

BJP's Lok Sabha Victory in Madhya Pradesh: an Analysis

Shreyas Sardesai¹

Building on its landslide victory in the 2013 Madhya Pradesh (M.P.) Vidhan Sabha election under the leadership of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) further consolidated its position in the state winning 27 of the total 29 seats in the 2014 Lok Sabha election (Table 1). The BJP which has consistently secured above 40 percent of the vote since 1989 crossed the 50 percent mark for the first time. The party secured 54 percent of the total vote which is just two percentage points less than the previous high of 56 percent secured by the Indian National Congress (INC/Congress) in 1984 and four percentage points less than the 58 percent vote share of the Janata Party in the 1977 election.² Moreover, as compared

Table 1

Madhya Pradesh – 2014 Lok Sabha Election Results

| Party | Seats Contested | Seats Won | Seat Change from 2009 | Vote (%) | Vote Change from 2009 (%age points) | Vote Change from 2013 Assembly (%age points) |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Congress | 29 | 2 | -10 | 34.89 | -5.25 | -1.49 |
| BJP | 29 | 27 | 11 | 54.03 | +10.59 | +9.66 |
| AAP | 29 | 0 | 0 | 1.18 | +1.18 | +1.18 |
| BSP | 29 | 0 | -1 | 3.79 | -2.06 | -2.50 |
| NOTA | 29 | 0 | 0 | 1.32 | +1.32 | -0.58 |
| Other Parties | 262 | 0 | 0 | 4.79 | -5.78 | -6.27 |

Source: ECI data compiled by CSDS Data Unit.

¹ Author is Research Associate at Lokniti, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi.

² Vote shares of BJP and Congress in elections held before bifurcation are only for seats that fall in present day Madhya Pradesh. They do not include seats that were previously part of undivided Madhya Pradesh and now fall in Chhattisgarh, which was carved out of Madhya Pradesh in November 2000.

to the Assembly election that had been held in Madhya Pradesh just five months earlier, the BJP's vote-share went up by ten percentage points. In terms of seats too, 2014 marked the BJP's best ever performance in the state. Its previous high had been of 25 Lok Sabha seats in 2004. Most of what the BJP won in 2014 it won very comfortably. 24 of the 27 seats won by the party were won by margins of over one lakh votes (Table 2). Indore and Vidisha (from where Sushma Swaraj won) recorded the highest victory margins of over four lakh votes. Moreover, in seven constituencies the BJP secured over 60 percent of the votes, and in 13 the party's vote share was in the 50-60 percent range. The Congress party, the main opposition in this traditionally bipolar competition-state, could manage to win only two seats – Guna which was won by Jyotiraditya Scindia, and Chhindwara won by Kamal Nath. As compared to the 12 seats that the party had won in the 2009 Lok Sabha election, this was a major comedown. Having put up a creditable performance in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections soon after being defeated in the 2008 Assembly polls, the Congress was hoping to pull off a similar surprise; however it clearly failed to do so. The party amassed about 35 percent of the votes, down by 1.5 percentage points since the Vidhan

Table 2

Madhya Pradesh - Victory Margins of BJP and Congress in the 2014 Lok Sabha Election

| Victory margin(votes) | BJP victories | Cong victories |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 4 lakh and above | 2 | - |
| 3-3.99 lakh | 5 | - |
| 2-2.99 lakh | 9 | - |
| 1-1.99 lakh | 8 | 2 |
| 50,000-99,999 | 1 | - |
| 25,000-49,999 | 1 | - |
| 10,000-24,999 | - | - |
| Below 10,000 | 1 | - |
| Total | 27 | 2 |

Source: ECI data compiled by CSDS Data Unit.

