

Fig. 2

Fig.2 : Consistency in the seats won by the BJP: 1989-2004 (See page 66 for text)

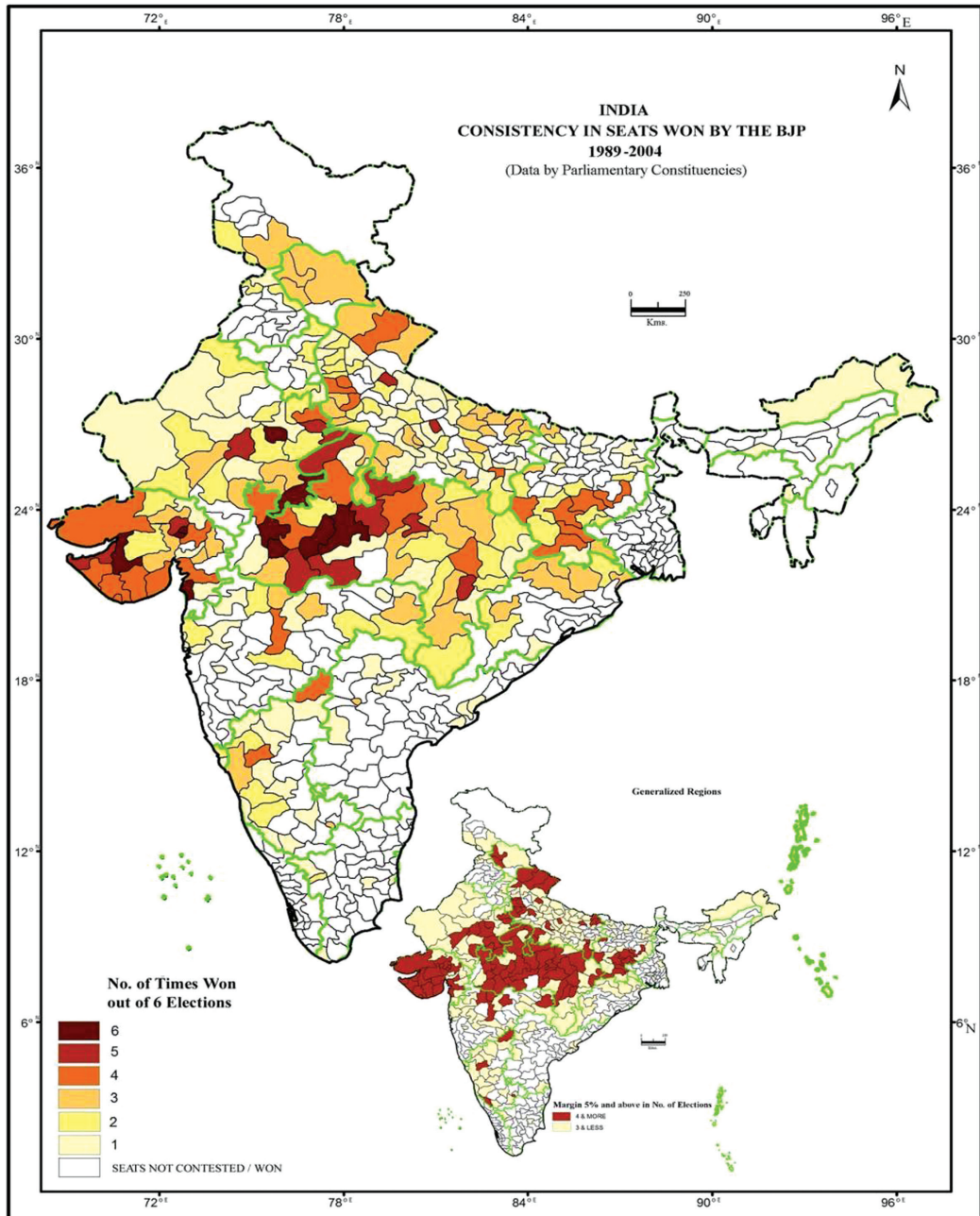


Fig. 3

Fig.3 : Consistency in the seats won (in number of time) by the BJP: 1989-2004
(See page 66 for text)

Trends and patterns of seats Won by the BJP in Indian Parliamentary Elections (1984-2004): A Geographical Analysis

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Abstract

The paper analyses the trends and patterns of seats won by the BJP in Indian parliamentary elections (1984-2004) which examines the geographical spread of the party. The constituency-wise analysis of the seats won by the BJP reveals that the main supporting area of the party was North India in general and Hindi Speaking States in particular. Outside this region, the state of Gujarat has emerged the key state for the party. The party performed appreciably well in the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka. Recently the party also has shown its presence in North-Eastern States and in Orissa.

