2019 Indian General Elections: Breaking Down the Landslide Victory

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ABSTRACT
The 2019 Indian elections was a colossal event in the Indian political scene. It broke records in terms of levels of voter participation, wherein according to the Election Commission of India, 900 million people were eligible to vote and it saw the highest voter turnout in Indian history with 67.11%. In this paper the authors will try to present explanations for the BJP’s success by looking at various factors such as the significance of a focus on leaders over political parties in the election campaign, lack of a strong opposition candidate, reasons behind the change in support from previously unfavoured constituencies, their grand election manifesto which aims to tackle various social and political nuances of the society, the favouritism towards the incumbent due to its socio-economic and political policies of the previous term and its attempts to improve on national security following terrorist attacks days before the general elections. India has seen landslide victories before as well in the years of 1971, 1977, 1984 and 2014. However, the government had never won a second term in office up until the BJP’s re-return in 2019. This manifests the question of how far should India’s 2019 elections be seen as an unparalleled landslide which is merely an interruption to the normal political order rather than a pivotal realignment of the terms of electoral competition.

Keywords: Indian elections; Electoral competition; Party leadership; Campaigning; Opposition

INTRODUCTION
The results of the 2019 Indian general elections which had started in April came to a halt on 23rd May to constitute the party 17th Lok Sabha. With around 900 million eligible voters, the voter nation saw a 67% turnout which is the highest ever turnout experienced in India. The Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP won with a whopping 303 seats and the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance won 353 seats [1]. The key opposition party, the Indian National Congress won 52 seats, and the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) won 91. Other parties and alliances won 98 seats. Due to Congress’s lack of achieving the required 10% of the seats in the Lok Sabha, the nation remains without an official opposition party. This year’s polls have repeatedly depicted a contest for the soul of India [2]. These elections made Modi’s Hindu nationalist government agendas come face to face with an array of opposition parties including Congress, whose secular vision had previously ruled the nation since independence. This victory was not achieved in isolation. Reasons for this immense victory include socio-economic factors like policy successes and Modi’s charisma along with a shift to right wing ideology nationwide [3]. Apart from this the rise in nationalist sentiments following security threats along with support from previously untouched constituencies played a pivotal role in these elections. Lastly, the elections were performed in an environment where people felt a lack of effective leadership and a higher outreach of the election commission which led to the greatest voter turnout. In this paper we view these prominent grounds behind BJP’s remarkable win [4].

Voter turnout
The nation saw the most elevated voter turnout since Independent India in 1997, which recorded 67.11%, beating the past turnout of 65.95% in 2014, as indicated by the provisional information discharged by the Election Commission (EC). This information is for 542 constituencies except for the turnout in Vellore in Tamil Nadu where polling was dropped over claims of maltreatment of cash control [5]. Madhya Pradesh had the maximum turnout of voters which expanded by 9.59% indicating a jump from 61.61% to 71.2%. The gap between the

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turnout of male and female voters has limited altogether from 9% in 2009 to just 0.4% in 2019. Women made up 48% of the registered voters and were more in number than men in areas including Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Mizoram and Tamil Nadu, among others [6]. There has also been a sharp increment in the BJP’s vote share in the rural electorate of 7.3%. This means it has lead to the decrease in the gap between urban-rural in favor of BJP. This overall increase in the number of voters in the nation led to the highest number of votes ever registered. The increase in voters experienced with the increase in the preference for BJP in rural areas as well as previously non-favourable states such as West Bengal, Odisha, Tripura and Telangana, led to an overall increase in the votes for BJP and subsequent winning of more seats.

Focusing on weaker regions

The geographic base of BJP has spread towards the east into new zones. NDA expanded its vote share in the East by 17 percent more than 2014, about double the expansion in the North. The NDA’s technique resulted positively in bringing 29 extra seats into its crease, incorporating 8 in Bihar, 7 in Odisha and an expansive 16 seats in West Bengal. Odisha too is a key case in showing that the NDA and especially the BJP, has designed an Eastward extension, however more critically it is a new party option for the minorities. The BJP’s show in the north in this election supported its excellent performance in the previous election. In 2014, the BJP had wiped north India winning 134 seats of the 180 on offer and won 122 this time. In nine of these states and UTs, the BJP’s vote offer rose juxtaposed with 2014, while in seven of these states and UTs the party likewise expanded its triumph edge. The NDA has had the option to build its base here with its vote offer ascending to 49%. As opposed to mainstream observation, the BJP-led NDA appears to have influenced the minorities. The NDA got about double the vote portion of the Congress in the electorate that had minorities representing under 40% of the absolute population, or low minority seats [7]. The Modi wave in 2019 demonstrates that the 2014 outcomes were no abnormality and structural move is occurring in the politics of India. Through the information acquired, the NDA was successful in 141 of the 234 high minority situations, an expansion of 18 such seats. Critically, the NDA’s vote portion rose fundamentally from 34.3% to 41.9%, predominating both that of regional parties as and the UPA. Modi has treated all of the hindi heartland as a single state seeming as though the party has expanded from state level to the national level.

