

The Tale of Indian Opposition

Pre-2014 v Post-2014

Abstract	1
Introduction	2
Pre-2014	2
A) The Congress Era	2
B) Regional Parties & Coalition Government	3
Post-2014	6
A) 2014 Lok Sabha Elections	6
B) 2019 Lok Sabha Elections	10
C) 2024 Lok Sabha Elections	13
Way Forward	15
Reference	15

ABSTRACT

“Man is a political animal”- Aristotle. Though this statement dates back to ancient times it has its significance even today. In this complex world, politics is one of the most debated topics not only in parliament but also in schools, colleges, business hours, and so on. India is the mother of democracy and robust opposition is essential for healthy democracy. The party in opposition plays an important role in scrutinizing and aiding in making policy decisions. India has seen the government of both the oldest party the Indian National Congress as well as the current largest party of India, the Bharatiya Janata Party in opposition. This paper will observe the parties in opposition from a spectrum of pre-2014 v post-14 era. It will study how ideological positions, caste dynamics, appeasement politics, regional politics, and other elements have rendered the party in power and opposition.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian National Congress (INC) has been the central pole in national politics till 1989. Its hegemony ended around 1989 with the growing opposition at the state level which denoted the beginning of coalition politics in India. The number of parties contesting also increased wherein various individuals created new parties with abandon, expecting that earning a few seats or even a solid vote share would accord them clout in the coalition.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) soon emerged as the only other strong national party to give the INC a serious fight across multiple seats. However, it also faced demography, geography, and ideology limitations. With the BJP's breakthrough in 2014, there was discourse about the possibility that India was going past the multipolarity, fragmentation, and coalition era and closer to a new, dominant-party system where the BJP replaced INC as the central pole. In 2019, the BJP clinched a second consecutive majority, a maneuver the INC last accomplished in 1980 and 1984. The BJP's victory in the third term in power in the 2024 elections with 240 seats even after the anti-incumbency effect significantly remarks a rare occasion in Indian political history and supports this contention.

The post-2014, therefore, marks a new era where BJP became the first party to increase its political stature from INC and it redefined how the elections could be fought henceforward.

PRE-2014

The pre-2014 era saw the hegemony of the INC as the only dominant party, as well as the coalition government, amidst its decline. The following pointers will highlight the story of the politics of the biggest democracy in the world before 2014.

A) The Congress Era

- The dominance of the INC all over India lies in the distinct circumstances under which it was developed. During the British period, the aim of the INC including nationalists was to free the country from colonial power due to which the INC developed into a broad movement encompassing all classes and regions which made it a national party accommodating every social group, community, and political ideas.
- From the first general election in 1952 when Jawaharlal Nehru led it to a landslide victory (it won 364 of the 401 seats), the INC won in the majority of the following state elections and paved the way for a Nehruvian era of single-party dominance. It achieved back-to-back electoral victories in the 1952, 1957, and 1962 Lok Sabha elections. Thus, INC appeared to be the need of the hour of newly formed independent India, though its extensive dominance triggered its weakness in the long run.
- During the Nehru era, the major base of the Congress on which it relied for its success was the -Hindi heartland. The leadership of the Congress party in these states was drawn from the regional castes and classes dominant at that time, for example, the Marathas in Maharashtra, Patels in Gujarat, Reddis in Andhra, etc which is seen in the 1950s. In 1957, INC won 90% more seats and 2% more votes in the heartland than its national average, and its performance on both these counts was better than in any other region.¹
- An important point during the period from 1952-1967 is that there was no presence of any official opposition.² However, A.K. Gopalan has been considered the first leader of the opposition in Lok Sabha. During the first three general elections, the Communist Party always formed the major democratic opposition. Though this party won only 16 seats in the Lok Sabha elections, they with the support of Socialists managed to keep the Nehru-led government in check.

B) Regional parties & Coalition government

- The general elections held in 1967 after the death of Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri showed a lack of consensus within the party regarding the choice of successor. These internal dissensions led to a faction within the INC wherein Indira Gandhi gained majority support. This highlighted the first sign of the decline of the party. Another major reason for the

¹ [Regional Parties And The Emerging Pattern Of Politics In India](#)

² [Histroy against Congress Leader's of Opposition, The Economic Times](#)

breakdown of the INC was its ability to assimilate several small groups and movements which led to the formation of regional parties.

- Various factors have contributed to the development of regional parties such as the formation of the linguistic state, the downfall of INC, unequal economic development of states, increasing levels of mobilization, and entry of new forces into politics. Thus, the vote banks of such regional parties were also limited to their particular region. Varied land reform measures and their failure to end the dominance of feudal landowners in the rural areas have created since the 1960s a new kulak lobby in many states that challenged the older rural oligarchy. The "kulak" lobby has supported regional parties. The best and clearest example is the Akali Dal.³
- Though INC won at the center, it faced hardships in the state elections. In the 1967 elections, the Congress Party lost in nine states, including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, West Bengal, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu. This was a shock as it indicated a decline in the party's dominance.

