

THE 2019 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN INDIA

Democracy at a Crossroads?

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PARTY POLITICS IN INDIA SINCE THE 2014 GENERAL ELECTIONS

BJP Dominance and the Making of the Fourth Party System

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This chapter analyzes the changing nature of the Indian party system, starting with the 2014 general election, covering the assembly elections between May 2014 and March 2019 and finishing with the 2019 general elections. We document the rising footprint of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) across India in both sets of elections, but also highlight the extent to which this support base has remained territorially uneven. We contrast this with the following of the Congress Party and that of the cross-regional, regional and regionalist parties. In the second section of the chapter we discuss what the rise of the BJP means for our understanding of the fourth party system by placing this in a longitudinal perspective. More particularly, we consider the question: how does this ‘new dominant party system’ compare with the two previous periods of party dominance (1952–1967; 1967–1989)? To answer this question, we consider a Gini-based measure of party nationalisation (Bochsler 2010) and a measure of party system congruence (Schakel 2013). These demonstrate that while the BJP has improved its nationalisation score since 2014, the party system as a whole still remains relatively denationalised. Therefore, we argue that the nationalisation of the BJP and that of the party system as a whole is distinct from the dominance of Congress in the first and second party systems. We should note that for reasons of space, our analysis is primarily concerned with electoral outcomes. Therefore, we pay minimal attention to electoral survey data (to assess the social composition of the electorate) or party ideology, even though we acknowledge that the ability of a party (or a set of parties) to set the dominant ideological frame or capture broad segments of the electorate play an equally important role in the understanding of a party system and its change across time (Palshikar 2014; Chhibber and Verma 2018).

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The Making of BJP Dominance: The 2014 General Elections and Assembly Elections since 2014 until March 2019

Context Leading up to the 2014 General Elections

Scholars of Indian party politics have identified three distinctive phases or ‘party systems’ in India since 1952 (Yadav 1999), the first two of which (1952–1989) were marked by the dominance of the Congress Party, the party which led India into independence and shaped its constitution. Within this period of one-party dominance, two distinctive phases have been identified. The first phase (or so-called ‘first party system’) lasted from 1952 until 1967 and was marked by Congress dominance at the centre and also in nearly all of the Indian states. During the second party system, which lasted from 1967 until 1989, Congress retained its dominant position at the national level (except for a brief period between 1977 and 1979), but faced fiercer competition from other parties in the states with which it engaged in an often-confrontational way. This period also featured higher electoral volatility and mobilising strategies of the Congress which varied significantly from state to state.

One-party dominance broke down in 1989 with the emergence of a ‘*post-Congress*’ polity. However, it took a decade of unstable coalitions and minority governments (1989–98) before multipartisan tendencies in Indian politics had fully crystallised into a new party system, India’s third (Yadav, 1999; Singh and Saxena 2003). The third party system featured strong electoral competition between two pre-electoral coalitions, namely the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance and the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance – it became known as the ‘two national alliances’ (National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution 2002) or binodal² system (Arora and Kailash 2013). This pluralised party system also coincided with diverse forms of party competition in the states and the *de facto* decentralisation of the Indian polity.³

In 2014, a clear victory in the general elections gave a decisive majority to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the lower house of parliament. The BJP’s majority in the Lok Sabha, in which it secured 282 (52%) out of 543 seats, was both unexpected and extraordinary. Furthermore, Congress, with less than 20 % of the vote, was reduced to 44 seats in the federal lower house. In this context, the 2014 election result was associated with the renationalisation⁴ of Indian politics (Vaishnav and Smogard 2014) in which the BJP had become the new ‘dominant’ party,⁵ replacing the Congress as the ‘system-defining’ party of the first and second party systems (Chhibber and Verma 2014). Some authors have gone as far as to identify the 2014 elections as the start of a fourth party system (Chhibber and Verma 2018). Indeed, in a set of assembly elections that were held between May 2014 and March 2019, the BJP continued to extend its electoral footprint across most of the Indian states. Although in a recently published article (Schakel et al. 2019) we reserved judgement on the arrival of a new dominant party system, the outcome of the 2019 general

elections appears to have made it so. The BJP strengthened its voteshare to 37.4% and its overall parliamentary majority to 303 seats (55.8% of Lok Sabha seats). In contrast, Congress added only 0.2% to its 2014 vote share (from 19.3% to 19.5 %) and increased its Lok Sabha representation from 44 to just 52 seats, less than the minimum 10% of the Lok Sabha seats which are required to gain recognition as a formal opposition.

The Rise of the BJP in the 2014 General Elections

In the federal election of 2014, the BJP claimed a landslide victory. Together with its allies in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the party amassed 336 seats in the Lok Sabha against just 60 for the incumbent Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) (of which Congress only captured 44). These results illustrate the rise of the BJP (up from just 116 seats in the 2009 elections). However, some scholars believe that the BJP win, with only 31.3 % of the vote share, was underwhelming (Moussavi and Macdonald 2015). The illusion of a landslide, so they argue, was the result of the first-past-the-post system, where no minimum threshold of votes is required to win elections. Furthermore, although the BJP fielded 427 candidates (out of 543 single member-districts), its strike rate would have been considerably lower without seat-sharing arrangements or pre-electoral alliances. The BJP aligned itself with 10 parties in the National Democratic Alliance with which it made seat-sharing arrangements ahead of the elections (Sridharan 2014: 21).

Even so, 31% is a remarkable feat, especially in view of the fiercely competitive nature of elections in the coalition era since 1996. The vote share of the first party within the ruling coalition typically ranged between 23 and 28%. The BJP's success in 2014 unfolded in a context in which elections had become even more contested (in 34.8% of constituencies there were more than 16 contestants as against 28.6% in 2009 (Election Commission of India, Electoral Statistics, 2016). The results were also dramatic because the BJP improved its vote share by 12.5%, whereas the support for Congress dropped by 9.2%. However, the 2014 elections also confirmed that the party's strength remained territorially uneven. It was primarily based on an outstanding performance in the Hindi belt and the West of India, the party's traditional strongholds, but much less so in the South, the East and the Northeast. For instance, the party won 208 seats in just eight states, adding 142 seats to what it had won in 2009. The gains were strongest in Uttar Pradesh (+61), Maharashtra (+14), Bihar (+10), Madhya Pradesh (+11), Gujarat (+11), Rajasthan (+21), Haryana (+7), and NCT of Delhi (+7). In contrast, seven major states resisted the rise of the BJP, restricting the party to 8 seats in total: West Bengal (2 out of a total of 42), Tamil Nadu (1/39), Andhra Pradesh (2/25), Odisha (1/21), Telangana (1/17), Kerala (0/20), and Punjab (1/13). Of the 11 seats in the Northeast (excluding Assam), the party could win only one. The territorial unevenness in the support of the BJP is also linked to the party's ability to win votes more easily from constituencies in which it faced competition from a polity-wide, cross-regional or regional party than in constituencies where it was up against a regionalist party. We define

a polity-wide or national party as a party which participates in general and state assembly elections in more than half of the states whereas a cross-regional party is party which participates in more than one but less half of the states. Regional and regionalist parties share a state-specific following, but, as Adam Ziegfeld (2014) observed, *regionalist* parties, unlike *regional* parties (see Appendix for a list of regional and regionalist parties), emphasise regional or cultural nationalism or represent concerns that are specific to their state. Based on this definition, we have identified 69 parties in India which are regional or regionalist (see Appendix 6.2 for a list of regional, regionalist, cross-regional and polity-wide or state-wide parties). In India as a whole, the share of the vote for polity-wide parties increased from 48.7% in the 2009 general elections to 52.01% in the 2019 general elections (reflecting the stronger rise of the BJP than the decline of Congress). The share of cross-regional parties dropped nearly with a third, from 14.9% to 10.02%, reflecting the significant decline in vote share of the Communist Parties and the Dalit Bahujan Samaj Party across India. Regional parties marginally added to their vote share (from 7.1% to 7.6%). However, in relative terms, the regionalist parties were most successful, adding a third to their overall vote share (from 15.01% to 20.2% overall).