Table 3
Madhya Pradesh - Region-wise Results of 2014 Lok Sabha Election

| Regions | Total Seats | Turnout % | BJP | | Congress | | BSP | | Others | | NOTA Vote % |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|------------|----------|------------|-------------|
| | | | Won | Vote % | Won | Vote % | Won | Vote % | Won | Vote % | |
| Chambal | 4 | 52.3 | 3 | 45.6 | 1 | 38.3 | 0 | 10.5 | 0 | 4.9 | 0.8 |
| Vindhya Pradesh | 8 | 56.3 | 8 | 51.1 | 0 | 32.7 | 0 | 6.9 | 0 | 7.8 | 1.4 |
| Mahakoshal | 6 | 66.9 | 5 | 51.9 | 1 | 36.3 | 0 | 1.9 | 0 | 8.0 | 1.7 |
| Malwa North | 7 | 65.1 | 7 | 62.2 | 0 | 32.3 | 0 | 1.0 | 0 | 3.7 | 0.8 |
| Malwa Tribal | 4 | 66.9 | 4 | 54.1 | 0 | 38.1 | 0 | 1.2 | 0 | 4.8 | 1.9 |
| Total | 29 | 61.6 | 27 | 54.0 | 2 | 34.9 | 0 | 3.8 | 0 | 6.0 | 1.3 |

Source: ECI data compiled by CSDS Data Unit.

Sabha poll and by five points since the 2009 Lok Sabha election. Perhaps the only consolation for the Congress was that unlike neighbouring Rajasthan and Gujarat (also Congress versus BJP contestation states) where the party failed to win a single seat, in Madhya Pradesh it was at least able to avoid a wipeout. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) which is the third major force in the state could not make much of an impact failing to retain the only seat (Rewa) it had won in 2009 and securing about 3.8 percent of the total vote. While the BSP still retains some influence in the Chambal and Vindhya Pradesh regions bordering Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh continues to be essentially a two-party competition state with the combined vote share of the BJP and the Congress having gone under 80 percent only once in 1996.

A region-wise analysis of the 2014 Lok Sabha verdict in Madhya Pradesh reveals that the BJP swept the regions of Vindhya Pradesh and Malwa winning all the seats on offer (Table 3). In terms of vote share the party secured its highest vote share in the Malwa region followed by Mahakoshal. The Congress on the other hand registered its best performance in the Chambal region securing 38 percent of the votes and winning one seat. This was also the region where the BJP performed below par even though the party was ahead of the Congress. The BSP secured 10.5 percent votes in Chambal finishing runner up on one seat and third on three seats. On one of these seats (Gwalior) the vote share of the Congress and the BSP combined was more than that of the winning party, BJP. Similarly in Vindhya Pradesh there were at least two seats - Rewa and Satna - where the combined vote share of the Congress and the BSP was greater than that of the BJP. The BSP secured nearly seven percent votes in this region.

Another interesting aspect of the Parliamentary election in Madhya Pradesh is that the BJP's performance on reserved seats was better than it was on general category seats (Table 4). Not only did the party win all seats reserved for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), but it also managed to secure a greater vote share on these seats compared to the non-reserved ones. The reason for this could be the vote gains made

Table 4
Madhya Pradesh - Reserved Category-wise Results 2014 Lok Sabha Election

| Categories | Total Seats | Turnout % | BJP | | Congress | | BSP | | Others | | NOTA Vote % |
|---------------|-------------|-----------|-----|--------|----------|--------|-----|--------|--------|--------|-------------|
| | | | Won | Vote % | Won | Vote % | Won | Vote % | Won | Vote % | |
| Reserved (SC) | 4 | 58.3 | 4 | 58.4 | 0 | 32.7 | 0 | 2.3 | 0 | 5.6 | 1.0 |
| Reserved (ST) | 6 | 65.0 | 6 | 53.6 | 0 | 36.0 | 0 | 1.5 | 0 | 6.7 | 2.2 |
| General | 19 | 61.2 | 17 | 53.4 | 2 | 34.9 | 0 | 4.8 | 0 | 5.8 | 1.1 |
| Total | 29 | 61.6 | 27 | 54.0 | 2 | 34.9 | 0 | 3.8 | 0 | 6.0 | 1.3 |

Source: ECI data compiled by CSDS Data Unit.