STATES RULED BY NON-CONGRESS PARTIES AFTER 1967	
STATES	RULING COALITION
BIHAR	SAMYUKTA VIDHAYAK DAL
UTTAR PRADESH	SAMYUKTA VIDHAYAK DAL
RAJASTHAN	PRESIDENT'S RULE
PUNJAB	AKALI DAL-LED COALITION
WEST BENGAL	UNITED FRONT
ODISHA	SWATANTRA PARTY
TAMIL NADU	DMK-LED COALITION

Source: 1.Bidyut Chakrabarty, Forging Power: Coalition Politics in India
2.Paul Brass, Coalition Politics in North India

- The 1967 elections saw the emergence of India's first multi-party coalition known as the Samyukta Vidhayak Dal (SVD)⁴ which joined hands against INC and challenged its supremacy. Regional parties that arose due to regional and aspirational grievances had their vote banks limited to particular regions. Though the INC remained a major dominant party at the center, it was slowly reduced to a party limited to some regions. Its dominance in the Centre covered this fact. The coalition politics marked a significant and more diverse shift in the political landscape of India.
- The general election in 1971 was contested by Indira Gandhi on the slogan "Garibi Hatao" and her pro-poor posturing created an electoral wave in her favor with the party adding 69 more parliamentary seats and increasing its vote share pan-India by 3%.⁵ This election also resolved the issue of leadership for good with Indira Gandhi gaining an enormous reputation that was equated with Goddess Durga thereby starting a new era that came to be known as a personality

³ [Regional Parties And The Emerging Pattern of Politics In India.](#)

⁴ It was an alliance of various regional and ideological parties with Bhartiya Jan Sangh being the major party.

⁵ [Decline of Congress Party in Indian Politics](#)

cult in Indian politics. The period following the tenure of Indira Gandhi destroyed the second-tier leadership in the party and voice for constructive criticism as state leaders were replaced with their own people and loyal to her. Further, the party's organizational structure was also in shambles and changed from top to bottom which weakened its connection with the common people, and closed the direct line of communication and feedback from the electorate.

- The isolation of Indira Gandhi was completed in 1972 as the party lost several by-elections including one seat that it had not lost since the first general elections and encountered a host of internal problems like high inflation, due to the war with Pakistan, drought in some parts of the country and the 1973 oil crisis.⁶
- All such factors along with the verdict of Allahabad High Court on electoral malpractices deteriorated her popularity. This led to the declaration of emergency in 1975 wherein she bypassed the parliament by concentrating total powers in her hands through harsh and presidential proclamations crushing constitutional bodies and violating the democratic rights of the people. The extra-constitutional powers appropriated by Sanjay Gandhi during the period of emergency showed one does not have to hold office to wield government power. This not only destroyed the popular mandate bestowed on the Congress but also knocked the party structure that was built and consolidated over the years. The political halo as the only party that could govern India was seriously breached due to the emergency and also challenged its winnability ratio.
- The support base of INC began to shift towards the upper south and west from 1967 onwards. It obtained a higher percentage of votes and seats there, as opposed to the Hindi heartland. After the Hindi heartland, this region was the stronghold of INC which was also been observed during the 1977 election when Indira Gandhi shifted to the Medak constituency thereby demonstrating its support for the southern strategy. The party received only 154 seats, most of which were from the west and upper south. which prevented the party's destruction.
- The election of 1977 was rare in the political history of the country wherein opposition parties united to knock out the INC from power by forming Janta Dal which handed the Congress party one of its worst electoral defeats since its inception. The Indira Gandhi government was diminished beyond redemption but due to internal disturbance within the Janata Party and a low index of opposition unity, the INC was able to reposition itself and come back to power with a big majority in the election of 1980.
- After Indira Gandhi's assassination, Rajiv Gandhi became the successor who led the party to an extraordinary victory in the 1984 elections winning a record of 415 seats⁷ majorly due to the

⁶ [Decline of Congress Party in Indian Politics](#)

⁷ [India Votes, 1984](#)

sympathy wave that was created by the assassination of Indira Gandhi. During his tenure, the party was mired with controversies, the opposition parties joined hands in the throes of the Bofors scandal due to which the party lost not only national power but also political dominance in the 1989 general elections.

- During the 1989 elections, V.P Singh, defense minister of Rajiv Gandhi's cabinet resigned which weakened the party's image. He formed Jan Morcha and joined the National front led by Janta Dal with several regional parties to defeat the Congress for the second time ever in the history of independence. V.P Singh held office until coalition politics led to its downfall when BJP withdrew support for the arrest of L.K Advani who had taken Ram Rath Yatra towards the direction of Ayodhya's Babri Masjid.
- The period from 1992-1996 might be interpreted as a period of transition for the Congress party as it was the first instance when the Congress president was not from the Nehru-Gandhi family. As identity-based regional parties and Hindutva-based BJP grew prominence during the post-Mandal and Mandir phase, the Congress party's popularity continued to decline. In the 1996 general elections, the mandate was against the Congress which granted political space to the BJP. Thereafter, BJP managed to gain 182 seats in the 1999 general elections and emerged as the single largest party and formed an alliance under the banner of National Democratic Alliance(NDA) which was the first right-wing government at the center with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as the new prime minister.
- As INC realized that BJP has emerged as a viable alternative national party, they invited Sonia Gandhi who has been away from politics, to take command of the party. The Lok Sabha election in 2004 was a battle between the NDA led by its popular Prime minister Vajpayee and the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) stitched together under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi. The policies brought during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government were constructively criticized by the Congress party. They also made wide use of media and news to create an anti-BJP narrative in the country. Also, the riots in Gujrat and the "India Shining" campaign apparently did not go down well with the people and alienated the BJP from the masses. Due to such reasons, Congress was able to come back to power in 2004 and Manmohan Singh became the prime minister of the UPA government. The leadership was diluted from a single person to the Manmohan-Sonia-Rahul troika which worked well for five years (2004-09) and in the 2009 national elections was able to retain power winning over 200 seats on its own. The impressive performance of the INC was due to the combined leadership of Manmohan Singh, Sonia Gandhi, and Rahul Gandhi, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), the farm loan waiver scheme, pro-poor policies of the UPA government, confidence of the stability and victory of secular forces.