The BJP booked the strongest gains where it was in direct competition with the most significant and only other polity-wide party, the Congress party (it won 88 % of all such bilateral contests). In comparison, it won just 28 % of all battles where its most direct competitor was a regionalist party. This said, not all voters who deserted the Congress party embraced the BJP. As Oliver Heath (2015) observed, the BJP was able to attract only 33% of those who voted Congress in 2009. Former Congress support may have gone to regional or regionalist parties instead, especially in those parts of India (South, East, Northeast) where the BJP traditionally had been much weaker. The BJP also had a good strike rate where it faced competition from cross-regional parties in part because in some states, such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where said parties are caste-based, no significant alliance among them had been formed ahead of the elections (Vaishnav and Hinton 2019: 23). For instance, the BJP won 93 seats from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar alone where it competed against cross-regional or regional parties and Congress was not even a major player (see also Kailash 2014 and Tillin 2015). Regionalist parties have been able to hold onto their seats in the Lok Sabha much more successfully than regional or cross-regional parties. In fact, after the 2014 general election, regional parties acquired more than a quarter of Lok Sabha seats (compared with only about 14% in 2004), whereas the seat share for regional parties has shrunk from above 9 to scarcely 4% and for cross-regional parties from 9.3 to 2.5 % (see also Figure 6.1 for a longitudinal perspective).

A detailed analysis for *why* the BJP was able to exert such influence in the 2014 general elections and how this transformed the social composition of its electorate falls beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice to say that strong Congress anti-incumbency after a decade of Congress-led government, marred by economic decline and corruption, played an important part in this. Equally significant was the decision of the BJP to field Narendra Modi as its prime ministerial candidate and his ability to project his Gujarat high-growth development model as the standard

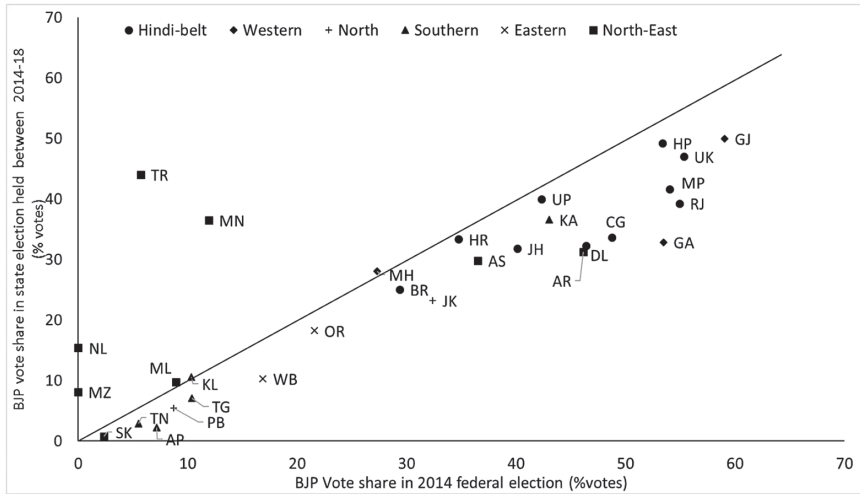


FIGURE 6.1 BJP vote share in 2014 General Election vs BJP votes share in 2014–2018 Assembly Elections

for India (Sharma and Swenden 2020). Scholars have also pointed to the support of the media and the role of vote mobilisers to drive up participation in the elections as important factors. Finally, Chhibber and Verma (2018) have shown how the positioning of the BJP on issues such as development and caste reservations ties in with the majority preferences of the Indian electorate.

The Rise of the BJP in the Assembly Elections Between May 2014 until April 2019

After the huge success of the BJP in the 2014 election, the party continued to register impressive victories in the Assembly elections. The party went on to win no fewer than 16 state assembly elections between October 2014 and March 2018, expanding its control (either on its own or in coalition) to 21 states by March 2018 from just five states in 2013. Even so, as Figure 6.1 demonstrates, whilst the BJP outdid the Congress Party and most of the regional parties in assembly elections that took place after 2014 – with the exception of Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland and Mizoram, all smaller states in the Northeast – its performance was generally not as strong as in the 2014 general elections.⁶ Although the active presence of ‘Modi’ during the state assembly election campaigns may have helped to push up the BJP vote, as expected, this ‘Prime Ministerial bonus’ did not generate as strong a dividend as in the general elections. Figure 6.1 further reveals that the performance of the BJP in assembly elections since 2014 more or less follows the territorial spread of the vote in the 2014 general elections: with the exception of the aforementioned Northeastern states, the party performed best in absolute terms in the Hindi belt and Western states. With the exception of Karnataka, however, they stayed well

below 20% of the vote in the East and South of India. Despite the lower BJP vote share in state assembly elections compared with general elections, the electoral support for the BJP in the Hindi belt states of around 38%, easily translated into seat shares of more than 50%.

Mimicking the rise of the BJP is the sharp fall in support of the Indian National Congress, especially in the non-Hindi belt states. The less pronounced fall of the Congress in the Hindi belt may well be explained by the fact that the party was already reduced to a minor party in *the most populous* of these states, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, well before the 2013 assembly elections. In Table 6.1, we have listed the performance of the BJP and the Congress Party (INC), as well as a set of regional or regionalist parties across state assembly elections to analyze to what extent the rise of the BJP has altered the nature of party competition in the states. For each state, we identify the predominant mode of party competition (classified on the basis of their *two strongest* parties in *vote share* between 2004 and 2009). Party competition can revolve around national or polity-wide parties (as in most of the Hindi Belt states, except for Uttar Pradesh and Bihar), pit a national against a regional (as in Bihar or Uttar Pradesh) or regionalist party (as in much of the Northeast, South, East, and Maharashtra), or involve competition between two regional(ist) parties (as in Tamil Nadu). We consider assembly elections between 2004–2009, 2009–2014 and since 2014 until May 2019. Thus, the 2014–2019 column lists results for 4 state assembly elections (Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim), which coincided with the 2019 general elections. Table 6.1 lists, for each state, the position of the party holding the largest and the second-largest share of *votes*. Table 6.2 is a summative table, distinguishing between different forms of party competition by listing the number of states in which the BJP, INC, a regional or regionalist party comes first or second.

Table 6.1 clearly illustrates the rising support of the BJP (marked in bold) across all types of state party systems since 2014. The party is first in five states in which party competition (based on the 2004–2009 classification) is predominantly between polity-wide parties (but one down from its position in 2004–2009). In Delhi, the AAP displaced Congress as the largest party in the 2013 and 2015 assembly elections, but the BJP is the strongest opposition party (and also captured all Delhi seats in the 2014 parliamentary elections). With the exception of Jharkhand, the BJP did not come first or second among the 16 states in which competition revolved between a national party (Congress, CPI) and a regional(ist) party between 2004 and 2009. Now it is the strongest party in six states among that cohort and it is placed second in a further two. That the BJP has not advanced further is largely due to the sustained success of the regionalist parties which, as in the 2014 general elections, have been able to hold on to their top positions much better than regional parties. By displacing regional parties from power in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the BJP has become the largest in two states in which competition revolved mainly between regional parties, but it has not been able to break through in Tamil Nadu where regionalist parties continue to dominate.

