

# The BJP's 2014 'Modi Wave'

## An Ideological Consolidation of the Right

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In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party put together an unprecedented social coalition: in addition to the upper castes and Other Backward Classes, it received support from the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes. We argue that the BJP built this coalition, in addition to energising its traditional base of social conservatives, by mobilising voters who favour less state intervention in the economy. Narendra Modi's anointment as the BJP's prime ministerial candidate aided this strategy, as Modi is widely perceived to be a socially conservative, pro-market leader. The sclerotic performance of the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government over the past few years compounded the BJP's own efforts. Though the BJP's support base remains Hindu, upper caste, and Hindi-speaking, these other two factors helped the BJP break the social and geographical barriers necessary to secure an outright Lok Sabha majority.

How did the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) come to power in 2014? The party won two out of every three seats it contested, or 282 of the 428 seats for which it put up candidates. In total, the BJP won 31.1% of all votes polled, and its vote share was close to 40% in the parliamentary constituencies it contested. In its traditional strongholds of northern, western and central India, the BJP managed a virtual sweep. It also made significant advances in many parts of India that have not been the party's traditional bastions.<sup>1</sup> The BJP stitched together an unprecedented coalition of social groups. Not only did the upper castes and the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) vote for the party, but many scheduled tribes (STs) and scheduled castes (SCs) did so as well. The BJP received more votes from STs and SCs than the Congress. This has never happened before.

How did the BJP put this coalition together? Using data from a series of public opinion polls conducted by Lokniti-CSDS, we show that, in addition to energising its traditional base of social conservatives, the BJP built this coalition by mobilising voters who favour less state intervention in the economy. The fact that social conservatives voted for the BJP is nothing new. Social conservatives, many of whom are upper caste, have always supported the BJP (Chhibber 1997; Heath and Yadav 2010; Hansen 1998; Palshikar 2004). What is new in this election is that the BJP managed to draw into its coalition those who would like the state to minimise its role in the economy by both reducing subsidies and business regulations.

We make four claims in this paper and the paper is organised accordingly. First, we demonstrate that there has been a clear shift in the ideological middle ground of Indian politics. This shift has not occurred with respect to social issues, but there has been a clear rightward shift on issues related to the role of state in economy.<sup>2</sup> Compared to previous elections, recent data indicate that a sizeable chunk of voters have emerged as rightward leaning on economic issues. Second, we argue that the BJP was able to put together this coalition of social and economic conservatives at least in part because of the administrative failures of the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in the years preceding the 2014 elections. While the UPA government introduced several schemes that could potentially benefit a large segment of India's population, the corruption and inefficiency with which it did so limited the electoral gains that the UPA could draw from these schemes. In our view, the administrative failures of the UPA government in managing the economy played a catalytic role in the emergence of the economic right as an electoral force. Third, we demonstrate that a large

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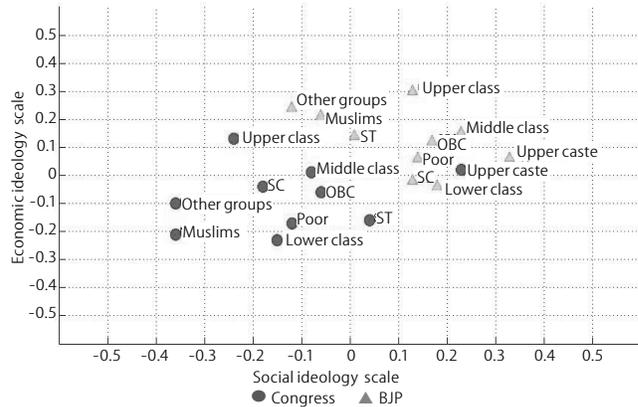
“Modi effect” propelled the BJP to victory in the 2014 elections. Modi’s image as a Hindutva icon and a pro-business reformer contributed substantially to the BJP’s appeal. During the campaign, Modi played up the idea that he was responsible for Gujarat’s economic growth and proved himself to be an efficient administrator capable of helping the BJP to attract the economic right. Finally, we conclude the paper by highlighting the limits of ideological consolidation. We show that, despite the BJP’s dramatic victory, its support base remains circumscribed, both socially and geographically. This consolidation is limited to Hindus in Hindi-speaking states. The magnitude of the BJP’s victory in this election presents a serious challenge to the BJP itself as much as to other political parties.