POST-2014

A) 2014 Lok Sabha Elections

In the history of India, no other party except INC has managed to win a clear majority (excluding the Janata Party, which was more an aggregation of disparate parties than a cohesive political party). The victory of the BJP in the 2014 general elections was astounding as it delivered a mandate for a powerful, unified government based on a clear majority. The BJP alone won 282 seats whereas Congress managed to grab only 44 seats. In Lok Sabha, the BJP-led NDA held about 338 seats. In contrast, the INC-led UPA had a total of only 58 seats and thus struggled to be the principal opposition party in the Lok Sabha. This election also highlighted a break from coalition governments which have been in place based on unwieldy and clumsy alliances. The election results of 2014 were significant and historic in several ways which can be understood by exploring the electoral performance and other important factors of the major parties contesting elections.

Electoral Agenda & Manifesto

The BJP and Narendra Modi held on to its "development and good governance" agenda, despite predictions that the BJP and Narendra Modi would stroke communal tensions and provoke polarization in Indian politics. The 2014 electorate delivered one of the most stable and encompassing mandates to date. The party concentrated on expanding its voter base through governance and development issues which resonated more across the country. The BJP in its economic agenda focused on addressing the high unemployment rate, job creation, and skill development to target young voters. It also puts great emphasis on infrastructural development, and the need to introduce GST to integrate the domestic market. It carried out the Make in India campaign to attract investment and boost infrastructure and the smart city campaign to revitalize existing urban centers. Thus, it was the first election in India's history, primarily on a pro-growth agenda. The UP was an electoral battleground as both Rahul Gandhi (family seat: Amethi) and Narendra Modi (Varanasi in UP along with Vadodra) contested from its constituencies plus there was opposition from strong regional parties, BJP managed to get 71 seats. BJP was successful in bipolar states like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chattisgarh, and Gujrat. Thus, they adjusted campaigns according to the region and regionalist agenda of its competitors. For instance, in Maharashtra BJP focused on the national agenda while in states such as Andhra Pradesh and Punjab BJP focused on the legacy of local leaders and concerns about state-center relations. In this way, the BJP effectively used the strategy of blurring particular dimensions on the agenda of the regionalist party while highlighting the other aspects to gain a stable and encompassing mandate.

The BJP manifesto of 2014 prioritized the agenda of promoting economic growth, agricultural development, and individual empowerment. At the National Executive Meeting, Modi had referred to a “five T’s” approach to creating a Brand India based on talent, tradition, tourism, trade, and technology which was reaffirmed in the 2014 manifesto by way of listing specific goals, strategies, and policies to be implemented. Thus, the campaign slogan Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas ultimately won while the more traditional BJP and Hindutva issues like Ram Mandi, Article 370, and UCC were put in a less prominent place or were addressed in a less strident language in the manifesto.

Voter Turnout

The Election Commission of India reported that over 800 million voters were eligible to vote in these elections, and 553.8 million completed voting, yielding a 66.4 percent turnout across the country. The turnout witnessed in 2014’s elections broke all records and was the highest ever in the history of the country. Another significant aspect was the fact that women’s turnout was higher than men which includes Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Orissa, and Sikkim, among others the turnout for the 2014 election reached a peak of 66.4%, with the 1984 election being the most comparable. In 1984 turnout was huge due to the outpouring of sympathy for the Congress party. Whilst, 2014 elections were a normal election taking place within the electoral cycle and still elicited a mass response. The high turnout can be explained by way of the anti-incumbency effect, with voter outrage rising as a consequence of a series of corruption scandals, each one being bigger than the last which shook the UPA government and led to the discontent of the masses of India.

Regional Politics

The BJP and INC were the two main political parties contesting in the election, however, there were also other various parties such as the newly formed Aam Aadmi Party led by Arvind Kejriwal and several well-known regional parties like the Trinamool Congress, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), the Telegu Desum, the Shiv Sena, the Biju Janata Dal, and the Shiromani Akali Dal. Notably, some parties such as Biju Janta Dal in Odisha won polls in state elections. The BJP regained power in the Seemandhara Assembly polls along with its partner Telugu Desum Party after a gap of ten years. In West Bengal, Mamta Banerjee continued to have a strong voice in West Bengal politics as Trinamool Congress won 34 out of 42 seats while BJP won just two seats.

The BJP’s seats are extremely regionally concentrated. Six states alone – Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh – contributed 194 seats to BJP’s kitty, 69

percent of the total number of seats won by the BJP.⁸This election was remarkable as BJP got to enter various constituencies which were either strongholds of INC or regional parties. The BJP gave a tough fight to strong regional parties such as the Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, and the INC in the constituency of Maharajganj as well as in Amroha and Agra part of Paschim UP which was the stronghold of the Samajwadi Party. The Jhansi constituency in Bundelkhand is important as it spreads across MP as well as UP. The Congress who entered not long ago but made it a stronghold to grab seats of UP, lost. The BJP's candidate Uma Bharti won in Jhansi which also indicated that the BJP got its lead in this constituency after 15 years.

The Electoral Campaign of contesting parties.

