



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

A Paradigm Shift in the Politics of State: The Rise of BJP in Haryana

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The unprecedented success of Bharatiya Janata Party in the 2014 parliamentary elections has brought a paradigm shift in India's electoral politics. The party achieved an absolute majority in Lok Sabha on its own. Haryana is one of the states of North-Western region where it did exceedingly well by winning seven out of the eight seats that it had contested and by securing 34.7 percent votes while its vote share was merely 12.1 percent in 2009. However, its alliance partner Haryana Janhit Congress lost the two seats contested by it to the Indian National Lok Dal and its vote share declined from 10.2 percent in 2009 to 6.1 percent in 2014. The INLD won two out of the ten seats that it contested and its vote share also increased to 24.4 percent-a gain of 8.72 percent in comparison with the last Lok Sabha Election¹. The Congress could win only one out of the ten seats in which it had entered into fray. It could retain only Rohtak seat from where Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda's son Deepender Singh won it for the third consecutive term. This has been the only consolation for the party in Haryana. Besides, there was a decline of 18.56 percent in the support base for the Congress as its poll percentage dwindled from 41.46 in 2009 to 22.9 percent in 2014.

Table 1: Performance of Political Parties in Haryana Parliamentary Elections

Party	Seats Contested (2014)	Seats Won (2014)	Vote (%) (2014)	Change in vote share since 2009
BJP	8	7	34.7	+ 22.6
Congress	10	1	22.9	-18.56
INLD	10	2	24.4	+8.72
HJC	2	0	6.1	-4.1
BSP	10	0	4.6	-11.1
AAP	10	0	4.2	+4.2
Others	200	0	3.1	-1.7

Source:CSDS Data Unit.

Note:Total Lok Sabha Seats: 10 *In 2014 Lok Sabha Elections, there was an alliance between the BJP and the HJC with BJP contesting in 8 seats while the HJC contested in 2 seats.

It is pertinent to mention in the above context that Haryana had been the only Hindi speaking state in Northern India where, unlike its neighbouring states, BJP could never grow as a principle political force. Its vote share in the state could never cross 10.5 percent. And since its inception it won double digit seats only in 1996 that too on account of its alliance with the Haryana Vikas Party. Whatever vote share the party had been getting in the past was mainly because of its alliances with regional parties. Unlike other Hindi states, the party had neither a significant support base nor an organizational structure. Its limited influence had been chiefly confined to upper castes and that too only in urban areas and it had failed to substantially mobilize any of the major communities in its favour in rural areas. The party had been weak among numerous peasant castes of state. It had also not been able to draw a major chunk of the votes even from the upper caste which is the mainstay of its support in other Hindi states. Moreover, religion had never been an important factor in the politics of Haryana due to demographic and historical reasons. Its peasantry had been mobilized on the bases of economic and caste factors by Chhotu Ram during colonial period and that legacy had been continuing in the post-colonial period. And the Hindus, who constitute about 90 percent of the population, had never perceived any threat from the religious minorities-the Muslims and the Sikhs on account of their

numerical insignificance. Perhaps this had been the reason that had prevented the Hindutva from spreading its wings in Haryana even after the BJP had come into prominence in 1980's and 1990's in other Hindi states.

Interestingly just within six months of the parliamentary elections in 2014, the BJP which had barely managed to get a double digit vote share in elections before then, emerged as the clear winner. The last time the BJP had won double digit seats in Haryana was in 1996 when it had contested in alliance with the Haryana Vikas Party. A comparison with the 2009 result reveals this shift in state politics. The BJP's vote share in the 2014 election was 33.2 percent, almost four times or 24.2 percentage points higher than its 2009 vote share. The BJP won a comfortable majority with 47 seats as compared to only 4 seats in the 2009 Vidhan Sabha election. The Congress party was the biggest loser in terms of both seats and votes as it faced a negative vote swing of more than 10 percentage points and its seat tally reduced by as many as 25 seats. The INLD continues to remain relevant in state politics as it came in the second position.

