

A mixed bag up north

While the BJP swept Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir saw a split verdict and Punjab provided some comfort for the Congress

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Today we report on the smaller States and one Union Territory of north India – Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Delhi. Except in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, this region saw an electoral landslide in favour of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP achieved a 100% strike rate in these areas.

While the BJP repeated its 2014 performance in terms of seats in Himachal Pradesh and Delhi, it is important to note that it secured a much higher vote share and won by a much bigger margin than it did in 2014 in these States. Haryana is now an addition to the category of States where the BJP won all the seats. In Jammu and Kashmir, there was a split verdict. The BJP won in Jammu, Udhampur and Ladakh, while the National Conference won in Anantnag, Baramulla and Srinagar. Punjab went against the trend in north India and provided some comfort for the Congress party.

Implications for State polls

The electoral contest in Delhi had garnered a lot of attention in view of the moves made by many non-BJP leaders to ensure a seat-sharing arrangement between the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Such an arrangement, it was felt, would prevent the split of the non-BJP vote. An alliance was not forged ultimately as both parties were unwilling to concede to each other's demands. The Congress wanted an exclusive seat-sharing arrangement for Delhi, while the AAP was in favour of a broader arrangement that included Punjab and Haryana. The BJP retained all seven seats in the capital by impressive margins of victory.

What is significant is that the Congress was able to push the AAP to a distant third position in the electoral battle. This will have important implications for next year's Assembly election.

The BJP also achieved a clean sweep in Himachal Pradesh. The Modi factor and the Balakot strikes played an important role in the party's success. Infighting in the Congress was a key factor that contributed to the party's inability to open its account in the State. Himachal Pradesh was also witness to a dual pro-incumbency sentiment as the government in the State is also a BJP government.

Haryana saw one of the keenest electoral contests in this region.



"The BJP retained all seven seats in the capital by impressive margins of victory." BJP president Amit Shah at the party headquarters in New Delhi.
■ R.V. MOORTHY

The BJP had the advantage of facing a divided Opposition. It launched an aggressive campaign focusing on the Prime Minister, the Balakot strikes and its own 'idea of India'. In the recent past, the BJP State government too had improved its image. This helped to boost its prospects. The Union Cabinet's approval of 10% reservation for the economically backward in the general category also made a difference in attracting Jat votes. Haryana also saw a clean sweep by the BJP.

Some wins for the Opposition

Jammu and Kashmir saw distinct regions of the State voting differently. The BJP retained its monopoly in the Jammu and Ladakh regions. In the Kashmir Valley, the National Conference, which was in alliance with the Congress, was able to beat the challenge from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and win all the three seats. This clear divide gains significance as the State prepares for Assembly polls. This trend indicates that it could well be a split verdict like the last time round.

In Punjab the Congress was able to win a majority of the seats, and

double its 2014 tally. The National Democratic Alliance partners, the Akali Dal and the BJP, were able to win only four seats. The AAP was able to retain just one seat. The decline of this party is truly the story of this election as is the revival of the Congress's fortunes in a Lok Sabha election from the State. The NDA partners were unable to get their act together. The detailed article on Punjab makes the important point that the AAP vote has shifted to both the Akali Dal-BJP combine and the Congress. While the Other Backward Classes Hindu vote has moved to the Congress, the upper caste Hindu vote has moved to the NDA alliance, more specifically the BJP. A segment of the Jat Sikh vote seems to have moved from the Akali Dal to the Congress.

The articles provided a detailed outline of the results in the five small States and one Union Territory of north India and reflect the diversity of trends in this region.

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Modi all the way

Deep changes are taking place in the arena of competitive politics

SUHAS PALSHIKAR, SANDEEP SHASTRI & SANJAY KUMAR

One might be tempted to dismiss the NDA's feat of winning two parliamentary elections in a row by pointing out that even the UPA government, without a towering Prime Minister, returned to power. Such an assessment would obviously be a mistake. What the BJP has achieved, both in 2014 and 2019, goes much beyond winning parliamentary majorities. In explaining the 2014 verdict for the readers of *The Hindu*, the Lokniti team had described it as a new phase. We cannot but overemphasise that 2019 has consolidated that phase.

