issue (Ram Vilas Paswan (JD (U))). A censure motion in the Lok Sabha on the Government's handling of the Gujarat massacres was easily defeated (276 votes to 182), even though the abstaining of the TDP. The explanation seems to be grounded in perceptions of the electoral impact at the state level. First, in Gujarat the BJP fought against the Congress on its own, and so the Gujarat riots did not recast the nature of party competition. Second, the electoral character of the events was uncertain, and there looked to be no substantial repercussion against the BJP. Indeed, the state assembly elections that followed the massacres saw the BJP government returned to power in Gujarat, and the 2004 national elections saw little evidence that the events led to a national vote swing against the BJP.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ A. Datar, (2004) 'A vote for secular politics', The Hindu, 20 May: AE-2.

The BJP-led coalition governments (1998-2004) deliberately accepted at the outset the following cost-reduction strategies to make sure its durability:

1. Constructing and fighting the election on a common agenda: The BJP in 1999 did not issue its own manifesto and decided to contest the election on an agreed upon common agenda. A common agenda usually operates on the principle that its broadness will attract the voters and be flexible enough to be acceptable to every member of the coalition subjugating various positions on the left-right spectrum.

2. Choosing more parties than essential to build the coalition: The 1999 coalition consists of 24 parties and can truly be regarded as a surplus coalition.

3. Over-sized government: While the 1998 government comprised marginally more than 40 members, the 1999 coalition started with 70 ministers. Had it been a single-party government this would have been much too large but the requirements of the coalition make this unavoidable. Its configuration was clearly calculated on the basis of satisfying regional, caste, communal and gender interests.¹⁴⁷

4. Coming up with a formula for determining the number of cabinet slots built on the parliamentary strength of the coalition partners made the distribution of the portfolios a transparent and equitable affair. It was decided that one Cabinet slot will be given for a party with six MPs and additional numbers were accustomed by offering other positions like Ministers of State.¹⁴⁸

5. Appeasing certain sectional interests by redeeming the electoral pledges made to them was also a sensible strategy. This was deceptive in the Vajpayee government's decision in its very first Cabinet meeting approving "the list of 116 castes/sub-castes from 17 States/Union Territories for inclusion in the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) list making them eligible for benefit of 27% reservation in Central government jobs".¹⁴⁹ The extension of reservation to the Jat community of Rajasthan and Delhi under the OBC category by the NDA government must be seen in the light of the assurance that the Congress had made to the community and had failed to honour it. Appeasing the interest of special groups was a good strategy to keep the constituent parties happy but the danger in this is that governments become "responsive without being responsible" since they only please some sections for purposes of keeping themselves in power.

¹⁴⁷ The Hindu, 23 October, 1999.

¹⁴⁸ India Today, 25 October 1999, p. 21.

¹⁴⁹ The Hindu, 22 October 1999.

6. This government had also been making various suggestions to amend the Constitution to reduce governmental instability. The BJP leaders had been arguing for a German type of law which specifies that an acceptable alternative government must be projected before pulling down the existing one. The other projected change relates to a fixed-term parliament. The NDA manifesto specially proposed the replacement of no-confidence motion “with the German system of a constructive vote of non-confidence” and “a fixed term (five years) for all elected bodies including legislatures”.¹⁵⁰ Both these proposals were broadly criticised by the opposition parties as well as by the media as devices intended by the present government to prolong itself in office. The NDA government nonetheless, went ahead with the creation of an 11-member Constitutional Review Commission to review the Constitution following the Prime Minister’s announcement that a review was reasonable for reasons of political stability and country’s development.¹⁵¹

Together these measures proved that the BJP and its allies acknowledged the inevitability of coalitions and were keen to make provisions for ensuring the stability of such governments. Settling itself to coalition politics was a major adjustment for the BJP since it is considered as anti-consociational and less devoted to power-sharing. But it appears to have shed these inhibitions while the more natural party to adjust to coalitions, namely the Congress had found it difficult to accept them specifically at a time when coalitions had become an essential part of Indian politics.¹⁵²

Those who despair about the number of political parties and the fragmentation of the Indian political system can take heart in the fact that India is slowly moving towards an emerging two-party system. One of the cited generalisations in comparative politics namely, Duverger’s Law commands that the first-past-the-post electoral system leads to a two-party system and India in this respect was supposed to be an anomaly.¹⁵³ But a closer look at the Indian experience suggests that at least at the state or regional level there has emerged a definite tendency towards a two-party system¹⁵⁴ with a regional party forming one pole and Congress/BJP forming another pole. In some circumstances we have two regional parties alternating in power such as in Tamil Nadu. At the Centre

¹⁵⁰ The NDA Manifesto, 1999.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² The Hindu, 25 October 1999.

¹⁵³ Brian J. Gaines, “Duverger’s Law and the Meaning of Exceptionalism,” *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 32, No.7 (October 1999), pp. 835-61 for a different perspective on the Canadian experience.

¹⁵⁴ E. Sridharan, “Duvergiers Law, Its Reformulations and the Evolution of the Indian Party System,” (New Delhi: Centre for Policy Research, 1997), p. 11-13.

too, one can see the existence of this structure except that it is in the form of two combinations - one could term this as clustered bipolarity. With the “now-we-see, now-we-don’t” phenomenon of the Third Force, it is BJP and its allies and Congress and its allies which form the two poles. These allies, of course, are the important regional parties which have come to acquire a great deal of clout in the Indian federal system.

CHAPTER-5

ECLIPSE of BJP: 2004-2014

Everyone in India, as well as the leaders of the opposition Indian National Congress (INC), was convinced that the incumbent Bharatiya Janata Party–led National Democratic Alliance (BJP-NDA) would handily win the April–May 2004 Indian Lok Sabha elections. In the days before the election results were declared, BJP leaders were already jostling for plum ministerial posts in the expected postelection reshuffle, while the Congress party’s leaders were on television trying to reduce expectations before what many predicted would be yet another miserable performance. The BJP had reason to be confident. The country was enjoying near record economic-growth rates, there was improvement on dialogues with Pakistan over the disturbed state of Kashmir, and Indians consistently told pollsters that BJP Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the person they most sought to lead the country. Furthermore, the BJP had done very well in some state elections in late 2003, prompting its leaders to call a premature national election rather than wait until the end of their five-year term in November. Opinion polls suggested that this was the right move. Even though they showed a narrowing of the gap between the BJP-NDA and the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (INC-UPA) in the run-up to the elections, most surveys continued to forecast a solid BJP-NDA victory. And then, to everyone’s surprise, Congress won. It was of course far from the kind of crushing victory that the party used to get during the years of Congress system (1950s-1980s), when it often won two-thirds to three-quarters of the seats in the Lok Sabha. This time Congress itself seized only 145 (27 percent) of the 543 seats in entire parliament, just ahead of the BJP, which won 138 (25 percent). But the INC-UPA as a whole won 219 seats (40 percent), compared to 185 (34 percent) for the BJP-NDA, placing it close to a stable majority in parliament. After a few days of consultations with the regional, state, and left-of-center parties, Congress cobbled together a coalition that the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) decided to support from the outside.

Reasons for the Early Election

Elected to office in 1998, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government led by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was the first

government in a long time to complete the normal five-year term. In spite of the fact that almost seven of the 1998 original coalition partners left the NDA, Vajpayee worked with the other 18 parties successfully warding off attacks from inside the BJP, from within the coalition, and the opposition led by the Congress Party. Buoyed with the success, and perceiving a “feel good” factor and seeing “India shining”, he declared that he will go to polls early. There were five reasons for his optimism.

First, the opposition was fractured and ineffective. The once hegemonic Congress Party which led India for long without ever having a majority vote, was left in a midpoint. Although the Party controlled 11 state governments, it had only about 100 members in the Parliament since the NDA government took power. The so-called “third front” never was on the horizon. In the absence of any great challenge, the NDA government claimed that it could deliver stability. It went to declare that it would also end the hereditary politics, or the Congress “dynasty” for good.

Second, the economy was doing well. The New Economic Policy of liberalisation was inaugurated under pressure from lenders such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund during the Congress government in 1991 by then Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, under the leadership of the then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. These reforms picked up speed during the NDA/BJP rule as Prime Minister Vajpayee himself declared: “We are carrying forward a process that was started by the Narasimha Rao [Congress] government and continued by the two United Front governments. But we do legitimately take the credit for having broadened and accelerated the reforms process.”¹⁵⁵

Far from the past “Hindu growth” of 2-3%, the Indian economy started growing at 7-8% annually. Even as the global economy was down, the top 100 Indian companies exported goods worth about US\$15 billion (Rs.700 billion). Taxes were cut, incomes rose, monsoons seemed on time, industry became competitive, and the people began spending. In a poll conducted in early 2004, 85% of Indians felt “most confident” that the local economy had improved, and 89% thought that it would improve the following year.¹⁵⁶

Third, the electoral scenarios looked bright In the December 2003 election, the Congress Party lost in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, and Rajasthan for the

¹⁵⁵ “Newsmaker of the Year,” India Today, 12 January 2004, p. 24.

¹⁵⁶ India Today, 2 February 2004, p. 31.

BJP, and won only in Delhi. In Mizoram, the National Front (a BJP ally) defeated the Congress Party. Sonia Gandhi, who as the President of the Congress Party was thought to be an asset, suddenly appeared like a liability.

Fourth, India's foreign relations improved in recent years. While the concern of the United States with terrorists in general and the Taliban in Afghanistan in particular grew, the relationship with the United States on the one hand and Pakistan on the other had taken on a different hue. Thus, for the first time in several decades the NDA government had friendly relations with the only superpower left on the globe. With its nuclear club membership status, India had reason to look the United States in the eye, if not as an equal, but certainly as a power to be reckoned with, not only in South Asia, but on the world scene. Such self-confidence may be seen from India's claim for a seat on the Security Council of the United Nations. In spite of the debacle of the Agra meeting between Prime Minister Vajpayee and President General Pervez Musharaff of Pakistan, relations seemed to be on the mend between India and Pakistan. The 1999 Kargil war controversy was put behind, if not forgotten.¹⁵⁷

Fifth, democratic elections in Jammu and Kashmir had show-cased Indian democracy for the world.