The evolution of the Congress (underlined in Table 6.2) tells a different story. With the exception of Delhi, the Congress remains the second largest party in

TABLE 6.1 Party competition in 30 states since 2004 (largest and second largest party in vote share per state and election cycle based on assembly election performance)

<i>Party competition</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>2004–2009 1st–2nd party</i>	<i>2009–2014 1st–2nd party</i>	<i>2014–2019 (March) 1st–2nd party</i>	
National- National	Chhattisgarh	<u>BJP-INC</u>	<u>BJP-INC</u>	<u>INC-BJP</u>	
	Delhi	<u>INC-BJP</u>	<u>BJP-AAP</u>	<u>AAP-BJP</u>	
	Goa	<u>INC-BJP</u>	<u>BJP-INC</u>	<u>BJP-INC</u>	
	Gujarat	<u>BJP-INC</u>	<u>BJP-INC</u>	<u>BJP-INC</u>	
	Himachal Pradesh	<u>BJP-INC</u>	<u>INC-BJP</u>	<u>BJP-INC</u>	
	Karnataka	<u>INC-BJP</u>	<u>INC-BJP</u>	<u>INC-BJP</u>	
	Madhya Pradesh	<u>BJP-INC</u>	<u>BJP-INC</u>	<u>BJP-INC</u>	
	Rajasthan	<u>BJP-INC</u>	<u>INC-BJP</u>	<u>INC-BJP</u>	
	Uttarakhand	<u>BJP-INC</u>	<u>INC-BJP</u>	<u>BJP-INC</u>	
	National- (Cross-)	Andhra Pradesh	<u>INC-TDP</u>	INC-TDP	TDP-YSRC
Arunachal Pradesh		<u>INC-IND</u>	<u>INC-NCP</u>	<u>INC-BJP</u>	
Regional(ist)	Assam	<u>INC-AGP</u>	<u>INC-AGP</u>	<u>INC-BJP</u>	
	Haryana	<u>INC-INLD</u>	<u>INC-INLD</u>	<u>BJP-INLD</u>	
	Jharkhand	<u>BJP-IND</u>	<u>BJP-INC</u>	<u>BJP-JMM</u>	
	Jammu and Kashmir	<u>JKN-INC</u>	<u>JKN-INC</u>	<u>BJP-JKPDP</u>	
	Kerala	<u>CPM-INC</u>	<u>CPM-INC</u>	<u>CPM-INC</u>	
	Maharashtra	<u>INC-SHS</u>	<u>INC-NCP</u>	<u>BJP-SHS</u>	
	Meghalaya	<u>INC-NCP</u>	<u>INC-IND</u>	<u>INC-NPP</u>	
	Manipur	<u>INC-IND</u>	<u>INC-AITC</u>	<u>BJP-INC</u>	
	Mizoram	<u>MNF-INC</u>	<u>INC-MNF</u>	<u>MNF-INC</u>	
	Nagaland	<u>INC-NPF</u>	<u>NPF-INC</u>	<u>NPF-NDPP</u>	
	Odisha	<u>INC-BJD</u>	<u>BJD-INC</u>	<u>BJD-INC</u>	
	Punjab	<u>INC-SAD</u>	<u>INC-SAD</u>	<u>INC-SAD</u>	
	Sikkim	<u>SDF-INC</u>	<u>SDF-INC</u>	<u>SDF-SKM</u>	
	Tripura	<u>CPM-INC</u>	<u>CPM-INC</u>	<u>BJP-CPM</u>	
	Telangana		<u>TRS-INC</u>	<u>TRS-INC</u>	
	Regional(ist)- (Cross-)	Bihar	RJD-JD(U)	JD(U)-RJD	<u>BJP-RJD</u>
	Regional(ist)	Tamil Nadu	ADMK-DMK	ADMK-DMK	ADMK-DMK
	Regional(ist)	Uttar Pradesh	BSP-SAP	SAP-BSP	<u>BJP-BSP</u>
		West Bengal	CPM-AITC	AITC-CPM	AITC-CPM

Notes: The table displays the parties that are ranked first or second based on their party *vote shares* won in state election during the time period.

Each starting year also includes the state assembly elections that were held concurrently with the general election.

Hence, the 2014–19 data contains state assembly elections that were held in April–May 2014 but not in April–May 2019. The party system characterisation is based on the 2004–2009 time period. See Appendix for the full names of states.

TABLE 6.2 Summary of Party Competition in 30 States Since 2004

	2004–2009	2009–2014	2014–2019
BJP 1 st	7	6	13
INC 1 st	13	13	7
OTHER 1 st	9	11	10
BJP 2 nd	3	4	6
INC 2 nd	11	12	10
OTHER 2 nd	15	14	14
BJP prominent	10	10	19
INC prominent	24	25	17
OTHER prominent	24	25	24

Notes: The table displays the number of states where the BJP, INC or OTHER (regional, regionalist, or cross-regional) was the largest (1st) or second largest (2nd) party based on vote shares won in the state election. Prominent means a party ended first or second in a state assembly election. The final rows display sums of first and second places per party. Note that we take into account regional assembly election results which coincided with the 2019 General Elections.

those states with competition between national or polity-wide parties only. As we will discuss below, it even wrested back control from the Bharatiya Janata Party in the November–December 2018 elections in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, three Hindi-heartland states. However, with the exception of Mizoram, Kerala, Odisha and Telangana, it is not well placed to fight back in those states where polity-wide parties compete against regional or regionalist parties. In several of these states, the BJP has either displaced Congress as the largest party or pushed it into third position. Table 6.2 illustrates the advance of the BJP as first or second party at the expense of the INC. Other parties more or less held their strength within the party system, albeit more successfully so in case of the regionalist than regional parties, as set out above.

What enabled the BJP to do so well in most state assembly elections since 2014? In our recently published article in *Regional & Federal Studies* (Schakel et al. 2019), we provide a more detailed analysis of the narratives and strategies that helped the BJP to cement its support. We paid attention to its ability to cash in on its 2014 general election result in subsequent assembly elections (Haryana, Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir, and Jharkhand), playing out the leadership of Modi and development as a trump card. We also pointed to its ability to engineer political defections and to broker winning caste alliances (for instance, in Haryana). We referenced its ability to use social media platforms such as WhatsApp to the full and to its organisational strength, helped by its structural links with the Hindu volunteers (or ‘mobilisers’) of the RSS. Despite some setbacks in 2015 (Delhi, Bihar), either because of a ‘new’ and corrupt-free alternative to the BJP (Delhi) or because of the ability of opposition parties to join forces (Bihar), the BJP won most of the assembly elections as of 2016, except those in the South and Punjab. Noteworthy is the ability of the BJP to break into states where its presence had been traditionally weak. For instance, in Manipur,

and Meghalaya, elections resulted in a fractured mandate with the Congress party winning the largest number of seats (Noronha 2017; Phanjoubam 2017). However, in each of these Northeastern states, the BJP formed post-poll alliances with regional parties and independents to claim majority support. The Nagaland elections also gave a hung verdict, with the Nagaland People's Front (NPF) being the largest party. However, the BJP managed to form the government by supporting the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) and gaining the support of smaller parties in the assembly (Phanjoubam 2018). In Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya, the BJP's rise is also linked to defections and in Tripurathe BJP was able to secure the support of the tribal community (Roy 2018).

We also observe a change in the BJP's dominant narrative since 2017. As early as the 2016 Assembly elections in Assam, the BJP moved away from its Modi-centred agenda of development and played to ethno-national sentiments by employing a 'sons of the soil' (nativist) campaign particularly targeting 'Muslim or Bangladeshi immigrants' (Misra 2016). In general, assembly elections since 2017 have shown a gradual move away from development (given that job creation and economic growth figures were not living up to expectations) to 'Moditva' (a word-play on Hindutva, or Hindu nationalism), in which development sits alongside a narrative of Hindu nationalism (Tharamalangam 2016). The limits of this strategy became apparent in the November and December 2018 assembly elections in which the BJP lost control of three important Hindi belt states (Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) to the Congress, but only in the case of Chhattisgarh on the basis of a decisive gap in the vote.