What are the features from 2014 that have made an impact on this outcome as well? One, clearly the era of single-party dominance seems to have stabilised quite comfortably. Two, the relation between national parties and State parties continues to be reworked, possibly to the disadvantage of State parties. The additional votes polled by the BJP are at the cost of the State parties rather than the Congress. Three, the results have left the Congress in disarray. It may have added a few more seats to its total tally this time, but the losses in State after State practically make the party ineffectual. An extraordinary feature of this election was the fact that everything began and ended with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In short, the 2019 election was a replay of the 2014 election – deep changes are taking place in the arena of competitive politics and in the political process generally.

Churning of the polity

This churning of the polity has three dimensions. One, the nature of political competition has changed. This election began with the appearance of a strong fight by the Congress which could have ensured a somewhat bipolar political competition in the future. While the Congress failed, the non-BJP alliances too had limited traction, except in Kerala where the alliance continues to work and even barred the BJP's entry. In Tamil Nadu, the DMK alliance worked, but more because of the mild assertion of Dravidian exceptionalism. This aspect of the churning is evident in the increasing instances of modified 'ticket splitting'. While voters in Odisha voted more or less similarly overall for Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan voters quickly shifted to the BJP after having voted the Congress to power in last year's Assembly elections. In Telangana,



the TRS won big in the 2018 Assembly election, but had less cause to celebrate this time as voters returned to a more competitively shared outcome. Thus, in States where elections to the State legislature are not happening along with elections to the Lok Sabha, voters are abruptly shifting away from one party and towards another.

The second feature of this political churning has to do with the social bases of parties. Traditional ways of estimating or explaining outcomes on the basis of social demographics has (at least temporarily) lost its salience. It has also rendered political strategies of constructing alternative social coalitions somewhat ineffective, as shown by the limited success of the SP-BSP coalition in Uttar Pradesh. In a multi-party competition, for the BJP to poll 50% of the votes is remarkable, more so as the party saw many hiccups in the nineties. To properly understand the BJP's performance would require many more analytical prisms. Our write-ups point to a few trends. One, the geographical expansion of the BJP has been remarkable. Two, many non-BJP voters were persuaded to vote for the BJP because of the leadership factor. Three, support for the party got consolidated through the construction of a nationalistic narrative that did not perhaps become very visible despite the Balakot issue.

But above all else, the BJP is now becoming a new umbrella party replicating the Congress of yesteryears – though this umbrella does not have room for non-Hindu sections. As the piece on religious divide shows, the rise of the BJP corresponds with a probably unprecedented religious polarisation. Hindus and Muslims polarising around the BJP and the Congress, respectively, is a dangerous development that is attendant on this outcome. Hindu consolidation in favour of the BJP also means that apart from the religion factor, the BJP's voter base lacks any sharp social character. Yes, young, educated

men do vote for the BJP a little more. Yes, the BJP is on the road to becoming a party of upper and backward Hindu communities propped up by critical support from Dalits and Adivasis. But despite these fine points, the big story is in the Hindu consolidation that has been achieved through the outcomes of 2014 and 2019.

A temptation to be avoided

The BJP's success in building a broad Hindu coalition takes us to the third feature of the churning brought forward by the outcome of 2019: how to read the mandate. Certainly, this feature will keep unfolding as we go along. As our data on 'issues' pointed out, the campaign brushed under the carpet many issues which people thought were critical. Now that the elections are over, this allows the victors to interpret the outcome as a mandate for something larger than governance and well-being. The debate over Hindutva is sure to continue, but it would be well for the BJP to remember that however ambiguous it may be, voters identify the party with development. Moreover, the majoritarian tendency among voters has remained fairly stable over the past five years – the 2019 National Election Study suggests that nearly half the respondents approve of the statement that 'in a democracy, the will of the majority community should prevail'. So, the BJP will have to take a call on the political direction to be adopted.