Key Words: 'Indian Parliamentary elections', BJP, Hindu Nationalism, Secular Nationalism

Introduction

Among the many Indian political parties claiming to uphold Hindu nationalism, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is the most significant one in the contemporary political scene. As a concept, Hindu nationalism has been defined as a feeling of pride in the ancient glory of the Hindu culture and tradition. Although as a concept, Hindu nationalism is centuries old but the scale at which it has been aligned with politics is a new phenomenon in Indian politics. At present the BJP is the main articulator of this conception. Over the period of time, this party has become one of the largest political parties in the country, challenging the Indian National Congress which uphold a form of secular nationalism and held sway over the Indian politics for a long period. The controversy over the dual membership of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh

members as members of the party and that of the R.S.S. (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) in the Janata 2 regime was the deciding factor behind the establishment of BJP as an independent party. With its new incarnation as Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from Bharatiya Jana Sangh, entered into the mainstream of Indian politics and is continuing up till now. Taking the whole span of period (1984 to 2004), it would not be wrong to say that its electoral gains were highly considerable.

Methodology

The detailed constituency level analysis of seats won for the BJP has been carried out for seven parliamentary elections, spanning over 20 years of Indian politics—1984, 1989, 1991, 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2004. The spatial patterns of seats won by the party are examined at the unit of parliamentary

constituency with the help of tables and maps for the selected seven parliamentary elections. Wherever required such patterns are also examined at the unit of state and region for testing the regional character of the party. Among the cartographic techniques, choropleth method is used to show the patterns of the party's seats won. Bar diagram and histogram are also used to show the trends in seats won by the party.

For all the elections under study, the source of data remained the election reports as published by the Election Commission of India.

Trends and patterns of seats won

For a political party which could win only two seats in 1984, the period that followed was quite astounding (Fig.1). In the next election it won 85 seats and this upward trend continued in the elections of 1991

(120 seats), 1996 (161 seats) and 1998 (182 seats). In 1999, the party seats tally was similar to that of 1998 election (i.e. 182 seats). However, in 2004, the party had experienced a loss of 44 seats.

In terms of seats won, the party was last in the ladder of seven national political parties in 1984. The BJP's electoral debacle in the 1984 parliamentary polls was indeed tragic. The party blamed the ruling party for making clever use of the situation “resulting from operation Blue-Star, the ghastly assassination of Indira Gandhi and bloody riots following the assassination” (Puri, Geeta, 1992). However, in the next election, its position was raised to third place (85 seats) after the Congress (197 seats) and the Janata Dal (143 seats). “The 1989 elections allowed the BJP to improve its representation throughout North India and in Maharashtra, where its association

