

How BJP Captured India's Largest State: An Analysis of General Elections 2019 in Rajasthan

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Introduction

In democratic states elections is a regular process conducted in intervals where the opinion of the populace is transformed into votes. Securing the majority in the lower house of parliament ensures the authority of a party or coalition partners to rule for five years. In India, people elect the representatives to the lower house who participates in decision making on behalf of their constituency subjects. Being the world's largest democratic country Indian general elections attracts considerable attention, as the policies formulated have substantial influence both within and outside the nation. The onus lies on the voters of the nation to deliver prudent judgment while casting their votes.

Electoral dynamics will help the public to understand the policy outcomes and behaviour of political actors (Menocal, n.d.). A party or parties must secure 272 seats out of 543 in the lower house of parliament and is allowed to frame public policies for five years. A nation with multiparty democracy, the Indian public is tested to a different set of ideologies. Party ideology carries a lot of clouts and acts as a base to formulate policies. Practiced norm is, post-elections the elected representatives will express their loyalty to the party or their leader than to the electorate who voted them (ibid.). When the next election turns up after the successful completion of the regime, the incumbent will try to mobilize public strength based on the programmes emanated during their tenure.

Often, in their enthusiasm to deliver services better, the government in power will forget what is needed by the populace and will be swayed by their party philosophy. Strong practice of party principles for years will generate a sense of antipathy when they face considerable criticism from the opposition. It is here, the party in power must maintain a cordial relation with the opposition and shall accommodate them to

express their opinion. Proselytization of one's beliefs and thoughts can affect the future elections of the incumbent and can hamper its opportunities to come to power again.

Elections may have both stabilizing and destabilizing consequences for almost any type of political system (Palmer, 1972-73). If the incumbent's policies were accepted by the populace, the party will get another chance to rule. This occurred in 2009 elections when the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) led by Indian National Congress (INC) was in government from 2004-09. If the government's policies were not appreciated, citizens will allow the opposition to form the government. National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government led by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 2004 is an example where the NDA in power lost and paved way for UPA.

2004 electoral verdict witnessed an era of modification in the government formation by the grand old party. First time in the history of the Congress Party, the government was formed with coalition partners. The era of coalition politics at the center came to existence in 1977¹ and set a stable foot in Indian politics in 2004. With two consecutive coalition regimes (NDA in 1999² & UPA in 2004) completed their tenure, it proved that fractured verdict can be turned to a successful government regime. Since 1996, electoral analysts were predicting that national parties lack the strength to form a single-party government by securing the required majority in the Lok Sabha. This may be probably due to the emergence and strengthening of regional parties in states, regionalism or linguistic chauvinism and attention towards local issues over national concern were a few to mention.

The decade of the UPA government came to an end with the emergence of the saffron party by securing an absolute majority in 2014 general elections in India. With 282 seats won on its own by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) garnered its strength to 336 seats in the lower house of the parliament under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with its coalition partners. After 1984, BJP is the only national party to secure largest number of seats in the Lok Sabha..

During its tenure, NDA initiated the largest tax reform since independence with the Goods and Service Tax, integrated Railway Budget with General Budget, Make in India to boost entrepreneurship among Indian citizens and expansion of tax base with an increase in Income-tax Returns in 2016-17 financial year. Government's policies were observed as Prime Minister Modi's than the coalition government as a whole. On the other hand, the autocratic nature of the central

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government to infuse Sangh Parivar's ideology on others has generated controversies that submerged the deserved credits of the aforementioned initiatives.

Act of infamous Demonetization on 8th November 2016, to crack down black money and counterfeit currency circulation, draws both criticism and controversies across the nation. Economists blamed the government for its hastiness which affected the growth rate, loss of livelihood and financial crunch in day to day transactions. Rural India, BPL families, traders, and a common man faced hardships due to improper measurements taken by the government. Opposition garnered the support of anti-Modi parties to project center's action as a disaster to the Indian economy.

The demonetization has little impact on Uttar Pradesh elections contrary to what was expected by the opposition parties. BJP won a thumping victory by securing 312 assembly seats out of 403 with 39.67% share in valid polled votes (ECI report 2018). The result appeared to be utter dismay to the anti saffron parties and proved that demonetization received scant attention among UP citizens. As the general elections were approaching, political parties rallied against the BJP by uniting on one platform by shedding their internal differences. Karnataka electoral verdict and a subsequent coalition government formed by INC and Janata Dal (Secular) witnessed a union of National, regional and communist parties to show their strength.

