

Why it bucked the trend

The State government's performance was the principal factor, though an element of social engineering helped



BIHAR
Bihar defied conventional political common-sense. It bucked the national trend with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) picking up 32 seats and flattening some formidable caste coalitions. Initially, the appeal of the Janata Dal (United)-Bharatiya Janata Party alliance seemed confined to a small pool of the upper castes and the Kurmi-Koeris, well below 30 per cent of the State's population. But it succeeded in overwhelming the strongest caste-community coalitions one could hope to string together: one that comprised Yadavs, Muslims and Dalits, who together account for about 47 per cent of the electorate. Going by

the 2005 Assembly results, the aggregate of the votes polled by the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and Lok Jan Shakti Party (LJP) seemed big enough to outdo the NDA.

The result has stood this conventional logic on its head. The JD(U)-BJP combine surpassed the RJD-LJP coalition by as much as 12 percentage points. Lalu Prasad could only manage a paltry four seats and Ram Vilas Paswan drew a blank. For the RJD chief, this was the worst election in the last two decades. His party polled around 19 per cent of the vote while the LJP clocked 6.5 per cent. The Congress managed to win 10 per cent, a good launching pad for a possible revival in Bihar.

The NDA won all over the State, though with some subtle variations. The RJD-led alliance did relatively better

Social composition: changing caste equations			
	BJP-JD(U)	RJD-LJP	Congress
Brahmins	69	3	18
Rajputs	80	5	3
Bhumihars	48	13	6
Kurmi-Koeris	62	10	4
Yadavs	13	65	4
Lower OBCs	58	12	8
Muslims	9	31	29
Pasis	24	50	6
Other Dalits	32	20	4

Source: NES 2009, Bihar weighted data file, sample size: 1934
All figures in per cent, rest others

in the Bhojpur region. But the NDA was far ahead in Magadh. Though the Congress won seats in Sasaram (in the Bhojpur region) and Kishanganj (East Bihar), it did better in terms of votes in the Tirhut and Mithila regions.

The credit for the NDA

sweep must go to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, particularly his clean image and his agenda of governance. The NES 2009 shows that his rating is one of the highest as Chief Minister: 61 per cent named him as their choice for the post. His government received an extraordinary

approval rating: 86 per cent, including Yadavs and Muslims, were satisfied with its performance. They preferred Mr. Nitish Kumar's rule over Mr. Lalu Prasad's in almost every respect, including such areas as tackling crime, providing electricity, roads and water, combating corruption and ensuring social harmony. Thirty-seven per cent of those polled said the governance of the State determined the manner in which they voted. Against this, only 29 per cent said the Central government's performance was the influencing factor. Seventeen per cent said they considered the performance of both the Central and the State government while voting. The Congress secured most of its votes from those who voted with an eye on the performance of the Central government.

An element of social engineering too helped the BJP-JD(U) combine this time. As expected, the Brahmins, Rajputs, Bhumihars and other upper castes voted en bloc for the NDA, as did the Kurmis and Koeris. Having assessed the electoral limitations of this small social bloc, Mr. Nitish Kumar made a special effort to attract the Most Backward Caste vote, which comprises nearly a quarter of the electorate. A massive lead among these castes gave the NDA a decisive edge.

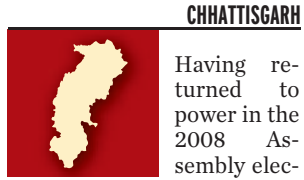
While the RJD managed to retain its hold over the Yadavs, Mr. Paswan could deliver only about 50 per cent of the Pasi vote and about 20 per cent of the Jatav and Other Dalit vote. An even split of the Muslim vote between the Congress and the RJD was enough to seal the electoral fate of the RJD-led alliance.

