BJP Landslide Victory in 2014 General Election: A Political Geographer Perspective

[1]Pratap Singh, [2]Anil, [3]Ashok

Abstract: For those who have been following Indian politics, this has been quite an exciting year. It culminated in an election where over five weeks, 550 million Indians—66 percent of the electorate—turned out to vote. And what we got at the end of it is a historic result. The upshot of the 2014 election made BJP the India's premier national party and the Congress has been reduced to a regional party of two states in southern India and two districts in Uttar Pradesh. The BJP's single-handed majority in the Lok Sabha is noteworthy for two reasons. First, no party has achieved this feat after 1984. Second, no party has received more than 30 per cent of the total votes after the 1991 Lok Sabha elections. Such tectonic shifts are rare in a democratic polity. The BJP's tremendous victory in this election is not only a reflection of the personal popularity of Narendra Modi, and utter disenchantment with the Congress-led government, but also of terrific campaign planning. The good news for BJP just keeps pouring in while for Congress which has lost the official right to be the opposition party, it indeed is time for some serious introspection.

Keywords: Political Geographer Perspective, BJP Landslide Victory in 2014 General Election.

1.   INTRODUCTION

The 2014 General elections verdict was stunning in many ways. It produced the first single-party majority in Lok Sabha since 1984 and the first majority obtained by a non-Congress party, the Bharatiya Janta Party. Recorded numbers were attained in terms of turnout, campaign expenses, media coverage and deployment of electoral machinery. There was a large 'Modi effect' that propelled the BJP to victory. The party's victory was also built on an unprecedented coalition of social groups, the upper castes, OBCs, Muslims, and Tribal with many Dalits supporting it as well. On the other side, Congress suffered its worst defeat in 129 years, much worse than its 1977's defeat, after emergency. What emerges from these results is a new form of political power- new at least for the two or three generations that have come of age in the post- Indira Gandhi years. A single individual seems to be running the show, with a compact government and within a reinforced Prime Minister's office, free from the shackles of coalition politics.

BJP and Narender Modi at the head of the government will determine whether these elections are the beginning of a new era or, more modestly, would have been a landmark change in the ways politics is done in India. With this singular victory, the BJP has clearly replaced the Congress as the system-defining party. The BJP, not the Congress, is likely to become the focal point of electoral alignment and re-alignment in the coming elections.

**Objective:** The present study has following objectives

▪ To analyze the BJP's social Engineering of wooing the voters.

▪ To analyze the so called Modi wave in this 2014 Loksabha election.

▪ To find out the factors that helped BJP crossing the magic 272+

2.   STUDY AREA

The 2014 Loksabha election has been taken as the study unit (Fig.1). This election was contested by 484 parties, which are 121 more than in 2009 election and nearly the double of the number of parties that contested in 2004 election. This inflation of the number of parties did not impact very much on the outcome as most of them failed to get any votes. The

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number of parties represented in parliament actually slightly decreased, from 39 to 35. Further, 8,139 candidates contested, out of whom, 6,959 (85 percent) forfeited their deposit, which mean that they gathered each less than one-sixth of the total votes polled in their constituency. This ratio is actually quite stable compared to previous elections.

