

For a meaningful study of elections that enable us to understand and analyze the long-term changes taking place in both sociological and institutional sense in an India in transition, it is of critical importance that the election studies combine theory with the relevant empirical details/findings to present a theoretical framework. In its absence the elections studies would remain confined to simply record the basic information like the demographic composition and nature of ethnic/communal/caste cleavages as well as other socio-political cleavages, like the regional, rural-urban and caste-class linkages and also an analysis of the electoral outcomes highlighting differences in major issues raised, trends, alliance formations, seat adjustments, selection of candidates and campaigns. While all these details are important, critical questions related to the larger political picture also need to be asked like whether the voters in a particular election had any real choice in terms of party/candidate selection or did the electorates' economic and political choices have any real long-term impact over public policies?

Studies of elections both at the state and national level based on CSDS-Lokniti conducted national election studies (NES) and published in academic journals like *Economic and Political Weekly*, *Seminar*, among other reputed national and international journals, have been most helpful in this regard.

The special volume of the Panjab University Journal of Social Sciences has essays written by the academics teaching and doing research in different universities/ institutes of India analyzing the recently held Lok Sabha elections with the help of Lokniti-NES' 2014 data. For the sake of brevity, the essays are primarily concerned with an analysis of the overall as well as the state specific 2014 Lok Sabha elections verdict. They complement nine essays published in the special issue of EPW (XLIX, 39, September 27, 2014) ¹concerning the 16th Lok Sabha elections that received attention for not only due to the fact that after a long time a party could win majority but also due to many other trends that were visible like the polity-wide decline of the Congress, the dismal performance of the state level parties in the Hindi-speaking states of North India, the leadership factor, the increasing role of the aspirational middle classes and the youth, so on and so forth.

Ashutosh Kumar

The Arithmetic and Implications of the 2014 Lok Sabha Elections

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The 2014 Lok Sabha elections will be remembered for three things in particular. First, it witnessed the highest ever voter turnout in a national election with two in every three Indians turning out to vote and the gender gap in turnout (the difference between female and male turnout) appears to have become negligible. Second, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) scripted one of the most spectacular electoral triumphs in the history of independent India. For the first time since Independence, a non-Congress party (except the Janta Party coalition in 1977) has a majority on its own in Parliament. The BJP's victory in this 2014 elections is remarkable as no party has won a single-handed majority since the 1984 elections or has received more than 30 per cent of the total votes since the 1991 elections. Third, the Congress party performed very poorly and was reduced to its lowest vote share and seat tally in the Lok Sabha.

This paper is organized in three sections. First, it describes the outcome of the 2014 elections, increased voter turnout, and the consolidation of social forces behind the BJP. Second, it dwells upon the reasons that helped the BJP such as the dissatisfaction with the Congress-led government and the leadership advantage in form of Mr. Narendra Modi as its prime ministerial candidate. Finally, the paper concludes, highlighting the implications of the 2014 elections on Indian politics.

The Outcome of the 2014 Elections

The BJP-led coalition – the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) – won 336 seats and 38.3 percent vote share in this election. The BJP alone won

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282 of the 428 seats it contested and polled 31.1 percent of total votes (See Table 1). Furthermore, the party won more than 50 percent votes in 137 seats, and in another 132 seats, it won more than 40 percent votes. Not only that, but the “Saffron Wave” swept the electoral map of western, central and northern India. More notably, the BJP made significant advances in many areas that were not a part of the party’s traditional bastion. Without the support of any ally, the BJP won a rather large share of votes in Jammu and Kashmir (36.4 percent), West Bengal (16.8 percent), Assam (36.5 percent), Manipur (11.9 percent), Arunachal Pradesh (46.1 percent), and Odisha (21.5 percent). In Andhra Pradesh (Telengana and Seemandhra) and Tamil Nadu, the BJP seemed to have made inroads with the help of alliance partners.

In comparison to the 2009 elections, the BJP faced a negative swing along with its ally Akali Dal only in Punjab (See Figure 1). Similarly, the average victory margin during the 2009 elections was nine percentage points,

Table 1

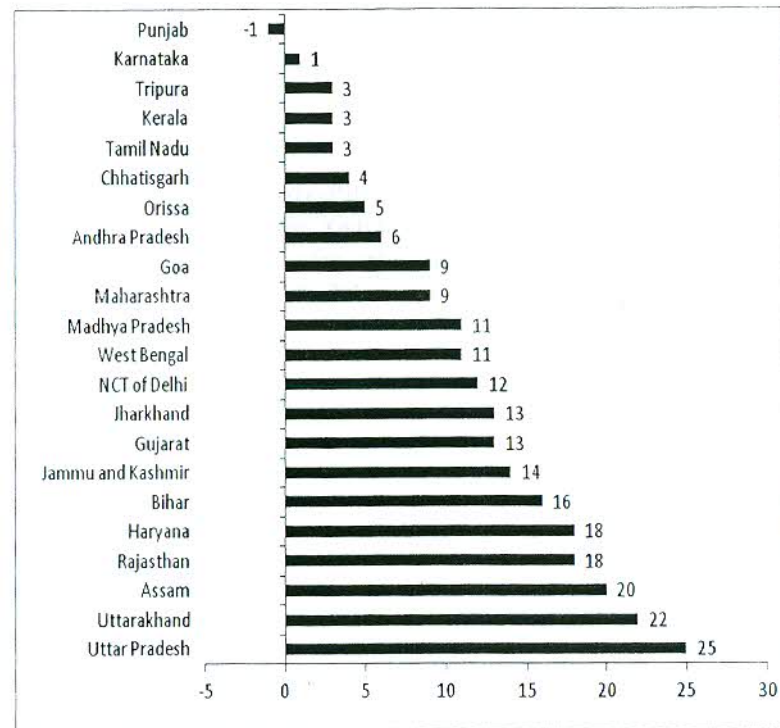
The Outcome of the 2014 Lok Sabha Elections

	Vote Share (in %)	Seats Won	Gain/Loss in Votes (in % points)	Gain/Loss in Seats Won (in % points)
NDA	38.3	336	+12.0	+195
BJP	31.1	282	+12.3	+166
BJP allies	7.2	54	-0.3	+29
UPA	23.0	59	-9.8	-173
Cong	19.3	44	-9.3	-162
Cong allies	3.7	15	-0.5	-11
BSP	4.1	0	-2.1	-21
Left	4.8	12	-2.8	-12
Others	29.8	136	+2.7	+11

Source: Election Commission of India.