January 2019, four months before the seven-phase polling begins, the anti-Modi wave started to twirl across the nation. The attack on Central Reserve Police convoy in Pulwama that killed 46 personnel, Rafale deal and PMO's intervention instead of Defense ministry that weakened the negotiation process, curbs on higher educational institutions and branding as anti-national who criticize Sangh Parivar ideology were a few issues that cropped during this period. No other national party since independence has taken credit for defining what nationalism is as BJP did during its tenure. The ideology of the saffron party defined and redefined the concept of Nationalism.

Anti-BJP wave proved to be a short while as the government procured public opinion in its favor with the policymaking. Interim Budget in February 2019 announced PM Kisan Samman Nidhi provides security to the farm sector, full tax rebate up to 5 lakhs for individual taxpayers and reduced GST rates. Apart from this to capture General voters, Modi initiated for an amendment in Article 15 and provided a 10% reservation for economically weaker sections among general categories. The

government was successful in inculcating the spirit of nationalism in the public by retaliating with Balakot strikes.

General elections 2019 in Rajasthan

The verdict of general elections 2019 proved disastrous to the main opposition INC as well as anti-BJP parties. BJP secured an absolute majority by winning 303 parliamentary seats. Assembly electoral verdict 2018 of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh provided much-needed motivation to the congress party as it forecasted the possibility of securing more parliamentary elections.

Public support which acquired in assembly elections didn't get converted in parliamentary elections. Predictions based on assembly elections proved miscalculated for anti saffron parties. Before analyzing the parliamentary elections in Rajasthan, we need to look six months prior as the political climate for public verdict began with assembly elections. Why did congress fail to capture even a single parliamentary seat in general elections 2019? Many controversies like cow vigilantism, anti-nationalism and anti-incumbency at the center, how did BJP secured all the seats it contested in the state? How the Rajasthan voter did give a different verdict to what he delivered six months ago in assembly elections? Whether local issues like farmer's suicides, unemployment and mob lynching did play a role or not?

Assembly elections 2018

The largest state of India, Rajasthan has 25 Lok Sabha constituencies and 200 assembly segments. 2018 Vidhan Sabha elections gave a much-needed respite to the INC party as it won in 100 (21 seats in 2013) assembly constituencies and bagged 39.3% valid vote share. BJP was satisfied with 73 (163 in 2013) assembly seats and secured 38.8% of valid vote share. Since the 2013 election outcome, Congress increased its vote tally by 79 and BJP lost 90 assembly seats in 2018.

'Ek hi Sankalp, Congress hi Vikalp' as the assembly election manifesto, Congress promised free education to women, providing jobs to qualified youth, ₹ 3,500 unemployment allowance to the educated and pensions to the old age. Besides, party president Rahul Gandhi announced a farm loan waiver within 10 days of coming to power in Rajasthan (India Today 29/11/2018, Congress Manifesto). With *Gaurav Sankalp Patra 2018*, BJP released its manifesto promising ₹ 5000 allowance to eligible youth of above 21 years, 50 lakh jobs to be created in private sector in forthcoming 5 years, 30,000 jobs in public sector and soaps to the

disadvantaged sections under B.R. Ambedkar Pilgrimage fund, Ambedkar Peeth in *Jaipur* and B.R Ambedkar Chairs to be set up in universities. The manifesto declares farmer's visit Israel to study best farming practices, expansion of 1 lakh crore cooperative loans to the peasants and promotion of Organic farming (Economic Time 27/11/2018).

Rajasthan voters continued the tradition of electing alternate governments, preferred Congress in 2018. Though analysts claim that it is Congress which won and BJP never lost, yet it is proved that the latter failed to impress the Rajasthani public. Anti-incumbency is the common answer which suits all incumbent governments that lost elections. Apart from this, farmer's distress in Hadoti³ which is famous for garlic, unemployment, differences within the state BJP leaders and party's proselytization in the form of cow vigilantism and anti-minority policies were reasonable causes for BJP's defeat.

Hadoti region is acclaimed to be a major production of garlic in the state. A mismatch between Production and demand, as the former is in surplus, garlic prices fell drastically from 2013-14 to 2018-19. In 2013-14, depending on the quality, the price was between ₹ 80-200 and in April 2018 it was ₹ 2-30. Failure of Market Intervention Scheme (MIS), peasants were forced to sell for lower prices and the government gave token of ₹ 50,000 as compensation while their loans were in lakhs. In distress, farmers took the extreme step of ending their lives (Business Line, 20/11/2018). According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian economy, the unemployment rate in urban Rajasthan is 8.89% and rural is 7.43% (CMIE, 2018). BJP failed to create a favourable climate for unemployed youth.