Election Schedule for 2014 General Election:
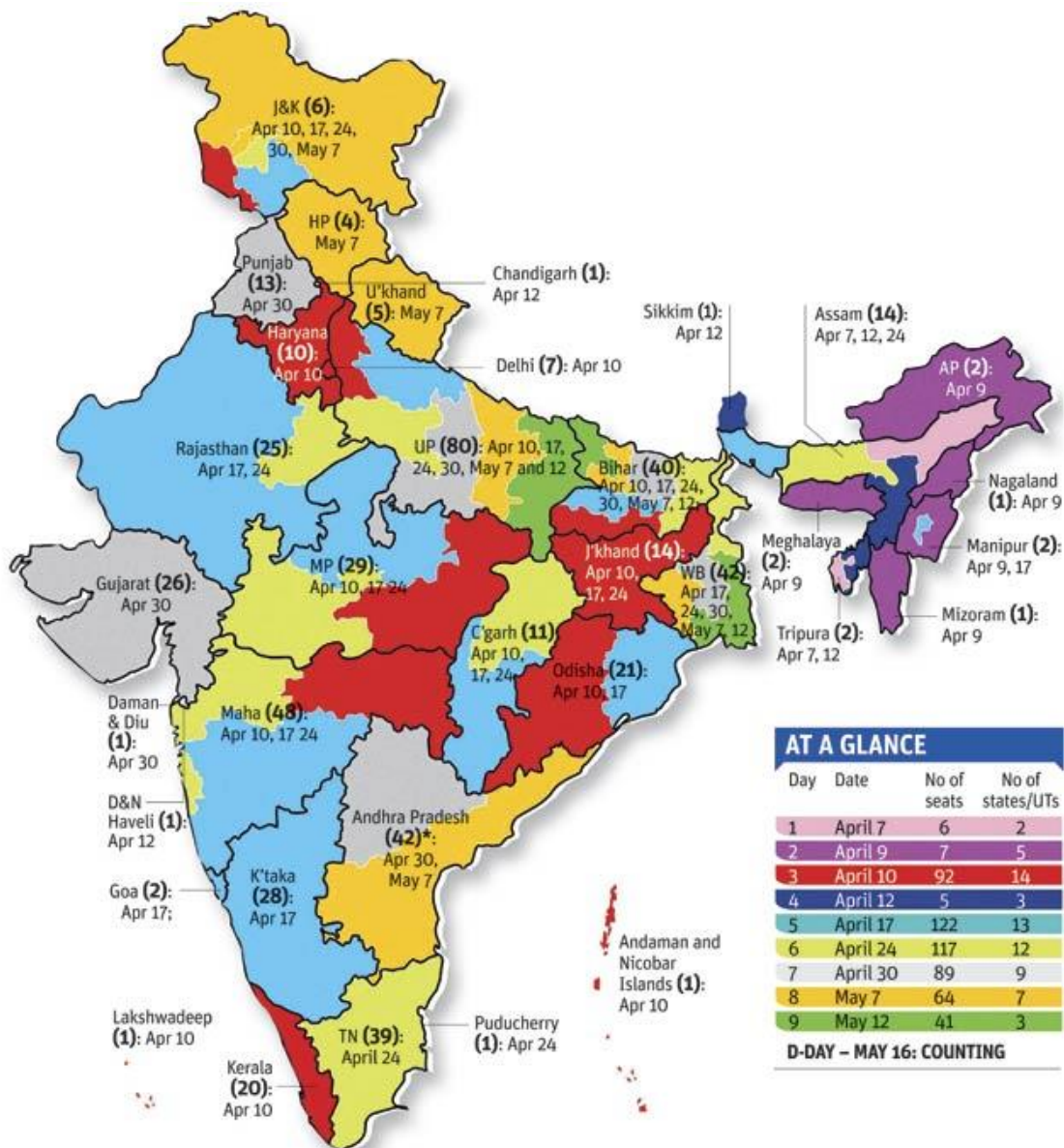
Source: www.electionindia.com   *Map not to scale*

Fig-1

3.   DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY

Data required for the purpose of understanding the whole range of basic facts, opinions and attitudes relevant to our study have been collected from various sources and through diverse methods. More emphasis has been placed on published materials and written documents while discussion with political leaders and people belonging to different walk of life have been conducted in a limited scale in order to present the course of events in its proper perspective. The secondary data have been collected from Election Office India, New Delhi, Reports of TV channels, News paper articles reports, and NGO reports, Census of India 2001 and 2011. Mapping and graphical presentation works have been made with the help of GIS techniques and Ms-Excel.

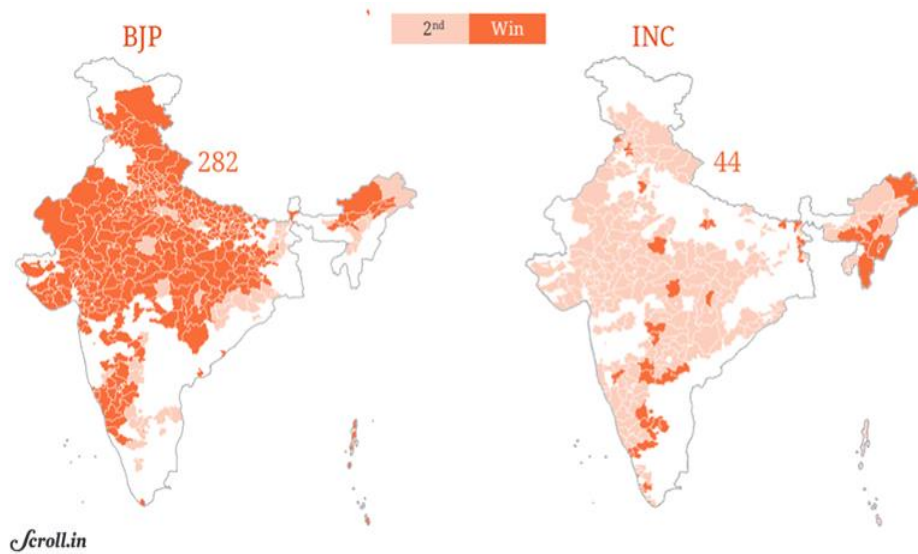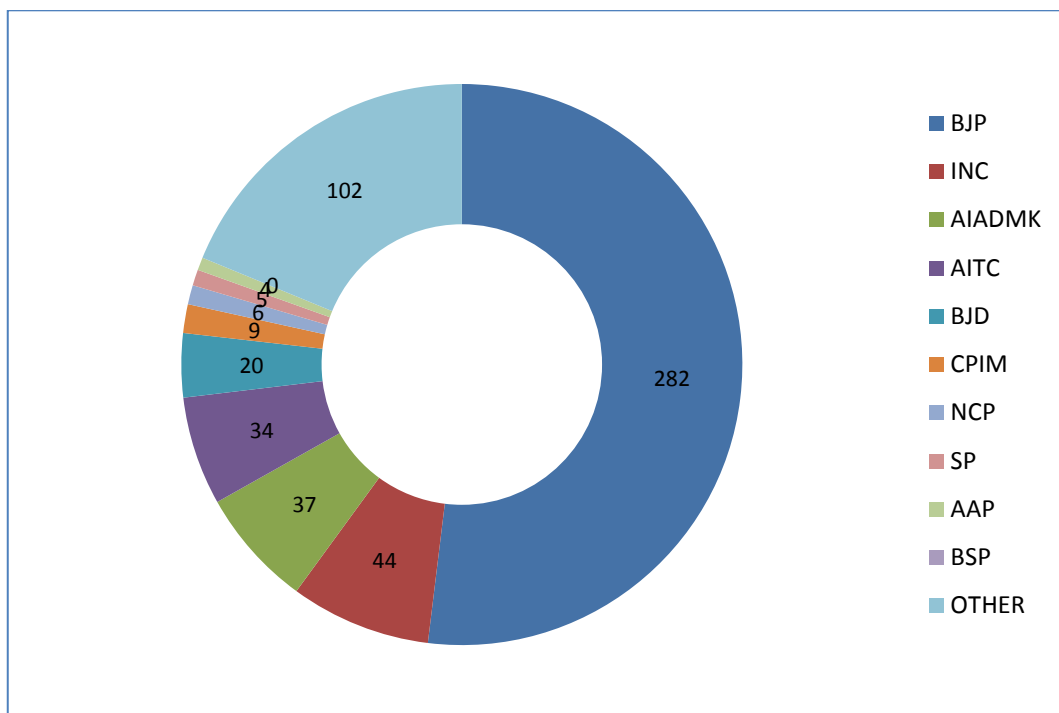**Performance of BJP and INC in 2014 General Election:**