Figure 1

The Change in BJP's Vote Share in 2014 from 2009



Source: Election Commission of India.

which increased to 15.2 percentage points in this election largely because many voters turned to specifically the BJP. The average victory margin in constituencies where the BJP won was 17.9 percentage points. In many constituencies, the BJP-led NDA's vote share was greater than the vote shares of first and second runner-ups combined. In terms of the absolute number of vote difference, of the 282 seats the BJP won, 206 were won by a margin of more than one lakh votes. This is very unusual and unexpected given India's recent electoral history.

The aggregate election returns also suggest quite clearly that the BJP won a comprehensive victory. The BJP won more than 50 percent of the total votes in states that have a two-party competition system (such as Himachal, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Chhattisgarh). In many states with multi-party competition, the BJP-led coalition was far ahead of its nearest rivals. For example, in Uttar Pradesh the BJP-Apna Dal coalition won more votes than the combined vote shares of the SP and the BSP. Similarly, the NDA coalition won more than 50 per cent of votes in Maharashtra. In Delhi, BJP's vote share is only marginally lower than the combined vote share of the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). In Bihar, it would take adding the votes of the entire political spectrum – the JD (U), the Congress, and the RJD – to get past the NDA's vote share.

However, the BJP's victory was also limited in some sense. The BJP performed extraordinarily in Hindi speaking states (Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi), which was largely due to the unparalleled consolidation of Hindu voters. And while the BJP has traditionally done well in the Hindi heartland, its performance in the region in this election was unprecedented. Table 2 shows that the BJP alone won approximately 44 percent of the vote share and 190 seats of the 225 seats in the Hindi speaking states, i.e., 85 percent of total seats. Along with its allies, it virtually swept the region by winning 201 seats. In non-Hindi speaking states, the BJP again did well in western India (Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Daman and Diu, and Dadar and Nagar Haveli).

The Congress, on the other hand, was reduced to its lowest tally of 44 seats, receiving just 19.3 percent of the votes polled. There was not a single state where Congress won seats in double digits, and in fourteen states, the party failed to open its seat account. In comparison to the 2009 elections, the Congress seemed to have lost its support base among every section of Indian society – socially and geographically. The Congress has lost elections earlier in 1977 and again in 1989 and 1996-2004, but what happened in 2014 was much more serious than being merely a routine

Table 2
The BJP Wave in Hindi Heartland and Western India

Regions	Total Seats	NDA		BJP		BJP Allies	
		Seats Won	Vote Share (in %)	Seats Won	Vote Share (in %)	Seats Won	Vote Share (in %)
Hindi speaking states	225	201	45.9	190	43.7	11	2.2
Western India	78	72	53.9	53	38.5	19	15.4
Rest of India	240	63	27.0	39	17.3	24	9.7
Overall	543	336	38.4	282	31.0	54	7.4

Source: Election Commission of India.

electoral defeat. The performance of the Congress Party in 2014 was the worst in the electoral history of the country and the party will undoubtedly find it difficult to revive itself in the near future.

As Table 3 shows, even during the anti-Congress waves of 1977 and 1989, the party managed to cross the 150 seat mark and won more than one-third of total votes polled. The number of seats where the party's candidates lost their security deposit was negligible. Since 1989, the party's vote share has been always below 30 per cent and mostly declining. The Congress was voted back in power in 2009 by winning 206 seats. This was its best performance since 1991, even though the Congress' vote share increased by less than half a percent of votes in comparison to 1999, when it had performed poorly. In 2014, not only were the party's seat tally and vote share abysmally low, but also two in every five Congress candidates lost their security deposit. In fact, in 105 of the 464 seats the Congress contested, the party's candidate got less than 5 percent of total votes polled. Such a defeat was unprecedented in the party's history.

The election results also confirm the long-term decline of the Left parties in India. The Left Front's national vote share in 2014 has been the lowest ever, from the high of 10.6 percent in 1989 to 4.8 percent in this election. The Left Front in 14th Lok Sabha had a sizeable contingent of 62 MPs and

Table 3

The Congress' Performance in Key Elections Since 1977

Lok Sabha Election Year	Seats Contested	Won	Number of seats Forfeited Deposit	Vote Share (in %)
1977	492	154	18	34.5
1989	510	197	5	39.5
1996	529	140	127	28.8
1999	453	114	88	28.3
2009	440	206	71	28.6
2014	464	44	179	19.3