Election Campaign and Issues

For the first time, in 14th Lok Sabha elections in 2004, Indian politics witnessed a contest at national level between two serious coalitions, namely the NDA and the UPA.¹⁵⁸ The number of political parties in the fight was around 600 in 2004 general elections. But, the horns were locked between NDA and Congress and its allies.¹⁵⁹ In other words, the first elections of the 21st century turned out to be a 'battle of alliances,' between the BJP led NDA and Congress led alliance.¹⁶⁰ This was reflected in the qualitative move from command to competitive liberal market economy, from one

¹⁵⁷ "Cover Story" in India Today, 26 July 2004, pp. 6-12.

¹⁵⁸ E. Sridharan, "Electoral Coalitions in 2004 General Elections, Theory and Evidence", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXIX, No.51, December 2004, p. 5418.

¹⁵⁹ Vandana Mishra, "Analysing the BJP and Congress", Mainstream, Vol. XIII, No.19, 1 May 2004, p.21.

¹⁶⁰ Aroon Purie, Editorial, India Today, Vol. XXIX, No.11, 22 March 2004, p.1.

party dominance to alliance/coalition politics, from nation building to representation of polarized socio-cultural reality into politics.¹⁶¹

The elections' results demonstrated the division of the polity into two huge, though not united, power blocs (alliance). It was not seen simply as one party replacing another, rather as signaling a fight between two incompatible ideological formations, which focused largely in two opposing somewhat equal, 'political phalanxes'.¹⁶² Further, one can talk in terms of two poles in politics, the pole of 'sectarian politics' and the pole of 'inclusive politics.' The BJP, the caste based parties and regional parties, persisted on the basis of sectarian appeal. The INC and Lefts, pursued to make a genuinely pan-Indian appeal to voters. Besides, the alliance/coalition politics could create compulsions for larger party to woo the smaller ones and not the other way round.¹⁶³

Paul Wallace, in this regard, used the term 'tail wagging the elephant,' which refers to the emerging significance of regional parties at national and state levels. The electoral politics confirmed that compromise was essential for national parties to maintain coalition at both national and state levels. The Congress Party and BJP-led alliances, were not incompatible ideological formation but competitors in India's federalist, democratic political system.¹⁶⁴

The significance of such electoral alliance became increasingly clear over the years, a period in which the rise of other regional and caste parties meant that no Indian party was able to win an absolute majority in Parliament.¹⁶⁵ The parties looked for win or majority, by entering into alliance arrangements because, they had strong incentives to aggregate votes through political formation/alliance, by sharing the total number of contested seats, so as not to split but to pool votes. This was because, a small addition of votes had the potential to increase or decrease the winning chance of party. There are many instances, when political parties in order to maximize their gains, shed away their respective ideologies in conditions of extreme incompatibility.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Pramod Kumar, "Contextualizing Religious, Caste and Regional Dynamics in Electoral Politics: Emerging Paradoxes", in Ramashray Roy and Paul Wallace (eds.), *India's 2004 Elections; Gras Roots and National Perspectives*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2007 p.59.

¹⁶² Baldev Raj Nayar, "India in 2004: Regime Change in a Divided Democracy", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 45, No.1, January-February 2005, p.77-78.

¹⁶³ Paranjoy Guha Thakurta and Shankar Raghuraman, "Divided We Stand, India in a Time of Coalitions", New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2007, p. 17.

¹⁶⁴ Paul Wallace, "Introduction: India Shining Trumped by Poverty", in Roy and Wallace, p. 5.

¹⁶⁵ Steven I. Wilkinson, "Reading the Election Results", in Sumit Ganguly, Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (eds.), *The State of India's Democracy*, New Delhi: Oxford University, 2010, p. 30.

¹⁶⁶ E. Sridharan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 5418.

The alliance formation was turning point in Congress Party's fortunes, which proved vital and led to victory in 2004 national elections. While, the BJP yielded to hubris (very great pride), rejecting some key allies such as DMK etc.¹⁶⁷ The BJP played alliance game very poorly by choosing unpopular parties' that controlled the state government and failing to make any tie-up at all in others.¹⁶⁸

The INC now, became 'coalitionable' and made poll agreements in number of major states for the first time. The INC was tied-up with TRS, RJD, DMK, NCP, JMM, PDP and others. The alliance formation facilitated it to form a ruling coalition under Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister of the country. The BJP electoral performance was much below expectations and its key alliance partners, barring a few expectations, did worse.¹⁶⁹

The BJP contested 2004 parliamentary elections on development plank (India shining and feel good factor) rather than contentious issues and took pride in its achievements and leader.¹⁷⁰ The Bharatiya Janata Party claimed that India was on a roll, its economy was growing at the rate of 8.5 percentage, industrialization was taking place, low inflation, low interest government, agriculture was giving good returns and so everyone was 'feeling good', (feel good factor). In brief, never had Indian economy been in better shape. The BJP/NDA was going to the voters on the slogans 'India shining' and 'feel good factor' and other issues, as a stable coalition government as well as, the able leadership of Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee.¹⁷¹

The BJP released the 'vision 2020 document', on 30 March 2004 which put to place development within a character for governance, while, pronouncing a new spin on traditional Hindutva issue, the party leadership believed that document would also serve as a new ideological roadmap. Nonetheless, the RSS cadre felt betrayed. Praveen Togadia, VHP, leader specified that there could be no 'feel good' without Ram Mandir at Ayodhya.¹⁷² The BJP electoral campaign started with L.K. Advani's (Deputy Prime Minister), Bharat Uday Yatra. He toured nearly 8000 K.M., from Kanyakumari to

¹⁶⁷ Nayar, Op. Cit., p. 75.

¹⁶⁸ Wilkinson, Op. Cit., p. 30.

¹⁶⁹ Ramashray Roy, "The Text and Context of the 2004 Lok Sabha Elections in India", in Roy and Wallace, n.54, p. 11.

¹⁷⁰ Nayar, Op. Cit., p. 76.

¹⁷¹ Syed Ali Mujtaba, "Feeling Good? Feeling Terrible", Himal, Vol. 17, No.3-4, March-April 2004, p. 14-16.

¹⁷² Rajeev Deshpande and Lakshmi Iyer, "Inside the Fog of War", India Today, Vol. XXIX, No.11, 22 March 2004, p.22.

Amritsar in the first half and then from Porbandar to Puri, on the other. The key objective of Yatra was to spread the BJP's 'India shining' message to the common people. Advani's well equipped and highly luxurious mini-bus, certainly widened the gap between ordinary voters and political leaders.

The Congress campaigning was based on an effective contrast and exposing the 'feel good façade (false appearance)'. The INC reply was: "hum ko kya mila" (what have we got?) specifying that the common man gained very little from the so-called economic growth.¹⁷³ Sonia Gandhi, President, All India Congress Committee (AICC), alleged that "the NDA ministry was nothing but government of empty slogans and jokes."¹⁷⁴ Ram Vilas Paswan, President, Lok Jan Shakti Party, blamed the NDA government on the ground that "what do 'eight-lane'/road and cheap air travel means for the poor?"¹⁷⁵ The leadership of Congress Party targeted the NDA on different accounts. The eight percentage growth rate of GDP was questionable, unsustainable and misleading. Moreover, they raised issues like growing unemployment, privatization of education, farmer's problems, dissatisfaction among the lower classes and emphasized darker sides of liberalization etc.¹⁷⁶ These were possible issues, which might generate anti-incumbency wave against the ruling NDA. The critics argue that whether it was 'India shining' or 'India cheated.' As a matter of fact, more than a quarter of the population live below poverty line and lack basic amenities, price of necessary commodities were rising, social tension increased and above all, country remained under water and power starved.¹⁷⁷ The Congress Party released 55-pages charge-sheet/broacher under title "a saga of sins, scams and shame" against the NDA which emphasized ground reality and failure of central government.¹⁷⁸ The INC, in its manifesto promised guarantee for 100 days employment to every rural house hold and selective privatization. The Congress Party showed great concern for aam aadmi (ordinary man) by giving the slogan– "Congress ka haath aam aadmi ke saath",¹⁷⁹ (the

¹⁷³ Thakurta and Raghuraman, Op. Cit., p. 75.

¹⁷⁴ India Today, Vol. XXIX, No.6, 10 February 2004, p.35.

¹⁷⁵ India Today, Vol. XXIX, No.5, 3 February 2004, p.32.

¹⁷⁶ Vandana Mishra, Op. Cit., p. 22.

¹⁷⁷ Mujtaba, Op. Cit., p. 16.

¹⁷⁸ Purnima S. Tripathi, "With Dogged Determination", Frontline, Vol. 21, No.8, 22 April 2004, p. 34-35.

¹⁷⁹ Deshpande and Iyer, Op. Cit., p. 26.

hand of Congress was with common man). The Congress Party successfully branded itself with party of the poor, pronouncing the BJP to be party of the rich.¹⁸⁰

The 2004 electoral campaign seemed battle between two corporate political giants. The focus of the campaigning was on mechanics of ‘electoral management’, on strategies of alliance making, and on psychological warfare and media manipulation through the fine art of spin healing. These elections were fought without any serious issues, the only issue mattered the future of secularism that made the polls worthy of attentions.¹⁸¹

Manifesto of BJP – “Vision Document 2004”

This document spelt out the “Party’s core beliefs, basic commitments, and ... priority agenda for the next five years....”¹⁸² Two main issues were identified for this election: “good governance and accelerated, all-round development.” Logically, accusing the past “misrule” of the Congress Party and its wrong policies for all the current problems, this document set out in detail 25 points. The proud objective was to make “India a Developed Nation and a Great Power by 2020.” Providing for national security—both internal and external—the party set up a highly admirable, perhaps an impossible, task of advancing economic reforms of liberalisation “based on a self-reliant approach, for sustained double-digit GDP growth rate to achieve complete eradication of poverty and unemployment; end regional and social disparities; and bridging the urban-rural divide.” It also hoped to launch a second Green Revolution to unleash the potential of agriculture and the agro-business, and forecast a world-class infrastructure in the country. To deal with water shortage, it had a three-pronged plan: launch a river-linking project; encourage massive micro initiatives in water management; and clean up river waters. Ideals of social and economic justice, and empowerment of the Scheduled Castes, Tribes, Other Backward Classes and ‘the poor among the Forward Classes’ would be energetically pursued. A consensus on reserving slots in the legislatures both at the State and Central levels would be supported.

Emphasizing its continued opposition to the prevailing separate Muslim civil code, the policy statement, however, was embedded in softer and more attractive language, and that too with a caveat: “The BJP views Uniform Civil Code primarily as an instrument

¹⁸⁰ Nayar, Op. Cit., p. 74.

¹⁸¹ Yogendra Yadav, “The Elusive Mandate of 2004”, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXXIX, No.51, 18 December 2004, p.5396.