Fig-2   Map not to scale

Seats won by Parties in 2014 General Election:

Source: Election Office New Delhi, India

Fig-3

BJP Performance:

The verdict in 2014 has clearly made the BJP a national party with significant presence in almost all parts of the country. The party virtually swept the polls in its traditional strongholds of northern, western and central India. The fig.2 clearly shows that the BJP's victory is before all a Hindi heartland victory. Barring Karnataka, the BJP has not pierced the southern states, and the eastern coastal states, up to West Bengal. The fig.2 also shows the Congress performance. The INC captured 44 seats only and came second in 224 seats. The white parts in the fig.2 are the areas where the national

parties (BJP and INC only) either did not contest or came out third or lower. In term of victory margin, the BJP's success is striking. Though the BJP won more seats than the Congress in 1996, 1998, and 1999, but it never won more votes. For the first time, the BJP has won more votes than the Congress. In this election about 31 percent voters in India voted for the BJP. Only about 19 percent voters chose Congress. In BJP the average vote share of winner was 47 percent and the average vote share of the runner-up was 32 percent. A 15 percent average margin is a very high number and a clear indication of the BJP's surge in popularity (Table-1).

Table-1: Performance of National Party in 2014 General Election

Sr. No.	Party	Vote Share	Win	Runner Up
1	BJP	31	282	54
2	INC	19.3	44	224
3	AIADMK	3.3	37	01
4	TMC	3.8	34	03
5	BJD	1.7	20	01
6	CPIM	3.2	09	30
7	NCP	1.6	06	17
8	BSP	4.1	0	36
9	SP	3.4	5	31

Source: Election Office New Delhi, India.

Party Wise Vote Share in 2014 General:
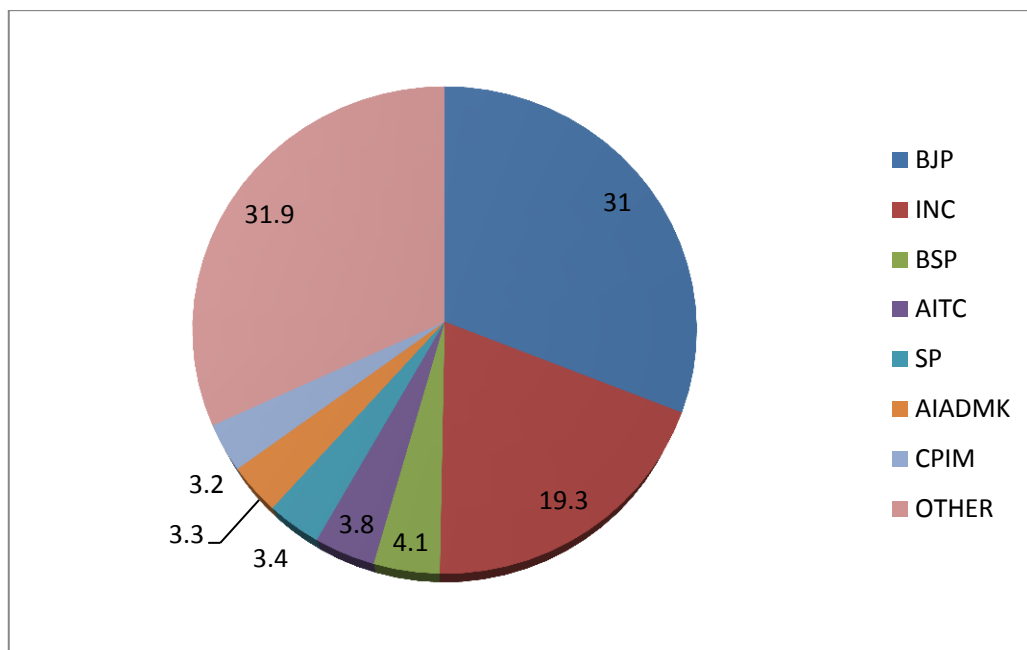
Source: Election Office New Delhi, India.