**An Ideological Consolidation**

We claim that the BJP achieved electoral success in 2014 because it managed to rally both social conservatives and those who favour a reduced role for the state in the economy. In the Indian context, social conservatives are those who say that the government should not make special provisions to accommodate minorities and that reservations based on caste and religion divide India. We measured respondents’ social conservatism by creating a scale score that incorporated responses to two National Election Study (NES) 2014 questions. The first question asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that the government should make special provisions to accommodate minorities. The second assessed whether a respondent agreed or disagreed with the statement that reservations based on caste and religion divide the people of India. We constructed the scale by reordering the responses to represent a standard left-right view on these two issues with voters on the left generally supportive of special provisions for minorities and favoring reservations for disadvantaged groups. To determine respondents’ ideological stance on the continued role of the state, we used two questions. The first question asked respondents whether the government should curb workers’ right to strike, and the second asked whether the government should focus its attention more on infrastructure development than on provision of subsidies. We constructed this scale like the first, by reordering the responses to align with a standard left-right view on the economy. Under this alignment, voters on the left generally support both subsidies and workers’ right to strike.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1 displays the extent of the ideological divide on social and economic issues between the BJP and the Congress Voters. The x-axis represents the ideological scale on social issues and the y-axis reports the ideological position of a respondent on the economy. We find a large ideological distance between Congress voters on one hand and BJP voters on the other. There is also a sharp ideological polarisation on social issues among different communities, with upper-caste Hindus and Muslims on opposite sides of the spectrum. There is, however, a far less pronounced difference between these groups on the economic scale, with both groups sharing very similar views on the economy. As Figure 1 makes clear, though there is little support for economic liberalisation, even amongst BJP voters, Congress voters are less likely to be social conservatives and

**Figure 1: An Ideological Polarisation in 2014**



Source: NES 2014.

more likely to favour economic liberalisation when compared to their BJP counterparts. While it is true that economic Right has supported the BJP in previous elections as well, the analysis of time-series NES data from 1996 to 2014 demonstrates that there is sharper distinction among voters on economic issues than ever before (Chhibber and Verma 2014a) and that there were more voters with rightward leaning on economic issues in 2014 than in past years.

**India’s Shifting Ideological Middle Ground**

What led to the emergence of this sizeable section of economically rightward leading voters? In the past two decades or so, especially post-1991, the Indian middle class has gradually expanded (Sridharan 2004; Fernandes 2006). According to some estimates the size of India’s middle class grew fivefold in last 10 years and is currently around 250 million people. This demographic shift is significant because middle-class voters are more likely to be aware of the discourse around state regulations and thwarted business development. They are also more likely to believe that subsidies can be economically harmful. Economic lethargy and inflation of essential commodity prices seem to have dented the consensus that once existed that the government should manage the economy.

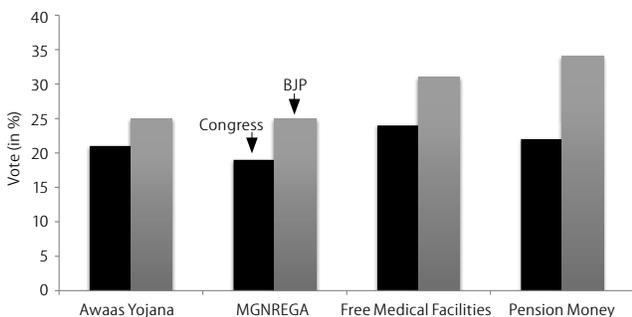
Three other factors also made this possible. First, in its second term, the Congress-led UPA government faced serious image crisis vis-à-vis charges of massive corruption at the highest levels. Both the government and Congress leaders faced public anger in the wake of several scandals: the coal scam, the 2G-spectrum scam, the Commonwealth Games scam, the Adarsh Housing scam, Congress’ president Sonia Gandhi’s son-in-law Robert Vadra’s alleged involvement in fraudulent land deals, among others. As corruption appeared to grow, many citizens became wary of state-led solutions to the economic issues facing the country.