¹⁸² Bharatiya Janata Party, Vision Document 2004, p. 1. http://www.bjp.org/Press/mar_304a.htm.

to promote gender justice. We believe that social and political consensus has to be evolved before its enactment.” Two other statements were noteworthy. The first was clearly aimed at Sonia Gandhi, the Congress Party President, in that the BJP would pursue legislation to “ensure that important offices of the Indian State can be occupied by those who are India’s natural citizens by their Indian origin.” The second related to their bread and butter issue of Hindutva (Hindu nationalism)—building a “magnificent Ram Mandir at Ayodhya”—by cordially resolving the dispute (whether there indeed was a temple on the site of a mosque that was demolished by Hindu mobs in December 1992) through a negotiation with the Muslims, and abiding by the court’s decision whenever it comes.¹⁸³ Needless to say, the leadership of Vajpayee was praised, and promised to continue. The document also declared that “The Congress era in Indian politics is now over;” the BJP era was on its way.

Considering that economic development alone is not sufficient, but a holistic development is needed, the party wanted what it called as “Integral Humanism,” and emphasised “Cultural Nationalism.” The latter was admitted to be a synonym for Hindutva. Ironically, according to their interpretation, in spite of their emphasis on Hinduism, “...Cultural Nationalism is the most potent antidote to communalism, divisiveness, and separatism of every kind, and a guarantor of our national unity and national integration.” The vision was “to make the 21st Century India’s Century” with India’s destiny entwined with that of the BJP. The party anticipated for an absolute majority for the BJP, and a two-thirds majority for the NDA in Parliament.

The National Democratic Alliance’s Manifesto

The NDA needed a separate manifesto in that the original 20 plus parties in the coalition (reduced by the departure of seven of them) did not share the BJP ideology in its whole. While following the major themes of the BJP, the NDA expected to see India become a superpower by being the “food factory of the world,” with the highest priority given to agriculture.¹⁸⁴ Infrastructure development followed next. The BJP, which at the start did not believe in any “minorities” in India, did speak of minorities in its Vision Document, and the NDA manifesto reflected “A Minorities Development Agenda,”

¹⁸³ Krishna K. Tummala, “Democracy vs. Fundamentalism: Religious Politics of the Bharatiya Janata Party in India,” in Santosh Saha, (ed.), *Religious Fundamentalism in the Contemporary World: Critical Social and Political Issues* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004), pp. 207-34.

¹⁸⁴ The quotes are from NDA Agenda for Development, Good Governance and Peace, <http://www.bjp.org/manifes/manife99.htm>

with a three-pronged emphasis: education, economic upliftment and empowerment. National Security ended up as the last part of the manifesto. There was no statement of any Hindutva, or for that matter secularism, and undoubtedly not the building of a Ram temple, or establishing a Uniform Civil Code for both Hindus and Muslims.

ELCTION RESULT and OUTCOME

The results of 14th Lok Sabha came as a jolt to everyone ‘BJP’ in particular and the NDA in general. Most of the observers had been so stunned by the BJP’s defeat that, in reaction, they overstated its amplitude. After all, the BJP was left with only seven less seats than the Congress –138 seats secured by the BJP compared to 145 by the Congress. However, the gap between both parties had become larger in terms of the percentage of valid votes gained (22.16 per cent by the BJP as against 26.69 per cent by the Congress). This means that the BJP, after 20 years of constant electoral rise, had almost reverted back to the position in 1991 when they won 120 seats and 20.1 per cent of the valid votes. Nevertheless, the loss was not as severe as this statistic made it appear. First of all, in 1991 the BJP won 20 per cent of the valid votes (see Table 19) whereas contesting 468 seats; while in 2004 it won more than 22 per cent while contesting only 361 seats. Furthermore, the decline in terms of valid votes was not so dramatic compared to 1999 when it won 23.8 per cent of the valid votes, while only contesting 339 seats. This is explainable because the BJP’s performances had been very unequally distributed in geographical terms.

Table 19. Performances of the BJP over 20 years of general elections in India

Year	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998	1999	2004
Per cent of valid votes	7.4	11.4	20.1	20.3	25.6	23.8	22.2
Number of seats won	2	85	120	161	182	182	138
Number of seats contested	229	226	468	471	388	339	361

Source: Election Commission of India

The BJP’s dominance had remained complete in its old strongholds go with back to the Jana Sangh’s days. In Madhya Pradesh, the BJP showed an outstanding degree of resilience: it won 25 out of the 29 seats it contested with 48.1 per cent of the valid votes; in Rajasthan, it won 21 out of the 25 seats it contested with 49 per cent of the

valid votes, and in Chhattisgarh, it won 10 of the 11 seats it contested with 47.8 per cent of the valid votes. These regions are those on which Bruce D. Graham had concentrated to show the emerging area of electoral strength of the Jana Sangh in the 1960s. New Delhi was the only 'old' stronghold where the BJP was defeated this time, winning only one seat.

The two most important states where the BJP had made recent inroads and where it recorded a setback in 2004, were Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. Uttar Pradesh was not a stronghold of Hindu nationalism until the 1990s. In 1989, the BJP was weaker in Uttar Pradesh than in Bihar (it won 7.6 per cent of the valid votes in the former and 11.7 per cent in the latter). Of course, the Ayodhya movement threw the party to power in 1991 (when the BJP multiplied its share of valid votes by a factor of four in two years, with 32.8 per cent of the total) and the party was able to withstand this level of influence until the late 1990s. It seized in 1998 with 36.5 per cent of the valid votes and 52 seats and started to decline in 1999 in terms of valid votes (30 per cent), but not in terms of seats since it won in a record number of electoral constituencies (57 seats). As a result, 2004 manifest a sharp decline in Uttar Pradesh. The BJP gained only 22.2 per cent of the valid votes and ten seats (if the seats in the state of Uttaranchal are included, part of Uttar Pradesh until 2000, then the BJP fell to 13 seats).

The BJP came to power in the 1990s because of its electoral success in Uttar Pradesh – one third of its tally, at least 50 seats, came from that state in the late 1990s. Those days were over. In terms of seats, the party had reverted to its level of 1989. The weakening started in 1999, but speeded during the 2002 state assembly elections when the BJP could only secure 27.1 per cent of the valid votes. The BJP leaders, not depend on the Ayodhya issue any more – either because they did not want to raise it again or because the public was not responsive to it any more – decided to woo the OBC vote by re-inducting Kalyan Singh in the party in February 2004, only a few months before the elections. Nonetheless, Singh could not compete with two parties which were the real winners of the 2004 elections in Uttar Pradesh: the Samajwadi Party which won 35 seats out of 80 and the BSP which got 19 seats. The BJP had lost the general election – and thus power – in Uttar Pradesh this time largely because of these low caste-based parties. In addition, the BJP lost sections of the upper caste vote by running after OBC voters. For example, 18 per cent of the Brahmins voted for the Congress this time.

In 2004, its fortune was also partly wrapped by the electoral verdict in Gujarat. Though it was not defeated there, it lost support, and succeeded to just secure two seats more

than the Congress. In terms of valid votes, the BJP got 47.4 per cent, as against 43.9 per cent for the Congress. In Gujarat, the BJP's support remain around the same as in the 1990s. It gained in 1999 with 52.5 per cent of the vote. Nonetheless, in terms of seats, with 14 victorious candidates, it is as close to 1989 – when it had won 12 seats – as to 1996 – when it had won 16. In May 2004, these results stood in unambiguous contrast with the result of the state assembly elections which had taken place only 18 months before, when the BJP had won a crushing majority. However, these elections had been organised by the BJP Chief Minister, Narendra Modi in the wake of extraordinary riots between Hindus and Muslims in 2002. This event had polarised the religious groups of the state in such a way as the majority community had supported the BJP almost en bloc. Its popularity was clearly much lower in normal conditions.

In 2004, the only states where the BJP further enhanced its performance after recent inroads in the 1990s were in some southern states, a region where the Hindu nationalist movement had been weak for decades, mainly because of its defence of the cause of Hindi as a national language. In Andhra Pradesh and in Tamil Nadu, where the BJP worked mainly through regional allies in 2004 – the TDP and the AIADMK – the party was declining, even though it was already very low. In Kerala and in Karnataka, though, it was making some progress. In Kerala, the BJP crossed the symbolic edge of 10 per cent of valid votes after 15 years of steady electoral gains. In this state, the party depend on the solid network of shakhas (local branches) that the RSS was developing with a great willpower to counter the Communists and the Muslim League. Of course, the main zone of influence that the BJP was carving out in the south was in Karnataka. This was a major development, which shows that the BJP had travelled a long way since the Jana Sangh days. Until the early 1990s, neither the Jana Sangh nor the BJP could win more than a couple of seats in south India. In 1991, the BJP won five seats in the entire south, including four in Karnataka where it polled 28.8 per cent of the valid votes. In 2004, it won 18 seats in the south – all in Karnataka where the BJP, which had won about one fifth of the valid votes in the second half of the 1990s, captured 34.8 per cent of valid votes.

This outstanding achievement further qualifies the notion that the BJP suffered a major setback, especially because it shown that the electoral map of the party was definitely different from that of the Jana Sangh. The rise of the BJP in the 1990s has been sustained by the capacity of the party to make major inroads in the south. So much so, that the share of the north Indian MPs, which represented more than 70 per cent of the

BJP MPs until 1991–96, fell to 61 per cent in 1999, and 56.5 per cent in 2004. The BJP was not only a Hindi belt party, unlike the Jana Sangh which was one during almost its entire career.

As Table 20 shows, the steady decline of the influence of the BJP MPs returned in the Hindi belt – also known as the cow-belt of India because of the strength of the Hindu orthodoxy in the region – may well be one of the reasons for the diminishing interest of the party on Hindutva based issues, like Ayodhya.

Table 20. The share of the Hindi belt MPs of the BJP in 1991–2004

Year	Hindi belt MPs of the BJP	Total BJP MPs	Ratio as percentage
1991	87	120	72.5
1996	119	161	73.9
1998	122	184	66.3
1999	112	183	61
2004	78	138	56.5

Source: Election Commission of India

The notion of a huge defeat of the BJP requires additional nuances, once the observation moves from the BJP to its allies. The very idea of making alliances, instead of going it alone during election time, took a new turn in the 1990s among the BJP leaders when they started systematically to select local partners to penetrate states or social groups where the BJP was weak.