On expected lines

The BJP's victory in Chhattisgarh owed to popularity of the State government

Social blocs: How the BJP fared				
	Upper castes	Lower OBCs	Dalits	Adivasis
BJP vote share	52	55	29	43
Congress vote share	38	26	44	40
BJP gain/loss since Assembly poll	+12	+18	-7	+3

Source: NES 2009, Weighted data, sample size: 617, vote share in per cent, gain/loss in percentage points



CHHATTISGARH
Having returned to power in the 2008 Assembly election on the plank of good governance, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) victory in 10 out of 11 seats in Chhattisgarh ran on expected lines. The party vote share declined from 48 per cent in the 2004 Lok Sabha election to 45 per cent. However, the Congress failed to take advantage of this despite the fact that the contest was essentially bi-polar; the party also ended up slipping in terms of vote share, by about three per cent. The BJP continued to do better in the naxalite-affected regions, securing more than 50 per cent of the votes polled. Its vote share in the rest of the State was around 43 per cent.

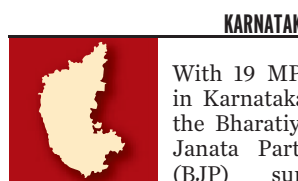
The BJP owes its victory to the popularity of Chief Minister Raman Singh, satisfaction with his government, and his initiatives to curb the naxalite violence. More than seven out of 10 voters were satisfied

with the government's performance. Significantly, over 50 per cent of Congress voters expressed such satisfaction. About 40 per cent of those polled preferred Mr. Singh as Chief Minister, way ahead of Congress rival Ajit Jogi (20 per cent) in the popularity stakes. As many as 32 per cent gave a thumbs up to the Raman Singh government for tackling naxalism and 27 per cent said Salwa Judum was not a State-sponsored movement and that people were not forced to join it.

The popularity of the State government earned the BJP support from all castes and communities. The party enhanced its upper caste vote share by 12 percentage points and that of the Lower OBC by 18 points since the 2008 Assembly election. Its most significant loss related to the Dalit vote. The party slipped by seven percentage points in Dalit support since 2008, although it gained three points among the adivasis in the same period.

Expanding support base

The BJP emerged stronger among the rural electorate



KARNATAKA
With 19 MPs in Karnataka, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) surpassed its performance in 2004 reducing the Congress' tally by two. The BJP swept three regions - Mumbai Karnataka, Central Karnataka, Coastal Karnataka - and ceded just one seat to the Janata Dal (S) in the Bangalore region. The only region where the BJP conceded ground was southern Karnataka, where the Congress and the JD(S) picked up most of their seats. Compared to the 2008 Assembly election, the BJP has improved its vote share by nearly eight percentage points. The Congress vote share also climbed (over three percentage points) but that of the JD (S) fell by over five percentage points.

The maiden BJP government still enjoys a positive rating with 60 per cent of respondents saying they were 'satisfied.' But this approval is not unqualified. Nearly two-thirds rated the JD(S)-BJP coalition government headed by H.D. Kumaraswamy as the best of the recent State governments. Over 70 per cent had heard of the infamous 'Operation Kamala,' the BJP's strategy of securing a majority in the Assembly by getting Congress/JD(S) MLAs to resign and return on BJP tickets. A majority of those who had an opinion on the issue disapproved of it. Almost 60 per cent had heard of the pub attacks in Mangalore and more than two-thirds who took a stand on the issue termed it as wrong. Near-

BJP's expanded social base			
	BJP	Congress	JDS
Upper castes	55	25	16
Lingayats	74	17	5
Vokkaligas	38	28	30
Non-dominant OBCs	44	40	9
Scheduled Castes	38	56	4
Scheduled Tribes	42	45	10
Muslims	11	68	14

Source: NES 2009, vote share in per cent, Rest others

ly one-third of the respondents, much higher among Muslims and Christians, felt that minorities had become more unsafe in the last one year.

The State government's rating is at best a partial explanation for the BJP's success. Another small factor was the BJP's early choice of candidates and a well-coordinated election campaign. The Congress was not only late but was also plagued by incessant infighting and total confusion over choice of candidates. As for the JD(S), it focussed its energies on a few prestigious battles.

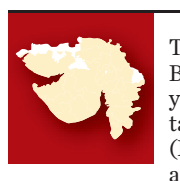
What may have helped the BJP is a subtle but significant shift in its support base. While the party continued to be popular among younger and more educated voters, it has emerged stronger among rural electorate. A majority of upper caste voters supported the BJP. In earlier elections, the party had won over the influential Lingayat community, which has a significant presence in Northern Karnataka. This time around, it has consolidated that position by pocketing almost three-fourths of the Lingayat vote.