National security sentiments: Balakot, Pulwama, Kargil comparison

40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) troopers in Pulwama were killed by a suicide bomber on the 14th of February. It is considered as the deadliest assault on security forces in Kashmir since 1989 which was claimed by Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), a Pakistan based terrorist group. A counter encounter to this was carried out by India which launched an attack on a JeM terrorist camp inside of Pakistan. Prime Minister Narendra Modi got wide acclaim in India for a definitive reaction to the dread assault carried out on 26th February. With a national election round the corner, this event couldn’t have happened at a more favorable time for the ruling government. Here is a rising agreement that the dread assault in Pulwama, India’s reaction to it by leading air strikes on the militant camps over the LoC, and Pakistan’s retaliatory measures have changed the constituent breeze for the Bharatiya Janata Party-ushered NDA government. There were fluctuations in people preferring Modi as Prime Minister from 2017-2019 with it slightly increasing around 2019, credits to the Pulwama attack for that.

While we don’t have hard proof to calculate the degree to which nationalist notions play with the change of minds of Indian voters, we do realize that the incumbent governments by and large, and substantially more on account of a Right-wing incumbent, have a upper hand at the hour of a national security critical point. During the 1999 voting, the Kargil war helped the BJP to come back to control. The BJP formed a more extensive constituent alliance in 1999, challenging 339 seats rather than the 388 seats it challenged in 1998. The BJP’s normal vote share ascended from 36% in 1998 to 40% in 1999, recommending a noteworthy yet humble effect of the Kargil war. The examinations recommend that the Kargil war was no turning point. Effect of the foreign policy of India on voter inclinations is regularly restricted to a compact group of upper class people. Be that as it may, Pakistan is extraordinary. It integrates with a story of Hindu-Muslim ill will and clear recollections of past wars and Partition. There are two assumptions that can come out of it which are that BJP could have had a larger impact on the areas and communities which support it and are ideologically more inclined towards it by gathering aid around the anti-Pakistan sentiment or in places where voters have more of a national inclination and where the BJP is head on with the major opposition Congress as against regional parties and problems, people could have a lesser impact on foreign policy and action against Pakistan which could not fruit out for BJP as much. All in all, the BJP alongside its present partners even in the pre-Pulwama and Balakot situation was particularly in the game. Pushing the national sentiment too much would have put the party in danger as situations with Pakistan were hostile but it did back up BJP to some extent.

Ideological play

An edge that congress had formerly was its straightforward secular ideology, which implied that plenty of social groups, religious minorities and the moderate Hindu constituency used to be pulled towards the party before. However, this impact is not so clear anymore. Neither does the Congress have an understandable philosophy to offer any longer, its secularism being an exceptionally uncertain and uneven reaction to religious nationalism, and its communism being in reality shared by almost all Indian ideological groups. The 2014-2019 term demonstrated that the BJP proceeded with numerous welfare projects that prevailed previously, for the most part Congress-ushered government. For what reason would the individuals vote in favor of the Congress, at that point, if the BJP can guarantee similar strategies and win the decisions considerably more effectively?
In this manner, it is in the middle of culture and power. Everyone looks for power yet the BJP paves a social thinking to look for power. This establishes an incredible connection in the voters' psyche. It reached out to the Hindu majority nation by promising the rise of Hindutva through promises like the Ram Mandir construction and Citizen Bill to showcase its dedication to ensuring an India which prioritizes Hindus [8]. The BJP not only focused on winning the country through policies but added an angle of religious identity which was well received by plenty. This was the social differentiation the BJP dealt with between Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi. The naamdar and kaamdar taunts emerged with a key goal to make such differentiate. This is where the BJP gathered a community to lead and offer something to believe in when congress kept on fighting an ideological battle with economic policies.

Lack of adequate opposition

The opposition in a country assumes a significant position in giving constructive criticism of the party in power. They make sure that the decision made by the ruling party is not damaging the enthusiasm of the overall population or pan India. Their job is to stand by the ruling party for the actions that are in favor of the people of the nation without disagreeing to every action taken by them but on the contrary Modi Hatao turned into the regular single point motivation for the entire opposition and the driving force of unification for the opposition parties. The congress made attempts to not lose the supremacy that it thinks it has by agreeing to divide their power with regional parties or support them in the 2019 elections. There was likewise an acknowledgement by the regional parties as well, who were also stressed over losing political ground to the BJP in their separate states. The primary race that everybody watched unfurling was in Uttar Pradesh whose 80 electorates sent the single biggest primary Opposition party, to be formally perceived all things considered, must be equivalent to the quorum of the house. Quorum is identical to 10% of the individuals. This implies that the congress not only is able to play the opposition figuratively but is also not supported by numbers. All government bodies commit errors and leave open doors for the party in the opposition. The BJP government also committed a few errors. Demonetization was an occurrence, loss of employment alongside moderate economic development and communal conflict in the nation were additional circumstances the opposition could have made use of yet they didn’t. The Congress neglected to show a solid initiative and leadership. A head associates genuinely and mentally to get the supporters to rise above their personal interests and align with the bigger reason, vision and motivation. In spite of overwhelming thrashing in 2014, congress would not introspect and invigorate it’s initiative, association and policy approaches. Modi’s solid patriotism and forceful self-assurance hit an instinctive compatibility with the 83 million new voters this year. He is set to rule Indian governmental issues like a Colossus. The message which the Congress party always passed on was that it was the Congress party alone which could govern the country but it seems so that the times are changing.