This modus operandi continued to help the party a great deal in many cases in 2004. In Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena remains a very useful local interpreter that facilitated a Hindi-belt oriented BJP to reach beyond the Vindhyas, a region with a specific identity and caste equation. The coalition won 25 out of 48 seats in 2004, with the BJP retaining most of the upper caste vote (48 per cent according to the CSDS exit poll). Meanwhile, the Shiv Sena successfully persuaded significant sections of the Maratha-Kunbi caste

cluster (39 per cent). Likewise, in Punjab, the BJP–SAD (B) swept the poll, winning 11 of the 13 Lok Sabha seats. In Orissa, the BJP–Biju Janata Dal won 18 of the 21 seats. In both cases, the BJP played the role of a junior partner, even more than before. For example, in Punjab, the party won 10.5 per cent of the valid votes, while the SAD (B) gained 34.5 per cent. In Orissa, the BJP won 19.3 per cent (four percentage point less than in 1999). In Bihar, the BJP declined so much, that it trailed behind its ally, the JD (U) with 14.2 per cent of the valid votes, nearly half less than its partner (22.9 per cent). The JD (U) continued to attract large numbers of low caste voters – including Kurmis, caste fellows of its local leader, Nitish Kumar – whereas the BJP was left with pockets of impact among the upper castes.

Nevertheless, in most of the states, the BJP’s allies took a very limited number of seats. In Andhra Pradesh, the TDP, which was the second largest party in the NDA after the 1999 elections won only three seats compared with 29 five years before. In West Bengal, the Trinamool Congress could only win two seats compared with eight in 1999. In count to these setbacks, the BJP made an error by dropping some of its allies of 1999 to make new ones in 2004. Tamil Nadu was a case in point. There, the DMK, which had moved allegiance and joined the INC coalition, won 16 seats, while the AIADMK, which had become the BJP’s ally, did not win any. While changes in alliances since the previous general elections facilitated the INC to add 47 seats to its overall tally, the BJP got 27 less seats than in 1999, mostly due to the poor performance of its allies. In fact, the Congress’s allies added 74 seats to the UPA and the BJP’s allies only 51 to the NDA. As a result, the BJP dominated the NDA more effectively than after the 1999 elections since its share of seats had improved from 60 to 73 per cent but the party did not need to congratulate itself for the bad results of its allies anyway.

Table: 21, Electoral Performance of the BJP, 2004 Parliamentary Election

Sr. No.	STATE/UT	Seats			Votes Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	42	9	0	8.41
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2	2	2	53.85
3	ASSAM	14	12	2	22.94
4	BIHAR	40	16	5	14.57

5	GOA	2	2	1	46.83
6	GUJARAT	26	26	14	47.37
7	HARYANA	10	10	1	17.21
8	HIMACHAL PRADESH	4	4	1	44.24
9	JAMMU & KASHMIR	6	6	0	23.04
10	KARNATAKA	28	24	18	34.77
11	KERALA	20	19	0	10.38
12	MADHYA PRADESH	29	29	25	48.13
13	MAHARASHTRA	48	26	13	22.61
14	MANIPUR	2	2	0	20.65
15	MEGHALAYA	2	1	0	8.63
16	MIZORAM	1	-	-	
17	NAGALAND	1	-	-	
18	ORISSA	21	9	7	19.3
19	PUNJAB	13	3	3	10.48
20	RAJASTHAN	25	25	21	49.01
21	SIKKIM	1	-	-	-
22	TAMIL NADU	39	6	0	5.07
23	TRIPURA	2	1	0	7.82
24	UTTAR PRADESH	80	77	10	22.17
25	WEST BENGAL	42	13	0	8.06
26	CHATTISGARH	11	11	10	47.78
27	JHARKHAND	14	14	1	33.01
28	UTTARANCHAL	5	5	3	40.98
29	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	1	1	0	33.95
30	CHANDIGARH	1	1	0	35.22
31	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	1	1	0	15.56
32	DAMAN & DIU	1	1	0	48.42
33	NCT DELHI	7	7	1	40.67
34	LAKSHADWEEP	1	-	-	-

35	PONDICHERRY	1	1	0	35.65
	TOTAL	543	364	138	22.16%

Source: STATISTICAL REPORT ON GENERAL ELECTIONS, 2004 TO THE 14th LOK SABHA, VOLUME I, Election Commission of India.

Straightaway after the elections, BJP leaders offered their own clarification for the defeat. Departing Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee declared: ‘It is very difficult to say what are all the reasons for the defeat in the elections [. . .] but one impact of the violence was we lost the elections’, clearly an explicit reference to the adverse effect of the 2002 communal riots in Gujarat.¹⁸⁵ Ten days later, L.K. Advani made the opposite comment. In a 40-minute speech to the National Executive Committee of the BJP, he considered that abandon of the Hindu nationalist themes had been one of the reasons for the party’s defeat.

Had the BJP lost because of Hindutva or because of its neglect of Hindutva? Definitely Muslims resorted to strategic voting to help defeat the party whenever they could. But they had been doing so, more or less systematically, for years now in spite of the repeated attempts by the BJP at persuading them. None of the Hindutva themes – including the building of a Ram temple at Ayodhya – was a crucial issue during the general election campaign. However, the BJP was so closely recognized with Hindu nationalist ideology that it did not need to champion it to be seen as associated with it. The defeat of the BJP candidates in the constituencies where Ayodhya, Varanasi and Mathura were situated replicated the diminishing influence of Hindu nationalism over voters. In these three places, the BJP had won repeatedly during the 1990s. In Uttar Pradesh, two champions of the demand for the building of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, Vinay Katiyar – the Uttar Pradesh state BJP president – and Swami Chinmayanand – a former Union minister of state for home affairs – lost their parliamentary seats. But Ayodhya was not an issue in the 2004 elections and the defeat of the BJP, thus, was not a vote for secularism. The CSDS exit poll shows, for example, that there was, among the public, ‘a widespread support for a ban on religious conversion’¹⁸⁶, a traditional demand of the Hindu nationalist movement.

¹⁸⁵ Central Chronicle (2004) Central Chronicle, 13 June.

¹⁸⁶ A. Datar, “A vote for secular politics”, The Hindu, 20 May: AE-2. de Swaan, A. (1973) Coalition Theories and Cabinet Formations: A Study of Formal Theories of Coalition Formation Applied to Nine European Parliaments After 1918, London: Elsevier.

Why then, was the BJP-led coalition voted out of power? Probably for socio-economic reasons.

Following the 1999 general election, Yadav et al. had strongly argued that the BJP trusted on a 'new social bloc' since the NDA parties secured 'the support of 60 per cent of upper caste Hindus and 52 per cent of the dominant Hindu peasant castes (which are not classified as OBCs, such as Jats, Marathas, Patidars, Reddys and Kammas)'.¹⁸⁷

For five years the NDA pursued an economic policy which favoured these groups (at the very least the other ones – which formed a vast majority of Indian society – had this impression).¹⁸⁷

The 2004 exit poll conducted by the CSDS showed that 26 per cent of the 'very poor' and 18 per cent of the 'poor' considered that their economic condition had deteriorated under the NDA Government. Logically enough, among NDA voters, 35 per cent declared that their condition had improved compared to only 22 per cent of Congress voters.¹⁸⁸ One of the key allies of the BJP, the TDP, was clearly punished for what was perceived to be its 'pro-rich policy': 54 per cent of the voters interviewed by the CSDS team considered that only the rich profited from the NDA policy; 39 per cent said that the TDP-led state government had only developed the state capital, Hyderabad, and 81 per cent were of the view that the information technology revolution – one of the priorities of the TDP Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu – had not enhanced the lives of ordinary people¹⁸⁹, at a time when suicides by over indebted farmers multiplied.

The overall idea that the NDA had followed a pro-rich policy which profited only the urban middle class is possibly an exaggeration since a larger portion of society profited by the economic dynamism showed by India during the NDA Government, but those who trailed behind disliked its policy because inequalities increased. Economic liberalisation facilitated the nouveaux riches to make progress more rapidly than the others – and they showed it.

As a result, the support base of the BJP continued to trust on the same 'social bloc' as in 1999, but this bloc shrank. The CSDS data show that the richer an Indian citizen was, the more likely he was to vote for the BJP. Incidentally, a similar correlation

¹⁸⁷ Y. Yadav, "Electoral politics in the time of change: India's third electoral system, 1989–99", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21–28 August, 1999: p. 2393–9.

¹⁸⁸ K.C. Suri, "Reform: The elites want it, the masses don't", *The Hindu*, 20 May 2004: AE-7.

¹⁸⁹ The Hindu 'Poll graphics'. Online. Available at: <http://www.hinduonnet.com/elections2004/index.htm> (accessed 30 September 2004).

applies in the case of education, namely college graduates and post-graduates vote much more for the BJP than non-literates.

Naturally, these variables are reflected in the caste background of BJP voters. Forty-two per cent of the upper caste people voted for the BJP (two times more than for the INC) and only 11 per cent of the Dalits do the same (as against 28 per cent for the INC). In spite of its repeated attempts at wooing the Dalits – as evidenced by its promotion of Ambedkar as one its favourite icons¹⁹⁰ – the BJP still failed to attract a substantial number of electors from the most important of the SCs such as the Chamars of North India (who support the BSP).

Until now, the BJP could do without the Dalit vote and with the social bloc which supported the party. Why was this not the case in 2004? This time, the BJP was perhaps affected by two simultaneous developments. First, the upper caste urban middle class, though better educated, was showing less interest in the act of voting. In India, in contrast to western democracies, the turnout of postgraduates was 50 per cent lower than that of those who only went to middle school (41 per cent compared to 82.6 per cent in 1998). Likewise, voter turnout by upper castes was much lower than that of the Dalits (60.2 per cent compared to 75.1 per cent in 1998). Besides, voter turnout of those with the highest income was ten percentage points below that of the poorest (46.6 per cent compared to 57.1 per cent in 1998). Finally, voter turnout in urban constituencies was much below that of the rural ones (in 1999, it was 53.7 per cent compared to 61.5 per cent.¹⁹¹ These trends had affected the electoral scenarios of the BJP since it could not mobilise all its supporters at the time of elections. The social bloc might have remained the same, but those who cast their votes were less numerous. In Delhi, the turnout was just above 45 per cent, in Gujarat, just above 47.1 per cent, in Uttar Pradesh just above 48 per cent. Certainly, 75 per cent of the Patidars and 60 per cent of the upper castes voted for the BJP in Gujarat but these big percentages represented smaller groups than before.