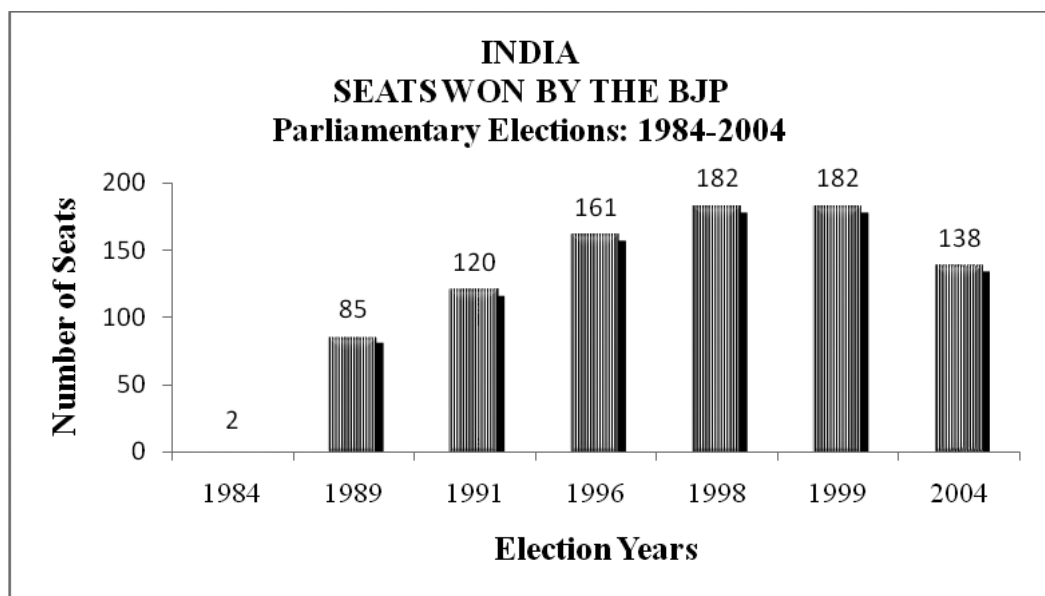


Fig.1 : Seats won by the BJP in Parliamentary elections: 1984-2004

with the Shiv Sena helped it to obtain 23.7% of the vote.....” The situation was evidently much more favourable in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, where it won respectively 12 seats out of 12, 13 out of 25, 3 out of 4 and 27 out of 40” (Jaffrelot, C., 1996). Further in 1991, with 120 seats it became the second ranking party, after the Congress (232 seats). The BJP's growing strength over the geographical space was quite noticeable in this election. “Barring Himachal Pradesh, its gain was in the entire Hindi-Heartland. There was hardly any doubt that this gain was largely on account of the Ram Temple agitation and the tirade against the so-called „minorityism” (Ghosh, Partha S., 1999). It became the largest party in 1996 (161 seats) and pushed the Congress to the second spot (140 seats). During this election, in the absence of any wave in favour of the BJP, two factors were mainly responsible for its impressive seat gains. “First, was the ability of the party to forge pre-election alliances with other parties, i.e., the Samata Party in Bihar, Haryana Vikas Party in Haryana and Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. Secondly, the party also succeeded in consolidating its support among the upper castes while fracturing the votes of the OBCs” (Kantha, Parmod K., 1997).

The party maintained its status of being the largest political party in 1998 (182 seats) and 1999 (182 seats) also. The seat adjustments during 1998 elections provided the BJP with crucial seats from its allies in regions where it formerly had no base. The party's pre and post-election coalition alliances enabled it to achieve a majority

in the Lok Sabha. “The party enjoyed 21, 30 and 6 seats from its pre-poll allies..... Following the elections, the BJP gained the support ofthe Telegu Desam Party (TDP) in Andhra Pradesh led by Chandra Babu Naidu- formerly a strong constituent of the UF- and a few Independents, which added 22 seats and a slender majority in the parliament to the BJP-led coalition” (Pai, Sudha, 2001). The BJP's repeated performance in 1999 elections by winning an identical number of seats was a proof of renewal of the mandate for the Vajpayee government. Studies have shown that the BJP has become a formidable national party within a short period. It stepped into “the mantle of the Congress by trying to become an umbrella organization by accommodating diverse cleavages and at the same time binding them with its distinctive ideological cement” (Appiah, P., 2004).

In 2004, however, the BJP was shifted to the second place (138 seats) by the Congress (145 seats). Despite the decline in 2004, the overall trend clearly indicates that the BJP with the passage of time has managed to create its place among the national political parties in the country.

Consistency in the seats won by the BJP

The analysis on the consistency of seats won by the BJP indicates that out of the total 543 constituencies there were 248 (249 from 1984 to 2004) constituencies never won by the party from 1989-2004. This indicates that the party victories were basically restricted to rest of the 295 constituencies. The detailed analysis

of these 295 constituencies reveals that there were only 100 constituencies won by the party 4 or more times and in 195 constituencies its victories were either 3 times or less (Fig.2) (see page 61 for fig 2).