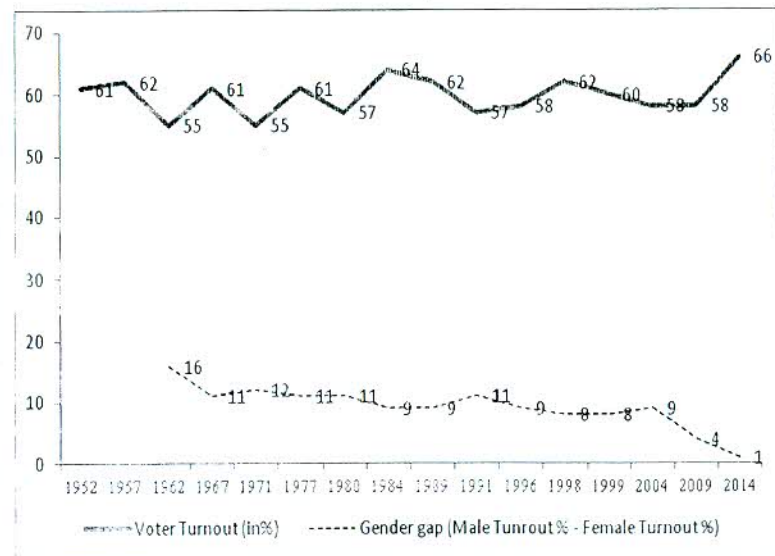
Source: Election Commission of India.

that has declined to just 12 MPs in the current Lok Sabha. Similarly, two big regional parties in Uttar Pradesh – Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Samajwadi Party (SP) – performed very poorly in this election. The BSP could not open its account in terms of seats and the SP barely won five seats. The only parties who managed to stand up to the BJP wave in this election were the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal, the Biju Janta Dal (BJD) in Odisha, and the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu. These three parties virtually swept their respective states.

The Increase in Electoral Participation

As historic as the outcome of the election was, the 2014 Lok Sabha election witnessed the highest ever voter turnout in a national election. It surpassed the previous record of 64 percent registered in the 1984 election following Indira Gandhi's assassination. When compared to the turnout in 2009, the

Figure 2
Voter Turnout and Gender Gap in Turnout Since 1952



Source: Election Commission of India.

2014 turnout was eight percentage points higher (See Figure 2). This increase in voter turnout is also the highest ever between two successive parliamentary elections. In this election, the gender gap in turnout appears to have become negligible. In many states, women voters have outnumbered their male counterparts. Unfortunately, the increase in female turnout has not led to a greater number of women candidates competing for a seat in the Lok Sabha (7 percent of total candidates in 2009 versus approximately 8 percent of total candidates in 2014) and no significant increase in the number of women MPs in the House. Similarly, the National Election Study (NES) 2014 data suggest that young voters, those aged between 18-25 years, turned out in large numbers compared to previous elections. The NES time series data show that in all the Lok Sabha elections held in India since 1996, the turnout amongst young voters have remained lower by nearly 4-5 percent compared to the average turnout. Though the turnout in urban constituencies still remained lower than in rural constituencies, the gap between the urban and the rural turnout narrowed down in this election compared to the past few elections.

How much did this unprecedented turnout contribute to the NDA's sweeping victory? The data presented in Table 4 indicate a link between the success rate of the NDA and the increase in turnout. If we compare the percentage point increase in turnout at the constituency-level with the winning party in that constituency, we find that the BJP and its allies had a greater likelihood of winning seats where the turnout increase was higher.

Table 4
Increase in Voter Turnout and NDA's Success Rate

Increase in Voter Turnout in comparison to 2009	Total Seats	Seats won by NDA	NDA's Success Rate (in %)
More than 15 percentage points	70	67	96
Between 10 and 14.9 percentage points	145	125	86
Between 0.1 and 9.9 percentage points	267	123	46
No change/decline in turnout	61	21	34

Source: Election Commission of India.

The NDA won 67 out of the 70 seats (96 percent) where the voter turnout went up by over fifteen percentage points since 2009. In the 145 seats that saw turnout go up by ten to fifteen percentage points, the NDA won 125 seats, a success rate of 86 percent. In the 267 seats where turnout increase was less than ten percentage points, the NDA won 123 seats (46 percent). Finally, in seats where the polling percentage decreased compared to 2009, the BJP and its partners won 21 of 61 such seats, a strike rate of 34 percent. Clearly, higher voter turnout seems to have played a role in the BJP's big win.

Consolidation of Various Social Groups Behind the BJP

In this election the BJP appeared to have broken social barriers just enough to make itself victorious. Thus far the party had been associated with urban dwellers, upper-castes, middle classes, and the educated. The data presented in Table 5 indicate that as in the past, the BJP did win a larger percentage of votes and seats in predominantly urban constituencies; nevertheless, its success in semi-urban and rural constituencies is extraordinary. Similarly, in some states, the BJP seemed to have benefitted from first time voters (18-22 years) and other young voters (23-35 years). There was a marginal shift among the first time voters in favor of the BJP that played a catalytic role in helping the BJP in registering this impressive victory in many parts of the country. The biggest shift amongst the first time voters in favour of the BJP could be seen in Uttar Pradesh followed by Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Jharkhand. Likewise, in many other states such as Bihar, Gujarat,

Table 5
The BJP's Penetration in Rural India

PC Category	Seats	2014		2009	
		Seats Won	Vote (in %)	Seats Won	Vote (in %)
Rural	342	178	30.3	66	17.7
Semi Urban	144	67	29.6	32	19.1
Urban	57	37	39.2	18	24.8

Source: Election Commission of India.

Haryana, Himachal or Chhattisgarh, it received more support amongst voters in the age group 23-35 years.

In addition, the BJP not only held on to its social base but also managed to attract a large number of voters from other communities. There was an unparalleled consolidation of upper castes and middle classes behind the BJP and for the first time in electoral history of India. In the past, the BJP always trailed behind the Congress among the economically weaker sections of Indian society (See Table 6). This time, however, it won greater support among the poor than the Congress, which seemed to have lost its natural advantage among the poor and lower middle classes. The BJP's victory was built on stitching together an unprecedented coalition of social groups, such as the upper caste, OBCs, with many Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs) supporting it as well. The Congress also lagged behind the BJP in winning the support of SCs and STs in this election (Verma and Chhibber 2014).

