

2014 Lok Sabha Elections in Andhra Pradesh: A tale of two states

Pranav Gupta¹

The concurrent Lok Sabha and assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh were held less than two months after the parliament passed the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Bill paving way for the bifurcation of the state. The two new states gave distinctive results as Seemandhra¹ witnessed a comeback by the TDP, which formed the government in alliance with the BJP, while Telangana went against the national trend and gave an overwhelming mandate in favour of the Telangana Rashtra Samiti. The former witnessed a direct contest between the TDP-BJP alliance and the YSR Congress as the Congress which had swept this region in 2004 and 2009 was reduced to a marginal player. Telangana on the other hand, saw a three way contest between the TRS, TDP-BJP and the Congress. This article seeks to analyze the 2014 election in Seemandhra and the newly formed Telangana. The article focuses on three broad dimensions of the verdict. Firstly, what factors led to this massive collapse of the Congress in the state. Secondly, what led to the resurgence of the TDP and BJP in Seemandhra and why was the YSR Congress unable to occupy the space vacated by the Congress. Thirdly, how important was the bifurcation issue in determining this result. There will be a parallel analysis of the two states as politics in the two states is not mutually exclusive.

The 2014 Verdict in Seemandhra and Telangana

In the Lok Sabha election in Seemandhra, the vote share gap between the TDP-BJP alliance (47.71 percent) and the YSR Congress (45.38) was marginal (2.33 percent). The gap was much wider in terms of seats as the former won 17 out of the 25 seats. The Congress which had swept the region in 2009 with more than 40 percent of the votes was routed as its vote share went below 3 percent. Though the YSR Congress's performance

¹ Pranav Gupta is a Researcher with the Lokniti Programme of CSDS

² Seemandhra in the article refers to the state of Andhra Pradesh post bifurcation.

Table 1
Seemandhra Lok Sabha Election 2014 Result

Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Change from 2009	Vote (%)	Change from 2009
Congress	25	0	-21	2.84	-37.87
NDA	25	17	13	47.71	12.63
BJP	4	2	2	7.18	5.72
TDP	21	15	11	40.53	6.92
YSR-Congress	25	8	8	45.38	-
NOTA	25	0	0	0.64	0.64
Other Parties	283	0	0	3.43	-20.78

Source: Analysis of ECI Data by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies Data Unit

Table 2
Telangana Lok Sabha Election 2014 Result

Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Change from 2009	Vote (%)	Change from 2009
Congress	16	2	-10	24.48	-11.83
NDA	17	2	0	22.56	3.47
BJP	8	1	1	10.37	3.19
TDP	9	1	-1	12.20	0.29
TRS	17	11	9	34.67	19.32
YSR-Congress	13	1	1	4.45	4.45
AIMIM	4	1	0	3.50	1.67
NOTA	17	0	0	0.80	0.80
Other Parties	215	0	0	9.54	-17.88

Source: Analysis of ECI Data by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies Data Unit

was praiseworthy considering it was their first assembly and Lok Sabha election, many had expected it to do much better going by its performance in by polls post 2011. A high vote to seat ratio allowed the TDP-BJP alliance (1.4 as compared to the YSR Congress's 0.8) to sweep the state. In Telangana the contest was basically for the second position as the TRS had a lead of over 10 percentage points with a vote share of 34.67 percent. The

Congress (24.48 percent) and the TDP-BJP (22.56 percent) stood second and third respectively with a vote share difference of less than 2 percentage points between them. The MIM and the YSR Congress won one seat each primarily because of the concentrated nature of their support base in the state. Even though the negative vote swing for the Congress (11.83 percentage points) in Telangana was relatively lower than Seemandhra, the party lost 10 seats as compared to 2009. This could be attributed to the multi cornered nature of the contest in the state.

In Seemandhra there was a regional pattern as well as TDP-BJP dominated in the larger Coastal Andhra region while YSR Congress led in Rayalaseema. The TDP-BJP alliance won 14 out of the 16 seats in Coastal Andhra. The gap between the TDP-BJP and the YSR Congress was 5.6 percentage points in this region. The YSR Congress had a lead of 3.4 percentage points in Rayalaseema which helped it in winning two third of the seats in this region. Concentration of support base in the larger region was probably the prime reason why the alliance had a high vote-seat ratio.