In any case, this explanation is only a small part of the story. A true understanding of the 2004 electoral setback of the BJP should lead us to the specificities of politics at the state level, largely because the state have become the most relevant unit of politics in India. In several states, the support of the social bloc that supported the BJP in 1999

¹⁹⁰ C. Jaffrelot, “Dr Ambedkar and Untouchability: Analysing and Fighting Caste, London: Hurst. 2005

¹⁹¹ Y. Yadav, “Understanding the second democratic upsurge”, in F. Frankel et al. (eds) *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy*, Delhi: OUP. 2000.

had begun to fissure. Uttar Pradesh was a case in point. Certainly the BJP retained 77 per cent of the votes among the Banya community, but this was a very small community. In contrast, the Party could keep only 58 per cent of the large Brahmin community because 18 per cent of them had opted for the Congress, as stated earlier. There may be some reasons for the loss of the BJP's support base among the upper castes: the return of prominent OBC leader, Kalyan Singh, to the helm of the Uttar Pradesh BJP possibly displeased them and the BJP's repeated alliances with a Dalit-based party, the BSP, had the same effect. Instead Brahmins, who had paid allegiance to the Nehru–Gandhi family till the 1980s, felt attracted by the entry of Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi into the fight. Likewise, the BJP only retain 50 per cent of the Rajput vote, while the SP gained 28 per cent of them.

However, besides state-centred explanations for the BJP defeat, there are others with a pan-Indian importance. The Congress had definitely been responsible for the BJP's setback in two respects. First, the Congress's leader, Sonia Gandhi, who had not been taken seriously by Hindu nationalist groups demonstrated great campaigning capabilities. Besides Hindu nationalist efforts to criticize her foreign origin had probably backfired, and inclined to transform her into a victimised target of xenophobes. Second, the Congress was quicker than the BJP in adjusting to the realities of the rise of regional parties and its consequence, the new era of coalitions. Therefore, Congress leaders chose their allies much more wisely than the BJP this time.

More notably, the BJP had been affected by the anti-incumbency response that the Indian electorate had developed over the years. Reasonably enough, this factor did not play any role in the states where the party was in command for less than six months, namely in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. In these states the party continued to benefit from the same sentiment of anti-incumbency that had removed the Congress from power. The variable of anti-incumbency had some effect in Gujarat, where the BJP was in office, and in Uttar Pradesh, where it was part of the ruling coalition eight months before. Overall, the electorate's anti-incumbency response affected about half of the BJP's outgoing MPs, since those that had been re-nominated ultimately lost in the election.

Finally, within the Sangh Parivar, the line of conduct pursued by the Vajpayee Government created some dissatisfaction within the VHP. This organisation overtly dissociated itself from the NDA Government when it turned out that the Prime Minister would not support the building of a temple in Ayodhya. Two other components of the

Sangh Parivar, the BMS, the largest labour union in India today, and the SJM, the economic wing of the RSS, disliked the economic liberalisation policy implemented by the NDA Government. The RSS itself shared these reservations and therefore did not enthusiastically support the BJP during the general election campaign. For instance, soon after the general election, the spokesperson of the RSS told The Hindu that:

“The grassroots traditional voter and cadre of the RSS was not so enthusiastic about the BJP. There were some organisational differences. Our cadres did work [for the BJP at the time of elections], but there was resentment on several issues, Hindutva and also economic issues.”

The 2004 defeat was considered by most of the components of the Sangh Parivar to be a rejection of the moderate line of conduct advocated by Vajpayee. The General Secretary of the VHP, Praveen Togadia declared soon after the elections, with his traditionally nuanced sense of rhetoric:

The Bharatiya Janata Party betrayed the Hindus. The BJP left its core ideology of Hindutva and trust on the basis of which they had been voted to power. For votes they tied up with the jehadis.¹⁹²

The RSS spokesperson, Ram Madhav, said almost the same thing. He admitted that ‘there was a perception over the last four to five years that there had been dilution of the Hindutva ideology’. The RSS naturally wanted the BJP to return to a Hindutva-led programme in order to bring back the imagination of the people.

Among the other variables stated above, the role of the other political parties was vital. In the 1990s, the Hindu nationalist party ended to be an objectionable coalition partner. Opportunist candidates to some alliance with the BJP, which had stigmatised this party in the 1980s unexpectedly began to appear from all quarters as soon as the BJP emerged as a powerful political force. These partners even came from within the fold of the Socialist Party, with George Fernandes associating himself with the BJP in 1995 and Sharad Yadav doing so in 1999. At the same time, the BJP became adept at coalition making, exemplified by the formation of the NDA. However, the rules of the coalition

¹⁹² The Hindu, 15 May, 2004.

game implied that the BJP agenda got diluted, mostly since former socialists and other self-proclaimed secularists could not support Hindutva-oriented objectives, such as the building of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, the proposed abolition of Article 370 of the Constitution regarding the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir, and the calls for the introduction of a Uniform Civil Code. With the approval of the RSS, the BJP put these issues on the backburner. Hence the contradiction in which the party found itself after the 2004 general election: on the one hand the RSS made it clear that it wanted the BJP to return to its core ideology, but on the other hand several constituents of the NDA had strong objections to this approach.

However, the 2004 general election had transformed the context considerably for the BJP's allies. First, the BJP turned out not to be an important electoral asset to some of its partners, like the JD (U) in Bihar, which won in their own strongholds. Second, the general atmosphere had changed in such a way as the dominant repertoire was not as much saturated with Hindu nationalism as it used to be in previous elections. Instead, social issues were back on the front stage – and the BJP had precisely ignored issues that concerned millions of Indians at its own cost. On the other hand, the INC emerged as the natural spokesman for the masses. In this changed context, coalition partners of the BJP – who swallowed the Gujarat pogrom without objecting – began to concern about their Muslim voters. They also grew worried about any return to a more aggressive Hindu nationalist agitation. For example, soon after the NDA's defeat, the JD (U) informed the BJP that it would leave the coalition if the party returned openly to adopt Hindutva issues. Right after the general election, the National Executive Committee of the JD (U) issued a resolution to this effect. It declared that:

We joined the National Democratic Alliance only after the three controversial issues (construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya, Article 370 and Uniform Civil Code) had been removed from the agenda of the NDA. If any effort is now made to revive them, we shall have to take another road.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ The Hindu, 2 August, 2004.

The TDP, another BJP ally, had adopted a similar line of conduct to that of the JD (U). For instance, the TDP's spokesperson announced that 'if the BJP chooses to adopt the communal agenda, we will sever ties with it'.¹⁹⁴

Perhaps for the first time, the party seemed to be virtually divided between moderates and radicals. For long, this division had been a functional one: the party projected a moderate face – Vajpayee – when it was in need of a widely acceptable leader for constituting coalitions; it projected a more militant one – Advani – when it needed to galvanise the party activists for Hindutva-oriented agitations. After the 2004 elections, both strategies were debated in the Party as two full-fledged alternatives. Before the hardliners had taken up the propositions from the VHP or even the RSS, the moderates launched an unexpected offensive. Vajpayee, who had declined the post of leader of the opposition – which instead was taken up by Advani – argued that the BJP had lost partly because of the mismanagement of the Gujarat riot by Modi. This move, at least, moved the debate to another level, thus avoiding Vajpayee's opponents from blaming him for the NDA's defeat.

In August, the BJP hosted a three-day chintan baithak (brain storming session) in Goa in order to take stock of the party's post-electoral situation and to analyse the reasons for its defeat. On the one hand, Madan Das Devi, representing the RSS, declared that the Sangh expected the BJP to remain firm on Hindutva and publicize its ideology. On the other hand, Vajpayee stressed the need to keep the NDA intact. The ten point 'document of conclusions' resolved to focus on ideological orientation and to continue with the NDA experiment. It maintained a moderate tone, in the sense that the meeting's resolutions did not even mention the word Hindutva.

At the same time, it devoted itself to get closer to the RSS exactly when this movement had decided to monitor more effectively the BJP's organisation and strategy. In August 2004, a new administrative position was created within the Party, that of 'regional organisation secretary' to improve the coordination between the Delhi headquarters and the state units. It was significant that the first six holders of this new position all came from the RSS, in fact, they were all pracharaks (full-time cadres).¹⁹⁵ On the other hand, the reshuffling of the party leadership which took place after the defeat did not

¹⁹⁴ The Hindu, 5 August, 2004.

¹⁹⁵ The Hindu, 7 August, 2004.

make any significant change: Venkaiah Naidu remained as the BJP's party president, Pramod Mahajan kept his post of General Secretary, Arun Jaitley and Rajnath Singh made the transition from the Union Government to become the Party's secretary and spokesperson respectively.

Based on the August meeting in Goa, it seem that the BJP had either not yet made up its mind and was still wavering between two strategies, or that it may try to combine both strategies. In terms of organisation, it would rely more on the RSS cadres, whereas in terms of electoral politics, it would continue to value the NDA and therefore retain the same leadership. This was consistent with the assessment of the situation by the RSS. The Sangh Parivar knew that any return to a radical brand of Hindu nationalist politics by the BJP would isolate its allies and delay the party's return to power. Though the BJP cadres were not happy with the dilution of its Hindutva agenda by the BJP, the RSS leaders were happier with the NDA experiment.

The attempt at combining the pursuit of the NDA experiment and a closer association with the RSS also reflected the thinking of Advani, who should have been the natural candidate for a radical reorientation of the party. In March 2004, Advani articulated very clearly the party's dilemma:

A country as vast and pluralistic as India cannot be ruled only by an ideological party such as the Jana Sangh. It has to be an aggregative party [. . .] I propounded that either we limit our objectives as an ideological party and fight election in some states or corporations, but if we aspire to become a ruling party in India, we cannot be limited as an ideological party [. . .] To rule India, we have to be inclusive.¹⁹⁶

Government policy has always been an important parameter in the shaping of the Jana Sangh's strategy, and then of the BJP. Whenever the BJP thought that the state would not strictly enforce the secular principles of the Constitution, they opted to agitate and unleash communal violence. When they feared repression, their strategy was more circumspect. Although the INC under Indira and then Rajiv Gandhi indulged in a new form of communalisation of politics, and the BJP grabbed this opportunity to enforce its own ethos, the INC in 2004 fought the general election on a secularist plank and the

¹⁹⁶ The Hindu, 23 March, 2004.

UPA had been formed on a secularist platform. In fact, the strongest cementing force in the coalition was the opposition to Hindu nationalism.