The Polarized Groups – Upper Castes and Muslims

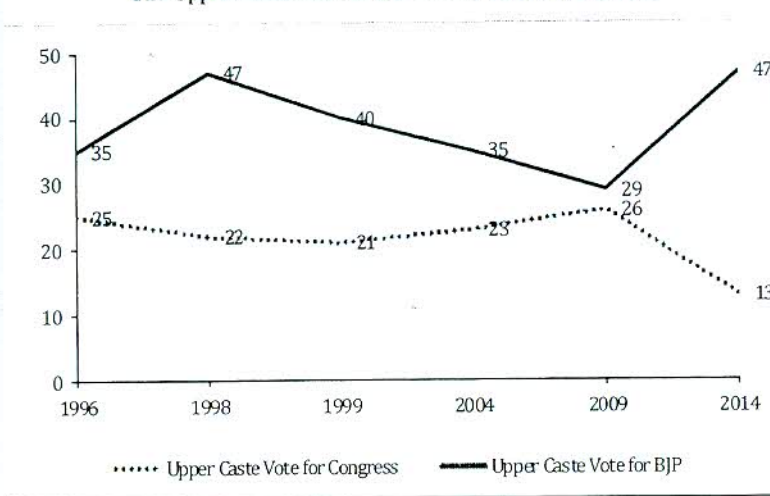
In this election the upper castes voting for the BJP presents the most prominent instance of en-bloc voting (See Figure 3). Although upper castes have been traditional supporters of the BJP, in 2009 they voted for the Congress and its allies in some states and strong regional players in the others. The 2014 elections saw a massive consolidation of the upper caste support in favor of the BJP and its allies. The BJP-led alliance managed to

Table 6
The BJP's Penetration in Rural India

Year	BJP lead over Congress among Very Poor	BJP lead over Congress among Lower Class
NES 2004	-7	-4
NES 2009	-11	-10
NES 2014	+4	+12

Source: NES 2004-14

Figure 3
The Upper Caste Polarization in favor of the BJP (in %)

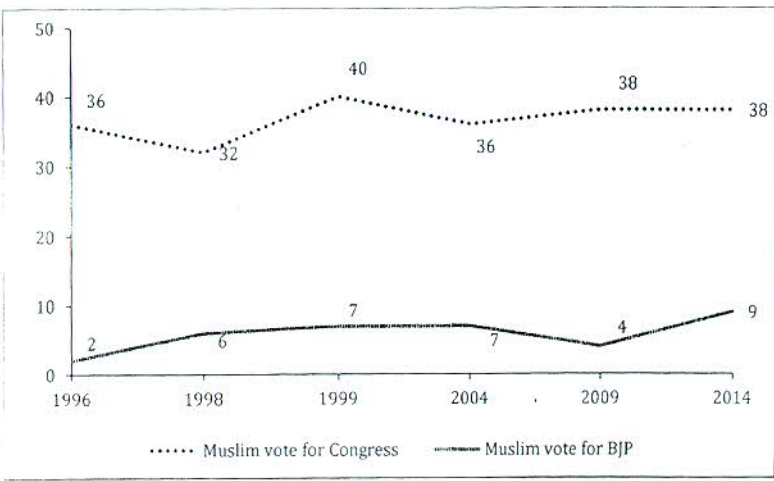


Source: Time-Series NES data 1996-2014

secure fifty-six percent of the upper caste votes, which is an approximately thirty percentage point increase in comparison to the 2009 Lok Sabha elections. The Congress and its allies lost approximately nineteen percentage points among this group.

Though the Congress managed to retain its support among Muslims, it could not add any more votes from the community in comparison to 2009 (See Figure 4). The NES data clearly show that in states where the Congress was in direct competition with the BJP, it got nearly three-fourths of the Muslim vote overall. On the other hand, in states with strong regional parties (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Delhi, Assam), the overall Muslim support for the Congress dropped to about one-third as the community also voted for non-Congress options. In fact, in many of these states - particularly UP - the presence of several viable non-Congress options seemed to have resulted in a division of Muslim votes.

Figure 4
The Congress held on its Vote among Muslims

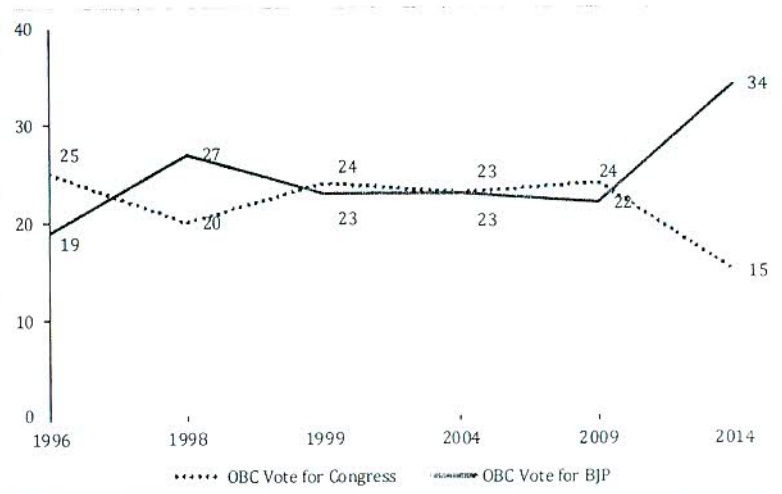


Source: Time-Series NES data 1996-2014

The Shift in Bahujan Vote – OBCs, Dalits, and Scheduled Tribes

The BJP gained among all the sections of the Bahujan category, but its performance among the OBCs (Other Backward Classes) is most impressive. The OBCs account for about 41 percent of the total population of the country and form the largest socio-political bloc. The NES data show that large portions of OBC voters in the last two decades have preferred regional parties. In 2009, the Congress and the BJP polled 24 percent and 22 percent of the votes among OBCs, respectively (See Figure 5). In other words, over half the OBC votes went to regional parties in varying proportions. However in 2014, the BJP increased its vote share by an impressive 12 percentage points (from 22 percent to 34 percent). At one level, the BJP gained at the expense of the Congress. However, BJP's spectacular success among OBCs is largely driven by a huge surge among the lower OBCs, who are said to have gained the least from the reservation regime.