Second, the Congress-led government relied heavily on the politics of subsidies and community-based distribution of it. Just before the 2014 elections the UPA government accorded minority status to the Jain community and approved reservations for Jats in educational institutes and public sector jobs under the central obc list. The Supreme Court and the National Commission for Backward Classes both questioned the government’s

decision to grant reservations to Jats. Similarly, despite the objections of the Reserve Bank of India, in January 2014, the central government proceeded with the populist move of increasing the number of subsidised gas cylinders available to citizens.<sup>4</sup> Many also questioned the government’s decision to introduce a National Food Security Act that proposed providing foodgrains to people at very low rates.

Third, the perceived increase in corruption over the past few years undermined the idea that the state could actually deliver goods and services to the public. The inability of the state to actually deliver on its promises had a particularly large impact on the very group that the Congress-led UPA was trying to keep by its side in the 2014 election: the marginalised sections of society. Given that the UPA government implemented several pro-poor welfare schemes (Manor 2014), the Congress Party’s performance amongst this group was especially surprising. Indeed, the return of the UPA in 2009 was attributed to the slew of welfare programmes (such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Gurantee Act, among many others) it implemented during its first term in office from 2004 to 2009 (Suri 2009).

Figure 2: Beneficiaries of Welfare Schemes and Their Vote Choice



Source: NES 2014.

The latter point merits further discussion, particularly because the Congress’s performance in the 2014 general elections suggests that not everything went right with its welfare schemes during its second term. Why? The NES 2014 collected information on four major schemes implemented by the central government, namely, those related to housing, rural employment, health and pensions (old aged, widows, and disabled), and the data indicate that less than one in every five respondents benefited from any of these schemes. The BJP capitalised on this fact and a large proportion of the BJP’s support came from those who did not benefit from the flagship policies of UPA government. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between a respondent’s receipt of a benefit and his or her vote choice. Further analysis of this data suggests that, of the beneficiaries (a respondent benefiting from at least one scheme), only 21% voted for the Congress Party and its allies; meanwhile, 28% voted for the BJP and its allies. And amongst the 57% of respondents who did not benefit from any of these schemes, only 18% voted for the Congress Party and its allies, whereas 34% voted for the BJP and its allies.

The data also suggests that many of those voters who did benefit from a central scheme were not actually aware that the government in Delhi was responsible for that scheme. In most cases, beneficiaries credited the benefit to the state government or to a local politician or bureaucrat, regardless of the party in power at the centre. In fact, during the 2014 election, a large majority of NES respondents credited their respective state governments for these benefits. It seems that the multiple Congress-created advertisements claiming ownership of these welfare schemes did not reach their intended audience. Even those with higher media exposure were likely to attribute these welfare schemes to the state rather than to the central government. In fact, fewer than 30% of Congress voters who benefited from a scheme gave credit to the central government.

It should not be surprising then that the Congress lost support from almost every segment of Indian society relative to its 2009 performance. The downward slide in the Congress-led UPA government’s popularity, as captured by the Lokniti-csds surveys, lays bare the fact that the Congress’s defeat was almost certain even before the polls opened (Palshikar 2014). The data presented in Table 1 supports this claim. It shows that, by January 2014, the popularity of UPA II was so low that not only was the defeat almost inevitable, the Congress was likely looking at its worst electoral performance in history (Chhibber and Verma 2014b). Still, the scale of the Congress’ defeat perplexed many.

**The Modi Effect: Bringing in the Economic Conservatives**

Why did the economic right switch to the BJP? While a shift in the ideological discourse in Indian politics did take place, it is not clear that, by itself, it was enough to move the economic right to the BJP. We claim that Modi’s image as a market friendly, pro-business leader helped the BJP to attract the economic right. The BJP framed the 2014 elections as a choice between Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi. Its victory was secured by a well-planned presidential style campaign around Modi himself. Opinion polls conducted by Lokniti-csds captured early evidence of Modi’s increasing popularity. Figure 3 (p 53) shows Modi’s popularity as increased in the wake of his appointment as the chief of the BJP’s campaign committee in June 2013. It