by the BJP among the SCs and STs. Survey data from the National Election Study (NES) 2014 conducted by the Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) clearly shows that the BJP did much better among SCs and STs as compared with the previous elections. Whereas the party had secured 31 and 36 percent votes among SCs or Dalits in the 2009 Lok Sabha and 2013 Assembly elections respectively, in 2014 support for BJP among them went up to 43 percent, mostly at the expense of the BSP (Table 5). Dalits form nearly 16 percent of the M.P.'s population. The BJP did even better among the STs or Adivasis who are about 21 percent of the state's population and who were once staunch supporters of the Congress. The party secured as much as 54 percent of their vote which was a gain of fourteen percentage points since the 2009 election. The BJP's performance among other castes and communities was equally impressive. It managed to hold on to its core Brahmin vote and made further gains among Rajputs and other upper castes. Among OBCs, who constitute about one-third of M.P.'s population, support for the BJP was close to 70 percent. It must be pointed out here that Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan belongs to the Kirar caste, an OBC community. It was only among Muslims (six percent of M.P.'s population) that the BJP fared poorly netting only about eight percent of their vote. This was a sudden reversal as the party had done much better among the Muslim community in the 2013 Assembly polls and much of this had been attributed to Shivraj Singh Chouhan's personal outreach to the community and his government's all-inclusive welfare schemes (Swaroop 2013). The candidature of Narendra Modi, however, seems to have made many of them go back to the Congress in the Lok Sabha election.

If we look at voting patterns in terms of Class, the BJP overtook the Congress for the first time even among the Poor. This shift can be attributed to the concerted attempts made by the BJP government to woo the Poor through government schemes including measures such as the provision of rice at Re. 1 per kg which the chief minister announced right at the start of his third term (Vincent 2013).

Finally an analysis in terms of Gender throws up a very interesting voting pattern. Unlike nationally, the BJP drew much greater support among

Table 5
Madhya Pradesh - Vote by Social Background in 2009, 2013, and 2014 Elections

| | Congress | | | BJP | | | Others | | |
|------------------------|----------|------|------|------|------|------|-----------------|------|------|
| | 2009 | 2013 | 2014 | 2009 | 2013 | 2014 | 2009 | 2013 | 2014 |
| Caste-Community | | | | | | | | | |
| Brahmin | 30 | 22 | 22 | 53 | 57 | 56 | 17 | 21 | 22 |
| Rajput | 45 | 26 | 27 | 48 | 60 | 69 | 7 | 14 | 4 |
| Other Upper Caste | 25 | 25 | 21* | 61 | 43 | 71* | 14 | 32 | 8* |
| Yadav | 47 | 25 | 16* | 34 | 67 | 70* | 19 | 8 | 14* |
| Other OBC | 31 | 35 | 20 | 49 | 44 | 66 | 20 | 21 | 14 |
| SC | 43 | 33 | 42 | 31 | 36 | 43 | 26 | 31 | 15 |
| ST | 51 | 43 | 40 | 40 | 47 | 54 | 9 | 10 | 6 |
| Muslims | 62 | 72 | 92 | 31 | 17 | 8 | 7 | 11 | - |
| Economic Class | | | | | | | | | |
| Upper | 37 | 27 | 29 | 49 | 42 | 55 | 14 | 31 | 16 |
| Middle | 42 | 34 | 36 | 47 | 46 | 53 | 11 | 20 | 11 |
| Lower | 42 | 38 | 32 | 43 | 45 | 56 | 15 | 17 | 12 |
| Poor | 38 | 44 | 47 | 42 | 44 | 49 | 20 | 12 | 4 |
| Gender | | | | | | | | | |
| Men | 41 | 36 | 35 | 44 | 44 | 51 | 15 ^c | 20 | 14 |
| Women | 38 | 37 | 34 | 45 | 46 | 57 | 17 | 17 | 9 |

Note: All figures are percentages; Figures marked with * should be read with caution due to low sample size.
Source: National Election Study (NES) 2014, 2013 Assembly election Post-Poll survey, and NES 2009 conducted by CSDS; Sample size in 2014 - 1129; Sample size in 2013 - 2828; Sample size in 2009 - 1617.