The results of the assembly election were similar to the Lok Sabha election as the TDP and TRS formed the government in Seemandhra and Telangana respectively. There seems to be little evidence of differential voting by the electorate for the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabha election as almost all parties had identical vote shares (See Table 4). Variations in the seat shares could have occurred because of distribution of vote share across assembly segments within a parliamentary constituency. The difference in the BJP and TDP's vote shares in Telangana basically arises due to the lower proportion of seats contested by the BJP in the Vidhan Sabha election. It is definitely crucial to understand the relative importance of national and state factors if one seeks to unravel what determined this verdict.

Political Realignment Post 2009

One of the factors which could have led to the collapse of the Congress in 2014 is the political realignment in the state in terms of changing alliances

Table 3
Seemandhra - Region Wise result Lok Sabha Election 2014

Regions	Total Seats	Congress		TDP-BJP		YSRC		Others	
		Won	Vote (%)	Won	Vote (%)	Won	Vote (%)	Won	Vote (%)
Coastal Andhra	16	0	2.8	14	49.3	2	43.7	0	4.1
Rayalaseema	9	0	2.9	3	44.9	6	48.3	0	3.9

Note: Others includes NOTA

Source: Analysis of ECI Data by CSDS Data Unit

Table 4
Andhra Pradesh Assembly Election Results 2014

	Telangana			Seemandhra			Andhra Pradesh		
	Cont.	Won	Vote (%)	Cont.	Won	Vote (%)	Cont.	Won	Vote (%)
Turnout	69.0			78.9			73.4		
Total Seats	119			175			294		
Parties									
Congress	113	22	25	173	0	2.94	286	22	11.8
NDA*		20	21.73		105	46.63		125	36.63
BJP	45	5	7.03	13	4	2.18	58	9	4.13
TDP	72	15	14.7	165	101	44.45	237	116	32.5
TRS	119	62	33.64	1	1	0.22	120	63	13.64
YSRCongress	92	3	3.36	174	67	44.12	266	70	27.75
Others	119	12	16.27	175	2	6.09	294	14	10.18

Note: Others includes NOTA

Source: Analysis of ECI Data by CSDS Data Unit

and emergence of new players. The incumbent Congress party started facing organizational troubles in the state after the death of sitting Chief Minister Y.S.R Reddy. A large number of legislators resigned from the party and joined the YSR Congress floated by YSR Reddy's son Jagan Mohan Reddy who had urged the Congress leadership to make him the new Chief Minister of the state. The leadership crisis that the party faced after YSR Reddy's death is evident in the fact that it couldn't portray a Chief Ministerial candidate in 2014 after incumbent Chief Minister Kiran Kumar Reddy opposed his own party's decision to bifurcate the state and formed a new political party - Jai Samaikyandhra Party in March 2014 (Economic Times 2014), less than two months before elections. Another major setback for the Congress was its inability to convince the TRS to merge or at least form an alliance in Telangana after the bifurcation. The party had tried for this alliance to prevent a division of the pro-Telangana vote (Sudhir 2014). The TRS correctly assessed the political atmosphere and the popular sentiment in the state and decided to contest the election alone. The TDP which had contested the 2009 election as part of a Grand Alliance with the Left and the TRS reunited with the BJP for this election. The alliance received support from film star Chiranjeevi's younger brother Pawan Kalyan and his Jana Sena Party. Due to its limited presence in Seemandhra, the BJP was a junior partner in the state and contested on only four seats. In Telangana, seat sharing between the two allies for the Lok Sabha election was much more equitable as the BJP's support base in Andhra Pradesh is more in Telangana. The YSR Congress contested the election alone and kept all options open for post poll alliances. Party President Jagan Mohan Reddy's statement in December 2013 that he was 'willing to do business with Modi' was probably the first sign of this strategy (Kanwal 2013). While political realignment does influence political competition and the electoral arithmetic, it cannot explain the complete picture. It is important to understand issues and factors which shaped public opinion in favour of these parties/alliances and leaders.