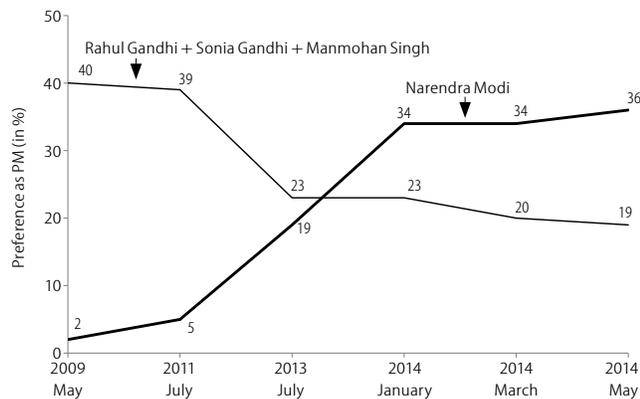
Table 1: The Making of Anti-Congress Sentiments (in %)

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

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

remained steady, with over one-third of respondents mentioning his name as their preferred choice for prime minister, once he was named the prime ministerial candidate in September 2013. In fact, Modi was preferred as prime minister by more citizens than those preferred Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, and Manmohan Singh combined.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 3: Preference for Narendra Modi as India's Next Prime Minister**



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

How much did Modi matter in swaying votes in favor of the BJP? The NES post-poll survey conducted in April-May 2014 included a series of questions to determine whether leadership was a factor in this election.<sup>6</sup> Respondents were also asked whether local candidates, state-level leadership, or the PM candidate was most important to them while voting. Those who gave preference to the prime ministerial candidate while exercising their franchise were twice more likely to vote for the BJP as those who value local or state-level leadership. Respondents were also asked if they would have voted any differently had 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 that they would not have voted for the coalition if 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.

How did Modi manage to draw such overwhelming support? In our view, Modi was able to attract the support of social conservatives with promises of “no tokenism” and “no special privileges” and respondents who preferred less state intervention in the economy with the success of the so-called Gujarat economic model.<sup>7</sup> But there is an important underlying trend here.

As Chhibber and Ostermann (forthcoming, 2014) argue, Modi’s success was tied to his ability to attract “vote mobilisers” – individuals who campaign for the party – to the BJP.<sup>8</sup> Modi drew more of these mobilisers to the BJP than other leaders drew to their own parties, more than even Vajpayee attracted to the BJP in the 2004 general elections. Vote mobilisers are important because they get leaders elected and they do so by turning out the vote for the party of their choice. Leaders draw support by convincing mobilisers that they are capable of winning and governing. And this is exactly what Modi managed to do. The BJP mobilisers have higher than average media exposure, as compared to other respondents, suggesting that they may have been attracted to the party as a result of Modi’s ubiquitous presence on all media platforms (tv, radio, newspapers, social media, etc) during the campaign. Once motivated, these vote mobilisers were able to go to other voters with less media exposure and persuade them to vote in the BJP’s favour. In other words, through the media, Modi managed to attract a set of mobilisers to the BJP that had either time or money to offer

and who were well placed to offer these things in the very places the party needed them most. Using NES 2014 data, Chhibber and Ostermann (ibid) show that as the number of BJP vote mobilisers increases; the proportion of the vote for the BJP among non-mobilisers also goes up. Most important for our purposes here, however, is the fact that most of the BJP’s mobilisers were either social conservatives, or those who wanted the state to retreat from regulating businesses and providing subsidies, or both.

The Modi effect is most visible in Table 2, which demonstrates that it was Modi and not the BJP that drew the economic conservatives to the party in 2014. Respondents to the 2014 NES were asked whether they would have voted for the BJP if Modi had not been the BJP’s prime ministerial candidate. Our analysis indicates that social conservatives were more likely than

**Table 2: Economic Liberalisers Rallied behind Modi**

Party Voted for and Opinion on Modi as PM Candidate...	Social Ideology Scale	Economic Ideology Scale
BJP voters – If Modi wasn’t the PM candidate would have voted differently	0.02	0.36
BJP voters – Modi’s candidature made no difference	0.29	0.07
BJP voters – Had no opinion on Modi’s candidature	0.17	-0.13
Voted for BJP allies	-0.18	0.15
Voted for other parties	-0.06	-0.06

Source: NES 2014.

liberals to say that Modi’s candidature made no difference to whether they would vote for the BJP or not. In contrast, those on the economic right indicate that they would have voted differently (i e, not voted for the BJP) if Modi had not been the BJP’s prime ministerial candidate.