The 2019 Elections and the Consolidation of the Fourth Party System

Whilst the general elections of 2014 and subsequent assembly elections 'made' the fourth party system, the 2019 general elections consolidated it. The indications which pointed at a weakening of BJP support towards the end of 2018 were not carried forward in the 2019 election result. With 37.4% of the all-India vote, the BJP added about 6% to its electoral base since 2014. Figure 6.2 summarises the performance of the BJP, Congress and the sum of cross-regional, regional, and regionalist parties and compares this with their performance in general and state assembly elections since 2009.

As Figure 6.2 clarifies, the party gained votes across nearly all the Indian regions compared with the 2014 general elections and the assembly elections since that time. Generally, the party was expected to lose seats in the Hindi belt, given that its seat share could hardly go up further from its high base in 2014 and taking into consideration the recent loss of power in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. Furthermore, in Uttar Pradesh, the lower-caste regional parties had formed a powerful alliance against the BJP. However, this did not stop the further rise of the BJP. The BJP captured more than 50% of the vote across the Hindi belt states and it amassed all the seats of Haryana (10/10), Himachal Pradesh (4/4), Delhi (7/7),

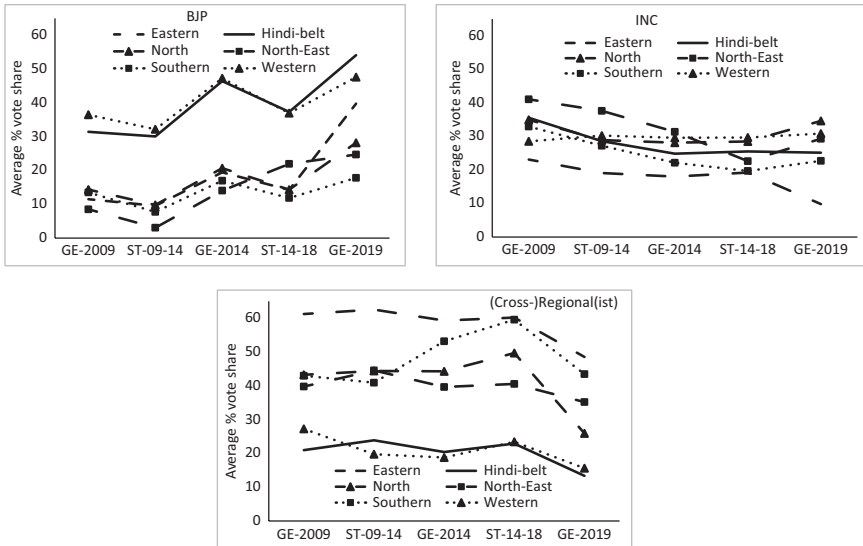


FIGURE 6.2 Average vote share in general and state elections since May 2009.

Notes: Shown are the results for the BJP, INC, and the sum for (cross-)regional(ist) parties across six macro-regions.

nearly all seats in Rajasthan (24/25), Madhya Pradesh (28/29) and a majority of seats in Uttar Pradesh (62/80). Yet, the Hindi belt states amassed ‘only’ 66% of the BJP vote, a slight decrease from 2014, signifying that its support base had become more evenly spread (Vaishnav and Hinton 2019: 9). In comparison with 2014, the BJP also retained its strength in the West: it captured all 26 seats in Gujarat, and 23/48 seats in Maharashtra. Beyond that, Figure 6.2 clearly illustrates the significant rise in support for the BJP in West Bengal and Odisha, two large Eastern states (where the party displaced the Communists or Congress as the largest opposition), and in some of the Northeastern states. The party had campaigned heavily in these states with the purpose of offsetting any expected losses in the Hindi belt. Whilst these losses did not materialise, the party’s campaign efforts in West Bengal and Odisha came to fruition: it captured 18/44 seats in the former and 8/21 seats in the latter. Indeed, the party made inroads in both states in subsequent assembly elections even as the regionalist incumbent parties – the TMC and BJD respectively – held their ground. The BJP’s vote share in the assembly polls in Odisha (2019) and West Bengal (2021), compared with the previous assembly elections, increased by 14.3% (from 18.2% to 32.5%) and 28.13% (from 10% to 38.13%), respectively. In terms of seat share, the BJP jumped from 10 to 23 seats in Odisha and from 3 to 77 seats in West Bengal. Overall, the BJP has emerged as the main opposition party in both states, relegating Congress to distant third spot in Odisha and decimating the party altogether in West Bengal.

On the other hand, the party continued to perform poorly in South India (with the partial exception of Telangana, where it won 4 seats and 20 % of the vote,

notwithstanding a poor performance during Telangana state assembly elections just months earlier). It has been suggested that the BJP may use Telangana as its 'gateway to the South' (even though the BJP is the strongest party already in Karnataka, another Southern state where it bagged 25/28 seats in the 2019 general elections).

As Figure 6.2 illustrates, in contrast to 2014, the swing to the BJP did not come at the cost of the Congress Party. Its overall vote share marginally increased. However, what Congress won in support across most states was largely offset by losses in some of the most populous states, most notably Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Odisha. It only bagged 1/40, 1/80, 2/44, 1/48, 1/28 and 1/21 seats from these states respectively. Conversely, Kerala and Punjab turned into its most successful states, with 15/20 and 8/13 seats respectively. In Kerala, the party benefited from strong anti-state incumbency and prevented the BJP from emerging as a credible alternative to the Communist-led Left front government. The strike rate of the Congress was also high relative to its vote share in Tamil Nadu, due to seat-sharing arrangements with the DMK. Congress bagged 8 of the state's 38 seats, despite a state vote share of just 12.8%. Leaving aside some of the states in the Northeast (most notably Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura), the Congress did not generally perform better in the 2019 general elections than in preceding state assembly elections. Its performance was especially bad in the East (Odisha and West Bengal), where the BJP now is in pole position to challenge the regionalist parties. Of further note is the drop in the Congress vote share in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh compared with assembly elections in November 2018, in which the party was able to wrest control from the BJP.

However, more than in 2014, the gains of the BJP have come at the cost of cross-regional, regional and regionalist party support. With the exception of some of the smaller states and West Bengal (where the TMC increased its vote share despite losing a significant number of seats due the rise of the BJP and the collapse of the Left vote in that state), regionalist parties performed worse in 2019 than in 2014. Their decline in vote share is significant in some of the larger states, such as Haryana and Maharashtra as well as Telangana and even Tamil Nadu). Vaishnav and Hinton (2019: 23) showed that the BJP won about 50% of direct contests against regionalist parties in 2019, compared with just 28% of such races in 2014. We also know that regional and cross-regional parties did not improve significantly on their performance either. Although the alliance between the Samajwadi party and Bahujan Samaj party helped the BJP to lose seats compared with 2014 (from 71 to 62 seats), their combined vote share dropped by 4.58% whereas the BJP nearly monopolised the non SP-BSP vote, increasing its vote share by 8.26% compared with 2014. Overall, cross-regional party support dropped from 14.9% to 10.02%, regional party support from 7.6% to 5.6% and regionalist party support from 20.2% to 15.7% compared with the 2014 general elections

Why did the BJP do as well as it did in the 2019 general elections? Based on some of the elections survey results which have become available, we can point to several factors. Generally, these have been summarised as the '4Ms' (Yogendra Yadav as cited in Seminar 2019): Modi, Mobilisation, Media and Money. Firstly, the

popularity of Narendra Modi relative to opposition leaders increased in the build-up to the election, compared to where it stood at the end of 2018 (India Today 2019). The 2019 National Election Survey revealed that 32% of respondents who supported the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance did so only because of Modi (he is seen to operate in the national interest, and lauded for his decisiveness and ‘incorruptible’ manner; Vaishnav and Hinton 2019: 21). In setting the dominant narrative, the BJP has been helped by an enormous election machine and war chest (facilitated by newly introduced campaign finance schemes such as ‘electoral bonds’, which disproportionately benefited the BJP), a supportive media (including the ability to use social media to its benefit from WhatsApp to Facebook), and a large number of ‘footsoldiers’ drawn from the RSS or other Hindutva-associated outfits. The latter helped to mobilise turnout, which, at 67.2% of eligible voters, stood at its highest level ever. As Vaishnav and Hinton (2019: 25) assert, this benefited the BJP more: the party gained 87% of seats where turnout increased by more than 5% from its 2014 base, but only 29% where turnout dropped by more than 5% from that base.