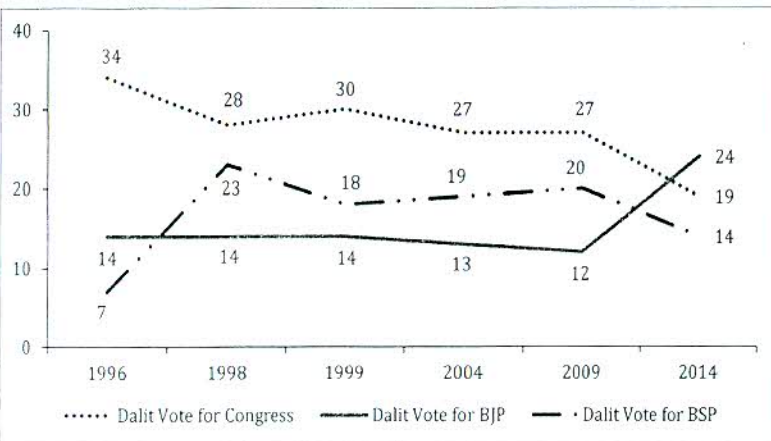
Figure 5
The decisive shift among OBC voters towards the BJP



Source: Time-Series NES data 1996-2014

The BJP polled approximately 42 percent of the lower OBC votes against 30 percent of the upper OBCs. In many states such as Kerala, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, the BJP failed to make an impact among the OBCs. However, it almost swept the OBC voters in states like Gujarat, MP, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. It also did quite well in those states that have long been the laboratory of OBC politics. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, not only did the BJP amass an overwhelming majority of the lower OBC votes, but it significantly cut into the upper OBC voters who have been religiously supporting prominent OBC leaders such as Mulayam Singh Yadav, Lalu Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar. This precisely explains why these leaders cut a sorry figure in this election. The parties who survived the BJP wave in this election – the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, the Biju Janta Dal in Odisha, and the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu – could do only so because they managed to retain a large chunk of the upper castes and OBC votes.

Figure 6
The Congress losing support among Dalits



Source: Time-Series NES data 1996-2014

The BJP also surpassed both the Congress and the BSP in attracting a larger share of the Dalit vote (See Figure 6). The BJP's Dalit vote base in this election was largely the upwardly mobile sections and the shift among Dalit voters was largely propelled by two reasons. Firstly, pre-election alliances played an important role. The party entered into an alliance with Dalit leaders like Ram Vilas Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) in Bihar, Ramdas Athavale's Republican Party [RPI(A)] in Maharashtra, and the induction of Udit Raj in Delhi. Secondly, as evident from the survey data, Narendra Modi's popularity cut across caste lines. Modi and his party became the symbolic vehicles representing dissatisfaction with the Congress.

Much of the BJP's gain among Dalit voters came at the expense of the BSP and the Congress. The BSP lost a substantial portion of its Dalit vote base to the BJP in Uttar Pradesh (UP), Haryana, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) became the principal beneficiary of the losses incurred by the Congress and the BSP among Dalit voters in Delhi and Punjab. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that

the BSP's vote base outside UP is largely made of Dalit electorates. The BSP failed to win a single seat in this election and its national vote share declined from 6.2 percent in 2009 to 4.1 percent in 2014. This was largely due to the drubbing it received in UP where its vote share declined from 27.4 percent in 2009 to 19.6 percent in 2014. In two-party competition states (Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, and Gujarat), the Congress lost a huge chunk of its Dalit vote to the BJP. In other states where state-level parties performed well such as Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, Biju Janta Dal in Odisha, and AIADMK in Tamil Nadu succeeded in winning substantial portion of Dalit Vote. The Left Front in West Bengal received a major drubbing and huge chunk of its Dalit vote base shifted towards the Trinamool Congress. The BJD in Odisha gained a share of Dalit votes from the Congress. Similarly, The Congress lost a substantial share of Dalit Votes to Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) in Telengana, and to NDA coalition and YSR Congress in Seemandhra.

In this election, the Congress also lost its advantage among Scheduled Tribes (ST) voters. The BJP saw an increase of 13 percentage points among ST voters whereas the Congress saw a decline of 10 percentage points in comparison to 2009 (See Figure 7). The NES data suggest that the BJP outperformed the Congress among STs in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand. In fact, the gains for the BJP in Maharashtra and Rajasthan among the STs were massive. Meanwhile, in Gujarat where the Congress had a huge lead over the BJP among the STs in 2009, the battle between the two parties for the tribal votes was very close. In Odisha, it was the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), which led the Congress among the ST voters with the BJP at the third place. Only Chhattisgarh saw the Congress making some gains among the ST voters compared to last time but here too the contest with the BJP was close.

What Explains the Outcome?