2017 Alwar mob lynching witnessed the murder of Pehlu Khan who is from Nuh district of Haryana. Cow vigilantes beat and injured six others who were with Pehlu Khan and later succumbed to injuries. Right-wing groups claimed that the dairy farmer Pehlu Khan is transporting the cattle for the sake of consumption than for dairy production. The last of the reason was indifference between the state leadership led by CM Vasundhara Raje and the Center. Tickets distributed were much against the candidates whom party leadership at the center wished to do. Party president and CM had differences which they never tried to resolve during the elections.

Though aforementioned were the reasons for coming back to power in the state by the grand old party, it failed to capitalize on anti incumbency wave. Party secured just 50% of the Vidhan Sabha seats allowing BJP

to form a strong opposition. The vote share of Congress is 0.5% higher than the BJP. With the two-party system, Rajasthan voters haven't viewed Congress as the best alternative to BJP, rather they don't have alternatives. 13 independents elected are disgruntled rebels who failed to secure tickets from the Congress high command.

Lok Sabha Elections April–May 2019.

Rajasthan underwent polling in two phases. Phase I⁴ polling was on April 29th, 2019 consists of 13 and Phase II⁵ on May 6th, 2019 consists of the remaining 12 Lok Sabha constituencies. Out of 25 seats, 18 are general, 4 and 3 are reserved for SC⁶ and ST⁷ respectively. BJP won 24 Lok Sabha seats and its ally Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLTP) president, Hanuman Beniwal won from Nagaur. Main opposition INC, Left Wing parties, BSP and independents didn't secure a single constituency. Across all the parties 226 male, 23 women and with no third gender contested for all the seats. Out of 249 contested, 182 male and 16 women deposit were forfeited (EC results).

The total polling percentage of all the constituencies in the state in general election 2019 (Table 1) is 66.34% and a hike in 3.23% from the 2014 electoral turnout. The lowest percentage of raise was in SC constituencies with 1.25% and the highest was in general with 3.66%. Growth of population, awareness created by election functionaries and civic responsibility were the reasons for an increase in voter participation.

Table 1: Comparison of polling percentage in Rajasthan between years 2019 and 2014.

Constituency	2019 (%)	2014 (%)	Variation (+/- %)
General	66.84	63.18	3.66
SC	62.28	61.03	1.25
ST	68.56	65.4	3.16
Total	66.34	63.11	3.23

Source: Election Commission of India (ECI), State wise voter turnout in Rajasthan, years 2019 & 2014.

Table- 2 represents the percentage of valid votes secured by the national parties in Rajasthan and its comparison by the earlier elections. Based on the outcome, only national parties were taken in to consideration

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and the only party which secured the seat and left in the table is RLTP, is an unregistered party. RLTP candidate contested from Nagaur and the voter turnout was 62.32% and the contestant secured 54.86% of votes. INC stands top in the list with an increase in 3.86% of voter turnout from the previous elections and has a variation of 0.4% with the BJP. The difference between BJP and INC in valid polled votes in 2019 elections is 24.48% where the same variation in the previous elections is 24.88. The other three national parties lost their relevance in 2019 verdict.

Table: 2 Percentage of Valid votes polled to the national parties in Rajasthan and their comparison between general elections 2019 & 2014.

Political Party	2019 (%)	2014 (%)	Variation (+/- %)
BJP	59.07	55.61	3.46
INC	34.59	30.73	3.86
BSP	1.09	2.37	-1.28
CPI (M)	0.2	0.29	-0.09
CPI	0.15	0.26	-0.11

Source: ECI, General elections, 2019 & 2014 Party wise won and valid voted polled in each state.

Let us compare the voting percentage in 25 constituencies of Rajasthan in 2019 and 2014.

Table 3: Percentages of valid votes polled in constituencies in 2019 & 2014 general elections in Rajasthan.