The votes of the other dominant caste - the Vokkaligas - which was earlier divided among the major parties seem to have tilted towards the BJP. It also managed to get the support of some sections of the OBC vote; but the Dalit vote continued to be largely with the Congress. The tribal vote too seems to be split between the Congress and the BJP even though the latter won both reserved tribal seats, largely on the strength of the Lingayat community, which has a significant presence there.

There was a very interesting link between consideration for voting and party preferences. The Congress led by 26 percentage points among the one-third that voted on the basis of the performance of the Centre. The pattern was reversed among the other one-third that voted on the basis of how the State government has performed. The BJP led the Congress by 38 percentage points in this category. The real edge for the BJP came from those who evaluated the performance of both governments before casting their votes - the party enjoyed an 8 percentage points lead among them.

Modi saves the BJP

But the party shows signs of fading in Gujarat



GUJARAT
The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) always had high hopes in Gujarat. The party was expected to build on its imposing Assembly election victory in 117 out of 182 seats. But the 2009 Lok Sabha election turned out to be a repeat of 2004. The BJP could add only one seat to increase its tally to 15, compared to the Congress' 11. The vote shares too stayed unchanged at 47 per cent for the BJP and 44 per cent for the Congress.

The BJP lost considerable ground in Saurashtra, the region where it had swept the Assembly election. The Congress won four out of seven seats this time. The Mahagujarat Janata Party of the BJP defectors harmed it at some places. The BJP also lost some ground in South Gujarat because of job losses in the diamond industry. But the party

posted a smart recovery in the Central Gujarat region where two important Union Ministers - Shankarsinh Vaghela and Naran Rathwa - lost their seats.

It was Mr. Modi's continuing popularity that enabled the BJP to stem the tide. Mr. Modi still enjoys considerable support as Chief Minister. He remains the preferred choice for the job among 45 per cent of respondents, with no rival crossing the 10 per cent mark. As many as 17 per cent named him their choice for the Prime Minister's job, second only to 18 per cent who preferred Sonia Gandhi. The BJP's Prime Minister-in-waiting, L.K. Advani, received just 10 per cent support. About 61 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that Mr. Modi is an effective leader. The performance of the State government was commended by 65 per cent of respondents; only 26 per cent were dissatisfied.

While Mr. Modi re-

mains the main protector of the BJP support base, his party has faded slightly in Gujarat. Its massive lead of over 10 percentage points over the Congress in the 1990s has shrunk to only three percentage points in the last two Lok Sabha elections. The Congress got 69 per cent of the vote among those who voted on the performance of the Central government. But it still needs a tall leader to challenge Mr. Modi in Gujarat.

For now, the picture is one of continuity rather than change. The BJP retained the strong backing of the Patidars, whose support for the party increased from 75 per cent in 2004 to 83 per cent in 2009. The attempts to create a wedge between the Kadva and Leuva Patidars had at best a marginal success, as the BJP secured 77 per cent of the vote among the latter as well. The OBCs remained split between the Congress and the BJP, marginally to the latter's advantage. The Congress continues to command massive following among the Dalits. It also expanded its adivasi support from 46 per cent to 55 per cent and improved its hold over the Muslims from 60 per cent to 69 per cent. The evidence suggests that the two rivals have reinforced their hold over those communities most likely to vote for them.

BJP and Congress entrench their social base		
	Congress vote	BJP vote
Upper castes	26	63
Patidars	9	83
OBCs	44	49
Dalits	62	20
Adivasis	55	37
Muslims	69	13
Others	36	56

Source: NES 2009, weighted data file. All figures in row percentages, rest others.

NORTH EAST/SIKKIM/GOA

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Good news for the Congress

The Congress won both seats in Arunachal Pradesh with a vote share of 51 per cent. On paper, it looks like a steep swing of 41 percentage points as compared to 2004. Since then, the Arunachal Congress has merged with the Congress. The success is particularly important for the Congress since Gegong Apang has been on the sidelines this time.

Though the contest in Arunachal East was very much tilted towards the Congress candidate, Arunachal West saw a very close contest.

The Congress government is in a favourable position with 50 per cent of the respondents saying that they will vote for the party if Assembly elections

are held in the near future.