In nutshell, 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 47 seats 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.

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 hindsight¹⁹⁷, 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

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.

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

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

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

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

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 exaggerated 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,

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

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 Mukht 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

²¹⁴ Ahmedabad Mirror, 17 April 2014.

²¹⁵ Christophe Jaffrelot, 2013. “Gujarat Elections: The Sub-text of Modi’s ‘Hatrick’ – 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

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

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

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

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 Murlī 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

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 madrasa 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

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

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

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,

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.

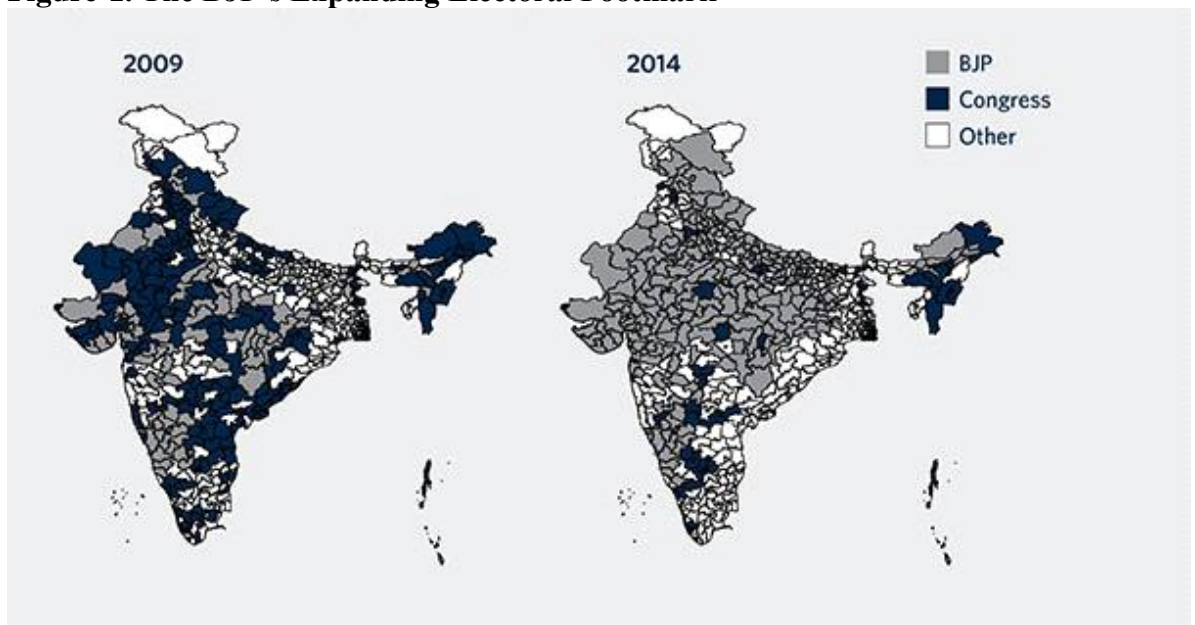
Results of the 2014 Elections

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 received 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

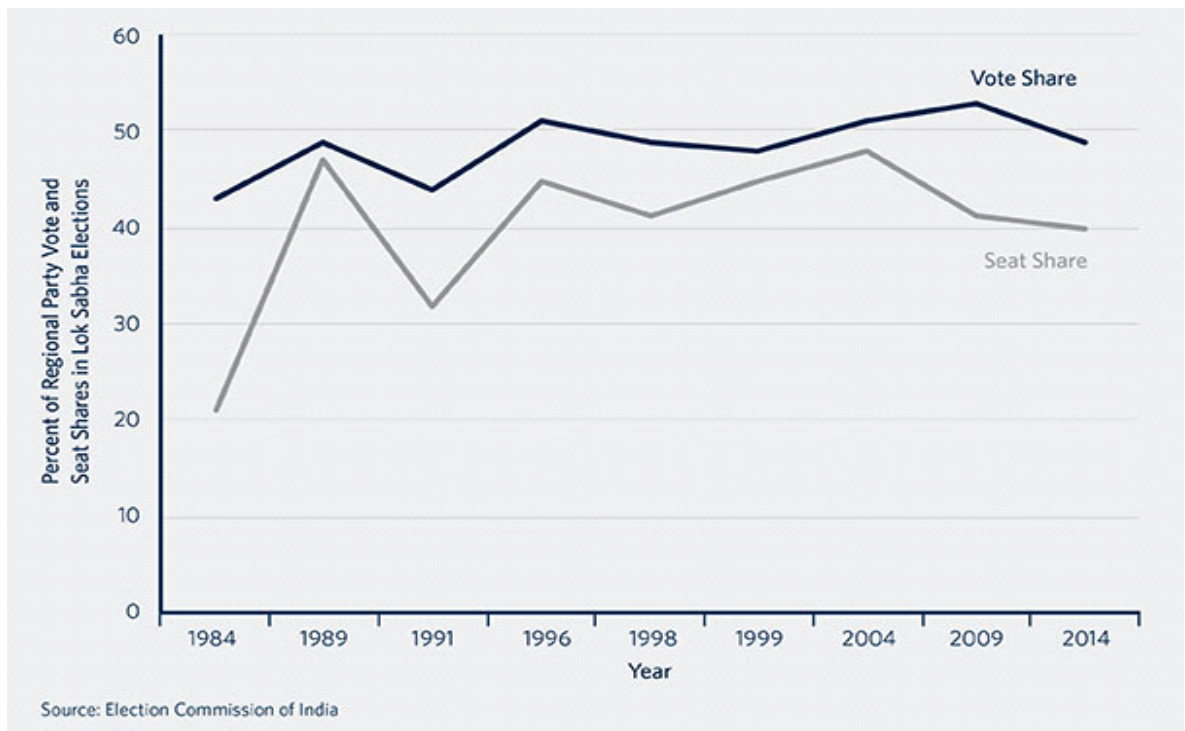
shifted between Congress and the BJP, but that the net effect of seats won by the BJP from, and lost by Congress to, a multitude of regional competitors was to maintain the overall balance between national and regional parties in the Lok Sabha. There was, however, a shift in the type of regional parties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



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



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. Its 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 assembly 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
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.

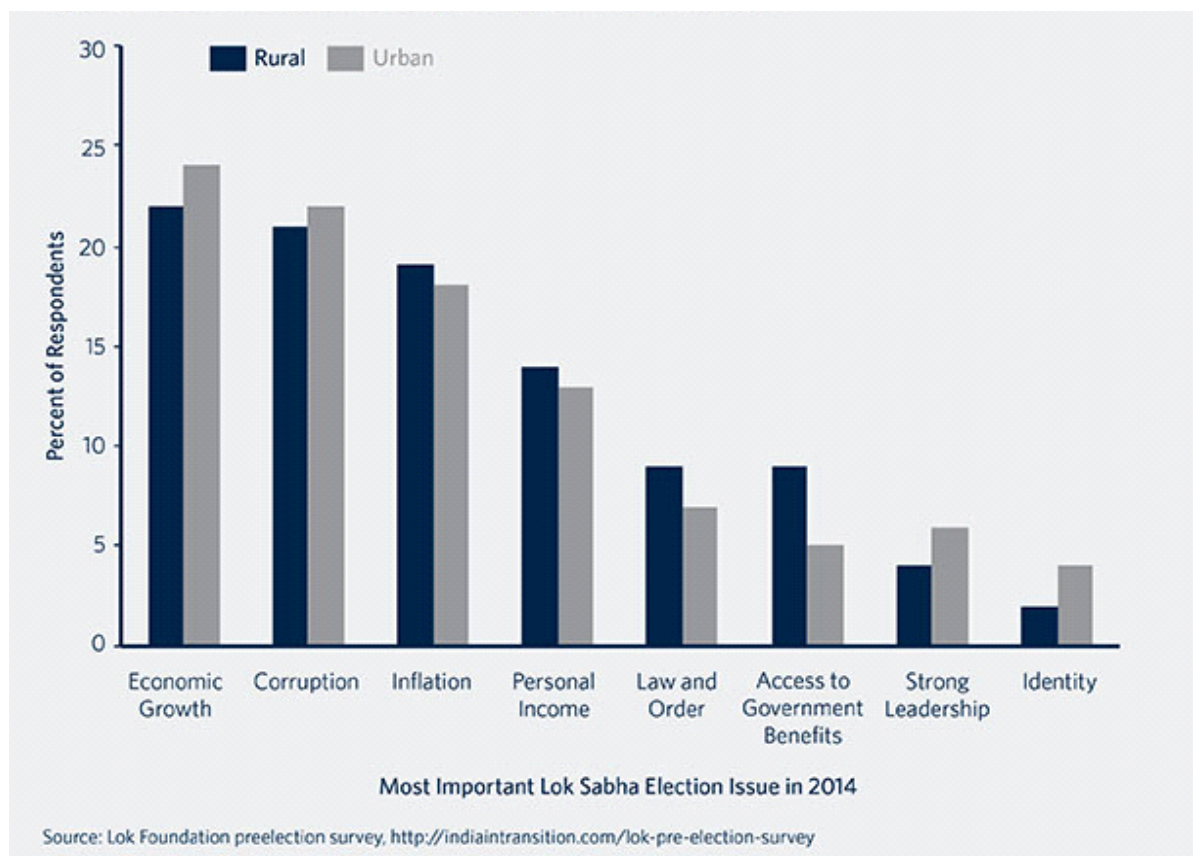
The effects of these developments showed up in preelection polling, which between July 2013 and March 2014 exposed a stable rise in prospective voters' support for the BJP and for Modi as prime minister. The Lok Foundation's survey for the University of Pennsylvania's Center for the Advanced Study of 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



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 (%)