Comfortable victories always have the possibility that the victors will read their own dreams as endorsed in the contingent verdicts produced by weary voters. This is a temptation that needs to be consciously avoided.

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THE HINDU
CSDS-LOKNITI
Post-poll Survey 2019

The verdict is a manifestation of the deepening religious divide in India

A majority of Hindus said they felt close to the BJP. Four of five Muslims said they disliked the party

SHREYAS SARDESAI & VIBHA ATTRI

It would not be an overstatement to say that the 2019 Lok Sabha election verdict and the sheer scale of the National Democratic Alliance's victory is in large measure a manifestation of the deepening religious divide in Indian society.

Hindu consolidation

Lokniti's post-poll survey data clearly find that the BJP's all-time high vote share of 37.4% has come mostly on the back of an unprecedented Hindu consolidation around the party as only a small proportion of religious minorities supported the BJP. In 2014, 36% of all Hindu voters were found to have supported the BJP. This time the number increased to 44%. The NDA got 51% votes among Hindus. In the face of such a massive consolidation of the majority community that comprises four-fifths of the country's population, the Opposition parties stood no chance at all.

The BJP was able to secure this enormous Hindu support on account of the backing it received from all Hindu castes and communities, including Dalits and Adivasis, when compared to 2014. Support from Dalits went up by 10 percentage points; among Adivasis, it went up by seven percentage points. In a sense, the unification of Hindu communities in the 2014 election not only persisted but strengthened further this time.

Polarisation of voters

If the Hindus were on one side, the minorities were clearly on the other, indicating a deeply polarised verdict. Only 8% of Muslim voters na-

The closeness factor

	%
Hindus who feel close to a party and that party is BJP	49
Hindus who feel close to a party and that party is Congress	16
Muslims who feel close to a party and that party is BJP	7
Muslims who feel close to a party and that party is Congress	33
Hindus who dislike a party and that party is BJP	27
Hindus who dislike a party and that party is Congress	29
Muslims who dislike a party and that party is BJP	78
Muslims who dislike a party and that party is Congress	4

Questions asked: Is there any political party you particularly feel close to? If yes, which party? Is there any political party you particularly dislike? If yes, which party?

tionally ended up voting for the BJP, the same as last time. Christians and Sikhs too largely kept away from the BJP. Among Christians, 11% voted for the party. Among Sikhs, the number was the same (the Akali Dal, the BJP's ally, got 20%). This lack of enthusiasm for the BJP among the minority communities is also evident in the party not being able to perform too well in minority-concentrated States like Kerala, Punjab and Goa.

The polarisation of voters on Hindu-Muslim lines seems to have taken place in many States, according to our survey. It was found to be most acute in States where the proportion of Muslims is high, namely, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar. Not only did the BJP get a massive proportion of Hindu votes in these States, this share was much

larger than what it received in the 2014 election. Increased Hindu support for the BJP in these States (and elsewhere too) ended up rendering Muslim consolidation behind the Congress and other Opposition parties ineffective again.

In Assam, the NDA got over two-thirds of Hindu votes compared to three-fifths last time. Consolidation of Muslims in favour of the Congress in some seats went up from two-fifths to two-thirds. In Bihar, Hindu support for the NDA increased by 21 percentage points, whereas consolidation of Muslims in favour of the RJD-Congress alliance went up by 9 percentage points. In West Bengal, the BJP's vote share among Hindus went up by 36 percentage points, whereas the consolidation of Muslims in favour of the Trinamool Congress increased by 30 percentage points. In Uttar Pradesh, the NDA got 60% of Hindu votes, while Muslim support for the mahagathbandhan was 73%.