MANIPUR

Victory, by default?

Manipur is clearly a case where the ruling party won despite not being very popular. Only 45 per cent of respondents said they were fully or somewhat satisfied with the State government. Only 15 per cent named Chief Minister Ibobi Singh as their preferred person to administer the State.

Yet, the outcome will be regarded as a victory for the ruling party, which won both the seats with a 18 percentage point vote swing in its favour. The post-poll survey shows that 57 per cent of the Meiteis, the dominant community in Manipur, voted for the Congress.

MEGHALAYA

Ally versus ally

Meghalaya's two parliamentary constituencies saw a direct contest between the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party-United Democratic Party combine.

Unlike the rest of the country, the Congress and the NCP are rivals in the State. The results did not favour any side. The Shillong seat comprising the Khasi hills was won by Vincent H. Pala of the Congress. The Tura seat, comprising Garo and Jaintia hills and considered a pocket borough of P.A. Sangma, was narrowly won by Sangma's daughter Agatha K. Sangma of the NCP. Overall, the Congress had a comfortable lead over the UDP-NCP alliance.

But this lead must be seen in the context of a national elec-

tion and may not ensure victory in the State Assembly.

MIZORAM

A bonus in Mizoram

The newly elected Congress government in Mizoram got a bonus from the electorate in the form of the lone Lok Sabha seat from the State. The Congress candidate, C.L. Ruala, won with 66 per cent of the vote, followed by the Mizo National Front (MNF) and Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP)-backed Independent candidate Dr. H. Lallungmuana with 33 per cent. This highly literate and peaceful State in the Northeast has 6.5 lakh electors, of whom 3.3 lakh turned out to vote.

The post-poll survey showed the Congress had everything going for it this time. The State government enjoys a decent reputation with a 62 per cent

approval rating. Chief Minister Lalthanhawla was named as favourite for the post by 47 per cent of the respondents

TRIPURA

An easy win

Unlike in its other strongholds in West Bengal and Kerala, the CPI(M) in Tripura won with ease both the East Tripura and the West Tripura constituencies, polling 62 per cent of the vote. This came as no surprise as the Left had scored an emphatic victory against united opposition in the State Assembly election held last year. For the record, the CPI(M) dropped 7 percentage points and the Congress gained 17 points compared to the Lok Sabha election in 2004.

To its credit, the Left enjoys an almost equal support among both Bengali-speakers and the native Tripuris and other

smaller tribal groups.

NAGALAND

A local level vote

Nagaland Peoples Front's C.M. Chang won the lone Lok Sabha seat with a 70 per cent vote share defeating his Congress rival K. Asungba Sangtam easily. The NPF is part of the Democratic Alliance of Nagaland - which includes the BJP - that formed the State Government in Nagaland for the second consecutive term in 2008. Satisfaction levels with the State government are significant with 71 per cent saying they are either fully or somewhat satisfied with the work done by the ruling Democratic Alliance of Nagaland during the last few months.

GOA

Honours split

The Congress-Nationalist

Congress Party alliance and the BJP split the honours in Goa with both getting one seat each. As in 2004, North Goa went to the BJP and South Goa to the Congress.

This outcome reflects the political and social balance in the State. If about one-third are dissatisfied with the State government, a little more than this is dissatisfied with the Central government.

The BJP leader Manohar Parrikar is the most popular choice for the Chief Ministership.

The Congress-NCP attracts overwhelming support from Christians (74 per cent) and Muslims while the BJP is popular among most Hindu communities except Dalits.

SIKKIM

Subtle signs of change

The Sikkim Democratic

Front has been voted to power in the State for the fourth consecutive time.

As in 2004, there is not a single opposition MLA in the Assembly. Pawan Kumar Chamling's party has won all the 32 seats in the Assembly, including the Sangha seat reserved for monks. There are some subtle signs of change, though.

The SDF vote share dropped by 7 percentage points in the Lok Sabha election. The popular preference for Mr. Chamling as the preferred CM has come down from 70 per cent in the 2004 to 42 per cent this time.

Clearly the opposition, led by Nar Bahadur Bhandari, the ex-supremo of the Sikkim Sangram Parishad, who is now the Congress leader, has a long way to go before winning popular trust.

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