**The Determinants of Voting for the BJP in 2014**

We use a logistic regression model to test whether a voter’s position on the ideological scale we created influenced whether he or she voted for the BJP. In the regression model, we controlled for customary demographic variables like economic class, age, education, caste-community, locality, and gender. Since traditional BJP voters are, of course, more likely to continue voting for the BJP they are also included in the regression model. In addition, since there was substantial commentary that the media played an important role in this election with some claiming that the media helped elect Modi and the BJP, we also assess the influence of the media. To do so we constructed a scale of media exposure based upon how often a respondent watches television news, accesses news on internet, or reads the newspaper.

There has also been a lot of talk about the fact that the BJP’s success in 2014 was built on anti-Congress sentiments fuelled by the failures of the UPA government. To assess the impact of the UPA government’s performance, our analysis includes two additional variables. In the 2014 survey respondents were asked whether there had been an improvement in or a deterioration of the condition of government schools, the supply of electricity, women’s safety, employment opportunities, and railway functionality. The survey also asked respondents whose responsibility it was to ensure better schools, electricity supply, safety for women, job opportunities, and railway conditions. We

assume that those who felt that the central government was responsible for the deterioration of government schools, electricity, railways, women’s safety, and employment opportunities were likely to vote for the BJP.

Finally, since the Congress-led UPA government also introduced a series of welfare programmes aimed at the weaker sections of society, we test for this influence as well. A long literature in the social sciences has assumed that political parties introduce welfare schemes to win votes. India is no exception (Chandra 2004) and we would therefore expect that respondents who benefited from any one of the various central government schemes with respect to employment, housing, and health, were less likely to vote for the BJP.

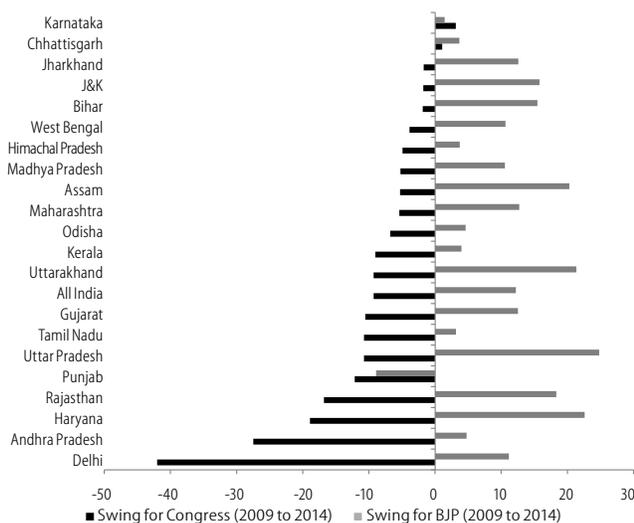
The model generally supports the arguments made in this paper. Table 3 reports the results of our regression model and

**Table 3: Determinants of Vote Choice for the BJP in 2014**

Variables	Coefficient (B Value)	Standard Error
Social ideology	0.10**	0.02
Economic ideology	0.03*	0.01
Central government responsible for deterioration of public infrastructure	0.03**	0.01
Benefited from any welfare scheme	-0.12**	0.02
Media exposure (low to high)	0.03**	0.01
Economic class	0.05*	0.02
Traditional BJP voter	3.53**	0.07
Age (young to old)	-0.04*	0.08
Education	0.06**	0.02
Upper caste	0.99**	0.08
OBCs	0.54**	0.08
SC	0.27*	0.09
ST	0.94**	0.10
Muslims	-0.94**	0.11
Locality (rural)	-0.03	0.04
Gender (male)	0.02	0.04
Constant	-1.91**	0.13

\*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05. Total case included in the analysis=19,997. Source: NES 2014.

**Figure 4: The Swing in Votes for BJP and Congress in Key States from 2009 to 2014**



We have only considered the states with more than six Lok Sabha seats for this analysis. In Punjab we have calculated the vote swings for BJP-SAD, and Congress-NCP and BJP-Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. In all other states, the vote swings have been calculated only for the Congress and BJP. Source: Election Commission of India.