A close analysis of NES 2014 data suggests that the massive dissatisfaction with the performance of the Congress-led UPA government and the subsequent emergence of the BJP as a national alternative under the

Figure 7

The BJP makes significant inroads among Scheduled Tribes



Source: Time-Series NES data 1996-2014

leadership of Narendra Modi contributed to the election outcome. As a result, this election witnessed largest change in the vote share for any party between two national elections in India (Table 7). The BJP's vote share increased by 12.2 percentage points, whereas the Congress's vote share declined by a little more than 9 percentage points. The BJP on one hand managed to increase its social and geographical presence across India's political landscape, while the Congress, on the other hand, seemed to have lost its support base among every section of Indian society – socially and geographically.

The Anti-Congress Sentiment

The downward slide in the popularity of the Congress led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government as captured by the Lokniti-CSDS surveys lays bare the fact that the defeat of the Congress was almost certain even before the elections began. The opposition parties during the election

Table 7

Change in Vote Share (percentage points) Between Two Consecutive Elections

	Change in vote share of Congress	Change in vote share of BJP
1952 to '57	2.8	-
1957 to '62	-3.1	-
1962 to '67	-3.9	-
1967 to '71	2.9	-
1971 to '77	-9.2	-
1977 to '80	8.2	-
1980 to '84	5.3	-
1984 to '89	-8.5	4.0
1989 to '91	-2.9	8.7
1991 to '96	-7.8	0.1
1996 to '98	-3.0	5.3
1998 to '99	2.5	-1.8
1999 to '04	-1.8	-1.6
2004 to '09	2.0	-3.4
2009 to '14	-9.3	12.2

Source: Election Commission of India

campaign, particularly the BJP and its prime ministerial candidate, attacked the government, the Congress party and its leaders, and prime minister Manmohan Singh on its track record. The Congress failed to realize the building of a strong anti-incumbency sentiment very late. Around half-way through the second term of the UPA, the anti-corruption movement in 2011 became the first expression of disenchantment with the Congress-led central government. The poor political judgments made by the Congress leadership during the height of this movement was still haunting the Congress, when the protests demanding immediate action against the accused in the Nirbhaya case made it clear the anger against the Congress was building up. The results of assembly elections in various states, since the anti-corruption

agitation, signaled the public mood against the Congress.

On a range of parameters, the ruling coalition scored poorly. The NES survey asked respondents about the single most important issue they considered while voting in this election. Half the responses covered four major issues- price increases, corruption, lack of development and unemployment. Price increases and unemployment hit the lives of common people directly. Lack of development and corruption were reflections of systemic ills that people believed that the government was unable to effectively address. A more detailed analysis of each of these factors as being accountable for the poor image of the UPA indicates the real cause of citizen discontent. One-fifth of the respondents considered price increases to be the most important issue for this election. There was an overall rise in prices of commodities in general and of food items and oil in particular. This dealt a severe blow to the common citizen. In the past it has been found that governments have been brought down because of their inability to curb price increases. The survey data indicate that over one-third of respondents felt that the unemployment situation had worsened during the UPA II. Closely linked to the shrinking opportunities was the issue of lack of development. This was considered important by over one of every ten respondents. During the UPA II, the GDP growth rate came down from nine percent in 2009-10 to below five percent in 2013-14. This is evident in survey data where more think that both their personal economic condition and the condition of national economy worsened during the UPA II regime.

The data presented in Table 8 show that the popularity of UPA II by January 2014 was so low that not only was defeat inevitable, many had suspected that the Congress was looking to its worst electoral performance in its history. However, the scale of the Congress's defeat perplexed many, especially the party's performance among marginalized sections of society given that the UPA government implemented several pro-poor welfare schemes. After all, the return of the UPA in 2009 was attributed to the slew of welfare programmes (such as rural employment guarantee scheme and Right to Information, among many others) during its term in office (2004-2009). The Congress's performance in this election suggests not everything

Table 8
The Making of Anti-Congress Sentiments (in %)

Indicators	Option Categories	2009 (May)	2011 (July)	2013 (July)	2014 (January)
Satisfaction with performance of the UPA II government	Dissatisfied	21	31	40	50
	Satisfied	64	49	38	35
	No Opinion	15	20	22	15
Satisfaction with performance of PM Manmohan Singh	Dissatisfied	17	24	32	43
	Satisfied	69	56	49	41
	No Opinion	14	20	19	16
How corrupt is the UPA II government?	Very Corrupt	-	28	34	45
	Somewhat/Not at all Corrupt	-	47	46	36
	No Opinion	-	25	20	19
Should the UPA Government get another chance?	No	45	35	39	52
	Yes	55	37	31	26
	No Opinion	*	28	30	22

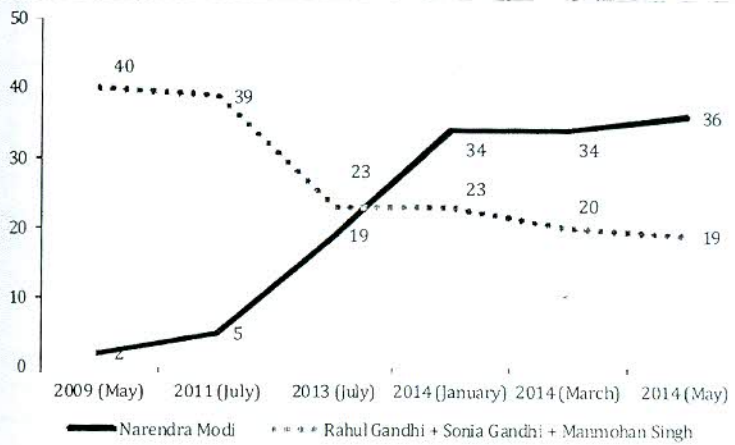
Source: NES 2009, SONS 2011 (July), Tracker I (July 2013), Tracker II (January 2014)