Table 6
Choice for Prime Minister in Madhya Pradesh

| | M.P.% | All India% |
|-----------------------|-------|------------|
| Narendra Modi | 44 | 36 |
| Rahul Gandhi | 26 | 14 |
| Sonia Gandhi | 2 | 3 |
| Manmohan Singh | 1 | 2 |
| Shivraj Singh Chouhan | 3 | Neg |
| Mayawati | 3 | 3 |
| Others | 2 | 13 |
| Can't say | 19 | 29 |

Note: Neg means negligible;

Source: NES 2014 (Post poll) conducted by CSDS; Sample size: 1129.

women than among men. While 51 percent of men voted for the BJP as per the CSDS survey, the support among women was 57 percent. The fact that several schemes of the Chouhan government such as the Ladli Lakshmi Yojana, Kanyadan Yojana and Janani Suraksha Yojana address the girl child and women could possible explain why the BJP did so well among them.

Explaining BJP's victory

So what explains the BJP's best ever performance in Madhya Pradesh? The standard and somewhat simplistic explanation would be Narendra Modi's high popularity in the state. Modi was after all the prime minister choice of 44 percent of the respondents in the state as per NES 2014 (Table 6). This is higher than Modi's all-India popularity of 36 percent. However it would be wrong to read much into this finding because Madhya Pradesh was different from many of its neighbouring states and for that matter the rest of the country on at least two counts. Firstly, if Modi's popularity was higher than the national average in the state, so was his main opponent Rahul Gandhi's. Gandhi was the choice of 26 percent of the respondents in the state which is much higher than the overall national preference of 14 percent for him. Secondly and more significantly the CSDS survey shows that the likelihood of BJP voters voting for the party solely because of Narendra

Table 7

Modi Did not Influence BJP Vote in Madhya Pradesh

| | Would NOT have voted for BJP if Modi had not been PM candidate | Would have still voted for BJP even if Modi had not been PM candidate |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BJP voters nationally | 27 | 48 |
| BJP voters in M.P. | 15 | 62 |
| BJP voters in Rajasthan | 42 | 38 |
| BJP voters in Gujarat | 18 | 37 |
| BJP+ voters in Maharashtra | 22 | 45 |
| BJP voters in Chhattisgarh | 10 | 65 |
| BJP+ voters in Uttar Pradesh | 20 | 62 |

Source: ECI data compiled by CSDS Data Unit.

Modi was less in Madhya Pradesh as compared with other states and the rest of the country. Only 15 percent of the respondents in Madhya Pradesh said they would not have voted for the BJP had Modi not been the prime ministerial candidate of the party. This figure was higher nationally and in the neighbouring states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and U.P. (Table 7). It can therefore be argued that even though Modi was extremely popular in Madhya Pradesh he did not determine voting choices in the state, at least not to the extent he did in many other parts of the country.

Another obvious explanation for BJP's remarkable performance in Madhya Pradesh is that the Lok Sabha elections followed soon after the Vidhan Sabha elections which had seen the party getting re-elected for the third consecutive time in the state. Being a recently elected ruling party it was only natural that the BJP would benefit from the so called 'honeymoon period' and do well, just as it did in neighbouring Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan which had also seen Assembly and Lok Sabha polls in quick succession. While this explanation is certainly plausible, the only problem with it is that in 2009 too the situation had been exactly similar since Lok Sabha elections had taken place within months of the Vidhan Sabha polls. However at that

Table 8

Voter's Satisfaction in M.P. With Central and State Governments, 2009 and 2014

| | Performance of... (%) | | Performance of... (%) | |
|--------------|-----------------------|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | UPA-I2009 | UPA-II2014 | M.P.'s BJP govt. 2009 | M.P.'s BJP govt. 2014 |
| Satisfied | 71 | 50 | 81 | 81 |
| Dissatisfied | 17 | 39 | 12 | 16 |
| Can't say | 12 | 11 | 7 | 3 |

Source: NES 2014 (Pre poll) and NES 2009 conducted by CSDS; Sample size in 2014: 1121. Sample size in 2009: 1617

time the contest between the BJP and the Congress had ended up being much closer. What then explains a landslide victory for the BJP in 2014 given that circumstances were similar to 2009? The answer to this can be found in the 2014 and 2009 NES surveys. While in 2009 the popularity of the UPA-I government heading into the Lok Sabha election had been quite high in M.P., in 2014 the popularity of the UPA-II in the state was relatively much less. As opposed to 71 percent of the respondents being satisfied with UPA-I's performance in 2009, the figure of those satisfied with UPA-II's performance in 2014 was lower at 50 percent (Table 8). Moreover, in comparison, satisfaction with the state's BJP government remained extremely high across the two national elections at 81 percent. It can be argued hence that since there was a near parity in the satisfaction levels with the central and the state government in 2009, the Congress was able to give a strong fight to the BJP in the 2009 Lok Sabha election. However in 2014, there was a considerable gap in the satisfaction levels with the two governments resulting in a one-sided contest. There was a decline in satisfaction with the Manmohan Singh-led central government but no such simultaneous fall in satisfaction with the Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led state government.