Ideologically, the BJP gave less emphasis to its development plank (or emphasised the need to continue in power for another five years to ‘complete’ its development work) and strongly nationalised the campaign (unlike in the 2014 general elections, the ‘messaging’ in 2019 was more homogenised). Modi and the BJP played out their strong muscular nationalist stance to the full, especially in the aftermath of the Pulwama terrorist attacks in Kashmir, less than two months before the opening of the polls. The decision to launch air strikes across the Line of Control with Pakistan boosted the image of Modi and the BJP as India’s ‘strongmen’ (‘chowkidar’) and branded criticism thereof as ‘anti-national’. Vaishnav and Hinton (2019) also points to the ability of the BJP to project itself as corruption-free more than just ‘pro-business’. Indeed, despite lacklustre economic growth, the BJP had continued, introduced and sometimes rebranded welfare schemes launched by Congress. Some of these schemes (such as the construction of toilets or rural roads, or the introduction of gas cylinders) primarily benefited the countryside and the poorer segments of society. Thus, these policies helped to cement the BJP as first party of choice in rural India and among the OBC, Dalits and tribes, pushing it further away from its traditional urban and upper-middle class and upper-caste electorate (see also Sircar and Kishore 2019; Gupta and Shrimankar 2019; Poonam, Jyoti and Prakash 2019).

Situating the Fourth Party System or India's Third Dominant Party System: A Longitudinal Perspective

The sustained dominance of the BJP over two general elections and most state assembly elections since 2014 can now be said to have pushed India into a new dominant party system with the BJP as the central node. However, in some respects the attributes of this party system remain distinct from key features of the first two dominant party systems in which Congress reigned supreme.⁷

Firstly, Figures 6.3 A and B compare the relative strength of polity-wide, cross-regional, regional and regionalist parties across time per set of general elections. We

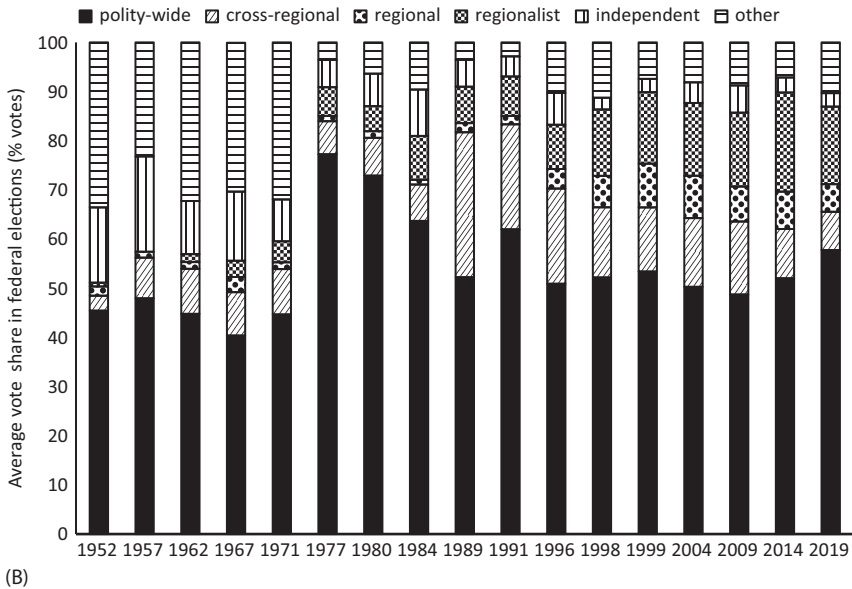
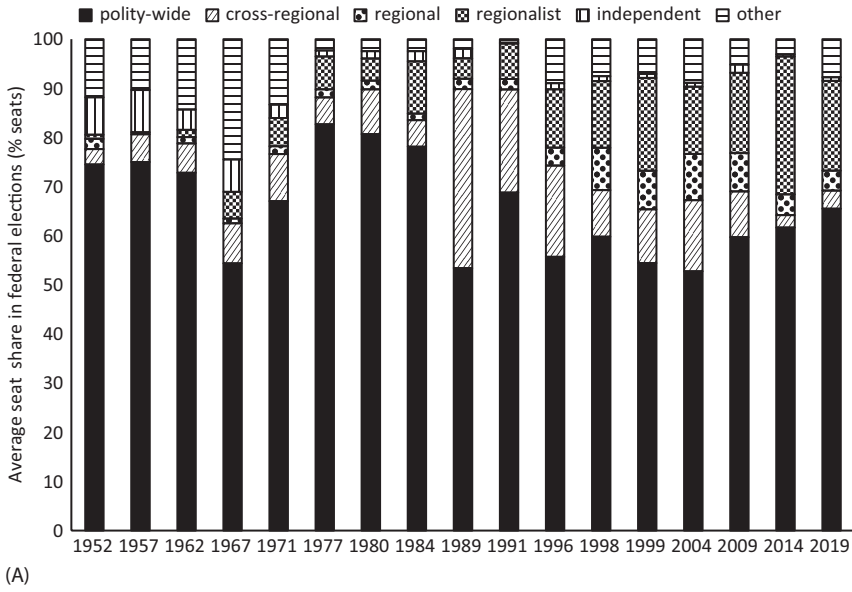


FIGURE 6.3 A. Vote share in general elections per type of party (1952–2019). B. Seat share in general elections per type of party (1952–2019).

Notes: Vote and seat shares are weighted by the size of the state electorate. See Table A6.2 in the Appendix for a classification of parties.

note that the first party system (1952–1967) was marked by a relatively low aggregate vote share for polity-wide parties but this was due to the comparatively large support for independent candidates and for small, sub-state parties in the context of a very fragmented opposition. The polity-wide party vote in this period was also entirely monopolised by the Congress Party, giving it clear hegemonic status in the party system.

The second party system (1967–1989) sees a stronger nationalisation of the vote, although not significantly until the 1977 elections due to the emergence of the Janata Party as a polity-wide alternative to Congress, and a decline in 1980 due to that party's fragmentation. At the same time, even in national elections regionalist and cross-regional parties make gradual inroads, despite the continuation of single-party majority governments in a highly centralised 'federal' context at the centre. Compared with the second party system, the third (1989–2014) is marked by a generally lower share of the polity-wide vote (around 50%) and its internal split between the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party, heading the two major alliances as of 1998. Regional and regionalist parties perform at their strongest in this period, strengthened by their ability to wielded political and economic influence in a context of federal coalition government and economic liberalisation respectively. Figure 6.3 shows that the 2014 general election result appears to continue this trend if it were not for the decline in the Congress vote and the rise of the BJP. Overall, the features resemble the third party system more than the first or second. Even the 2019 result is not dramatically different in this light, at least in vote shares, except that the combined vote share of the cross-regional, regional and regionalist parties continues to decline at the expense of the polity-wide parties (due to the further rise of the BJP). However, in terms of seat share the features resemble the early 1990s, but differentiated by more support for regionalist parties now than then, and less support for cross-regional parties (Figure 6.3B). In addition, the BJP accounts for a larger share of the polity-wide seats and votes.