Sl.No	Constituency	2019 (%)	2014 (%)	Variation (+/- %)
1	Ganganagar*	74.77	73.17	1.6
2	Bikaner*	59.43	58.45	0.98
3	Churu	65.9	64.54	1.36
4	Jhunjhunu	62.11	59.42	2.69
5	Sikar	65.18	60.31	4.87
6	Jaipur Rural	65.54	59.77	5.77
7	Jaipur	68.48	66.35	2.13

8	Alwar	67.17	65.36	1.81
9	Bharatpur*	59.11	57.00	2.11
10	Karauli-Dholpur*	55.18	54.62	0.56
11	Dausa#	61.5	61.08	0.42
12	Tonk-Sawai Madhopur	63.44	61.02	2.42
13	Ajmer	67.32	68.73	-1.41
14	Nagaur	62.32	59.90	2.42
15	Pali	62.98	57.69	5.29
16	Jodhpur	68.89	62.50	6.39
17	Barmer	73.3	72.56	0.74
18	Jalore	65.74	59.62	6.12
19	Udaipur#	70.32	65.67	4.65
20	Banswara#	72.9	68.98	3.92
21	Chittorgarh	72.39	64.67	7.72
22	Rajsamand	64.87	57.78	7.09
23	Bhilwara	65.64	62.92	2.72
24	Kota	70.22	66.26	3.96
25	Jhalawar-Baran	71.96	68.65	3.31
	State Total	66.34	63.11	3.23

Source ECI, Constituency wise summary 2019 & 2014 general elections in Rajasthan. SC &# ST constituencies.*

From Table-3, it is identified that overall highest and lowest polling percentage in general elections 2019 is recorded in SC reserved constituencies Ganganagar (74.77 %) and lowest in Karauli-Dholpur (55.18 %) respectively. If we compare the polling percentage of Phase I, Barmer (73.3 %) and Pali (62.98 %) stands highest and lowest respectively. It is Ganganagar and Karauli-Dholpur which will be first and last in the next phase.

Mid April the mercury skyrocketed to 45° degree in temperature, yet the voter turn-out in western Rajasthan (Phase I) is impressive as none of these parliamentary seats recorded less than 60% polling

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percentage. Bikaner (59.43 %), Bharatpur (59.11 %) and Karauli-Dohlpur (55.18 %), all the three SC reserved seats recorded less than 60% of voting. Among general seats Chittorgarh (72.39 %) and Jhunjhunu (62.11 %) stood first and last respectively. In ST constituencies, Banswara (72.9%) and Dausa (61.5%) stood first and last.

If polling percentage in 2019 is correlated to 2014 general elections, Ajmer (-1.41 %) is the lone constituency with a decrease in polling percentage in 2019 and the highest is recorded in Jodhpur (6.34 %). An increase in polling percentage of 3.68% in Phase I, and 3% in Phase II from 2014 to 2019, and overall escalation of 3.23 %.

Analysis

Opinion polls (India TV, Republic TV & ABP News) predicted 8-13 parliamentary seats to INC. Exit polls (India Today & Axis My India) forecasted for 23 BJP seats, a surprise for INC as within six months voters shifted from what they preferred in assembly elections. The Hindu-CSDS Lokniti predicted the repeat of a similar outcome what the public delivered five years ago.

Four reasons can be cited as to why BJP bagged 24 seats and other national parties failed even to capture one. Failure of INC led state government to implement farm loan waiver, interim budgets soaps to the farmers by center, providing relaxation of 10% to economically weaker sections among general candidates and infusing nationalism among the public are the factors contributed for BJP victory in Rajasthan.

Failure of Congress

Congress that came to power with 100 assembly seats failed to transform the popularity in parliamentary elections. Rajasthan became the third state along with Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh to announce a loan waiver up to ₹ 2 Lakh. Nearly 2.19 million beneficiaries were identified and 1.68 million were issued waiver certificates by April 2019 (Tiwari, Economic Times, 05/04/2019). The loan waiver was implemented to the farmers who have debts between ₹ 50-15000. It covers 32% of the farmers. 3.2% were lying between ₹ 5000-10,000.

BJP led opposition was lucky to propagate that loan waiver covers all banks i.e, nationalized and cooperative banks. Even media too promoted that loan waiver means debts taken by farmers from all institutions.

Government never took the initiative to clear the confusion that was created among the cultivators as where the loan waiver is being implemented? To the utter disappointment of farmers, waiver was applied to loans drawn from the cooperative banks not from the nationalized institutions. It is hardly 5% of cultivators who are covered under the waiver scheme having debts above ₹ 1lakh (Sharma, Economic Times, 4/3/2019).

INC as a party and in government failed to communicate the common peasants regarding the implementation of farm loan waiver. Coupled with poor loan waiver scheme that assisted only to micro debts, insufficient minimum support prices to cash crops and overproduction of garlic in the Hadoti region, congress government in the state faced the ire of cultivators. According to the 2011 Government of India census, Rajasthan has 75.11% of the rural population and 62% of them depend on the farm sector. Improper implementation of this farm scheme created considerable vacuum between government and public, what BJP wanted. The support which the INC procured in assembly elections couldn't be carried to the parliament elections.