Fig. 4

This is not to say that the BJP has not progressed outside its traditional stronghold. More notably, it made significant advances in many parts of the country that were not the party's traditional bastion. Without the support of any ally, the BJP won a large chunk of votes in Jammu and Kashmir (32.4 per cent), West Bengal (16.8 per cent), Assam (36.5 per cent), Manipur (11.9 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (46.1 per cent), and Orissa (21.5 per cent). In Andhra Pradesh (Telangana and Seemandhra) and Tamil Nadu, the BJP has made important inroads with the help of alliance partners. In West Bengal, the BJP comes second behind the Trinamool in the two Kolkata seats. But all these votes hardly translated into any seat: two in West Bengal (same as the Communist Party of India [Marxist]), one in Kerala, one in Tamil Nadu, for the first time (Table-2).

Table-2: New Terrain for BJP in General Election 2014.

Sr. No.	State	Vote Share 2009	Vote Share 2014
1	Assam	17.2	36.5
2	Jammu & Kashmir	18.6	32.4
3	West Bengal	6.10	16.8
4	Kerala	6.30	10.3

Source: Election Office New Delhi, India.

Victory margin:

A more careful look at the data (Table-3) shows the remarkable nature of the BJP's victory the average victory margin during the 2009 elections was 9.2 percentage points. In 2014, the average victory margin increased to 15 percentage points largely because many voters turned to the BJP. In many constituencies, the BJP-led NDA's vote share was greater than the vote shares of the first and second runner-ups combined. For BJP that post a historic 282 seats under its belt, comes the good news that on an average victory margin for all seats won by the party stood at 1.83 lakh votes. This is more than double the victory margin of votes for 44 seats won by Congress. Congress average victory margin stands at 79 thousand.

Table-3: Average Victory Margin of Winner Candidate in 2009 and 2014 General Election.

Party	Winning Seat 2009	Margin	Winning Seat 2014	Margin
BJP	116	63000	282	183000
INC	206	72000	44	79000

Source: Election Office New Delhi, India

The highest victory margin has been recorded by Narendra Modi in Vadodara at 5.70 lakh votes. The lowest victory margin of 36 has been registered at Ladakh in J&K. The massive success of BJP can also be ascertained by the fact that in previous polls the party had an average victory margin of 63 thousand votes. Moreover, in 2009 Congress winners had an average margin of 72 thousand votes. Although Congress has marginally improved on this front from the last time yet the conversion rate of BJP is much higher than the oldest party (Fig.5).

Average Victory Margin of Winner Candidate in 2009 and 2014 General Election:
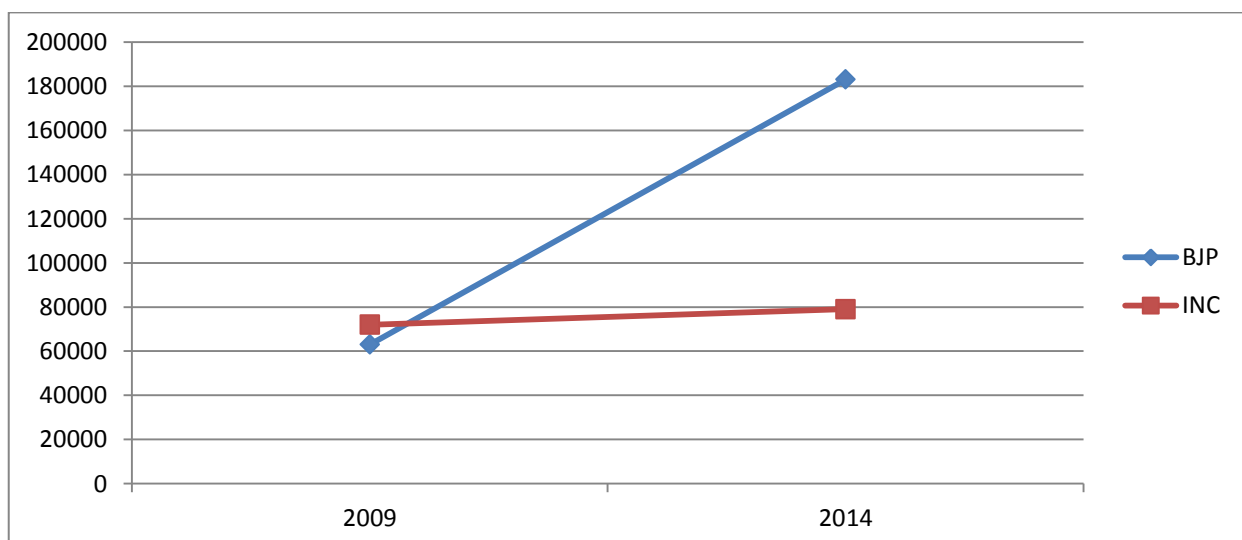
Source: Election Office New Delhi, India

Fig.5

A detailed study of victory margins between the winner and the runner up throws up some very interesting pointers. For instance Congress managed to grab the second position in as many as 224 constituencies. Is this a consolation for Congress? Not really! The average gap between Congress candidate and winner in these 224 seats stands at 1.82 lakh votes. Thereby hangs a tale! (Table-4)

Table-4: Gap from Winner Candidate in 2009 and 2014 Loksabha Election.