In the Lokniti survey, the NDA got 45% of the Hindu votes in sampled seats where Muslims are less than 10% of the population, and 59% of the Hindu votes in seats where Muslims are between 20% and 40% of the population.

Divided in responses too

The religious divide in these elections could be seen in not just how people voted, but also in how they responded to several survey questions. For instance, on being asked if the government should return to power, over half the Hindus answered in the affirmative, while two-thirds of Muslims and over half the Christians and Sikhs replied in the

negative. On the question of Rafale, a plurality of Hindu respondents who had heard of the controversy felt there had been no wrongdoing by the government, but a majority of Muslims, Christians and Sikhs respondents felt otherwise. Similarly, while most Hindus credited either the government or both the government and the Indian Air Force (IAF) for the Balakot strikes, a majority of Muslims, Christians and Sikhs credited the IAF alone.

Like or dislike for a party

Finally, when respondents were asked whether they felt close to any particular party and, if yes, which party, Hindu respondents (all States combined) who felt close to a party were three times more likely to feel close to the BJP than the Congress. On the other hand, Muslim respondents who felt close to a party were five times more likely to feel close to the Congress than the BJP. When voters were asked whether they disliked a party, only one of four Hindus who said they disliked a party took the BJP's name, whereas four out of five Muslims who said they disliked a party identified the BJP. Christians and Sikhs too were more likely to name the BJP.

Some claim that religious minorities voted in large numbers for the NDA. This is not true, according to our data. The burden and responsibility of this sweeping verdict for Prime Minister Narendra Modi rests almost entirely on the majority community's shoulders.

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Hindu support surged for the BJP since 2014

	Voted for BJP in 2014 (%)	Voted for BJP in 2019 (%)	Voted for BJP allies in 2014 (%)	Voted for BJP allies in 2019 (%)
All Hindus	36	44	7	8
Hindu upper castes	47	52	9	7
Hindu OBCs	34	44	8	10
Hindu Dalits	24	34	6	7
Hindu Adivasis	37	44	3	2

No appreciable change among minorities

	Voted for BJP in 2014 (%)	Voted for BJP in 2019 (%)	Voted for BJP allies in 2014 (%)	Voted for BJP allies in 2019 (%)
Muslims	8	8	1	1
Christians	7	11	10	5
Sikhs	16	11	33	20

The Hindu-Muslim divide across States

	Hindu vote for NDA in 2014 (%)	Hindu vote for NDA in 2019 (%)	Muslim vote for main opposition to NDA in 2014 (%)	Muslim vote for main opposition to NDA in 2019 (%)
Assam	58	70	41 (Cong) 39 (AIUDF)	70 (Cong)
Bihar	44	65	68 (RJD+)	77 (RJD+)
Gujarat	64	67	64 (Cong)	70 (Cong)
Karnataka	46	58	68 (Cong)	73 (Cong-JDS)
Kerala	16	22	63 (UDF)	65 (UDF)
Madhya Pradesh	59	60	92 (Cong)	67 (Cong)
Maharashtra	54	62	83 (Cong-NCP)	86 (Cong-NCP+)
Odisha	22	40	*	*
Rajasthan	57	63	55 (Cong)	79 (Cong)
Tamil Nadu	19	29	37 (AIADMK) 33 (DMK)	74 (DMK-Cong+)
Uttar Pradesh	48	60	59 (SP)	73 (SP-BSP+)
West Bengal	21	57	40 (TMC) 31 (Left) 24 (Cong)	70 (TMC)
Delhi	52	66	56 (AAP)	66 (Cong)
Jharkhand	53	64	61 (Cong+)	78 (Cong-JMM+)
Telangana	10 (only BJP)	22	60 (Cong)	43 (TRS) 42 (Cong)

*Sample size is too low

Vote on the government

	Wanted Modi government to return (%)	Didn't want Modi government to return (%)
Hindus	54	29
Muslims	15	64
Christians	17	55
Sikhs	29	55