The interim budget February 2019 proposed major initiatives to the farm sector building confidence among the agriculturalists. PM Kisan Samman Nidhi that provides ₹ 6,000/year in three equal installments to the small and marginal families having combined land holdings up to 2 hectares. Pension of ₹ 3000/month under PM Shram Yogi Mandhan injected much-needed confidence over BJP by the farming sector.

EWS and Minorities

Economically weaker Sections were provided 10% of reservation (103rd Amendment Act) in public sector recruitment and government led educational institutions by NDA government just before the notification of general elections 2019. It is here BJP secured confident support from the general public. Congress got the support of SCs and Muslims. Brahmins, Baniya, Rajput, Other Backward Classes (OBC) and dominant caste among them Jat supported BJP. Un-reserved public though small in percentage preferred BJP as they were provided relaxation which was a futile attempt tried way back in early 1990's.

Approximately 50% of the population who constitutes OBC and Jats, the majority of them are agrarian favoured BJP as the state government failed to address their distress. BJP didn't give the ticket to a single Muslim candidate, yet the party won in Muslim dominated parliamentary seats Tonk-Sawaimadhopur, Ajmer and Churu. It shows

Pehlu Khan's issue was diluted in the mind of Rajasthan Muslim voters. Unified opposition raised the issues like cow vigilantism, oppression of Minorities and Hindutva ideology of Rightwing groups hardly has any effect on the voting behaviour.

Nationalism

No other national party has raised the concept of nationalism what BJP led NDA has created since coming to power in 2014. If anyone disagrees with BJP and its ideology they were branded as anti-national, slogan Bharat Mata ki Jai, award wapasi, press restrictions, murders of left-wing groups, arrest on sedition laws of anti rightwing individuals and finally those who are not satisfied with BJP they can go to Pakistan are the issues associated with BJP during its 5 year tenure.

Opposition devised a strategy to infuse that in the guise of nationalism, BJP forcefully rubbing its saffron's principles on Indian citizens and trying to weaken those who resist them. Besides the retaliation carried out by the Indian army under Balakot strikes (Pakistan denies any such attack), government ferried the required amount of enthusiasm among the patriotic Indians. BJP and its supportive media were successful in linking the strikes to nationalism and converting the electoral verdict in favour of ruling party.

Though the Balakot strikes have very little impact on southern states, it is effective in northern and western India. These regions are prone to attacks since ancient times, bordered to Pakistan and the majority of them contributed to the Indian army. BJP successfully injected the nationalistic fervor among them. Rajasthanis didn't believe what opposition propagated the strikes as an electoral gimmick and they voted in favour of the ruling party at the center. Local issues were submerged at the cost of nationalism.

Concluding Remarks

INC failure of forming alliances with RLTP, anti-saffron and other smaller parties is also responsible for BJP's victory. From the voting pattern, it is observed that regional matters carried light in weight before national interests. Saffron party was fortunate to regain upper caste support which it lost six months before in assembly elections. Verdict disappointed the majority of opposition parties which united under the banner of Modi Mukta Bharat. Internal squabble within the congress is one among many factors of INC loss. The gap between the older generation (CM) and newer (Deputy CM) lead to a power struggle which

reflected in the electoral verdict. Last but not the least the charisma of Prime Minister Modi and the meticulous electoral strategy of party president (Amit Shah) lead for a decisive win for BJP in general elections 2019.

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- [2] NDA (1999-04) didn't complete full tenure. Vajpayee went for premature elections 6 months before the schedule.
- [3] Hadoti region comprises Kota, Baran, Bundi and Jhalawar districts of Rajasthan.

- [4] Covers south and west Rajasthan i.e., Hadoti, Mewar and Marwar regions. (Ajmer, Banswara, Barmer, Bhilwara, Chittorgarh, Jalore, Jhalawar, Jodhpur, Kota, Pali, Rajsamand, Tonk-Sawaimadhopur, & Udaipur constituencies).
- [5] Spreads across North and East Rajasthan i.e., Shekhawati, Brij and Mewar regions. (Ganganagar, Bikaner, Churu, Jhunjhunu, Sikar, Jaipur –Rural, Jaipur, Alwar, Bharatpur, Dausa, Nagaur, & Karauli-Dholpur constituencies).
- [6] Ganganagar, Karauli-Dholpur, Bikaner and Bharatpur
- [7] Dausa, Udaipur and Banswara