Party	Runner up seat 2009	Gap from winner	Runner up Seat 2014	Gap from winner
BJP	110	72000	54	100000
INC	141	75000	224	182000

Source: Election Office New Delhi, India

BJP has emerged the single largest party in the Lok Sabha but ended second on 54 seats. BSP and SP came up as runners-up on 36 and 31 constituencies respectively. CPI (M), DMK, RJD and NCP grabbed second position on 30, 27, 22 and 17 constituencies respectively. In 2009 Lok Sabha elections Congress finished second on 141 seats while BJP came second on 110 seats followed by BSP (50) and CPI (M) (36) respectively. Lalu's RJD and Chandrababu Naidu's TDP finished second on 20 seats each followed by Mulayam Singh's SP on 18 seats. This time for runner-up parties the gap from the winner is a worrying sign. For instance, this time Congress registered a difference of 1.82 lakh votes from the winner on seats where party ended second. Surprisingly, this gap for Congress was only 75 thousand in 2009. On the other hand BJP has reported an average margin gap of about 1 lakh votes in 2014 election on seats where party finished second. In 2009, the number was only 72 thousand. Among major parties, Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) reported a margin of 1.96 lakh from the winning candidates. The average gap between the winner and Samajwadi Party (SP) candidate is 1.60 lakh votes. Rise in voting percentage could be the driving factor behind growing defeat margins as 2014 general elections registered a record high voter turnout of 66.38 percent.

Interestingly, Rajasthan and Gujarat are top two states which reported maximum margin between the winner and runner-up. In both states, BJP has won all the seats. The four other states under this category are Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh (Election office, New Delhi, India).

Decimation of Congress:

What led to the Congress party's worst-ever defeat?

The roots of the Congress party's defeat are myriad. The party was fighting an uphill battle against its own decade-long incumbency. There was an overwhelming mood for change in India. Furthermore, the souring economy - particularly over the past two years - badly hurt the prospects of the Congress.

The party was not able to construct a coherent, forward-looking narrative during the course of the campaign to convince voters it had solutions to what ailed India's economy. Then, of course, there was the leadership question. Rahul Gandhi refused to put himself forward for the Prime Minister's job. In a context where the BJP backed a leader and quite early on, the Congress was unable to effectively push back.

INC Performance in 2009 and 2014 General Election:
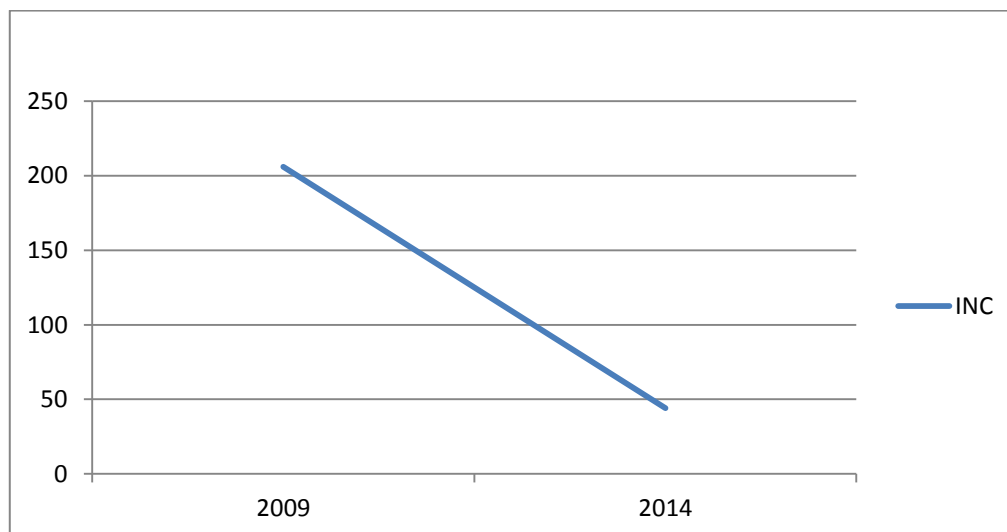
Source: Election Office New Delhi, India

Fig. 6

This is the worst defeat of the congress in 129 years. It got only 44 seats, with a 19 percent vote share (Table-1). The party performance graph declined in last five year (Fig.6). It becomes a serious crisis for the Congress Party and the Gandhi dynasty. They don't even have enough seats for the leader of Congress to claim leader of the opposition, because the party failed to capture 10 percent of seats in the chamber. In the Hindi heartland, the party has been reduced to seven seats, five less than its previous comprehensive defeat in 1977, when it faced the competition with the entire opposition united behind the Bharatiya Lok Dal banner, to become the Janta party. Even in 1977, the Congress managed to maintain itself in the south and still retained 27 percent of the total vote share. In 2014, the Congress losses have been comprehensive. Though Gandhi had won his seat of Amethi by a slender margin, the party lost its hold in the country. Not projecting a prime ministerial candidate and in fact having a weak candidate in the face of Rahul Gandhi has proved catastrophic for the Congress.