The 2014 election campaign was one of the largest mass outreach campaigns in the electoral history of India. The BJP took the agenda of development and good governance to every corner of India. Narendra Modi travelled across the length and breadth of India addressing rallies and programmes in almost 5800 locations, including Bharat Vijay rallies. Chai pe charcha was held in over 4000 locations across India. The Bharat Vijay 3D rallies were phenomenal and covered around 1350 locations.⁹ Narendra Modi's online footprint was staggering. All forms of social media were used in an innovative way to reach every segment of the masses. From full-page advertisements in newspapers, radio, and television ads to WhatsApp and Twitter messages, it generated tremendous buzz and revolutionized the campaign. They dedicated its Twitter handle to 9 regional languages targeting every state where it felt BJP has a strong presence. Aside from the role played by Modi, the organizational capacity and strategic calculation during the campaign at the booth level were key factors in its victory. While discussing the campaign particular attention must be given to UP as it has the largest seats and the election was a four-way contest between regional parties: Samajwadi party and Bahujan Samaj Party and the national parties: INC and BJP. Amit Shah played a key role in UP campaigns. He highlighted the BJP's decisiveness and clarity in leadership and development, pointing out potential vulnerabilities in the state to exploit, such as voter dissatisfaction with the Samajwadi Party and the multiplicity of authority in the state government which created tensions and confusion during policymaking. The Congress, on the other hand, was unable to find a solid agenda, there was a lack of strong political leadership and the absence of a credible prime ministerial candidate. The anti-incumbency factor, and failure of the party to revive the economy, and deal with inflation, corruption, and other social issues led to the increasing unpopularity of the party thereby losing its credibility. ‘

⁸ [The number Game: An Analysis of 2014 General Elections](#)

⁹ [Extensive, Innovative and Satisfying: The Story of 2014 Campaign](#)

Rahul Gandhi's targeted campaigning seemed to be focusing on historically reliable pro-congress voting groups, whereas Modi seemed to be reaching out to the general public.

The Prime Ministerial Candidate

The 2014 elections somewhat marked a contest between two individuals wherein both became emblems of their respective parties as media and political campaigns focused significantly on the candidate that the election came to be seen as presidential style. Rahul Gandhi was assumed to be the Prime Ministerial candidate of the Congress, but he successfully failed to convince the voters and the critics that the Congress has a decisive leadership as determined during his interviews and broadcast. In contrast, the BJP put significant emphasis on the personality of Modi and portrayed him as a pragmatic, focused, promising strong leader suitable for becoming the prime minister of India. The leadership of Narendra Modi played an important role in winning the 2014 elections. In September 2013, the BJP announced a prime ministerial candidate, a strategic move in Indian politics. In November, Modi campaigned in four state assemblies, where the BJP performed well, increasing his popularity beyond his home state of Gujarat. Narendra Modi concentrated more on economics and development concerns, directing attention away from the party's Hindu nationalist leanings. With his ascent through the party hierarchy, he personified achievement on merit, resonating with the youth's ambitions across the country. Thus, the two candidates were portrayed as opposing contrasts, one born into India's prominent political family whereas the other represented merit.

An unexpected party, The Aam Aadmi Party which was essentially unknown on the national political scene gave voters another choice as this party progressed through a new approach to politics which majorly consisted aggressive campaign against corruption to appeal to the voters. This party also won the Delhi assembly elections of 2013 and was able to form a minority government with Arvind Kejriwal being the chief minister. He seemingly spoke about the shortcomings of the Gujrat administration, the home state of BJP's candidate Narendra Modi. He was the person who reportedly said that it would be "a treachery against God and the country" even if a single vote is cast in favor of the INC and BJP."¹⁰ The party did much to set the agenda, social media also played an important role in the campaigns but they won only four seats and 2% of the national vote.

¹⁰ [Election Commission pulls up Arvind Kejriwal for remarks against Congress, BJP](#)

Unprecedented Electorates

In 2014, the BJP succeeded in forming an unprecedented coalition of social groups. The party while retaining its upper caste support base managed to win a fairly large share of votes among Dalits, Adivasis, and Other Backward Classes (OBC).¹¹The Modi factor was important in gaining OBC votes as a possible reason that he is from OBC. The BJP also garnered the Dalit votes which they had never done before as they considered the community as a part of the majority Hindu.¹² It is because of this reason that they tried to consolidate Dalit votes and purposefully made some important coalitions in Maharashtra and Bihar.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP emerged as a major recipient of Dalit votes, with its vote share increasing by 12%, while the Congress' share decreased by 8%. The Dalits vote share for the Bahujan Samaj Party(BSP) fell 6% from 2009. The BJP won 40 of the 84 reserved seats, while the BSP failed to secure any. The pre-election alliance with Dalit parties and leaders in various states, For instance, the Lok Janshakti Party in Bihar, the Republican Party of India in Maharashtra, and the appointment of Udit Raj, a Dalit leader in Delhi proved to be a strategic move which gave BJP an advantage with Dalit voters.

Adivasis in India have historically supported the INC, with it receiving 38% of their votes in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections. However, in the 2014 elections, the BJP received a significant increase in tribal votes, outperforming the INC. In the 2014 elections, the BJP's vote among tribals increased by 14% over the previous Lok Sabha elections, while the INC's vote fell by 10%. The constitution reserves 47 seats for Scheduled Tribes (ST). Since Madhya Pradesh has a large tribal population, it has six Lok Sabha constituencies reserved for them, followed by Jharkhand and Orissa, which each have 5 seats reserved for STs. The INC won only 5 reserved seats and lost 15 reserved seats in the 2009 Lok Sabha election. In contrast, the BJP won 27 seats in 2014, an increase from 14 seats in 2009. The BJP performed best in Assam, increasing its vote share by 32% among the Bodo community and 18% among other tribes. In Gujarat, the INC lost support from the Bhil community, which benefited the BJP, as its vote share increased by 30% among the tribe. Similarly, in Rajasthan, the BJP's vote share has increased among the two major tribal communities, Mina and Bhil.