Taking into consideration that most of the voters who supported polity-wide parties between 1967 and 1989 in general elections supported Congress, with about 37.4 % of the polity-wide vote in the 2019 general elections, the BJP comes closer but remains below the vote share of the Congress Party during the first and second party systems. Congress obtained 45.0, 47.8, 44.7, 40.8, 43.7, 42.7, 49.0 and 39.5% of the vote in the general elections of 1952, 1957, 1962, 1967, 1971, 1980, 1984 and 1989, respectively. Leaving aside the post-Emergency 1977 elections (in which Congress support shrunk to 34.5% and the party was relegated to the opposition benches) the party amassed a larger share of the vote in the face of a more fragmented opposition throughout. However, what these figures do not tell us is how this share of the vote maps on the social coalition of voters which these polity-wide parties can amass. In terms of the Congress vote, the dominance of the party was clear across all segments in the first party system, but much more variable and volatile (often depending on different coalitions of voters per state depending on the nature of party competition) during the second party system. In the current context,

the social coalition of the BJP appears to resemble Congress in the first party system since the BJP now amasses majority support across all segments (caste, class, tribe, urban–rural) of voters *except* among the religious minorities.

Secondly, we can assess the extent to which the BJP has developed into a genuine polity-wide party, i.e. by assessing its territorial spread of the vote. The assumption is that dominance is not only a function of overall vote share in a national election, but also of the ability to obtain consistently high vote shares across as many of the states as possible in national and state elections. We calculate Daniel Bochsler's (2010) party nationalisation score to illustrate this point. This score expresses the extent to which a party obtains similar vote shares across all the various states of India. It ranges from 0 (in which case a party is assumed to obtain all its votes from within one state) to 1 (which assumes that a party obtains an identical share of the vote across all the states of a federation). Importantly, nationalisation scores only consider the distribution of a party's vote across the states, but not its size. Table 6.3 lists party

TABLE 6.3 Party Nationalisation Scores

Election <i>year</i>	Federal elections				State elections					
	<i>BJP</i>	<i>INC</i>	<i>JNP</i>	<i>REG</i>	<i>N</i> <i>states</i>	<i>BJP</i>	<i>INC</i>	<i>JNP</i>	<i>REG</i>	<i>N</i> <i>states</i>
1952		0.90		0.39	15		0.91		0.44	13
1957		0.94		0.45	16		0.95		0.48	12
1962		0.93		0.47	18		0.93		0.52	15
1967		0.93		0.58	21		0.92		0.53	21
1971		0.81		0.45	22		0.80		0.48	22
1977		0.82	0.70	0.38	25		0.81	0.76	0.45	25
1980		0.86	0.68	0.39	26	0.52	0.86	0.47	0.49	25
1984	0.47	0.92	0.46	0.46	25	0.50	0.88	0.42	0.50	25
1989	0.47	0.90	0.26	0.81	25	0.51	0.86	0.36	0.82	24
1991	0.64	0.85	0.37	0.75	25	0.59	0.74	0.28	0.70	25
1996	0.64	0.78	0.36	0.77	26	0.60	0.76	0.41	0.75	25
1998	0.73	0.69	0.18	0.68	26	0.61	0.76	0.46	0.73	26
1999	0.71	0.74		0.70	26	0.61	0.71		0.73	26
2004	0.69	0.75		0.71	29	0.61	0.75		0.75	29
2009	0.62	0.78		0.71	29	0.60	0.75		0.70	29
2014	0.72	0.69		0.65	29	0.72	0.67		0.66	30
2019	0.75	0.67		0.64	30					

Notes: Shown are party nationalisation scores weighted by the size of states and the number of states (Bochsler 2010). State elections are held simultaneous or after a general election. When no state election has been held simultaneous or after a general election we selected the previously held state election (but which took place after a previously held general election).

BJP = Bharatiya Janata Party; includes Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD)

INC = Indian National Congress; includes Indian National Congress (I) and Indian National Congress (U)

JNP = Janata Party; includes Janata Party (JP) (JNP/JP) and Janata Party (Secular) (JP(S))

REG = includes cross-regional, regional, and regionalist parties (see Appendix).

nationalisation scores for the BJP and INC in recent national and state elections. The national figures list standardisation scores in a given national election. The state election scores list nationalisation scores for the cycle of state assembly elections, starting from the date of the previous general elections until the date of the general elections for which a date is listed (hence the nationalisation scores for state elections in 2014 calculate party nationalisation on the basis of party shares in state assembly elections which have taken place after the federal election in May 2014).

Table 6.3 demonstrates that until the federal election of 2014 the Congress Party had a more evenly spread support base than the BJP in federal and state elections. But this situation changes in the general elections of 2014 when the BJP and Congress acquire approximately the same territorial spread of the vote. The BJP even becomes the more nationalised of both parties during the cycle of state assembly elections after 2014. The 2019 general elections extended the territorial spread of the BJP vote (given the gains in Odisha, West Bengal and Telangana, states in which the party had been traditionally weak), and weakened that of the Congress.

Yet if we situate these figures in a more longitudinal perspective, then the nationalisation of the BJP remains *below* that of the Congress Party during the first and second party systems. Indeed, between 1952 and 1989, the Congress obtained nationalisation scores in general and state assembly elections close to or in excess of 0.9. Given that such a territorial spread was *combined* with vote shares in general elections which consistently exceeded 40% up until the 1989 national elections, the Congress was comparatively more dominant *electorally* than the BJP today. The table also shows that cross-regional, regional and regionalist parties remain quite 'omnipresent' across India, despite a drop in their aggregate 'nationalisation score' post-2014. They remain in any case more prominent than they ever were in the first and second party systems.

Finally, the long-term nationalisation of a party system can be expressed by calculating congruence measures. We look here at one of a range of measures which have been developed by Arjan H. Schakel (2013), namely party system congruence. Party system congruence measures the extent to which a particular state party system is different from a federal party system and it is the result of two sources of variation: the extent to which voters in a general election across the polity are different from the electorate within a particular state or union territory in the same (general) election *and* the extent to which voters within a particular state or union territory switch their vote between federal and state assembly elections. Hence party system congruence maximises variation in the level of aggregation and the type of election. The more congruent or more nationalised a party system, the lower the degree of dissimilarity in electoral outcomes when varied by level of aggregation and type of election; the more incongruent or less nationalised a party system, the higher the degree of dissimilarity in electoral outcomes when varied by level of aggregation and type of election. In Figure 6.4, the x-axis denotes a set of elections, whereby each year corresponds with a general election *and* a set of state

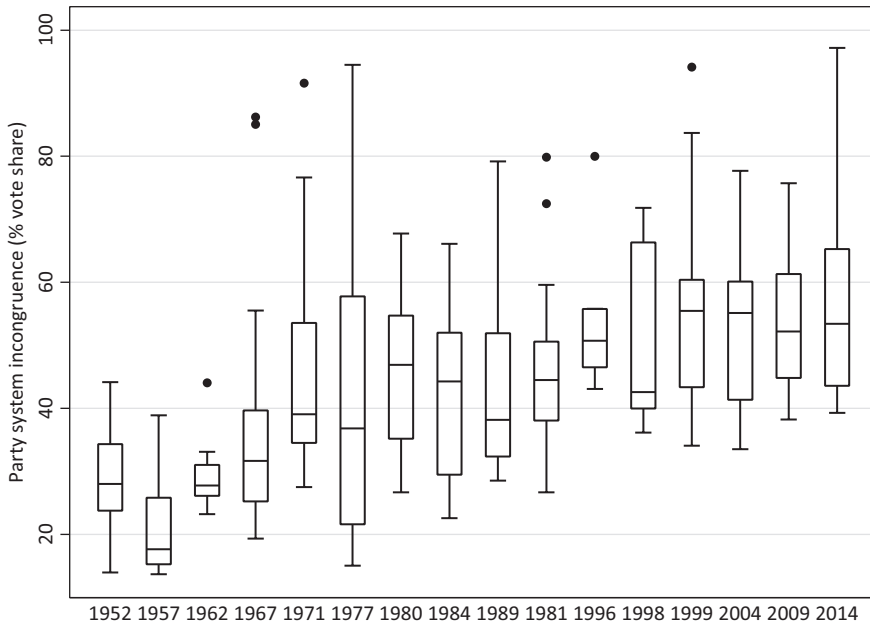


FIGURE 6.4 Party system congruence between federal and state elections since 1952.