Appendix 2 (p 56) provides summary statistics for the variables used in the model. We find that voters who are socially conservative or who prefer a reduced role for the state in the economy are more likely to vote for the BJP. Respondents who benefited from welfare schemes were less likely to vote for the BJP. And, given that a large proportion of voters (almost two-thirds) did not benefit from any of the schemes, the BJP had a much larger pool from which to mobilise votes. Finally, those who thought that the central government was responsible for the deterioration of employment opportunities, government schools, electricity, women’s safety and the railways were more likely to vote for the BJP.

The results also show that voters with higher media exposure, those were educated, younger in age, and belonged to the upper class were more likely to vote for the BJP. We find statistically insignificant results for both gender and the locality of the respondent; i e, these variables did not affect respondents’ probability of voting for the BJP.

**What the BJP’s Mandate Means for Indian Politics**

The BJP’s victory in this election has generated debate on the nature and magnitude of the party’s mandate. Some political commentators suggest that the BJP’s legislative majority in this election is largely due to the first-past-the-post electoral system, which allows even a small plurality of votes to gain a massive number of seats.<sup>9</sup> A deeper look at the aggregate election returns, however, shows that the BJP’s victory was, in fact, comprehensive. Figure 4 shows the 2014 state-wise swing in favour of the BJP (and against Congress). In 2014, the BJP only faced a negative swing, along with its ally, the Akali Dal, in Punjab. The Congress, in comparison was only able to marginally improve its vote share in two states, Karnataka and Chhattisgarh. In all other states, the party saw a negative swing in vote share.

The BJP’s victory in the 2014 elections is remarkable for other reasons as well. Since 1984, no party has had a clear parliamentary majority. Similarly, no party has captured more than 30% of the total votes cast since 1991. The BJP managed to do both – winning a parliamentary majority and more than 30% vote share – in this election. The BJP won more than 50% of the votes in 137 seats, and in another 132 seats it received more than 40% of vote share.<sup>10</sup> And, while the average margin of victory during the 2009 elections was nine percentage points, it increased to 15.2 percentage points in this election, largely because of the BJP’s massive success. As a case in point, the average victory-margin in constituencies where the BJP won was 17.9%, much higher than the national average. The BJP won more than half of the total votes cast in states that have two-party competition (such as Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Chhattisgarh). And in the many states with multiparty 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 vote shares of the SP and the BSP combined. Similarly, the NDA coalition won more than 50% of the votes cast in Maharashtra. In Delhi, the BJP’s vote share was only marginally lower than the combined vote shares of the Congress and the Aam Aadmi

Party (AAP). In Bihar, the vote shares of the entire political spectrum, from the JD(U), to the Congress, to the RJD, would be needed to surpass the NDA's vote share. In short, the BJP-led NDA's vote share was greater than the vote shares of the first and second runner-ups combined in many parts of the country. This is unusual and unexpected in light of India's recent electoral history.<sup>11</sup>

The BJP also made important breakthroughs by making inroads into non-urban areas. As in the past, the BJP did win a larger percentage of votes and seats in predominantly urban constituencies, but it was also more successful in semi-urban and rural constituencies than in past elections. Similarly, while the party's mandate has been limited geographically and socially in the past, the BJP managed to expand on these fronts as well. The BJP's traditional support has come from the Hindi heartland (Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi) and its performance in this region in 2014 was unmatched. Table 4 shows that the BJP alone won approximately 44% vote share and 190 seats of the 225 seats in the Hindi-speaking states, i.e., 85% of total seats. Along with its allies, it virtually swept the region by winning 201 seats. In contrast, in non-Hindi-speaking states, the BJP won only 22% of the votes and 92 of the 318 seats. However, the NDA coalition managed to garner 33% of votes and 42% of total seats, which is more than any other NDA coalition has managed in the past. Likewise, though the party managed to attract a large number of non-traditional BJP voters, the data presented in Table 5 clearly indicate there was an unparalleled consolidation of the upper castes and middle classes behind the BJP. Nationally, the BJP also lead the Congress among both the dalit and ST voters. In fact, when we compare the 2014 to the 2009 elections we find that, proportionately, the BJP gained more votes from the marginalised sections of Indian society than any other group.

Naturally, the challenge for the BJP in the near future is to keep its winning coalition together. It would be naïve for the

**Table 4: The BJP's Performance in the Hindi Heartland**

Regions	Total Seats	Lok Sabha 2014		Lok Sabha 2009	
		Seats Won	Vote Share (%)	Seats Won	Vote Share (%)
All India	543	282	31.1	116	18.8
Hindi-speaking states	225	190	43.7	63	25.8
Rest of India	318	92	22.3	53	14.7

Source: Election Commission of India.