The generalized map shows that the constituencies where the party had won 4 or more times are from Madhya Pradesh (27), Uttar Pradesh (22), Gujarat (17), Rajasthan (9), Bihar (9), Maharashtra (6), Karnataka (4), Delhi (4), and Himachal Pradesh (2). In terms of regions, there were only 4 such constituencies from South India. On the other hand, there were 73 such constituencies from the Hindi Speaking States. The 100 constituencies won by the party 4 or more time include 20 constituencies won by the party 6 (out of 6) times. There were 32 constituencies

won by the party 5 (out of 6) times and the remaining 48 constituencies were won by the party 4 times (Fig.3) (see page 62 for fig 3). The 20 constituencies won by the party in all the elections (1989-2004) include nine constituencies from Madhya Pradesh (Bhind, Damoh, Hoshangabad, Bhopal, Vidisha, Shajapur, Indore, Ujjain, and Mandsaur), six constituencies from Gujarat (Rajkot, Dhandhuka, Ahmednagar, Gandhinagar, Broach, and Surat), three constituencies from Rajasthan (Jaipur, Bayana, and Jhalawar) and one constituency each from Uttar Pradesh (Bareilly) and Delhi (South Delhi). In majority of the cases, constituencies won by the party five and four times were adjacent to the constituencies won six times.

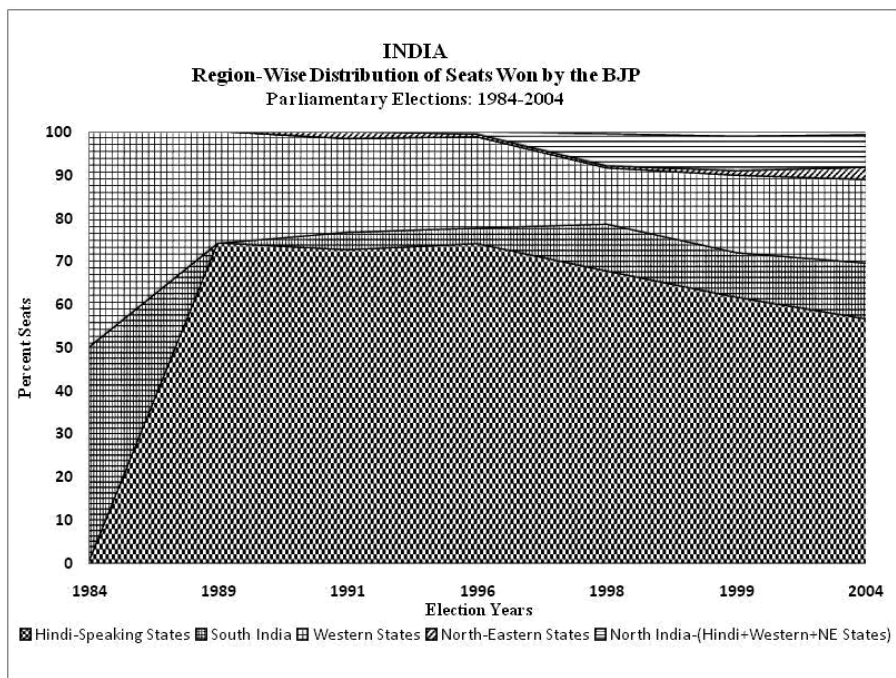


Fig.4 : Region-wise distribution of seats won by the BJP in Parliamentary elections: 1984-2004

Regional Analysis of the seats won by the BJP

The regional analysis of the seats won by the BJP was important to test the opinion people hold that the BJP is a party of North India in general and Hindi-Speaking States in particular. The analysis of time series data in terms of seats won by the party has revealed that the results are not in contravention to the general feeling of the people (Fig.4). Barring the 1984 election when the party could win 2 seats only, the share of North India in total seats won by the party remained more than 85 percent. It was 100 percent in 1989 and more than 95 percent in 1991 and 1996. In the later elections, however, a decline was recorded in the share of this region. The share of this region was 86.59 percent in 2004. In contrast to North India, the share of South India has shown an increasing trend. From 1989, when the party could win a single seat in South India, the share of this region in 2004 was 13.04 percent (18 seats). The analysis has shown that in the North India, the main supporting area for the party was the Hindi Speaking States. The share of this region was about 75 percent in 1989. It remained more than 70 percent in 1991 and 1996, thereafter, it recorded a continuous decline. It was 67.58 percent in 1998, 61.53 percent in 1999 and 56.52 percent in 2004 (Fig.4). This decline in the performance of the party in the Hindi Speaking region was basically associated with capturing of the electoral space by other political parties in Uttar Pradesh—the largest constituent among the Hindi-Speaking States. In 1998, out of the total 85 seats in Uttar Pradesh,

the party wise distribution of seats won was as follows: BJP (57 seats), SP (21), BSP (4) and others (3). In 2004, for comparison, it was BJP 13 seats (-44 from 1998), SP 36 (+15), BSP 19 (+15), Others 7 (+4) and the Congress 10 (+10). Outside the Hindi Speaking States, the party has shown its signs of presence in North Eastern States (nil in 1989 to 4 seats in 2004). The party performed consistently well in Western States (22 seats in 1989 to 27 seats in 2004). Among the Western States, the state of Gujarat has emerged as a secure area for the party. The state of Orissa has also shown its inclination towards the BJP.