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

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

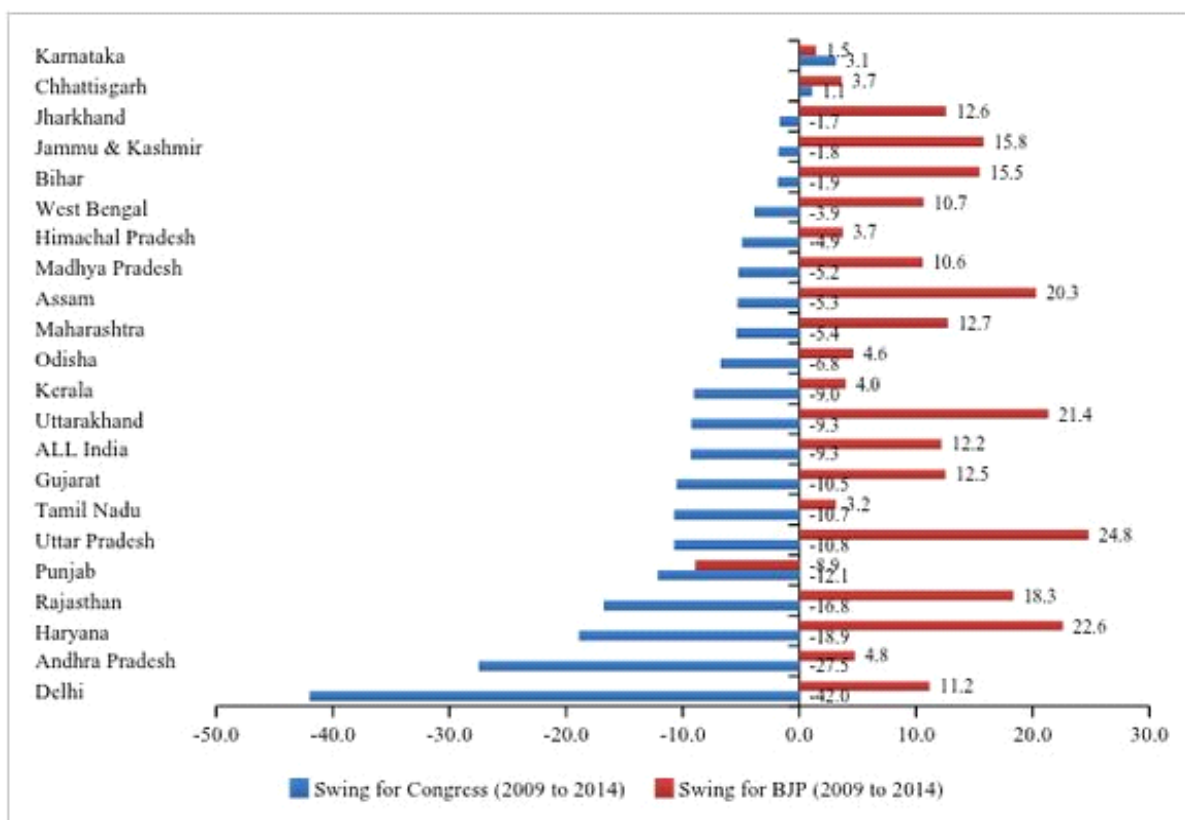
There can never be a single-factor explanation of the mandate. A multiplicity of variables worked in tandem to unleash the final outcome. One cannot deny the strong anti-incumbency sentiment prevailing among the people against the poor performance of the UPA II government. There was double anti-incumbency 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 <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/outofstep2/>