Notes: Shown are dissimilarity scores (percent votes) between a federal election and subsequently held state elections held at the same time or after the federal election but before the next federal election. Dissimilarity scores are calculated based on Schakel (2013). A box plot distributes values into four groups with each 25 per cent of the observations. The values of the first quartile of observations lies in between the bottom line of the box and lower whisker, the second quartile in between the bottom line of the box and the middle line of the box which is the median, the third quartile between the median and the upper line of the box, and the fourth quartile between the upper line of the box and upper whisker. Dots are outliers which have values more than 3/2 times of the upper quartile.

assembly elections held thereafter until the next general election (the 2014 data incorporate state assembly elections results until March 2019). The y-axis denotes dissimilarity values, i.e. the higher the value, the less *nationalised* or congruent is the party system.

Based on the evidence produced here, the Indian party system remains as denationalised as for previous cycles of general and state assembly elections since 1999. Therefore, while we do not dispute the dominance of the BJP at the moment, especially in light of Congress’s decline; the position of the BJP in the party system does not appear to be strong enough to reproduce the level of dominance which marked the more nationalised first- and second-party systems. However, if the BJP continues to win state assembly elections, and voters in the states who stuck with regionalist parties were to shift their allegiance to the BJP (what they

appear to have done in the most recent general elections, see, for instance, the significant gains for the BJP in Telangana, West Bengal or Odisha in comparison with recent state assembly elections), then the result may well lead to significantly higher congruence or nationalisation. We will have to await the outcome of the general elections of 2024, as the relevant box plot would capture vote shifts in assembly elections between 2019 and 2024 (plus GE 2019–2024) which may well confirm the following of the BJP (and thus register lower vote shifts since the 2014–19 assembly elections).

Conclusion: India and the Fourth Party System

The BJP's unexpected rise to federal power in 2014 and the landslide victories in state assembly elections held close to the national elections led political scientists to proclaim the dominance of the BJP and the arrival of India's fourth party system. In this chapter, we took a closer look at the data to investigate whether such a conclusion is warranted. The analysis in the first two sections clearly demonstrated the dominance of the BJP in the Indian political landscape. However, we also observed the resilience of a structural split between the Hindu nationalist and regional(ist) domains of politics. The ruling party has not yet fully succeeded in integrating the non-Hindi Belt cultures into its discourse, despite the BJP-RSS effort to produce a narrative of inevitability and some electoral successes in the Northeast. Regionalist parties in particular continued to perform well in the state assembly elections.

The 2019 elections appear to have changed whatever doubts were still cast on the rise of the fourth party system, doubts we expressed ourselves in our article in *Regional & Federal Studies* ahead of the general election outcome and campaign for that election. Our analysis documents the further rise of the party, its growing territorial spread (especially in the East and Northeast) and its ability now to also eat into the support base of the regionalist parties, at least in general elections. It remains to be seen whether voters in states such as Odisha, West Bengal and Telangana will consider the BJP as the best alternative to the regionalist parties which currently govern their states. Forthcoming assembly elections will reveal the extent to which voters in these states are willing to extend support to a polity-wide party which projects a strong and muscular sense of Indian nationality. Writing in October 2020, the results in four assembly election since May 2019 (Haryana, Maharashtra, Jharkand and Delhi) have demonstrated a considerable loss in support of the BJP, compared with the BJP performance in these states in the 2019 general election. Just as in assembly elections between 2018 and 2019, for now, this continues a pattern of 'dual or split-ticket voting' in which voters support state-based parties or Congress in state assembly elections, despite the BJP's grip on central office.

Conversely, although the Congress has held onto its electoral position, its inability to project a strong ideological alternative to the BJP at a time of economic crisis

inevitably raises questions about the party's electoral future. Despite the stabilisation of its aggregate vote, the Congress vote has become more territorially uneven and it no longer offers a credible alternative of governance to the BJP in West Bengal and Odisha, let alone in some states of the Northeast. The Congress could not benefit from the decline of the Left (CPI) in West Bengal, despite it is ideologically closer to the latter on issues such as welfare and secularism. Instead, CPI voters have flocked to the BJP instead.

Therefore, overall our analysis confirms the arrival of India's fourth party system. Yet the dominance of the BJP is different from the dominance of Congress in the first and second party systems. The non-BJP vote is higher than the non-Congress vote in the second party system, or distinctive in nature from the non-Congress vote in the first. As of yet, Congress occupies a larger position in the party system than any alternative opposition party during the first and second party systems (leaving aside a brief spell of the Janata Party which in itself was a very loose coalition of parties rather than an integrated party). As a result of this, party system congruence remains relatively low compared with the first and second party systems. At the same time, the BJP hegemony or dominance across different electoral segments resembles that of Congress in the first and second party systems: the party is ahead among all social groups based on caste, tribe, class, and urban or rural denomination, except among religious minorities. We also emphasised that the social composition of its electorate, unlike that of Congress in the second party system, is more consistent across the territories of India. The resounding win in the 2019 general elections may enable the BJP to assert its hegemony more forcefully and party system congruence may increase further as a result.⁸ Future research could reveal evidence from time-series or diachronic analysis of survey data to link our analysis based on election outcomes with data on party identification of Indian voters. A more congruent or nationalising party system is one in which such identifications become more similar across the states and level of election.

Our chapter briefly pointed at the factors enabling the BJP to assert its hegemony. In spite of an economic slowdown, the party has a sharp ideological profile, linked to nationalism, infrastructure and minimal welfare tied to some central development schemes. Narendra Modi remains a strong vote puller. Hindu fringe organisations such as the RSS (which serve to drive up and implant the Hindutva ideology in society) have further increased their reach across Indian society. Since 2010, no less than 19,584 RSS shakhas ('Hindu boot camps') were set up across India, taking the total up to 57,000 (Hindustan Times 2019). 'Money and Media' have added to the BJP's strength. This said, Modi will not be prime minister indefinitely. A highly centralised Congress Party under Indira Gandhi never fully recovered from her demise. Will a highly centralised BJP be able to retain its unity in a post-Modi-Shah era? Organisationally though, the BJP is anchored more strongly in society than Indira's and even Nehru's Congress ever was. But will that be enough to continue to sway voters with its ideology? Time will tell.

Appendix

TABLE A6.1 Classification and abbreviation of 29 states

<i>State</i>	<i>abbr.</i>	<i>Hindi Belt</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>Northeast</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>
Andhra Pradesh	AP					X	
Arunachal Pradesh	AR				X		
Assam	AS				X		
Bihar	BR	X					
Chhattisgarh	CG	X					
Delhi	DL	X					
Goa	GA						X
Gujarat	GJ						X
Haryana	HR	X					
Himachal Pradesh	HP	X					
Jammu & Kashmir	JK			X			
Jharkhand	JH	X					
Karnataka	KA					X	
Kerala	KL					X	
Madhya Pradesh	MP	X					
Maharashtra	MH						X
Manipur	MN				X		
Meghalaya	ML				X		
Mizoram	MZ				X		
Nagaland	NL				X		
Odisha	OR		X				
Punjab	PB			X			
Rajasthan	RJ	X					
Sikkim	SK				X		
Tamil Nadu	TN					X	
Telangana	TG					X	
Tripura	TR				X		
Uttar Pradesh	UP	X					
Uttarakhand	UK	X					
West Bengal	WB		X				