Until 2014, INC received the majority of OBC votes. The 2014 elections saw a reversal of the trend, with the BJP's lead increasing to 19%. The BJP's vote share increased by 19% in the 2014

¹¹ [It is Modi, not BJP that won this election, The Hindu](#)

¹² [Babasaheb and BJP, The Indian Express](#)

elections, with regional players also winning a sizable share of OBC votes. Lower OBCs voted overwhelmingly for the BJP, allowing it to make significant gains in states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. In Bihar, the BJP gained a significant share of the vote among Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) supporters, as well as non-Kurmi Koeri and non-Yadav OBCs, who were primarily RJD and Janata Dal (United) supporters. In Uttar Pradesh, the BJP took a significant portion of Yadav votes from the Samajwadi Party and Kurmi Koeri votes from BSP and regional parties. The BJP made significant gains in the bi-polar states of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. In Rajasthan, the BJP received more than half of the total OBC votes. The only state in which the BJP appears to have gained directly at the expense of the Congress is Madhya Pradesh. Yadavs in Madhya Pradesh overwhelmingly supported the BJP, with 70% voting for it.

B) 2019 Lok Sabha Elections

This section will briefly put forth certain important factors that will explain how the ideological positions, lack of constructive criticism from the opposition, and the party's take on policy issues play an important role in elections.

Electoral Performance

The factors due to which BJP was able to successfully connect with the public and win the elections can be explained by the following considerations.

The BJP emphasized the ideology of nationalism and national security after the terrorist attack of Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir, followed by India's decisive action of airstrikes on terrorist camps deep within Pakistan which had a substantial effect on the electorate. The BJP also propagated the 'Hindutva ideology which means to have pride in our culture, to construct a politico-religious-cultural narrative. Such principles resonated well with the voters and won over majoritarian Hindus. It also became successful in persuading the masses that they have been part of the corruption drive through its action of demonetization and introduction of GST. Lack of development was also connected to the corrupt officials and bringing 'Vikas' (development) was one of the key features of its victory. The welfare schemes introduced by the Modi government were also referred to in every campaign. Thus, the construction of toilets under Swacch Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBGM), the provision of LPG gas cylinders under the Ujjwala Yojana scheme, electrification of households, release of funds under Mudra Yojana, Ayushman Bharat Yojna for health insurance, the opening of Jan Dhan accounts, construction of roads and infrastructure and many other welfare schemes drove the voters to a message that development is occurring under Modi Government. BJP wanted to pursue a hardline approach concerning the crisis in J&K by abolishing Article 370 and 35A of the constitution to change the demography. Narendra Modi was

successful in introducing new topics in its campaign e like the role of ex-PM Rajiv Gandhi and his alleged involvement in an arms deal and the memory of the killing of thousands of Sikhs in 1984 in Delhi and elsewhere. Further, BJP was successful in establishing the Gandhi family as a dynasty, which has been ruling for decades with unquestioned power. BJP portrayed Narendra Modi as its prime ministerial candidate, who has used the language of 'ordinary masses' to convey the work and position of his party. Furthermore, the popularity of Narendra Modi also played a decisive role in influencing the voters to incline towards BJP vis-a-vis Congress which failed to project a strong and suitable prime ministerial candidate.

Debate of INC

Congress faced a decline due to various reasons: INC was unable to highlight the deficits of the NDA balance sheet and many unfulfilled promises. Further, it focused and exaggerated more on the alleged 'Rafale' scam. Proving the alleged corruption of the 'Rafale scam' becomes difficult, unless there is a sustained campaign through the help of a noncorrupt person like Anna Hazare, as done in "India Against Corruption" (IAC). Also, the charge by Congress, that chowkidar chor hai ('the night guard is a thief concerning Modi) backfired not because Modi donned the prefix of Chowkidar, but because he has a clean image personally and there have been only allegations. There was a lack of consensus within the party and lack of organizational work at ground level. It was unable to establish a pan-India narrative. For instance, it could have established a strong secular pre-poll alliance against the ruling party. It made promises of curbing unemployment without a concrete plan. INC wanted to modify or even abolish the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Acts (AFSPA) and the sedition law, besides proposing a dialogue with all political and social stakeholders. It focused on the 20% of the poorest population through the NYAY ('Justice') program and promised through a monthly topping up a basic annual income of 72,000 Rupees for each of the relevant households. However, this program, introduced quite late in its manifesto, did not reach the grassroots workers and the potential recipients.