Conclusion

On the basis of various criteria used for analyzing the consistency in the seats won by the BJP, the following points can be summed up:

1. In terms of seats won, the party was at seventh spot in 1984 which rose to third place in 1989, second place in 1991. It became the largest political party in 1996 and maintained its status in 1998 and 1999 also. In 2004, however, it was relegated to the second spot by the Congress;
2. In the country about 46 percent constituencies (249) were never won by the party. Of the region's total number of constituencies, the share of such constituencies for the party was 36.74 percent in North India, 74.24 percent in South India. It was 19.91 percent in the Hindi Speaking States and 70.83 percent in North-Eastern States;

3. Of the 295 constituencies won by the party at different times, there were 100 constituencies won 4 or more times. These include 27 constituencies from Madhya Pradesh, 22 from Uttar Pradesh, 17 from Gujarat, 9 each from Rajasthan and Bihar, 6 from Maharashtra, 4 each from Karnataka and Delhi, and 2 from Himachal Pradesh;
4. There were 20 constituencies won by the party in all the six elections held from 1989-2004. These include nine constituencies from Madhya Pradesh (Bhind, Damoh, Hoshangabad, Bhopal, Vidisha, Shajapur, Indore, Ujjain, and Mandsaur), six constituencies from Gujarat (Rajkot, Dhandhuka, Ahmednagar, Gandhinagar, Broach, and Surat), three constituencies from Rajasthan (Jaipur, Bayana, and Jhalawar) and one constituency each from Uttar Pradesh (Bareilly) and Delhi (South Delhi);
5. In terms of seats won at regional level, the party was at its best in North India in general and Hindi Speaking States in particular. The share of North India in the total number of seats won by the party remained more than 85 percent. The party performance has, however, improved in South India also. From one seat in 1989, the party won 18 seats in 2004 in South India;
6. Outside the Hindi-Speaking States, the party performed appreciably well in Gujarat and shown its presence recently in North-Eastern States and in Orissa;
7. The spatial analysis of the BJP candidates as runner-up candidates indicates that whereas in 1984 when the party could win only two seats, there were 102 seats where its candidates were runner-up. Of these 97 were from North India (75 from Hindi Speaking States) and the remaining 5 from South India. The number of runner-up candidates was maximum in 2004 (i.e. 132) when the party had experienced a loss of 44 seats from 1999 elections. Majority of the runner-up candidates for the party were from North India and more specifically the Hindi-Speaking States. The state wise analysis of runner-up candidates reveals that in addition to the Hindi Speaking States and Western India, the party is giving stiff competition in the state of Karnataka. The party is also in the process of creating its own space in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Assam.

In nutshell this can be summarized that by all means undertaken for analyzing the electoral performance of the BJP, it was found that the party's core area of strength was the Hindi-Speaking heartland. From this region, the core states for the party were Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar (Jharkhand area) and Delhi. Keeping in view the party's past record in the region it can be generalized that the party will continue to receive support from this region in near future also. However, it is difficult to draw the same prediction for the party in the case of Uttar Pradesh. The reason

being that the political space of the state is sharply divided between the Congress, the BJP, the Samajwadi Party and the BSP. With the latter two parties having their strong electoral bases around certain caste and religious groups, and the Congress seriously searching for its lost electoral ground, the space for the BJP is certainly not going to be easy to maintain and extend in the state.

The study, however, has also revealed that through organizing various *yatras*, agitations, making flash changes in its policies (putting various controversial agendas at the back), working with different regional parties, the party certainly has created space for itself beyond the Hindi Speaking States. The party has emerged as a strong electoral force in the states of Gujarat and Karnataka. In certain states its performance largely depends on the working of its alliance with regional parties viz. Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Punjab and Haryana. The party is also working seriously for gaining some space in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and North-Eastern States.

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