Nehru-Gandhi dynasty has been rooted out from several regions of India. It has suffered its worst defeat in the history of India. The dynasty that ruled India for most of the 67 years of independence has lost its glamour and luster. Thus we can say that Congress and Nehru family have lost the battle for five years at least. Now it is time for the Congress to think seriously about its future role in politics.

Table-5: Average Victory Margin in Percent Point.

Sr.No.	Level	Seat	Victory margin in percent
1	All india (2009)	543	9.0
2	All India (2014)	543	15.2
3	BJP Winner (2014)	282	17.9
4	Congress Winner (2014)	44	8.0

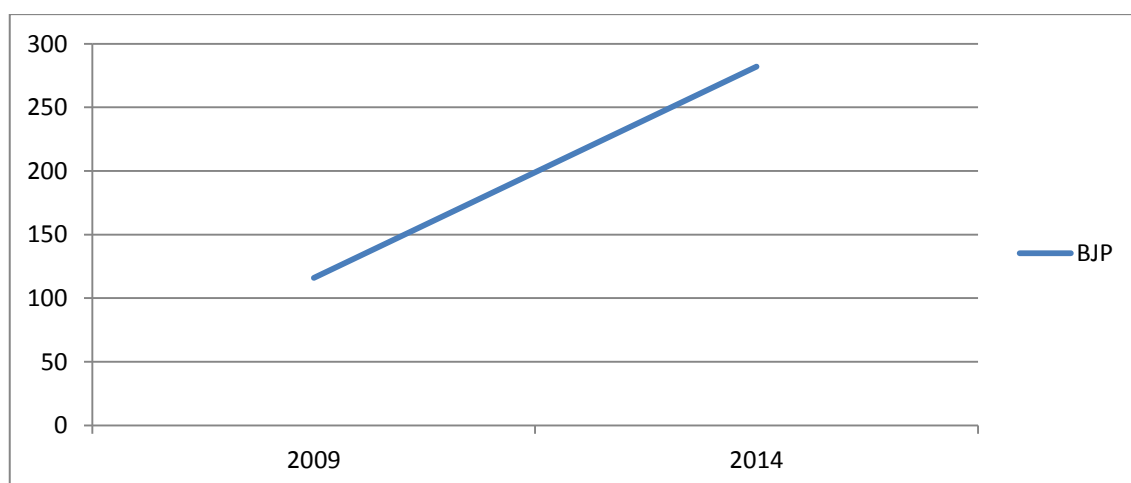*Source: Election Office New Delhi, India.*

Historic win:

We outline following reasons that makes BJP win historic

First, this government replaced the longest-serving Indian government since 1977.

Second, in the last five year, the BJP achieved drastic progress and now the BJP having won a majority on its own can form the first non-Congress Party, non-coalition government in India's history (Fig.7).

**BJP Performance in 2009 and 2014 General Election:**

Source: Election Office New Delhi, India

Fig. 7

Third, no party has received more than 30 per cent of the total votes after the 1991 Lok Sabha elections. Since the fragmentation of party system in the 1990s, even a small plurality of votes has been sufficient to obtain large majorities in the number of seats held by a party. For example, in the Uttar Pradesh assembly, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) won a majority in 2007 with just 30 per cent vote share and the Samajwadi Party (SP) won a majority in 2012 with just 29 per cent of the votes.

Fourth— it will, unusually for India, be led by the first Indian prime minister born after India's independence and a prime minister who really emerged from nowhere, completely different class background from most of his predecessors

Average Vote Percent of BJP and INC in 2009 and 2014 General Election:
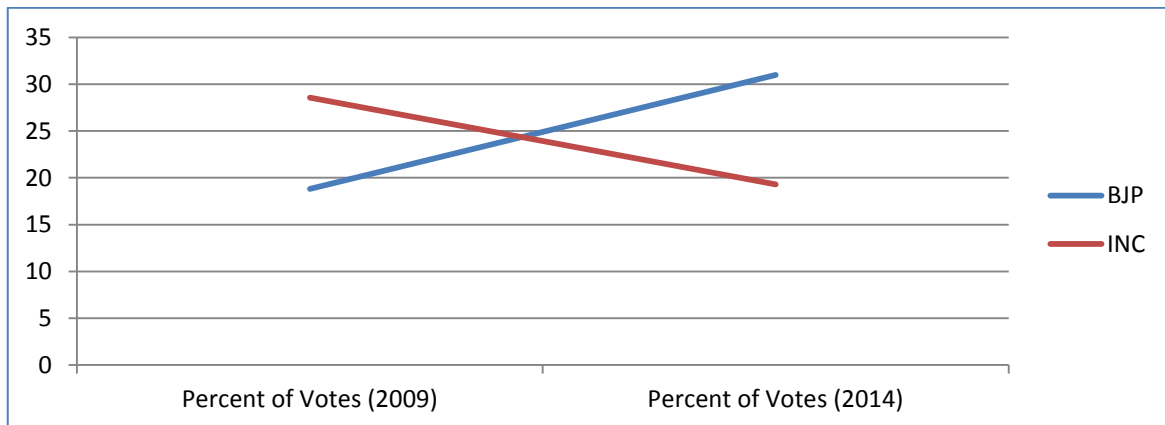
Source: Election Office New Delhi, India.