**Table 5: Consolidation of Social Forces in Favour of the BJP in the Hindi Heartland**

	BJP Vote Share in 2014 (in%)			Gain/Loss from 2009 (in Percentage Points)		
	All India	Hindi-Speaking of India States	Rest of India	All India	Hindi-Speaking States	Rest of India
All (actual vote share)	31	44	22	+12	+18	+8
Upper caste	47	65	31	+18	+19	+14
OBC	34	48	24	+12	+19	+6
SC	24	34	16	+12	+20	+6
ST	38	55	24	+14	+16	+7
Muslims	8	11	7	+4	+5	+4
Other social groups	19	45	14	+7	+12	+5
Poor	24	38	17	+8	+17	+5
Lower class	31	46	20	+13	+16	+8
Middle class	32	47	23	+11	+16	+6
Upper class	38	50	26	+15	+18	+10

Source: NES 2009 and 2014.

BJP's leadership not to realise that maintaining the stunning vote-seat conversion ratio that the party achieved in the 2014 elections and repeating its exemplary performance in Uttar Pradesh will be difficult in the future. So if it wishes to maintain its majority, the BJP will need to build a wider and deeper organisational base and expand its pockets of influence. Moreover, as the incumbent Congress' loss in this election is closely tied to non-performance, massive corruption, and failure to deliver welfare benefits, Modi and the BJP need to deliver on the promises they both made during the campaign. The party needs to perform and to appear to be winning in order to be able to hold on to its 2014 vote mobilisers.

The BJP will also have another challenge in the coming years: the party must separate its identity from that of Modi. Voters will be assessing how both Modi and the BJP govern from Delhi. Unfortunately for both Modi and the BJP, reforming governance in India is a long and arduous task. Given India's demographics, particularly because so many in India rely on the state for their well-being, no elected government can introduce radical policy changes, especially of the right-wing variety, and expect to go unpunished at the polls. In addition, Modi cannot afford to alienate the BJP's supporters on the economic Right. Attempts to appease both groups can only yield incremental policy challenges. The maiden budgets presented recently by the BJP government reflect the difficulty of making rapid changes in a large and complex society like India. The BJP may well have to make its mark by changing archaic laws, making the government work more efficiently, and creating a more approachable and open government, while appearing non-partisan in the process. These are, by their very nature, difficult tasks, as the recent controversy over the appointment of the prime minister's principal secretary, new judges to the Supreme Court, and the chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) show. To put it simply, the BJP's task, to transform the face of the state in the next five years, will be difficult to achieve.

## Conclusions

In this article we show that the 2014 Indian general elections resulted in a clear mandate in favour of the BJP. The 2014 elections have made the BJP into a truly national party with significant presence in almost all parts of the country. The party built an unprecedented social coalition of upper castes, with many OBCs, SCs and STs voting for it as well. We argue that this consolidation was made possible by the fact that the party successfully capitalised on an ideological divide present in Indian society, drawing support from both social conservatives and the economic right. Many amongst the poor, who traditionally support the Congress, perceived Modi as a better administrator. In the end though, it was Modi's popularity, which cut across the social and political landscape of India that led to the Congress's poor electoral showing in the 2014 elections.

The extent of the Congress' decline in 16th Lok Sabha may seem to be an aberration, but the reasons for it are deep and structural. As a result, the Congress will find it hard to come back from this loss. It will virtually have to reinvent itself – refine its political platform, build a new social base, develop its

organisational machinery, and cultivate a new brand of leadership within the party. Still, if the BJP wishes to replace the Congress as Condorcet winner (i.e., in pairwise comparisons with other parties many people would prefer the BJP to govern India nationally), it will need to introduce better governance,

and instead involve monetary donations, door-to-door canvassing, leaflet/poster distribution, etc. For now, however, the BJP has clearly replaced the Congress as the system-defining party. It is the BJP, not the Congress, which is likely to become the focal point of electoral alignment and realignment in the coming elections.