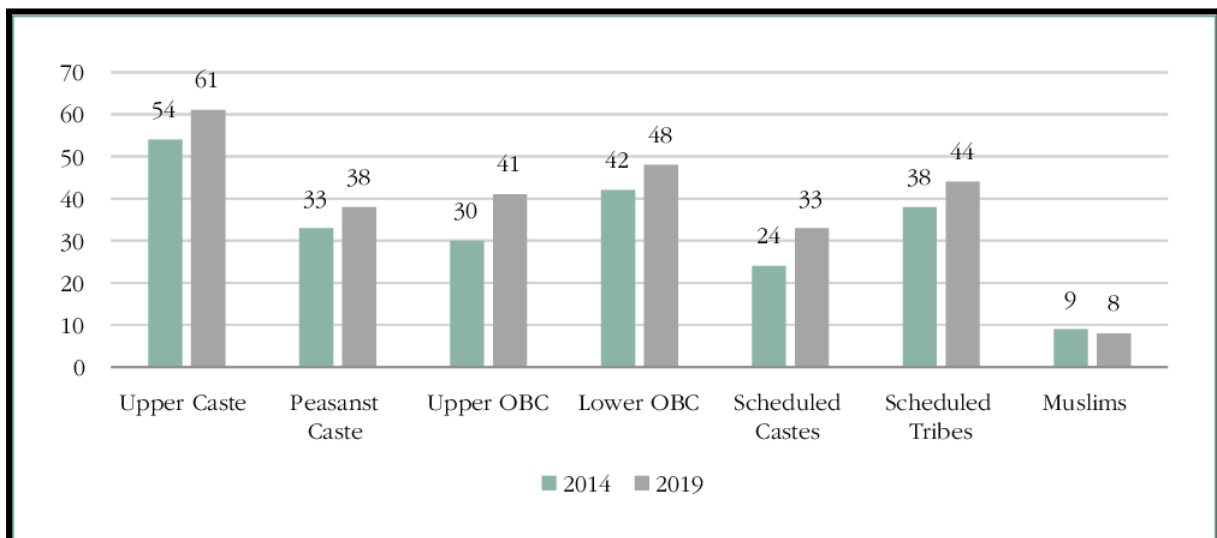
Crucial Votebanks

There was the emergence of particular groups, including women, the poor, and youth as crucial vote banks for the ruling party which contributed to the massive win for the party. A major reason behind the high percentage of women voters, especially in Uttarakhand and other hill states, is that they are directly affected by the issues. Since women have been at the forefront of most social campaigns in Uttarakhand, their overall awareness among them has increased. Several initiatives such as Ujjawala Yojana, Ghasyari Yojna, and assistance to women's self-help groups have got a positive response from women in the state.

BJP initiated campaigns such as ‘Youth with Modi’ on social media and ‘Modi Yuva Shakti’ to discuss the policies introduced by the NDA among the young voters which increased the popularity of BJP among the youth of India. In the 2019 general election, the BJP emerged as the most preferred party among the first-time young voters, which accounted for around 84 million in this election.¹³

Caste Dynamics

The following diagram explains the BJP’s expansion of support among various social groups in 2019 compared with that of the 2014 general elections. The BJP, an upper-caste party, consolidated its vote share and increased support among various social groups, including peasant castes and Scheduled Castes.



Source: National Election Study 2014 and 2019.

Note: Peasant caste is middle caste like Jats, Marathas, Patels etc.

The party also made significant inroads into the Scheduled Caste and Schedule Tribes community, overcoming resentment over issues like the Scheduled Castes/Tribes Act and inter-caste violence. The BJP also consolidated its vote share in the upper OBC, a powerful force behind anti-BJP and anti-upper Caste votes, especially in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. In a similar vein, the vote share of the BJP-led alliance was significantly increased in states on the western coast such as Maharashtra and Gujrat, in southern states like Karnataka as well as on the eastern coast where the party had little vote base. This consolidation supported the BJP in retaining dominance and winning seats. Overall, the ruling party's caste arithmetic was more effective than the opposition party's, which enabled the party to achieve an incredible victory.

¹³ [Post-poll survey](#)

Effective Alliance

BJP maintained a cooperative relationship with its NDA partners by negotiating seat-sharing arrangements, being generous in allocations, and supporting its allies in consolidating a broader vote base. For instance, the BJP allied with Janta Dal United and Lok Janshakti Party to influence its social base among non-Yadav OBCs, MBCs, and the Dalit community. Also, by focusing on a broad-based coalition of upper castes, non-Jatav Dalits, and non-Yadav OBCs, the BJP outperformed the Mahagatbandhan of Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party. It was able to reinforce its dominance in the Hindi heartland and western India despite defeat in the 2018 state assembly elections. Notably, the BJP made deep inroads in Karnataka and Telangana, though its efforts in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu did not yield substantial gains. BJP's significant gain in West Bengal, Odisha, and Assam despite disagreements over the Citizenship Amendment Bill indicated its expansion in the future. BJP's effective alliance highlights its pragmatic approach towards coalition politics which has enabled it to navigate the complex political landscape of India and achieve astounding success in various regions while adapting to local dynamics and managing key alliances.

	Vote Share (%)		Seats	
	2014 Election	2019 Election	2014 Election	2019 Election
Gujrat	59	62.2	26 (out of 26)	26 (out of 26)
Rajasthan*	54.8	58.4	25 (out of 25)	25 (out of 25)
Delhi	46.4	56.5	7 (out of 7)	7 (out of 7)
Himanchal Pradesh	53.2	69.1	4 (out of 4)	4 (out of 4)
Uttarakhand	55.6	61	5 (out of 5)	5 (out of 5)
Haryana	34.9	58	7 (out of 10)	10 (out of 10)
Bihar**	38.8	53.1	31 (out of 40)	39 (out of 40)
Maharashtra***	47.9	51	41 (out of 48)	41 (out of 48)
Madhya Pradesh	53.8	58	27 (out of 28)	27 (out of 28)
Karnataka	43	51.3	17 (out of 28)	26 (out of 28)
Chhattisgarh	49.7	50.7	10 (out of 11)	9 (out of 11)
Uttar Pradesh****	43.5	50.5	73 (out of 80)	64 (out of 80)
Assam*****	40.2	46.7	7 (out of 14)	9 (out of 14)
Jharkhand*****	40.1	55.2	12 (out of 12)	12 (out of 12)

Note: For 2019 General Election:

The above diagram explains how the BJP improved its seat tally to a great extent in the 2019 elections.