Smaller parties like Kuldeep Bishnoi's Haryana Janhit Congress and the BSP had been reduced to marginal players in the state's politics with only some pockets of influence and a vote share of less than 5 percent. The HJC contested the 2014 election in alliance with rebel Congress MLA Venod Sharma's Jan Chetna Party. The alliance polled a combined vote share of 4.2 percent and managed to win in only two seats - Adampur and Hansi which were contested by Kuldeep Bishnoi and his wife Renuka Bishnoi. A few months back HJC leader Kuldeep Bishnoi merged his party with the INC.

Table 1: Haryana Vidhan Sabha Election Result 2014

Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Change from 2009	Vote	Change from 2009
Congress	90	15	-25	20.6	-14.5
BJP	90	47	+43	33.2	+24.2
INLD+	90	20	-12	24.7	-2.1
INLD	88	19	-12	24.1	-1.7
SAD	2	1	NIL	0.6	-0.4
HJC+	88	2	-4	4.2	-3.2
HJC	65	2	-4	3.6	-3.8
HJCP	23	0	NA	0.6	NA
BSP	87	1	+1	4.4	-2.4
Others	90	5	-2	12.9	-2.1

Note: Vote shares are in percent; others includes NOTA Source: Analysis of ECI Data by CSDS Data Unit

The BJP's victory in 2014 has also altered the regional pattern in vote share. The BJP was ahead in three regions except the Jat dominated West Haryana. Most of the BJP's victories came from North and South Haryana alone. In South Haryana, the BJP was assisted by a sharp fragmentation of vote between the Congress and the INLD. Presently, the support base of – INLD and the Congress, principal forces in state politics earlier seem to have a limited spread. The Congress won 10 seats in East Haryana comprising of former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda's home district – Rohtak. In this region, there was a close contest between the BJP and the Congress and the former enjoyed a slender lead of only about 4 percentage points in terms of votes. The INLD on the other hand, performed relatively better in the the largest region of the state - West Haryana. In this Jat dominated region, the INLD was hoping to gain from its alliance with the Akali Dal. West Haryana was the only region where the BJP didn't lead as the INLD had a lead of more than 7 percentage points over the BJP. The INLD failed to benefit from the breaking of the BJP's alliance with the HJC. Kuldeep Bishnoi's HJC also had a decent performance in the region which includes their stronghold – Hisar. The HJC – Jan Chetna Party alliance had a vote share of 9.9 percent here, more than double their average vote share of 4.2 percent.

Table 2: Haryana Assembly Election 2014 Results by region

Regions	Total Seats	Congress		BJP		INLD+		HJC+		Others	
		Won	Vote	Won	Vote	Won	Vote	Won	Vote	Won	Vote
North Haryana	18	1	19.2	14	37.8	1	23.4	0	3.1	2	16.6
East Haryana	23	10	28.1	12	32.2	0	19.5	0	1.7	1	18.4
West Haryana	26	1	18.2	7	25.1	15	32.0	2	9.9	1	14.8
South Haryana	23	3	17.4	14	39.6	4	22.3	0	0.9	2	19.6

Note: Vote shares are in percent; others includes NOTA Source: Analysis of ECI Data by CSDS Data Unit

In this context, it becomes imperative to find out the key determinants that could explain the verdict in favour of the BJP and decimation of Congress and weakening of the INLD, the principle opposition parties in Haryana in the 2014 parliamentary and assembly elections

The 2014 victory of the BJP can be attributed to a Non Jat consolidation of support. An analysis of voting patterns of various social groups shows that the BJP managed a heavy consolidation of support among Upper Castes and OBCs. The party's vote share among Brahmins, Other upper castes and OBCs was 47 percent, 55 percent and 40 percent respectively. The party had failed to draw support among the Jats as less than one fifth of them (17 percent) voted for it. The INLD had received a plurality of support among the Jats as 42 percent of them voted for the party.

Dalits have been another crucial social group in Haryana politics as they constitute a substantial proportion of the electorate who traditionally voted for the Congress. In the 2014 election, there was a three way split of the Dalit vote and the Congress was marginally ahead with 27 percent votes among the community. Among Dalits, the BJP seems to have been helped by the support offered by

the Dera Sacha Sauda which is believed to have a high following among the community. As compared to an overall vote share of 20 percent among Dalits, the party had a much higher vote share among those Dalits who had made up their mind close to voting. Despite an alliance with the Akali Dal, the INLD was unsuccessful in dominating among Sikh voters as it only had a 5 percentage point lead over the BJP. The Congress too had hoped to do well among Sikhs especially after the Hooda government's move to form the Haryana Sikh Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee on the eve of elections. Although, more than half the Sikhs were aware about this move and supported the formation, only about 16 percent ended up voting for the Congress.