Fig. 8

Who voted for the BJP?

Why did voters gravitate to the BJP? There are many interrelated reasons for the electoral success of the BJP. To decode the victory and the "Modi wave," we proposed following key trends: Social engineering, the youth vote, the Muslim vote, the anti-incumbency vote and popularity of Narender Modi, etc. These trends also explained the disproportionate vote share of the B.J.P. compared to the seats it captured.

Social barriers fall:

Second, the BJP appears to have broken social barriers just enough to make it victorious. So far the party has been associated with urban dwellers, upper castes, middle classes and the educated. As in the past, the BJP did win a larger percentage of votes and seats in predominantly urban constituencies. However, its success in semi-urban and rural constituencies is extraordinary.

In addition, the BJP not only held on to its social base but managed to attract a large number of voters from other communities. There was an unparalleled consolidation of upper castes and middle classes behind the BJP. A large number of non-traditional BJP voters such as Scheduled Tribes and the poor have voted for the party this time. Nationally, the BJP leads the Congress among both Adivasi and Dalit voters by a wide margin.

Furthermore the high-level of dissatisfaction with the UPA government and the popularity of Mr. Modi drew new voters to the NDA. Thus, first-time voters, urban, educated, with high media exposure, upper caste, and economically well off were more likely to vote for the NDA. The biggest effect, however, remains associated with caste. It is the upper castes, the OBCs, and the tribals who together propelled the BJP to victory. This is an unprecedented alliance of social groups and is a winning coalition under any circumstances. The only parties who managed to stand up to the BJP wave in this election — the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, the Biju Janta Dal in Odisha, and the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu — managed to retain a large chunk of the upper castes and OBC votes.

How did the BJP build this winning coalition? It is certainly not a vote for economic liberalisation. In our view the upper castes, OBCs, and tribals voted for the BJP in large numbers because of the policy failures of the UPA including the politics of handouts that seem to have run their course. As the governing party, the BJP is likely to gravitate towards

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ideological centre. This is likely to add to the woes of regional parties and the Congress who compete for a share among the Dalits, Muslims, and upper OBCs (like Yadavs and Kurmis in north India, Vokkaligas in Karnataka, Nairs in Kerala, and Maratha-Kunbi in Maharashtra). Due to the shrinkage in their voter base, these parties will find it hard to compete against the formidable social coalition that the BJP has stitched together.

The challenge for the BJP would be to make sure that it continues to expand geographically, give the party an identity separate from Mr. Modi, and deliver on the promises closely tied to him and to keep its winning coalition together.

The Youth Vote:

India's electorate is particularly young, with half of the country's 814 million voters under 35 years old and eager to secure employment with promise. They are also impatient with India's political tradition of whipping up communal loyalties to secure votes from certain socio-economic groups, castes or religions.

By all accounts, new voters were swept away by Narender Modi. Majority of youth voters voted for B.J.P. What was equally interesting was that most of these votes may have gone to other party if Narender Modi had not been the B.J.P.'s prime ministerial candidate. The B.J.P. did better in states where the youth population was higher. In those states, there is a correlation between the youth population, those aged between 18 and 35, and the proportion of seats won by the B.J.P.-led National Democratic Alliance.

The Muslim Votes:

With the announcement of Mr. Modi as the prime ministerial candidate for the B.J.P., questions emerged about the likely response of the Muslim electorate. Mr. Modi was the chief minister in Gujarat when religious riots broke out there in 2002. More than 1,000 people died, mostly Muslims, and Mr. Modi has been criticized for his handling of the violence. Since then, Mr. Modi has often been portrayed as a polarizing and divisive figure, one against whom Muslims might vote en bloc. But the Muslim vote was divided in this election, and that it was unclear whether Muslims had voted against the B.J.P., which has Hindu nationalist roots, or against Mr. Modi himself.

In 2009, the Congress party garnered 36 percent of the vote among Muslims, while the B.J.P. had 3 percent. In 2014, preliminary estimates peg the Congress party's vote share among Muslims at 43 percent. But at the same time, the B.J.P. share of the Muslim vote edged up to 9 percent. (CNN-IBN/Lokniti exit poll)

"It is clear that Congress has gained Muslim votes," but so has the B.J.P." The B.J.P. had gained votes among all communities, including the Muslim community, of which a small section voted for Narender Modi. This mixed vote among Muslims helped the B.J.P.