Modi’s incumbency

According to Lokniti’s post-poll survey, Modi and his leadership was a key decisive factor that swayed votes in the BJP’s favor by being the most popular candidate choice. His post-poll preference was as much as 44% with contrast to Rahul Gandhi at 24%. Several voters gave a higher preference to the incumbent over other options. Hence having Modi as the leader was a key factor that aided the BJP voters look past their dissatisfaction with the party’s re-nominated candidates in several seats. The presence of anti-incumbency in India had been very strong in the last elections due to the widespread aggression towards the Indian National Congress's corrupt dynastic practices and lack of any policy focus. The resentment of the incumbent may seem like an abnormal practice, however, in India it has long been a part of a political discourse and hard-hitting political reality. However, in the case of Modi, his success as Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat had been well known throughout the nation which were recognized by the people in 2014. By 2019, the nation was able to point out his work done on a national level.

The BJP driven by Narendra Modi did not just out the viable and hypothetical comprehension to anti-incumbency, but in reality was able to embark on a constituent triumph that was vehement with its sheer numbers. The Modi government’s schemes for social welfare were implemented with proper efficiency and the reality was measured through digitization. The Indian people were able to observe the tangible differences with...
their own eyes which led to a positive outlook towards the PM even if the results of the policy were not very positive. This led to people believing the honesty of Modi and his work and moved forward to give him another chance. The Modi government identified the reasons behind anti-incumbency and worked specifically to target them.

**Favourable public image**

The Modi wave owes a great part of its fan following to the Prime Minister's persona. After years of having a Prime Minister like Manmohan Singh, who despite being a very qualified PM, exuded no charisma or appeal at his position, electing Modi in 2014 came as a breath of fresh air. Modi's media presence has been unprecedented as compared to any previous PM. As soon as Modi started contesting for the 2014 elections till the day he was elected, he has made hundreds of appearances to reach out to increase his voter share as much as possible. He continued the same pattern in the 2019 elections wherein he reached out to the people and charmed them with his confident speeches, tactful promises and his global presence to make sure India and Indians are seen by everyone. He appeals to the common people by portraying himself as one of them. His image of a former chaiwala works tremendously in his favour by making him seem to be down to earth and in tune with the common people’s issues. He reaches out to every section of the society with equal vigor, be it shaking hands with the billionaires and promising them tax concessions or consoling the poor farmers with debt waivers. These actions further aid his image of being an approachable political figure who wants the well being of everyone. Moreover, no political party has been able to provide an equal match to Modi. He ran on an all-time high popularity aided by his charisma and people’s faith in him. He turned the 2019 Lok Sabha elections into a Presidential style referendum on himself. He made sure to tell the public through his speeches and rallies that every vote they cast for their local BJP representative, is a vote that would directly come to him, which ultimately led to almost one third of the BJP voters actually voting in support of Modi and not their local candidate. Modi has carried the elections for the Bharatiya Janata Party. The term Tsunami has been rightly coined for his supporters who came out in millions to stand behind him. Thus, Narendra Modi won, not because his opposition Rahul Gandhi was terrible, he won because Indian voters were convinced that Modi was the best person to lead India for the next five years. People believe in the vision of India put forth by Modi.

**CONCLUSION**

What the 2019 elections have brought forth isn’t only a stunning electoral triumph yet a monumental shift in the entire nature of Indian democracy. More than the scale, it is the spread and profundity of the Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) triumph that verifies its electoral predominance. During a great part of the election season, the nature of open discussions affirmed that the BJP has caught the open creative mind and moved the range of popular opinion to its side. The job of different foundations in the run-up to the race left little question that the BJP controlled the state in a way not many governments in the past did. With everything taken into account, we are currently formally in the age of a BJP authority. In spite of talks of unemployment, agricultural distress, misery over GST and demonetisation, Modi has once again conveyed the races for his party. These decisions affirm that Indian politics and society are evolving. BJP representatives state that India is a nation of optimistic youth who are enthusiastic for change and are loaded with confidence and want an improvement in their everyday lives. It is this youthful optimistic India that has rested its confidence in Narendra Modi to take the nation to a superior and all the more satisfying future. There is no uncertainty that the youngsters of India have a consuming wish for a better future. It is likewise valid, as these outcomes appear that they keep on having incredible confidence in Modi.

**REFERENCES**