TABLE A6.2 Classification of parties

	<i>Party Name</i>	<i>Classification</i>
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party	polity-wide
BLD	Bharatiya Lok Dal	polity-wide
INC	Indian National Congress	polity-wide
INC(I)	Indian National Congress (I)	polity-wide
JNP	Janata Party	polity-wide
JNP(JP)	Janata Party (JP)	polity-wide
JNP(S)	Janata Party (Secular)	polity-wide
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party	cross-regional
CPI	Communist Party of India	cross-regional
CPI(ML)	Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)	cross-regional
CPI(ML)(L)	Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (Liberation)	cross-regional
CPM	Communist Party of India (Marxist)	cross-regional
JD	Janata Dal	cross-regional
NCP	Nationalist Congress Party	cross-regional
AAAP	Aam Aadmi Party	regional
AD	Apna Dal	regional
AIFB	All India Forward Bloc	regional
AIMIM	All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen	regional
AINRC	All India N.R. Congress	regional
AUDF	Assam United Democratic Front	regional
HJCBL	Haryana Janhit Congress (BL)	regional
JD(S)	Janata Dal (Secular)	regional
JD(U)	Janata Dal (United)	regional
JKNPP	Jammu & Kashmir National Panthers Party	regional
KEC(M)	Kerala Congress (M)	regional
LJSP	Loktantrik Jan Samta Party	regional
MUL	Muslim League	regional
PDA	People's Democratic Alliance	regional
PDF	People's Democratic Front	regional
PMK	Pattali Makkal Katchi	regional
RJD	Rashtriya Janata Dal	regional
RLD	Rashtriya Lok Dal	regional
RLSP	Rashtriya Lok Samta Party	regional
RPI	Republican Party of India	regional
RPI(A)	Republican Party of India (A)	regional
RSP	Revolutionary Socialist Party	regional
SMP	Samata Party	regional
SP	Samajwadi Party	regional
SVP	Sarvodaya Party	regional
SWP	Swabhimani Paksha	regional
UMFA	United Minorities Front Assam	regional

(Continued)

TABLE A6.2 Continued

	<i>Party Name</i>	<i>Classification</i>
ADMK	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	regionalist
AGP	Asom Gana Parishad	regionalist
AITC	All India Trinamool Congress	regionalist
AJSU	All Jharkhand Students Union	regionalist
BJD	Biju Janata Dal	regionalist
BOPF	Bodoland Peoples Front	regionalist
DMDK	Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam	regionalist
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	regionalist
GFP	Goa Forward Party	regionalist
GNLF	Gorkha National Liberation Front	regionalist
HSPDP	Hill State People's Democratic Party	regionalist
INLD	Indian National Lok Dal	regionalist
IPFT	Indigenous People's Front Of Tripura	regionalist
JKN	Jammu & Kashmir National Conference	regionalist
JKPDP	Jammu & Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party	regionalist
JMM	Jharkhand Mukti Morcha	regionalist
JVM	Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (Prajanatrik)	regionalist
KEC	Kerala Congress	regionalist
MAG	Maharashtrawadi Gomantak	regionalist
MDMK	Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	regionalist
MNF	Mizo National Front	regionalist
MNS	Maharashtra Navnirman Sena	regionalist
MPC	Manipur Peoples Council	regionalist
MPP	Manipur People's Party	regionalist
NDPP	Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party	regionalist
NPC	Nagaland Peoples Council	regionalist
NPF	Nagaland Peoples Front	regionalist
NPP	National People's Party	regionalist
PPA	People's Party of Arunachal	regionalist
SAD	Shiromani Akali Dal	regionalist
SDF	Sikkim Democratic Front	regionalist
SHS	Shivsena	regionalist
SKM	Sikkim Krantikari Morcha	regionalist
SSP	Sikkim Sangram Parishad	regionalist
TDP	Telugu Desam	regionalist
TRS	Telangana Rashtra Samithi	regionalist
UDP	United Democratic Party	regionalist
UGDP	United Goans Democratic Party	regionalist
VCK	Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi	regionalist
WBTC	West Bengal Trinamool Congress	regionalist
YSRCP	Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party	regionalist
ZNP	Zoram Nationalist Party	regionalist

Sources: Kumar (2014), Ziegfeld (2016), and author's own classification.

Notes

- 1 An earlier version of this chapter was published as Schakel, A.H., Sharma, C.K. and Swenden, W. (2019), 'India after the 2014 Elections. BJP Dominance and the Crisis of the Third Party System', *Regional & Federal Studies*, 29, (3), 329–54, under a Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). This is a partially revised and updated version of that article to reflect the outcome of the 2019 General Elections.
- 2 Named as such to reflect bipolar competition, with the Congress and BJP as the 'nodes' of two competing alliances.
- 3 The relationship between the (de)centralisation of the party system and the (de)centralisation of the Indian polity is contested and a detailed debate falls beyond the scope of this paper. Chhibber and Kollman (2004) argue that institutional, especially fiscal decentralisation has triggered a more denationalised party system. However, there is also a widespread literature which suggests that the advent of coalition politics at the centre with the inclusion of state-based or regional parties in government induced a more decentralised polity – more so in practice (e.g. in the much less widely practiced suspension of state autonomy by the centre) than in form (constitutional change). For a summary and various articles addressing this issue, see Sharma and Swenden 2017.
- 4 We understand nationalisation as *party system nationalisation*, i.e. the extent to which territorial variations in national (general) and regional (state assembly) diminish and state party systems (in general and regional elections) are increasingly alike. For a detailed analysis and operationalisation of this concept see Schakel (2013) and for a longitudinal application to India (including the 2014 general elections) see Schakel and Swenden (2018). A renationalisation of Indian politics implies that there is a substantial convergence in election results across levels and type of election, distinguishing Indian politics from the more 'denationalising' properties associated with the third party system (1989–2014).
- 5 A 'dominant party' is a party which is electorally ahead of its competitors and occupies public office on its own in the national government and a clear majority of sub-national governments. It is typically associated with a predominant party system (Sartori 1976: 192–4). It is to be distinguished from a single party in a one-party regime insofar as its dominance, unlike that of a single party, is the result of electoral competition in a democratic context (Lewis 2006: 477).
- 6 The rapid rise of the BJP in these Northeastern states is attributed to a number of factors. Being on the side of the (central) government is more important for these small border states, both in terms of securing their (internal and external) security and in funding development and infrastructure problems (given the relative weakness of indigenous industries). In Tripura, the rise of the BJP was linked to strong anti-incumbency, whereas in Nagaland and Manipur it was set against a backdrop of party defections to the BJP of former party leaders and alliances with regional parties in the build-up to the elections.
- 7 For a summary of the organisation, social composition and interest articulation and aggregation strategies of the Congress in the first dominant party system, the 'Congress System' see Kothari (1964), Mitra (2017: 151–54). Many authors believed Indira Gandhi's established dominance with a difference (as against her father) and reduced both tolerance for and legitimacy of factional competition (Joshi and Desai 1973). Kothari (1974) did not share this view. Others argued that Indira established a 'patrimonial system' (Dua 1985) which focused on maintaining centralised control over the regional wings of the Congress Party and restructured state legislative elites from above (Kochanek (1976: 100).

8 Note that Palshikar (2018) also adds two further characteristics of dominance which were left outside our analysis: the extent to which the BJP has been able to widen its social base and the ability of voters to trust its narrative irrespective of its (socio-economic) performance in the national or state governments which it controls. As Suri and Palshikar (2014) and Chhibber and Verma (2018) show, the ability of the BJP to capture the support of different social segments (except the Muslim minority community) is impressive, but Chhibber and Verma also point at the rising dissatisfaction among young voters (who do not share the BJP's Hindu agenda) and poorer voters (especially Dalits). Palshikar's second characteristic is more a measure of 'hegemony' i.e. the ability of the BJP to exert 'ideological, moral or cultural' leadership or dominance over an otherwise socially diverse electorate. This would require a deeper analysis of the narratives during election campaigns and the extent to which they impregnate attitudes of voters. Furthermore, in our view hegemony is a more longitudinal process which can be the result of party dominance sustained over multiple election cycles. At the time of writing in October 2020, we find any evidence that hints at 'hegemonisation' inconclusive.

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