was right with its welfare schemes. Why? The NES 2014 collected information on four major schemes implemented by the central government, namely housing, rural employment guarantee, health and pension (old aged, widows, and disabled) schemes, and shows that less than one in every five respondents had benefitted from any of the schemes. For example, the housing scheme benefitted about 15 percent of respondents. Of the beneficiaries, only 24 percent voted for the Congress party and its allies while 32 percent had voted for the BJP and its allies. The data also suggest that a large section of voters who benefitted by a central scheme were not aware that the government in Delhi was responsible for the scheme. In most cases, beneficiaries credited the benefit to the state government, or a local politician or a local bureaucrat regardless of the party in power at the Centre. In fact, during the 2014 election, a large majority of the voters across caste, class, religions and the rural-urban divide credited their respective state governments for benefits. It seems that the message of multiple advertisements by the Congress claiming ownership of many welfare schemes did not necessarily get through. Even people with higher media exposure were more likely to attribute these welfare schemes to the state rather than the central government. Less than 30 percent of Congress voters who benefitted from the scheme gave credit to the central government.

The Modi Factor

The BJP appointed Gujarat Chief Minister Mr. Narendra Modi as its prime ministerial candidate banking on his image as an efficient administrator and powerful orator and ran a high-voltage campaign highlighting the failures of the UPA II government and attacking the Congress leadership. The BJP made every effort to make this election a choice between Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi, and its victory in this election had much to do with a well-planned presidential style campaign around Mr. Modi. Many have pointed out that it was Modi, not the BJP that won the election. The opinion polls by Lokniti-CSDS captured early trends of the increasing popularity of Mr. Modi. Figure 8 captures his increasing popularity after his appointment as the Chief of BJP's campaign committee in June 2013. It remained steady

Figure 8
Preference for Mr. Narendra Modi as India's Next Prime Minister



Source: NES 2009, SONS 2011, Tracker I, Tracker II, NES 2014 (pre-poll and post-poll)

with over one-third of the respondents mentioning his name as the preferred choice for being the prime minister after the election once he was named as the prime ministerial candidate in September 2013. In fact, Mr. Modi was preferred by more citizens than those who wanted Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, and Manmohan Singh as prime minister put together. It is important to point out here that the prime minister choice question was open-ended and respondents were not offered any names.

How much did Modi matter in swinging votes in favor of the BJP? The post-poll survey conducted in April-May 2014 asked a series of questions to determine the influence of the 'leadership factor' in this election. The post poll survey also asked a battery of questions on the respondent's choice among top leaders of political parties keeping in mind critical leadership qualities. The qualities included concern for people, trustworthiness, getting things done, ability to work with other leaders in the party, and experience. On all the five indicators, four of every ten respondents mentioned Narendra Modi's name with Rahul Gandhi (who figured in second position) being

more than twenty-five percentage points behind on all indicators. Similarly, another set of questions was asked which leader was best suited to deal with issues such as national development, price rise, controlling corruption, national security, and upliftment of Dalits. Here again, close to four of every ten respondents mentioned Mr. Modi's name with the next highest leader being close to thirty percentage points behind.

Respondents were also asked whether they give importance to local candidates, state level leadership, or the PM candidate while voting. The likelihood of those who gave importance to the PM candidate while exercising their franchise were twice more likely to vote for the BJP compared to those who valued local or state level leadership. Respondents were also asked if they would have voted any differently had Mr. Modi not been the prime ministerial candidate of the BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). One in every four respondent who voted for the NDA said they would not have voted for the coalition if Mr. Modi had not been the Prime Ministerial candidate. And the odds of this were higher in states like Assam, Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Karnataka.

Many political commentators have suggested that TV and print media played a critical role in shaping the electoral outcome by becoming a force multiplier for the public relations campaign of Mr. Modi. They have gone to the extent of holding responsible both the national and regional language media for letting the spin doctors of Modi's campaign influence their election coverage, which it described as being "blinkered and obsessive" about Mr. Modi. There is indeed some truth to this claim as evident by the surveys conducted by Lokniti-CSDS between July 2013 and March 2014. The BJP's extensive media campaign kept gaining strength as elections approached and it seems that regular viewers and readers of news were influenced by it. Table 9 depicts the increasing popularity of the BJP and Modi in the run up to the elections. The BJP's popularity in comparison to the Congress was the highest among those who regularly saw television and read newspapers. In July 2013 the BJP's lead over the Congress in terms of votes was just three percentage points among those who saw TV news regularly (daily or sometimes). The figure increased steadily for the next

Table 9

Media Exposure and Popularity of the BJP and Narendra Modi

The BJP's vote lead over Congress (Percentage points)

	Watch TV News				Read Newspaper				Internet Usage For News			
	July 2013	Jan 2014	Mar 2014	May 2014	July 2013	Jan 2014	Mar 2014	May 2014	July 2013	Jan 2014	Mar 2014	May 2014
Regularly	+3	+10	+13	+15	+7	+14	+15	+20	+13	+19	+23	+26
Rarely	-7	+3	+7	+6	-2	+13	+8	+13	+8	+18	+13	+22
Never	-6	+3	+1	+3	-7	-1	+3	+4	-2	+6	+9	+10

Narendra Modi's lead over Rahul Gandhi as PM Choice (Percentage points)

The BJP's vote Lead Over Congress (Percentage points)

	Watch TV News				Read Newspaper				Internet Usage For News			
	July 2013	Jan 2014	Mar 2014	May 2014	July 2013	Jan 2014	Mar 2014	May 2014	July 2013	Jan 2014	Mar 2014	May 2014
Regularly	+9	+21	+21	+25	+11	+24	+25	+27	+14	+27	+30	+35
Rarely	+5	+15	+18	+13	+5	+22	+17	+21	+10	+30	+21	+30
Never	+5	+13	+12	+12	+5	+13	+13	+16	+7	+22	+18	+19