In terms of corruption too the UPA government was perceived to be more corrupt than the state government. While 80 percent of the respondents in NES 2014 dubbed the former as being corrupt (very or somewhat corrupt).

Table 9

Voter's Perception about Corruption in Central and State Governments

| | Central govt. (UPA) (%) | M.P.'s BJP govt. (%) |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Very corrupt | 40 | 13 |
| Somewhat corrupt | 40 | 50 |
| Not corrupt at all | 5 | 22 |
| Can't say | 15 | 16 |

Source: National Election Study 2014 (Tracker II poll) conducted by CSDS; Sample size: 936.

a lesser 63 percent viewed the state government as being corrupt (Table 9). The figure of 63 for the BJP government is a poor rating no doubt but it is still not as bad as the figure for the UPA. That the UPA was perceived to be more corrupt than the state government is significant considering the survey also found that corruption was the second most important voting issue for voters in Madhya Pradesh, much more so than it was nationally. While nationally 12 percent said corruption had been the main election issue for them, in Madhya Pradesh the figure was higher at 19 percent (Table 10). There is a similar pattern with respect to the issue of price rise which was the most important voting issue for 31 percent of the respondents. This figure too was much higher than the national average of 19 percent. What is even more significant is that the voters blamed the central government more than the state government for rising prices. While 57 percent of the respondents said that the central government was to blame for high prices of commodities, only five percent put the blame exclusively on the state government whereas 29 percent held both governments responsible for it.

The central government faced flak from voters not just for price rise but also for 'discriminating against Madhya Pradesh'. 52 percent of the NES respondents agreed with the perception that the Centre had discriminated against their state while only 22 percent disagreed. This is significant as Shivraj Singh Chouhan had raised the issue of discrimination against M.P. during both his tenures. He had even sat on an *Anshan* or fast on the issue in 2011 (Khandekar 2011).

Table 10

Price Rise Was a Very Important Issue in Madhya Pradesh

| Voting issues | M.P.% | India% |
|---------------|-------|--------|
| Price rise | 31 | 19 |
| Corruption | 19 | 12 |
| Employment | 11 | 7 |

Note: The rest of the respondents gave other answers.

Source: National Election Study 2014 (Post poll) conducted by CSDS; Sample size for M.P.: 1129. Sample size for India: 22,295.

Finally no analysis of Madhya Pradesh elections can be complete without mentioning the issue of factionalism and infighting within the Congress party. Political maneuvering by the party's senior leaders like Digvijay Singh, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Kamal Nath, Kantilal Bhuria, Ajay Singh and Arun Yadav was identified as one of the key reasons for the party's defeat in the 2013 Assembly elections (Pai 2013). Chastened by the state election defeat all senior leaders were reported to have reached a 'truce' to put up a better performance in the Lok Sabha polls (Vincent 2014). This 'truce' was also necessitated by the sudden defection of Congress candidate from Bhind, Bhagirath Prasad, to the BJP on grounds of sabotage by a senior party leader (Naveen 2014). The crossing over of Prasad had not only embarrassed the party on the eve of the Lok Sabha election but had once again revived talk of factionalism. Hardly surprising then that 38 percent of the respondents in the NES 2014 survey agreed with the notion that the repeated electoral defeats of the Congress in the state were mainly a result of factionalism within the party. Only 22 percent disagreed with this perception.

Conclusion

To conclude the BJP's unprecedented Lok Sabha performance in Madhya Pradesh can be attributed to a combination of factors and not entirely to Narendra Modi's candidature alone. While it is true that Modi was extremely popular in the state, what also emerges from the election analysis is that a majority of the voters who voted for the BJP did not vote for the party in his