Telangana Formation

In the last decade, the issue of bifurcation of the state has been one of the

most dominant issues in the political discourse of Andhra Pradesh. Broadly there was a major difference of opinion between the people of Seemandhra and Telangana on the issue of bifurcation. In a survey conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in January 2014, 95 percent of the respondents from Telangana supported the bifurcation while 80 percent of the people in Seemandhra opposed it. Approval ratings of the Congress's handling of the bifurcation issue were quite low in January. Almost four fifth of the voters who had heard about the bifurcation issue in Seemandhra felt that the Congress had handled it poorly. The proportion was much lower in Telangana at around one in every three. The Congress's decision to go ahead with Telangana formation could have been based on the realisation that it was bound to lose seats in Seemandhra due to this heavy discontentment. The party tried to counter balance imminent losses in Seemandhra by tapping the pro bifurcation sentiment in Telangana.

In the CSDS Post Poll Survey in Telangana, most of the respondents gave credit to the Central government, Congress leadership in Delhi and state Congress leaders for the bifurcation (44 percent). The proportion of respondents who gave credit to the TRS was less than half at 18 percent (*See Table 5*).

The proportion of people in Telangana who felt that the Congress had handled the bifurcation issue well was almost double in April/May (60 percent)

Table 5

Who do you Credit/ Blame for the Bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh?

	Telangana	Seemandhra
Chandrasekhar Rao/TRS	18	7
Central Government, Congress leadership in Delhi and State Congress leaders.	44	59
All Parties	11	10
Others	6	1
Don't Know/Can't Say	21	23

Note: All figures are in percent

Source: NES 2014 Post Poll Survey conducted by CSDS; Total Sample Size: Telangana - 509; Seemandhra - 723

as compared to January (31 percent). Thus, The Congress's subpar performance in Telangana cannot be attributed to a failure in taking due credit and recognition for the bifurcation. One reason for the Congress's failure could be high public opposition to the provision for making Hyderabad, joint capital for ten years. Almost half the voters (48 percent) opposed this move.

It is much simpler to explain the Congress's defeat in Seemandhra as there was heavy opposition to bifurcation in the region. More than half the respondents blamed the Congress (*See Table 5*) and its leadership for the bifurcation and almost three fourth (71 percent) felt that the party had handled the issue poorly. The two principal non Congress alternatives in the region had a different stand on bifurcation. The TDP has changed its stand on the issue multiple times and is considered to support Telangana formation in principle. But the party opposed the bill in the parliament on the ground of 'equal justice' (The Hindu 2014). The YSR Congress is probably the only party in the state which clearly opposed the bifurcation. It seems bifurcation lost electoral importance after it was passed by the parliament as people realised that the decision was irreversible. Thus, one could argue that Telangana formation could not be a factor on the basis of which voters chose between TDP-BJP and the YSR Congress. There is a need to look at other state and national level factors for a better understanding of the verdict.

Performance of the Congress Governments and Leadership

Having been in power at the state and the centre for the last ten years, it is natural that there would have been an anti incumbency sentiment against the Congress. Data from the CSDS Pre Poll Study shows that dissatisfaction with both the central and the state government was almost double in Seemandhra as compared to Telangana. Almost two third of the respondents in Seemandhra said that they were dissatisfied with the central government and the state government (*See Table 6*). In Telangana, the ratings of the state government were equal to national average while the central government's ratings were much higher than the national average. The high ratings of the Central government could be attributed to the Telangana

formation decision as the survey was conducted less than a month after the parliament passed the bill. The Congress clearly suffered from double anti incumbency in Seemandhra where the ratings of both the central and the state governments were abysmally low. The approval ratings of the Congress fail to explain its defeat in Telangana but do reveal why the party lost out in Seemandhra.

The Telangana story becomes clear if we look at the Prime Ministerial and Chief ministerial preferences of the voters. The Chief Ministerial

Table 6
Approval Ratings of the Central and State Government

	Seemandhra	Telangana
Dissatisfied with the Central government	65	36
Dissatisfied with the State government	65	36

Note: All figures are in percent

Source: NES 2014 Pre Poll Survey conducted by CSDS; Total Sample Size: Telangana - 496 Seemandhra - 812

preferences of the voters in the state provide a definite reason for TRS's victory in the state. More than half the respondents (56 percent) wanted to see K.Chandrasekhar Rao as the next Chief Minister of the state. The second most popular leader was Damodara Raja Narsimha of the Congress who was preferred by less than 10 percent of the voters (8 percent). The magnificent popularity of KCR seems to have tilted the election in favour of the TRS despite a positive rating of the Congress's role in Telangana formation. The negligible vote difference between TDP-BJP and the YSR Congress in Seemandhra is also reflected in chief ministerial preferences of voters in the state. Chandrababu Naidu and Jagan Mohan Reddy had similar popularity in the state. 44 percent wanted to see the former as the next Chief Minister while 45 percent preferred the latter. No Congress leader was preferred by more than 1 percent of the electorate.