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

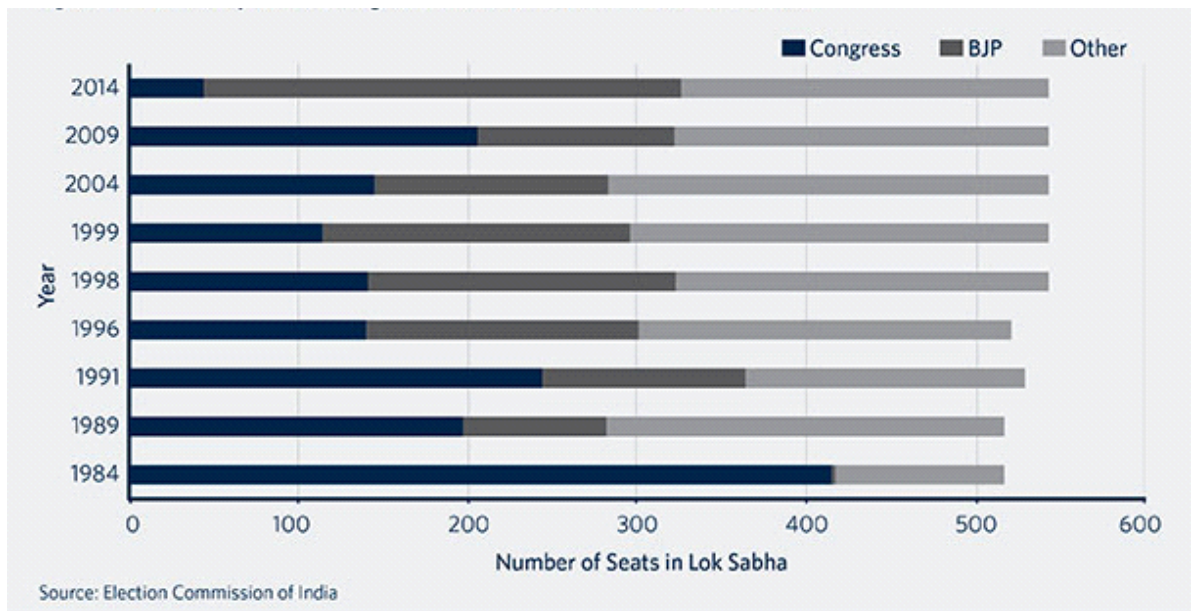


Figure-7. Weak Evidence of Economic Voting in the Aggregate

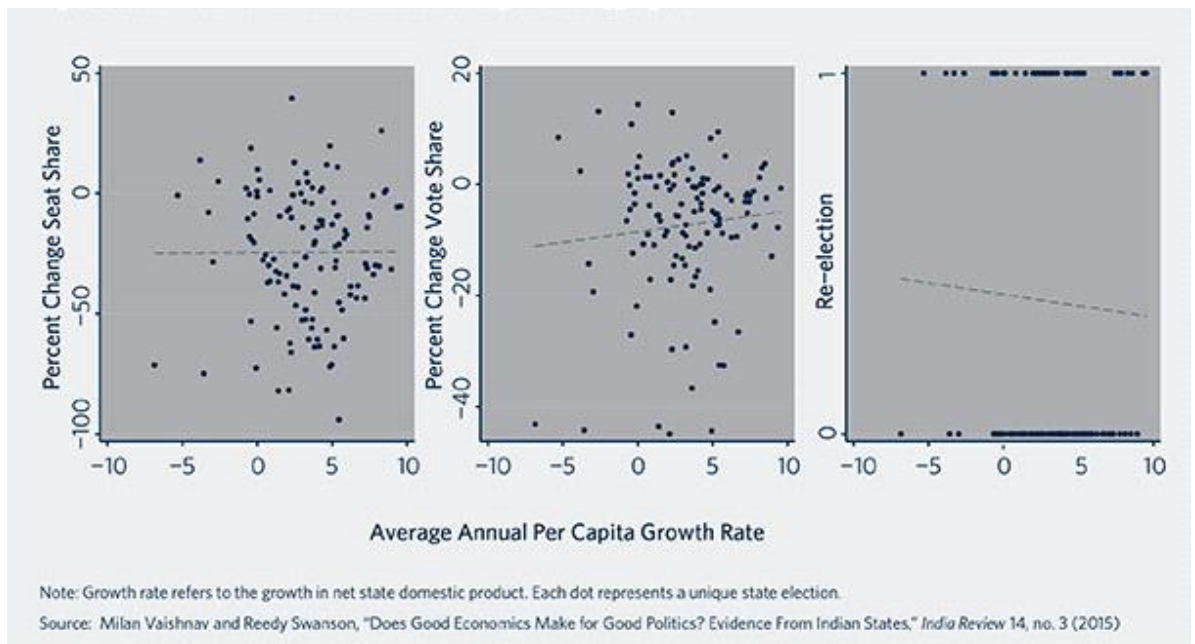


Figure-8. A Shift Toward Economic Voting Since 2000

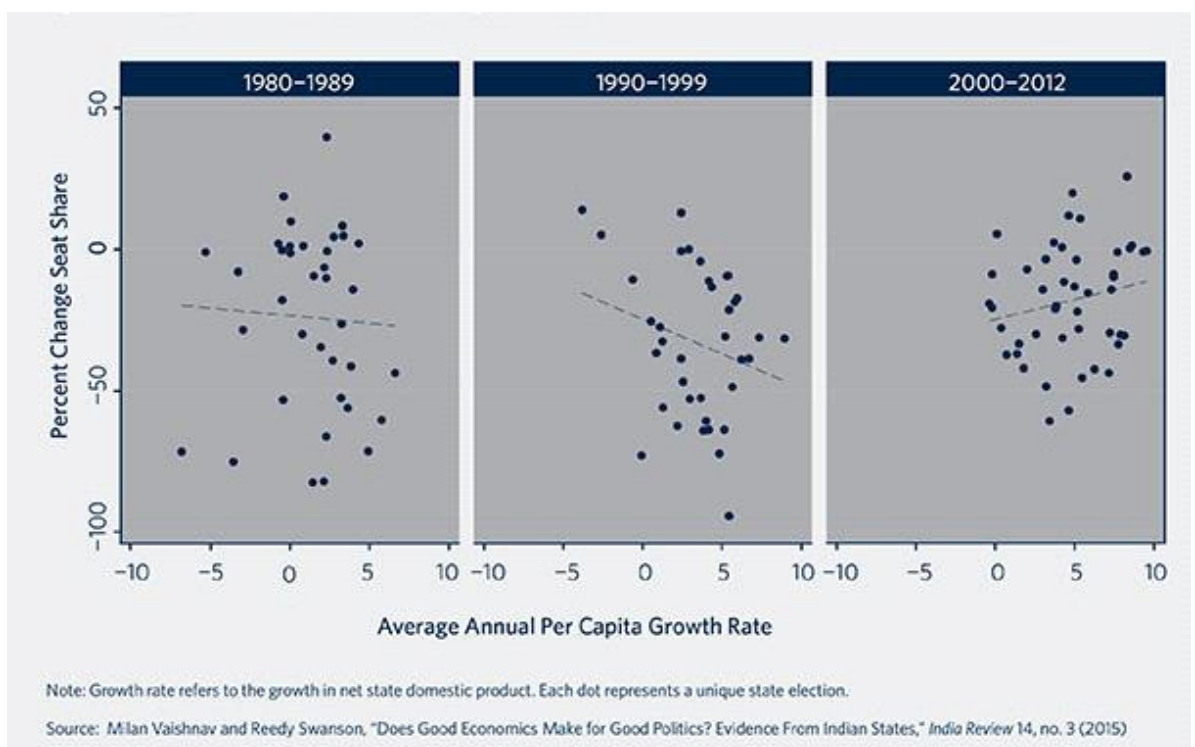
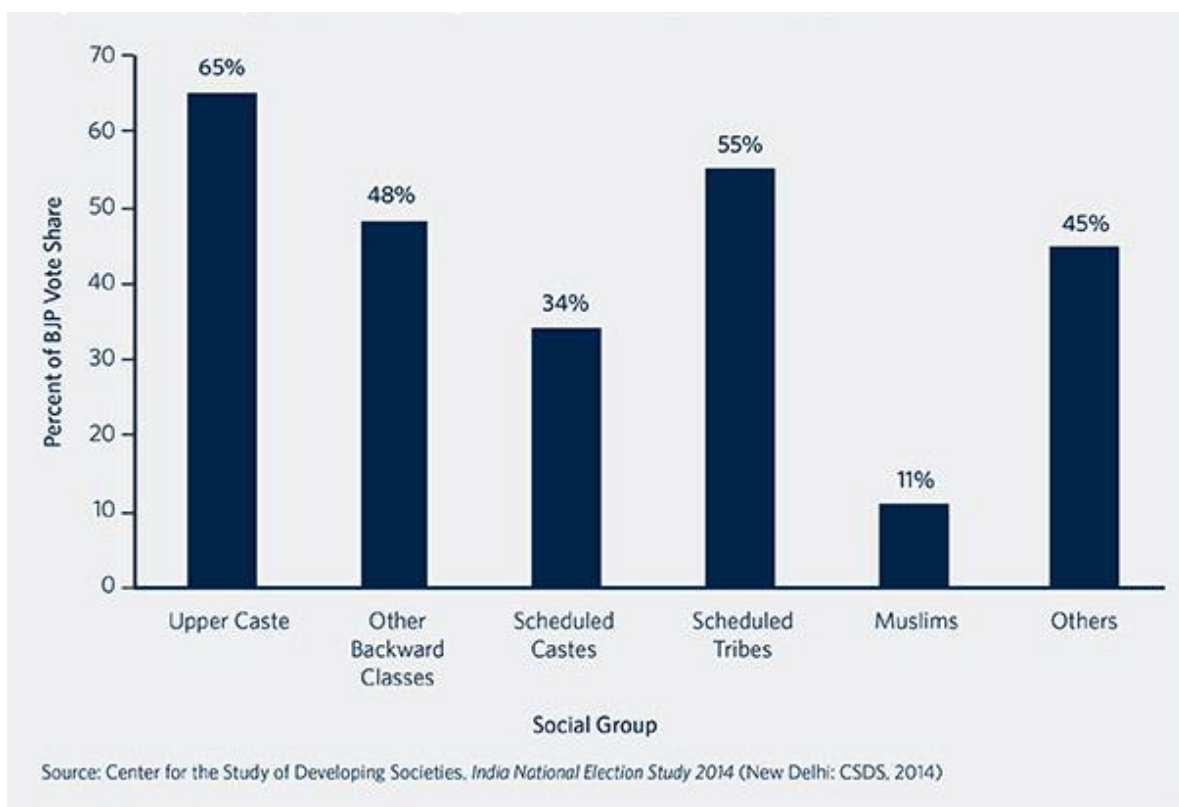


Figure-9. Increasing Presence of Parliamentarians Facing Criminal Cases



Figure-10. Broad Support for BJP Among Non-Muslims in North India in 2014



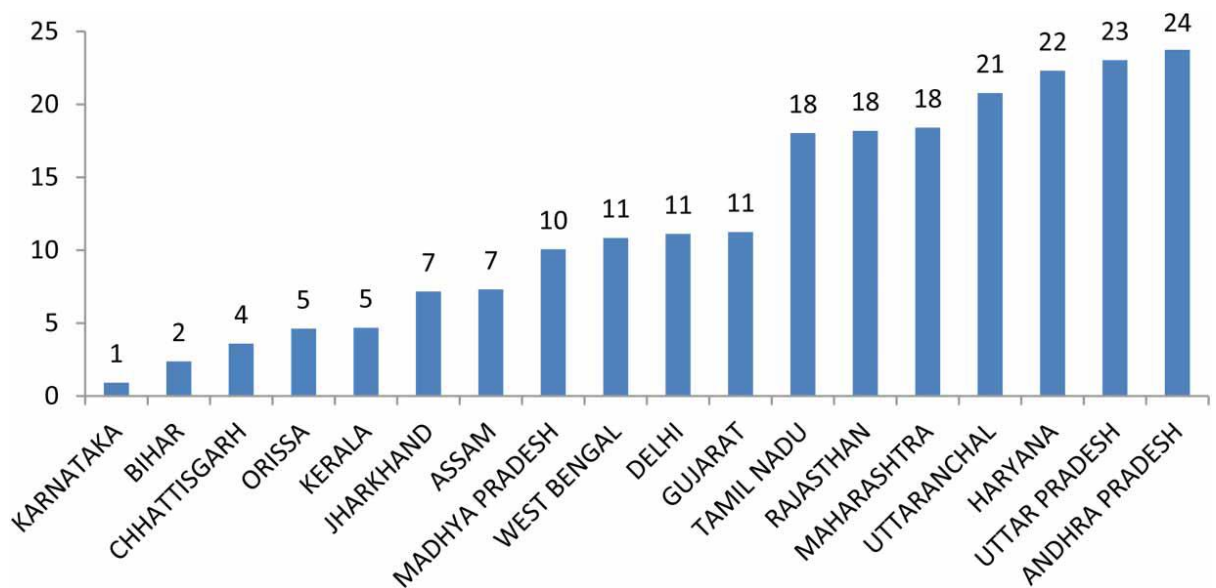


Figure-11. BJP's swing by state.

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

Source: Election Commission of India.

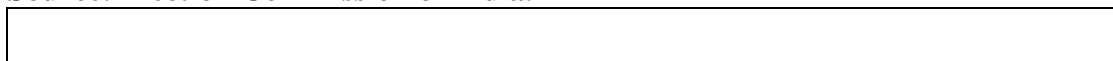


Table-34. BJP was a more popular choice among the young voters in 2014

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

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

Total	29	19	19	31
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Source: NES 2009 and 2014

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

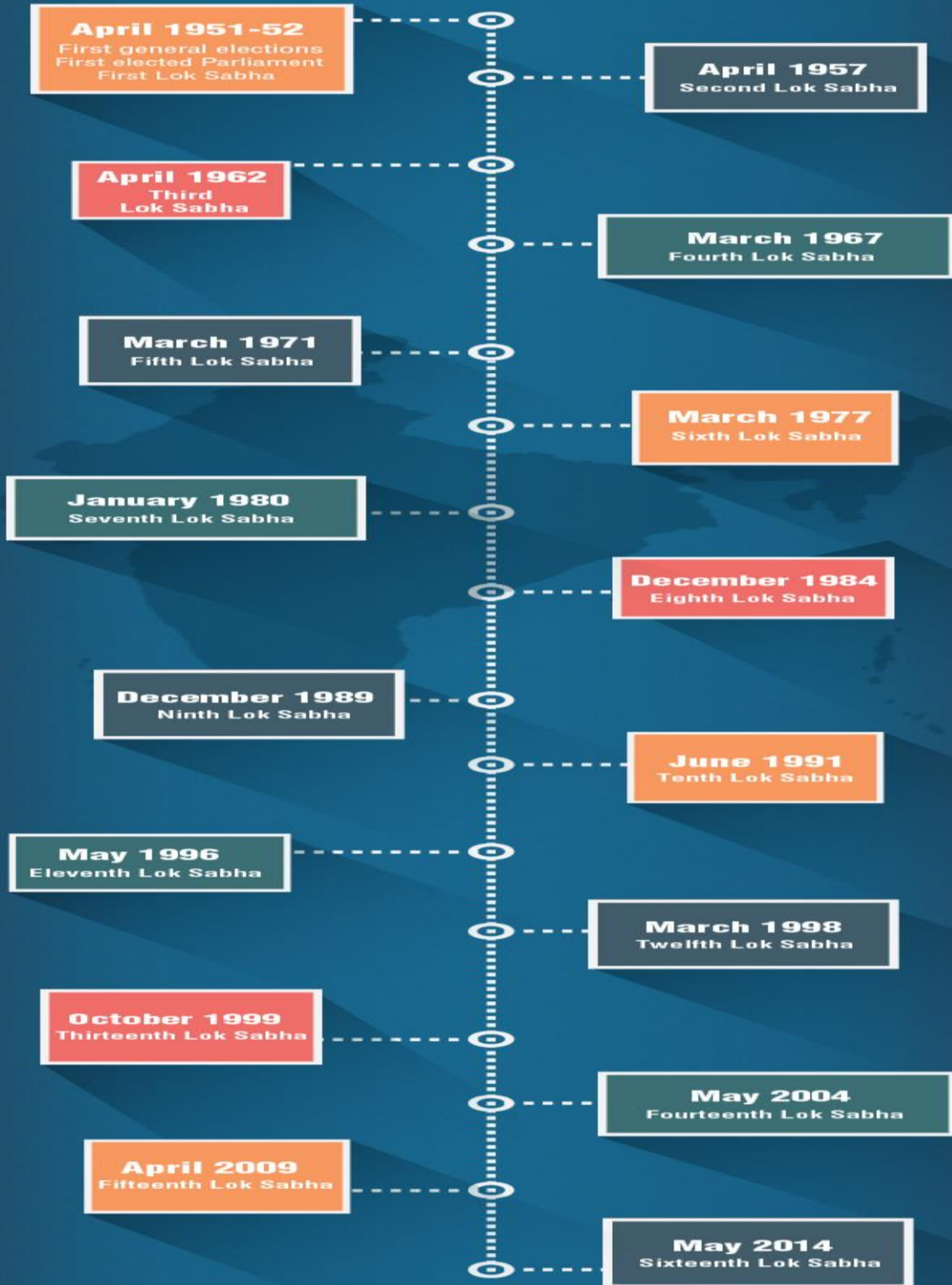
Caste / Community	Poor		Lower		Middle		Upper	
	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP	Congress	BJP
Upper caste	13	37	11	48	15	46	13	55
OBC	15	28	15	37	16	33	14	37
SC	17	22	18	22	20	27	17	25
ST	28	33	31	36	25	39	26	53
Muslims	41	4	34	10	42	11	27	7
Others	19	17	23	18	22	24	31	16
Total	20	24	19	31	20	32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

Source: Election Commission of India.

Figure-12. Various Lok Sabha Elections.



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



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 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 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 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 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.

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