Table 3: Vote share by social group: Haryana Assembly Election 2014

	Congress	BJP	INLD+	Others
Brahmin	12	47	18	23
Other Upper Caste	15	55	12	18
Jats	24	17	42	27
OBC	20	40	21	19
SC	27	20	21	32
Muslim	16	5	52	27
Sikh	16	36	31	16

Note: All figures are in percent; Source: CSDS Haryana Post Poll Survey 2014

Incumbent chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda enjoyed a decent approval rating as more than half the respondents (54 percent) were satisfied with his work. Even his government had a fairly decent rating as 56 percent of the respondents were satisfied with its performance.

Table 4: Satisfaction with performance of Congress Government and Chief Minister Hooda in Haryana during last 10 months

	Congress Government in State	Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda
Satisfied	56	54
Dissatisfied	36	37
Can't say	8	8

Note: All figures are in percent; Source: CSDS Haryana Post Poll Survey 2014

An important issue pertaining to development in the 2014 assembly election was excessive focus on Rohtak and East Haryana mainly. There was a clear difference in the assessment of condition of public services during the last five years between voters in East Haryana and rest of the state. For most public services, the proportion of voters who felt that the service had improved was more than 10 percentage points lower in rest of Haryana as compared to East Haryana.

Table 5: Improvement in the condition of public services

Public Service	East Haryana	Rest of Haryana	Overall
Hospitals	49	37	40
Roads	62	38	44
Bus Facilities	53	39	43
Electricity	53	42	45

Note: All figures are in percent; Source: CSDS Haryana Post Poll Survey 2014

A similar sentiment about regional bias in development under the Congress government can be seen in the response to a question asked to voters about this accusation. Only one third (33 percent) of the respondents outside East Haryana felt that the government had done equal development in all districts of the state. Slightly less than two third (60 percent) people in the state felt that more attention than required was given by the government to Rohtak district. In this regard, Hooda ignored numerous warnings from leaders within the party who had criticized him for concentrating only on Rohtak.

Another set of accusations which Hooda seems to have ignored completely were corruption charges made against the government and reports of illegalities and undue favours in various land deals made in the state by Robert Vadra. There was a widespread perception that the state government was corrupt as more than two third of the respondents (70 percent) felt so. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of the respondents were unaware about the Robert Vadra land deal case but 75 percent of those who were aware of the deals felt that the state government was suppressing the issue.

As state above the BJP formed government in the state on its own for the first time and introduced many administrative initiatives in the state. Moreover, its leader in Haryana Manohar Lal Khattar was able to provide a stable and credible non-Jat leadership. Khattar was also successful in building a perception of an honest leader. Moreover, at the central level BJP under the leadership of Modi successfully completed its five year tenure despite introducing the much debated legislations like GST and implementing demonetization. In the absence of strong opposition BJP ride high on issues on nationalism in 2019 parliamentary elections in the country. The popularity of Narendra Modi helped the party to be successful in the states as well.

The BJP which contested solely in 2019 Lok Sabha election, second time after 2004, won all ten parliamentary seats. It secured 58 percent votes, almost double of the Congress vote share and an increase of 23.2 percent as the party secured 34.8 percent votes in 2014. In 2004 when it contested alone without any alliance; at that time, it could secure only 17.2 percent of the vote share, winning only one seat. However, in 2009 and 2014, it allied with INLD and HJC respectively. The Congress and all other political parties including the alliances forged before parliamentary elections drew blank. Though there was an increase of 5.4 percent in its vote share of the Congress from 22.9 in 2014 to 28.4 percent votes in 2019. The INLD and its offshoot JJP faced massive defeats. The INLD, got two percent of the total vote share, a decline of 22.5 percentage points from 2014 Lok Sabha Election. The pre-poll alliance of JJP-AAP as well as well as of BSP-LSP proved to be a non-starter in Haryana politics and their poll percentage remained very poor 5.3 percent and 4.0 percent respectively (Table 2).