With simultaneous elections taking place in the state for the legislative assembly and the Lok Sabha, state level factors could have been relatively more important. The proportion of voters for whom the work done by the

central government was most important while voting was much lower in Telangana (7 percent) and Seemandhra (7 percent) as compared to the national average (22 percent). Narendra Modi's rating in Seemandhra (37 percent) was similar to the national average (36 percent) and slightly lower in Telangana (33 percent). Modi's popularity or what is referred to by many as the 'Modi factor' has been identified as an important factor in many states. Modi's ability to attract voters seems to be limited in both states considering the focus on state issues. Less than one tenth of the NDA voters in Seemandhra and around one fifth in Telangana said that they would have voted differently had Modi not been the BJP's prime ministerial candidate. This again is much lower than the national average of 27 percent. Conversion of Modi's popularity into votes was much lower in Telangana as only half of the voters who wanted to see Modi as the next Prime Minister voted for the BJP. Almost one third of them voted for the TRS. In Seemandhra also, Modi's popularity helped the BJP to a limited extent. Even though the party managed to convert support for Modi into votes, the support was lower than many other bipolar states. Also, the YSR Congress dominated among those who preferred other leaders for the Prime Minister's position.

Creating the 'perfect' Social Coalition

A discussion of any electoral verdict is incomplete without understanding the voting behaviour of various social groups. Table 7 shows the social coalition of all political parties in Telangana and Seemandhra. There were distinct caste and community based patterns in both states. In Seemandhra, leaders of the two principal parties – TDP-BJP and YSR Congress were able to consolidate support among their own communities for their respective parties. The Kammas supported the Chandrababu Naidu led TDP-BJP alliance while the Reddys and Christians backed Jagan Mohan Reddy's YSR Congress. Apart from this the NDA dominated among Upper castes and the OBCs while the YSR Congress got a majority of votes among other marginalized groups like – SCs, Adivasis and Muslims. Interestingly, the TDP-BJP did not fare too badly among the Muslims as they gathered one third of the Muslim votes. This could be attributed primarily to the TDP

as the party has enjoyed support among the community even in the past. This vote share among Muslims was much higher than other states. The real contest in Seemandhra was for the support of Kapus – the largest social group in the state which constitutes almost 27 percent of the population. The community had traditionally voted for the Congress after the Vangaveeti Ranga incident in 1989 (Acharyulu 2014). In 2009, the Kapus had overwhelmingly supported the Chiranjeevi led Praja Rajyam Party which eventually merged with the Congress. The electoral importance of the community can be ascertained from the fact that the PRP could get more than 15 percent votes overall with support primarily from the Kapus. The success of the BJP-TDP alliance in Coastal Andhra could be attributed to the 10 percentage point lead they enjoyed among the Kapus as the community is concentrated in four districts of the region. The alliance was aided by the support of popular film star Pawan Kalyan, a Kapu himself and its promise of making a leader from the community as the Deputy Chief Minister (Sreenivas 2014). In Telangana, the TRS led among all communities except the Muslims and the Upper Castes. The dominant peasant proprietor communities mainly supported the TRS as it led by a narrow margin of 4 percentage points among the Kammas and received a majority of the votes among the Kapus. Support for the TRS was extremely strong among the OBCs and SCs also. Surprisingly, the party failed to attract Muslim voters as more than 50 percent of them voted for the Congress. This seems to be one of the primary reasons behind the relatively better performance of the Congress in the region (See Table7).

In Seemandhra, the TDP-BJP led among most voters except those who are poor, college educated or have moderate media exposure. This seems to be a unique trend as both the TDP and BJP are believed to have strong support among the upper sections of the society. The “middle categories” seem to be the core supporters of the alliance it enjoyed a strong lead among the middle class, the primary and matric pass and those with low media exposure. In Telangana, the TRS enjoyed a significant lead among the lower sections – poor, non literate and very low media exposure. Support among the upper sections was almost equally divided between the three political parties.