The Anti-incumbency Vote:

In a country where the Indian National Congress has been in power for most of the nation's history and has played a key role in India's struggle for freedom, the Congress party's tally of 44 seats came as a shock – it was the party's worst showing ever.

However the numbers do not indicate that a desire for change was what spurred a record voter turnout of 66 percent. The dissatisfaction with the incumbent government did, however, play a significant role in how people voted.

There is no way to measure how much an anti-incumbency mood influenced voters, but we cannot completely rule that out as a factor leading to high voter turnout. The anti-incumbency sentiment was at work at both the state and national levels. In states where the Congress was in power at the state level like Maharashtra, Assam and Himachal Pradesh, there was a double anti-incumbency against Congress. People were unhappy with the central and the state government and that reflected in their choice in the national election. However, in B.J.P.-governed states, like Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, there was a pro-incumbency sentiment.

Modi Factor in BJP'S Victory:

The most commented upon reason behind BJP success is Narendra Modi. Most citizens preferred Narender Modi as Prime Minister. The people gave importance to the PM candidate while exercising their franchise. They did not value local or State-level leadership. In this way, the political scenario would have been different had Narender Modi not been

the prime ministerial candidate of the NDA. Thus to a great extent it is Modi, not the BJP that won this election. We try to analyze the so called Modi wave that led people to choose BJP.

Modi is a reasonable orator and a lover of social media. Rahul could not follow the pace of Modi in media. BJP and Modi ran a tech-savvy campaign that dazzled and engaged voters directly through social media. Modi snapped campaign selfies that went viral and even appeared as a holograph at campaign events. He flew 300,000 km during his election campaign and addressed 457 rallies in an effective way. Rahul could not understand the real issues of Indians. Indian youth, having more than 800 million votes, had a strong desire for a change. This urged them to support to Modi and BJP. The crumbling roads and ports, lack of adequate electricity supply, bad economy and corruption culture are some of the several factors went in favour of Modi. On the other side dwindling purchasing power of the people, issue of job opportunities, slumping economy and above all corruption culture prevailing throughout the country just like cancer. The major cause of Modi's success is bad governance of Congress and dissatisfaction of the masses with the Congress Party. The country is plagued with corruption and corruption scandals. Rahul Gandhi failed to inspire the congress voters and restore their shaken confidence. Naturally people were demanding change. The desire for change has been so strong that voters put aside concerns about Modi's Hindu-centric politics. The turnout was 66percent. About 500 million ballots were cast throughout India. Congress has suffered its worst-ever political defeat. Rahul's privileged background kept him away from the masses. As a matter of fact he did not much bother about the issues of the people and somewhat lived in a dream world. On the other side, Modi took great care to tailor the party message to India's youth and its growing urban population. These were demographics which the Congress had ignored and, to the extent they paid them heed, emphasized social welfare and entitlements rather than growth, jobs, and social mobility. Thus because of Congress ill governance May 16, 2014 became a day of humiliation for the ruling political dynasty.

4.   OTHER IMPORTANT TRENDS

A lot of debate has centred on how B.J.P. got only 31 percent of the vote share but won about 52 percent of the seats. The B.J.P. has a strong presence in the north and west but is traditionally weak in the south and east. However, it is making inroads in places where it is not traditionally strong, like in Kerala, where the party picked up 11 percent of the vote, and in West Bengal, where it got 17 percent.

We see B.J.P.'s increasing sway in rural areas, where voters in the past have favored the Congress party because it has implemented large-scale public works programs to benefit the rural poor. The B.J.P. won big in states which have a predominantly rural population like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, making inroads into the countryside.

Corruption:

Indians are incensed about the enduring culture of corruption at every level of government, from bureaucrats who demand bribes for basic services to lawmakers embroiled in huge scandals involving public funds. Voters believe Narender Modi has the political strength to curb corrupt tendencies within his government.

Infrastructure:

India's crumbling roads and ports and lack of adequate electricity supply are of paramount importance to voters, a third of who now live in cities. Narender Modi promised people to replicate his success in Gujarat, where he had made infrastructure improvements a priority, building thousands of kilometres of highways and attracting investment to build up the country's largest modern port. In sum, for the B.J.P., everything seemed to work in its favour.

5.   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there is no denying that the BJP performance is out of the ordinary. Not so much in term of vote share and seats- here the BJP is more a meta-regional party than a completely national party, despite the progressed in the east and south. But in terms of vote share in seats won, the BJP comes way ahead of its competitors, particularly in the Hindi belt. The performance of the BJP in the Hindi belt is what changes the balance of power between national and regional parties. On the other hand the Congress suffered its worst defeat in 129 years, much worse than its 1977 defeat, after the emergency. It could not save the official right of being the opposition party. Though the regional parties remain strong and a force to reckon with at the regional level.

In sum, we see that the BJP's tremendous victory in this election is not only a reflection of the personal popularity of Narendra Modi, and utter disenchantment with the Congress-led government, but also of terrific campaign planning. The upcoming assembly elections will be crucial to understand the sustainability of the BJP wave.

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