On the other hand, the Congress failed to build strong and effective pre-poll alliances to ensure that the anti-incumbency vote did not split among different parties. Even where the party formed alliances, “the chemistry among workers and party supporters was not positive, resulting in a shaky alliance on the ground and limited vote transfer” This happened in states like Karnataka, Maharashtra, Bihar, Jharkhand, where the party had pre-poll alliances, but it failed to yield the desired result. Hence, effective alliance formation was another factor which has impacted the electoral performance significantly.

C) 2024 Lok Sabha Elections

The 2024 election was a fiercely contested electoral process with BJP-led NDA and INC-led I.N.D.I.A being the major contender. The 2024 election has significant implications for the country's political landscape as it underscores the electorate's discerning approach and the importance of coalition politics in the Indian context. The BJP won 240 seats, along with the support of key allies N. Chandrababu Naidu's Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Nitish Kumar's JD(U), it was able to form government. For the first time, the BJP has to work with the coalition government. It can be considered that BJP has underperformed in this election as in the previous elections it had 303 seats. On the other hand, INC experienced a significant resurgence, nearly doubling its 2019 tally of 99 seats. Despite this comeback, INC remains in the minority and faces challenges, including the need for organizational revamp and effective leadership.

The election results underscore broader trends and dynamics within Indian politics and what factors have led to the decline of the BJP and the resurgence of INC can be discussed as follows:

Over-Reliance on the Modi Factor

The party's campaign heavily focused on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personality, with his name appearing 67 times in their manifesto. This approach and the slogan "Modi ki guarantee" (Modi's guarantee) failed to address growing dissatisfaction. Overall, the BJP's focus on Modi's appeal did not translate into the overwhelming success that they had anticipated. Modi's ambitious target of winning over 400 seats and the BJP's development plans ("Viksit Bharat Sankalp") did not resonate well, particularly in cosmopolitan and secular regions, and among areas with strong regional identities. Issues like high inequality and youth unemployment also dampened support.

Caste Matrix

The BJP faced challenges in Uttar Pradesh, including unemployment, inflation, anti-Muslim sentiment, and strong regional opposition. The Samajwadi Party (I.N.D.I.A bloc) gained more seats, with over 86% of elected MPs coming from OBC, Dalit, and Muslim communities. The party's biggest defeat was in Faizabad, where Ayodhya was one of the constituencies. The

Samajwadi Party experimented with fielding SC candidates from general seats like Meerut and Faizabad.¹⁴

Defectors as Candidate

One of the reasons for the decline of the BJP is that it ignored local leadership and gave tickets to members of other parties. At least 38 candidates who joined the BJP from 2014 onwards came from the Congress, the highest from any party. After the Congress, other parties contributing switchover candidates were the Bahujan Samaj Party (11), Bharat Rashtra Samithi (9), Trinamool Congress (7), Biju Janata Dal (6), Nationalist Congress Party (4), Samajwadi Party (4), and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (4).¹⁵

PERFORMANCE OF BJP'S 110 TURNCOAT CANDIDATES IN 2024 LS POLLS

State	Defectors fielded	Defectors Lost	Percentage
Uttar_Pradesh	22	12	54.55%
Maharashtra	8	8	100.00%
Punjab	8	8	100.00%
Tamil Nadu	8	8	100.00%
Telangana	12	7	58.33%
West_Bengal	8	5	62.50%
Karnataka	5	4	80.00%
Haryana	6	3	50.00%
Andhra Pradesh	2	2	100.00%
Assam	4	2	50.00%
Bihar	3	2	66.67%
Jharkhand	4	2	50.00%
Kerala	2	2	100.00%
Rajasthan	2	2	100.00%
Andhra_Pradesh	3	1	33.33%
Chhattisgarh	1	0	0.00%
Dadra_&_Nagar_Haveli	1	0	0.00%
Gujarat	1	0	0.00%
Madhya_Pradesh	2	0	0.00%
Odisha	8	0	0.00%
Grand Total	110	68	61.82%

Source: Election Commission of India

ThePrint

In many regions, people did not vote for the BJP as the candidate in that region was a defector and not favorable. The scale at which this phenomenon has occurred within the BJP's list for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls is remarkable. Nearly a quarter of BJP's candidates, or 106 out of 435, are individuals who have defected to the saffron party at some point in the last decade.¹⁶

¹⁴ [UP Caste Politics maths](#)

¹⁵ [BJP's Defector Gamble Flops, 69 of 110 Candidates Who Switched over in Modi Era Lost 2024 LS Polls, ThePrint](#)

¹⁶ [2024 Elections: BJP Candidate analysis](#)

Poll Promise

INC released its manifesto in which it promised to conduct a caste census and other measures to strengthen the representation of OBCs in the country. The Congress in its manifesto has promised the right to apprenticeship, a legal guarantee for MSP, passing a constitutional amendment to raise the 50 percent cap on reservations for SCs, STs, and OBCs, a nationwide caste census, and scrapping of the Agnipath scheme. The concerns surfaced by the caste census have placed the BJP on the back foot, with the opposition exploiting a rare opportunity to define the political narrative ahead of 2024, especially in heartland states.

I.N.D.I.A- The Opposition Bloc

The alliance is diverse ranging from the Congress Party being a national party, to including parties such as DMK, TMC, and various other parties. INC's resurgence, particularly in states like Rajasthan and Haryana, underscores a renewed vigor in its electoral strategies. INC's regional allies such as the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), Janata Dal (United) (JD(U)), Samajwadi Party (SP), and Trinamool Congress (TMC) have clinched significant victories, further diversifying the political landscape. The opposition alliance though has come together to collectively take on the BJP, but it seems difficult as these parties have varied interests. While their shared anti-BJP stance provides a platform for the opposition, the INDIA coalition must also present an alternative vision for governance that distinguishes it from the BJP.