Conclusion

It seems unlikely that the politics of Seemandhra and Telangana would become independent of each other like other newly formed states like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand and their parent states. Due to

Table 7
Vote by Social Background – Seemandhra and Telangana Lok Sabha Election 2014

Caste/Community	Seemandhra		Telangana		
	BJP+	YSR Congress	BJP+	INC	TRS
Upper Caste*	56	38	46	27	27
Kamma*	72	13	35	26	39
Reddy*	30	64	15	7	52
Kapu	49	40	**	**	**
OBC	54	37	23	25	41
SC	28	57	19	17	33
Muslims*	33	66	14	58	17
Christians	27	69	**	**	**
Economic Class					
Poor	44	49	19	26	45
Lower	50	43	21	21	36
Upper	46	46	27	26	28
Education					
Non Literate	49	48	13	20	46
Upto Primary	52	40	23	30	22
Upto Matric	49	38	25	33	32
College and above	40	50	41	22	25
Media Exposure					
Very Low	50	45	12	25	47
Low	50	46	27	23	30
Moderate	41	43	33	30	27
High	**	**	**	**	**

Note: All figures are in percent; *Low Sample Size; **Sample size inadequate for analysis
Source: NES 2014 Post Poll Survey conducted by CSDS; Total Sample Size: Telangana – 509, Seemandhra - 723

the contentious nature of the bifurcation and with the presence of the TDP as a major opposition party in Telangana, there would be a constant comparison of the progress made by the two states post bifurcation. The TRS should remember that in the next election it would be judged based on the performance of its government and not the party or its leader's role in securing a separate state. The TDP-BJP have their task cut out as exemplary progress in Seemandhra would allow them to provide a comparative assessment in Telangana where they seek to establish themselves as the primary alternative to the TRS. The Congress party needs to rebuild its organization, right from the local level, in a state which once used to be a bastion for the party. The scale of the loss in Andhra Pradesh is stunning for the Congress as for long the state used to send a large number of MPs for the Congress party. Lastly, the YSR Congress needs to rediscover its agenda as post Telangana formation, bifurcation has probably ceased to remain a viable issue for mobilizing voters. Overall, with the possibility of a Congress revival not being ruled out, Andhra politics especially Telangana seems to have entered into a distinct phase of multi polarity.

References

1. Venkatesu, E. and K.C. Suri (2014); 'Regional parties win favour in divided Andhra Pradesh'; *The Hindu*, May 25, Available <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/regional-parties-win-favour-in-divided-andhra-pradesh/article6045196.ece?ref=relatedNews>; Accessed on 22/9/2014
2. Suri, K.C. and P Narasamiha Rao and V Anji Reddy (2009); 'Andhra Pradesh: A vote for the status quo'; *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol XLIV No. 39
3. *The Economic Times* (2014), Available http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-03-12/news/48154057_1_ysr-congress-congress-mlas-y-s-jaganmohan-reddy; Accessed on 22/9/2014
4. Sudhir, T.S (2013); 'Congress-TRS merger will not be a cakewalk', November 25, Available <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/congress-trs-telangana-rashtra-samithi-congress-trs-kcr-andhra-pradesh/1/326391.html>; Accessed on 22/9/2014
5. Kanwal, Rahul (2013), December 13, Available <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/narendra-modi-not-untouchable-jagan-reddy-speaks-out/1/331142.html>; Accessed on 22/9/2014

6. *The Hindu* (2014), 'TDP rethinks alliance with the BJP', February 15, Available <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/tdp-rethinks-alliance-with-bjp/article5690860.ece>; Accessed on 22/9/2014
7. Acharyulu, S.N.C.N. (2014), 'Elections 2014: Parties bank on Kapus', *Deccan Chronicle*, March 25, Available <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/140325/nation-politics/article/elections-2014-parties-bank-kapus>; Accessed on 22/9/2014
8. Sreenivas, Janyala (2014), 'The Kapus, 27% and key to Seemandhra', *Indian Express* May 6, Available <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/politics/the-kapus-27-and-key-to-seemandhra/>; Accessed on 22/9/2014