NOTES

- 1 The BJP won a large share of votes in Arunachal Pradesh (46.1%), Assam (36.5%), Jammu and Kashmir (36.4%), Odisha (21.5%), and West Bengal (16.8%) without the support of any ally.
- 2 Suhas Palshikar (2013) suggests that the arrival of Modi at the political centre stage signals the shifting of political middle ground from liberal democratic practices to hard ethnic nationalism, whereby the public expression of religiosity has been popularised as a legitimate political action, almost as if it were natural in the context of secular democratic politics.
- 3 To construct the final social and economic ideology scale, we first calculated Z-scores of all variables and then added them. The two scales are relatively independent. The serial correlation between the social and economic ideology scale is low (Pearson Coefficient is -0.05). Appendix 1 lists the questions and how they were coded to create the two indices.
- 4 Various state governments have also indulged in offering exclusive benefits to certain communities, mainly differentiating on the basis economic status (for example, unemployment allowance, free television sets). This excessive use of freebies even led the Supreme Court (judgment in *S Subramaniam Balaji vs Government of Tamil Nadu and Others* on 5 July 2013) to intervene and ask the Election Commission to frame guidelines regarding what political parties can promise in their manifestos.
- 5 It would be important to point out here that the prime minister choice question was opened and respondents were not offered any names.
- 6 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, take other leaders along and experience. 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 the dalits. Four of every 10 respondents mentioned Modi's name with the next highest leader being close to 25 percentage points behind on most questions. It would be important to point out that these two sets of questions were opened and respondents were not offered any names.
- 7 The NES 2014 pre-poll data indicates that most people perceived Gujarat to be a well-managed state. Respondents were asked an open-ended question about which state in their opinion is doing best on development indicators. One in every five respondent named Gujarat, a little less than half of the respondents did not mention any state, and rest either named their state or other states. This perception is also reflected in respondent's vote choice in the NES 2014 pre-poll survey. Among those who perceived Gujarat to be doing best on development indicators, the BJP was six-times more likely to be the preferred party than the Congress.
- 8 Vote mobilisers are individuals whose support for a particular party goes beyond simple voting

- and instead involve monetary donations, door-to-door canvassing, leaflet/poster distribution, etc.
- 9 There are parallels from Uttar Pradesh assembly elections where the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) won a majority in 2007 with just 30% vote share and the Samajwadi Party (SP) won a majority in 2012 with just 29% of the votes.
- 10 In terms of absolute number of vote difference, of the 282 seats the BJP won, 206 were won by a margin of more than one lakh votes.
- 11 The vote-seat multiplier for the BJP in this election is 1.67, i.e., for every 1% of votes the BJP won nearly 1.67% of seats in the Lok Sabha. In simple words, in this election for every 1% 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.

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Appendix 1: Ideology Scale

Scales	Questions	Left					Right
		-2	-1	0	1	2	
Social ideology scale	Reservations based on caste and religion divides the people of India.	Fully disagree	Some-what	DK	Some-what	Fully agree	
	The government should make special provision to accommodate minorities.	Fully agree	Some-what	DK	Some-what	Fully disagree	
Economic ideology scale	Government should strongly curb strikes by workers and employees	Fully disagree	Some-what	DK	Some-what	Fully agree	
	Government should spend more on infrastructure than subsidising for the poor.	Fully disagree	Some-what	DK	Some-what	Fully agree	

Source: NES 2014.

Appendix 2: Summary Statistics

Variables	Valid Cases	Missing Cases	Mean	Std Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Vote for BJP	20,202	2099	0.31	0.46	0	1
Social ideology	22,301	0	0	1.31	-2.97	3.24
Economic ideology	22,301	0	0	1.24	-2.73	3.34
Central govt responsible for deterioration of public Infrastructure	22,301	0	0.98	2.67	0	25
Benefited from any scheme	22,301	0	0.73	1.06	0	4
Media exposure (low to high)	22,301	0	0	2.28	-2.53	6.17
Traditional BJP voter	22,301	0	0.15	0.36	0	1
Economic class	22,301	0	2.40	0.93	1	4
Education	22,071	229	2.55	1.13	1	4
Caste/community	22,301	0	2.77	1.57	1	1
Locality	22,301	0	1.34	0.48	1	2
Gender	22,301	0	1.47	0.5	1	2
Age	22,242	58	3.87	1.47	1	6

Source: NES 2014.