Source: Tracker I, Tracker II, NES 2014 (pre-poll and post-poll)

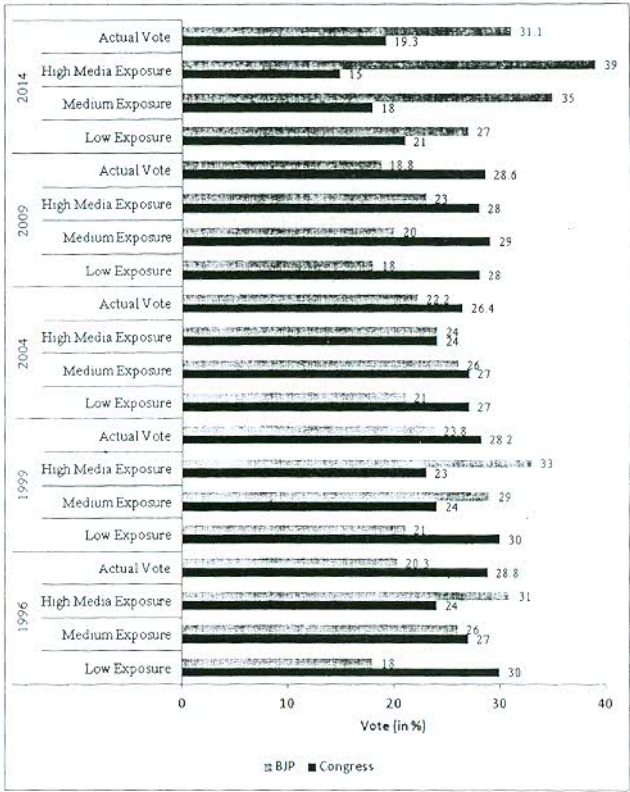
nine months to twenty percentage points in May 2014. Similarly, the BJP's lead over Congress among regular readers of newspapers increased from seven percentage points to twenty percentage points and among Internet users from 13 percentage points to 26 percentage points. Likewise, Narendra Modi's lead over Rahul Gandhi as the preferred choice for the next Prime Minister also increased during this period. Modi's lead over Gandhi increased from nine percentage points to 25 percentage points among regular TV news viewers, from 11 percentage points to 27 percentage points among regular newspaper readers, and from 14 percentage points to 35 percentage points among frequent Internet users.

The data presented in Table 9 lay bare a very important fact, and that is in these nine months there was a comparable increase in Modi's and the BJP's popularity even among those who were either remotely or not exposed to news. That means the BJP's media campaign was certainly effective, but it was only one of the factors that helped in gaining the victory. Media outlets were just another platform for the BJP and Modi to attack the incumbent Congress government for non-performance. The time-series NES data indicate that voters with higher media exposure generally tend to be more educated, are wealthier, live in urban areas, belong to higher castes, and are younger in age. There is enough evidence to suggest that this is essentially the BJP's constituency (Chhibber 1997, Hansen and Jaffrelot 1998, Heath 1999). In simpler words, the BJP tends to draw up more votes from these segments than from those who are less educated, poor, from rural localities, from the lower castes, and elderly (Yadav 2004, Yadav and Palshikar 2009). The time-series NES data also confirm that the greater the exposure of a voter to the media, the greater are her chances of voting for the BJP and the 2014 election is no exception to that trend (Figure 9).

Conclusion

The BJP's victory in this election has generated immense debate on the nature and magnitude of the mandate for the party. Political commentators have gone to the extent of suggesting that the BJP victory had much to do with the systemic characters of the first-past-the-post electoral system where even a small plurality of votes may lead to massive gains in seats.

Figure 9
Media Exposure and the Likelihood of Voting for the BJP since 1996



Source: Time-Series NES 1996-2014.

However, one should remember that this was not the first time in India's electoral history when a party won a large number of seats with a comparatively smaller vote share. We have similar parallels from the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections where the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) won a majority in 2007 with just a 30 percent vote share and the Samajwadi Party (SP) won a majority in 2012 with just 29 percent of the votes. The vote-seat

multiplier in this election is 1.67 for the BJP. In simple words, in this election, for every one percent of votes, the BJP won nearly nine seats in this Lok Sabha. This improves the previous record of vote-seat multiplier of 1.65 achieved by the Congress party in 1952.

The challenge for the BJP in the near future will be to keep its winning coalition together. It would be naïve not to realize that maintaining the stunning vote-seat conversion ratio that the BJP had in the 2014 elections and repeating the exemplary performance in UP would be difficult in the future. Therefore, the BJP needs to build a wider and deeper organizational base and expand its pockets of influence in eastern and southern India. As the incumbent Congress' loss of votes in this election is closely tied to non-performance, massive corruption, and failure in delivering welfare benefits, the BJP and Mr. Modi need to deliver on the promises made during the campaign.

The Congress party, on the other hand, is facing its worst ever crisis. This defeat indicates that the party will have to begin from the scratch. It will have refine its politics, build a new social base, develop the organizational machinery, and cultivate a new brand of leadership within the party. The 2014 election results suggest that the fundamental challenge before the party would be to reinvent itself.

The BJP's massive victory in 2014 suggests critical realignment in India's electoral politics, i.e., a radical shift in the social bases of political power, a shift that is not transitory but long term. The BJP with this singular victory has clearly replaced the Congress as the system-defining party and is likely to become the focal point of electoral alignment and re-alignment in the coming elections. We will have to wait to see whether the 2014 elections have firmly pushed the polity back into the era of a single party majority. The BJP, by enlarging its footprint, has become a genuinely national party and transformed India's political landscape, perhaps forever. Nevertheless, a new era is upon us and we will have to wait to make any meaningful predictions about its durability.

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