Way Forward

The 2024 elections have changed the circumstances. The BJP no longer has the formidable majority that it enjoyed in its previous two terms. Looking ahead, the task of government formation poses both challenges and opportunities for political stakeholders. A political party that does not have the majority of its own will face serious challenges from the opposition and in exceptional situations with its ally which may also cause tension and political compromises. The Opposition Members of Parliament may likely pose a major challenge to the government and, in particular, the speaker.

The government will have to change the way it deals with the opposition as over 234 members arrayed against the treasury benches, disciplinary methods followed in the past can be counterproductive. This house is evenly divided between the treasury benches and the opposition.

Parliament works together with greater efficiency when there is consensus on major issues. In competitive politics, it is difficult to always build a consensus. Dialogue between the government and the opposition is essential for the smooth running of the house which is the surest way to promote the democratic culture and parliament is the most powerful platform where it can be conducted.

The BJP's coalition management and Congress's restructuring strategies will be key factors to monitor. The evolving political landscape suggests a new era of rivalry between the Indian right and left, with both parties needing to adapt their strategies to address emerging challenges and opportunities.

REFERENCE

1. Dutt, S. (2014). India's 2014 elections: the BJP's victory. *New Zealand International Review*, 39(5), 16–19. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48551484>
2. MITRA, S. K., & SCHÖTTLI, J. (2016). India's 2014 General Elections: A Critical Realignment in Indian Politics? *Asian Survey*, 56(4), 605–628. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26364378>
3. Wyatt, A. (2015). India in 2014: Decisive National Elections. *Asian Survey*, 55(1), 33–47. <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2015.55.1.33>
4. Narendra, Modi. Extensive, Innovative and Satisfying: The Story of 2014 Campaign. <https://www.narendramodi.in/extensive-innovating-and-satisfying-the-story-of-2014-campaign-2-3121>
5. PAI, S. (1990). REGIONAL PARTIES AND THE EMERGING PATTERN OF POLITICS IN INDIA. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 51(3), 393–415. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41855505>
6. Kumar, R. (2020). An Analysis of the 2019 Indian General Election: Transition in Political Landscape and Its Implications. *Asia Review*, 9, 131-155.
7. How Ideology Shapes Indian Politics. <https://carnegieendowment.org/undefined?lang=en>. Accessed 29 July 2024. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/12/how-ideology-shapes-indian-politics?lang=en>
8. Pranav Gupta, Sanjay Kumar. Where Did the BJP Get Its Votes from in 2019? 3 June 2019, <https://www.livemint.com/politics/news/where-did-the-bjp-get-its-votes-from-in-2019-1559547933995.html>
9. Rai, Praveen, and Sanjay Kumar. The Decline of the Congress Party in Indian Politics. 23 Feb. 2024, <https://www.epw.in/journal/2017/12/web-exclusives/decline-congress-party-indian-politics.html>.

10. Kaur, Simran. 'Lok Sabha Election Results 2024: Analysis of Seats Won by Political Parties in India'. Y20 India, 5 June 2024, <https://y20india.in/election-results-2024-analysis-of-seats-won-by-political-parties-in-india/>.
11. Abdessalam Saad Jaldi. Retrospective Analysis of the 2024 Indian Elections: BJP Wins the General Elections Against the Strengthening Opposition of the INDIA Bloc. Policy Centre for the new South, June 2024, https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/2024-06/PP_10-24_Jaldi.pdf.
12. "Rahul Gandhi's Another Big Poll Promise: 'Congress Will Conduct Wealth Redistribution Survey If Voted to Power.'" Business Today, 7 Apr. 2024, <https://www.businesstoday.in/india/story/rahul-gandhis-another-big-poll-promise-congress-will-conduct-wealth-redistribution-survey-if-voted-to-power-424606-2024-04-07>.
13. The Sham Sharma Show. 2024 Election Results REACTION: Is Modi FINISHED? 2024. YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rw9exAXEo3c>.
14. The Dawn of India's Fourth Party System. <https://carnegieendowment.org/undefined?lang=en> Accessed 29 July 2024.
15. BJP Manifest, 2014 <https://www.bjp.org/bjp-manifesto-2014>
16. BJP Manifesto, 2019 <https://www.bjp.org/files/2019-10/BJP-Election-english-2019.pdf>
17. BJP Manifesto, 2024 <https://www.bjp.org/bjp-manifesto-2024>
18. INC Manifesto, 2024 https://manifesto.inc.in/assets/Congress-Manifesto-English-2024-Dyoxp_4E.pdf
19. Jyoti Mishra, Vibha Attri, Nitin Mehta. The Bahujan Vote in 2014 Elections: Voting Patterns among Dalits, Adivasis and Backward Castes. 2014, https://www.lokniti.org/media/upload_files/PU-The-Bahujan-Vote.pdf
20. Livemint. "Congress Leader Naveen Jindal Joins BJP Ahead of Lok Sabha Elections: 'I Thank Manmohan Singh And...'" *Mint*, 24 Mar. 2024, <https://www.livemint.com/politics/news/congress-leader-naveen-jindal-joins-bjp-ahead-of-lok-sabha-elections-i-thank-manmohan-singh-and-11711291767881.html>.
21. Rohmetra, Amogh. "BJP's Defector Gamble Flops, 69 of 110 Candidates Who Switched over in Modi Era Lost 2024 LS Polls." *ThePrint*, 5 June 2024, <https://theprint.in/elections/bjps-defector-gamble-flops-69-of-110-candidates-who-switched-over-in-modi-era-lost-2024-ls-polls/2118194/>.