Table 2: Performance of the parties in Lok Sabha Elections

Parties	Lok Sabha 2019			Lok Sabha 2014			Lok Sabha 2009		
	Contested	won	Vote (%)	Contested	won	Vote (%)	Contested	won	Vote (%)
BJP	10	10	58	8	7	34.7	5	0	12.8
INC	10	0	28.4	10	1	22.9	10	9	41.8
INLD	10	0	1.9	10	2	24.4	5	0	15.8
HJCBL	-	-	-	2	0	6.1	10	1	10.0
BSP	8	0	3.6	10	0	4.6	10	0	15.7
AAP	3	0	0.4	10	0	4.3			
JJP	7	0	4.9	-	-	-			
LSP	2	0	0.4	-	-	-			

Source: Election Commission of India.

Unlike its past tradition, the state has given another chance to the BJP in Lok Sabha election; but returned back to the previous track during 2019 assembly election. In 2019 Haryana assembly election resulted in a hung assembly and no party could secure the full majority to form the government; nonetheless, the BJP emerged as the single largest party with 40 seats, 6 seats away from the clear majority. Surprisingly, the Congress rejuvenated and performed much better than expected lines as compared to the last assembly election held in 2014. In 2019 Haryana assembly election, the Congress got 31 seats and 28.1 percent of the total vote polled. Its seat count gone up by 16 seats and vote share by 7.5 percentage points as compared to 2014 Assembly election. Though Congress did not get any seat in parliamentary election 2019, but improved its vote share as compared to the last parliamentary election. It maintained that vote share during the assembly election too.

As compared to the last assembly election 2014, the BJP's vote share has increased by 3.3 percentage points; in 2019 assembly election it secured 36.5 percent votes share. But as compared to the BJP's performance in the Lok Sabha election 2019, it was not a satisfactory performance of party. The past electoral trend in the state reflects that there was not much difference especially in terms of vote share of the parties it secured in Lok Sabha election and subsequent assembly election, it varies between +-6 percentage points, but 2019 assembly election verdict was exceptional as BJP's vote share gone down by 21.5 percentage points as compared to the Lok Sabha election 2019. The new party JJP emerged as the biggest beneficiary of this loss as it secured 14.8 percent vote in assembly election; the JJP secured 4.9 percent of the votes in 2019 parliamentary election (Table 13).

Table 13: Performance of the parties Vidhan Sabha Elections

Parties	Vidhan Sabha 2019			Vidhan Sabha 2014			Vidhan Sabha 2009		
	Contested	Won	Vote (%)	Contested	Won	Vote (%)	Contested	Won	Vote (%)
BJP	90	40	36.5	90	47	33.2	90	4	9.1
INC	90	31	28.1	90	15	20.6	90	40	35.1
INLD	81	1	2.4	88	19	24.1	88	31	25.8
HJCBL	--	--	--	65	2	3.6	87	6	7.4
BSP	87	0	4.1	87	1	4.4	86	1	6.7
AAP	46	0	0.5	--	--	--	--	--	--
JJP	87	10	14.8	--	--	--	--	--	--
LSP	66	0	1.2	--	--	--	--	--	--

Source: Election Commission of India.

It is pertinent to mention here that the party had led in 79 out of 90 assembly segments in the parliamentary elections (Table 14). While the Congress could lead only in ten assembly segments and the JJP could do so only in one of these. But in the assembly elections, the BJP won 40 seats; the Congress was able to bag 31 seats and the JJP managed to win in ten seats which was leading in only one assembly segment. Out of the

remaining nine seats, the INLD could win only one and the remaining eight were won by the independent candidates.

On the account of the uncertain verdict, the BJP decided to have an alliance with the JJP for forming the state government and offered the post of Deputy Chief Minister to its supremo Dushyant Chautala despite the fact that their ideological stances and support bases were diametrically opposite to each other. It is too early as well as difficult to predict the future of this coalition government in Haryana. In Haryana, more than ideology, personality and loyalty towards leaders matter the most. The state has pioneered the *Aaya Ram, Gaya Ram* politics. The political opportunism is in the electoral history of the state. The enhanced importance of the independent MLAs has also to be attributed to the uncertain verdict on the one hand and apprehension about the durability of the alliance in a section BJP on the other hand. In a way these elections can also be seen as a restoration of accommodation model of politics in Haryana.

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