

INTERNAL SPIRIT OF OPTIMISM AND FOREIGN POLICY READJUSTMENT

BACKGROUNDS AND PERSPECTIVES ON THE NEW INDIAN GOVERNMENT

Lars Peter Schmidt / Malte Gaier

On 16 May, the results of the national elections, which lasted from 7 April to 12 May, were announced. The former opposition party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), won a clear victory. With 282 seats, it achieved its strongest result since its establishment in 1980 and the highest percentage of votes by a single party since 1984.¹ Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat and the leading candidate for the BJP and its coalition, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), is now the new Prime Minister and head of the Government of India.² By contrast, the former incumbent party, the Indian National Congress (INC), suffered its worst defeat since India was founded in 1947, winning only 44 parliamentary seats.³

According to the Election Commission, approximately 815 million Indians were eligible to vote for 9,667 candidates⁴ for 543 parliamentary seats, with approximately 114 million of them being first-time voters.⁵ Nationally, voter



Dr. Lars Peter Schmidt is Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in India.



Dr. Malte Gaier is trainee with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in New Delhi.

- 1 | Election Commission of India (ECI), "General Election to Lok Sabha Trends & Result 2014", <http://eciresults.nic.in> (accessed 26 May 2014).
- 2 | Anandiben Patel succeeds him as the new Chief Minister of Gujarat; he served as one of Modi's confidants in the inner circle of the Gujarat BJP.
- 3 | N. 1.
- 4 | "Lok Sabha Polls: Stage Set für Last Phase Voting for 41 Seats on Monday", *Z-News*, 12 May 2014, http://zeenews.india.com/news/general-elections-2014/lok-sabha-polls-stage-set-for-last-phase-voting-for-41-seats-on-monday_931463.html (accessed 26 May 2014).
- 5 | B. Sivakumar, "12 crore first-time voters hold key to 2014 Lok Sabha polls", *The Times of India*, 4 Oct 2013, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/articleshow/23479553.cms> (accessed 26 May 2014).

turnout was 66.4 per cent, the highest voter turnout in the country's history.⁶ In order to ensure a smooth electoral process, a total of eight million election officials and three million security forces were called into action. After the results of the preliminary final polls were made public (a few days before the official election results), the stock market responded positively with a significant increase in the value of the Indian rupee, which temporarily reached its highest level since mid-2013, as well as a rise in the BSE Sensex, the main stock index traded on the Mumbai stock market.⁷ Another noticeable result of the elections is the high proportion of new parliamentarians. 58 per cent of the MPs in the 16th Indian parliament, the Lok Sabha, have been elected for the first time, the highest number seen for over three decades. At the same time, the average age of MPs has slightly decreased. That being said, a major point of criticism of the political culture is yet to be overcome. Many MPs still belong to political families, meaning one can continue to speak of a dynastic principle in Indian politics.⁸

ELECTION REACTIONS AND OUTWARD MESSAGES OF RECONCILIATION

The U.S. held firm to its position of the de facto denial of entry clearance to Narendra Modi that had been in place since 2005 until his election as head of the government.

The leader of the Indian National Congress party, Sonia Gandhi, commented on the outcome of the election quite late: the historic electoral defeat was not the sole fault of the leading candidate – her son – Rahul Gandhi, but this “collective failure” necessitates an internal reform of the party in the coming years and a return to the party's old policy agenda. Until the results of the election were made public, the U.S. held firm to its position of the de facto denial of entry clearance to Narendra Modi that had been in place since 2005 until his election as head of

6 | Saugar Sengupta, “Polls End: TMS Goons Run Riot in Bengal”, *The Daily Pioneer*, 13 May 2014, <http://dailypioneer.com/todays-newspaper/polls-end-tmc-goons-run-riot-in-bengal.html> (accessed 26 May 2014).

7 | Rajkumar K. Shaw and Santanu Charkoborty, “India's Nifty Stock-Index Futures Drop before Election Results”, *Bloomberg*, 16 May 2014, <http://bloomberg.com/news/2014-05-16/india-s-nifty-stock-index-futures-drop-before-election-results.html> (accessed 26 May 2014).

8 | Leading this charge is the AIADMK of Tamil Nadu with 92 per cent new MPs. Cf. “Watershed: More New than Old in Lok Sabha after 3 Decades”, *Hindustan Times*, 23 May 2014.

the government.⁹ At the outset of the election, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had already reiterated that his country would impartially recognise a democratically legitimised Modi government and, together with him, would want to promote bilateral rapprochement efforts that have recently faltered. Modi issued an invitation to all heads of state and government of neighbouring SAARC countries for his swearing in as the new Prime Minister of India on 26 May. This is a unique step in India's history, especially from an elected but not yet inaugurated prime ministerial candidate. In doing so, Modi laid out a highly regarded symbol of reconciliation before the start of his term by inviting Afghan President Hamid Karzai, the Prime Minister of Nepal, Sushil Koirala, who was just recently elected in February, and Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to New Delhi along with the Pakistani President; in short, heads of Governments of SAARC neighbouring states whose foreign policy relationships with India have been regularly dominated by tensions in the past.



Congratulations on the victory of the BJP leadership: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Minister of Interior Rajnath Singh. | Source: © KAS India.

9 | Shortly after Modi's victory, U.S. President Barack Obama called to congratulate and invited him to Washington for talks. According to media reports, the meeting will take place in September. As head of government, Modi would now receive an A-1 visa for entry clearance into the U.S.

With this offer of rapprochement primarily directed at Pakistan which underpins the reconciliation plans that already featured in Modi's election campaign but which shifted the onus of decision-making on India-Pakistan relations to the Sharif administration, the new government has skilfully issued a political signal: the fear expressed by many intellectuals and commentators of a split in Indian society under a radicalised Hindu nationalist BJP government, which appears to be susceptible to the ideology of rightist groups such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Organisation, RSS) or Vishva Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council, VHP),¹⁰ is invalidated for the time being by the new government's messages of reconciliation to the country's minorities, particularly India's Muslim population. However, protest against Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa's participation in the swearing-in ceremony has been criticised by the Tamil regional parties, AIADMK and DMK. Under the previous United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in India, they had already tried to enforce a policy of Indian isolation with regard to Sri Lanka's government, who has been accused of various war crimes and massacres of Tamils during the Sri Lankan civil war.¹¹ While the government was being formed, commentators reiterated that the long demanded regional realignment of Indian foreign policy under Modi – the first prime minister born in an independent India – should now take on more concrete form than it has in recent years.¹²

10 | Alongside the RSS, the VHP is the most important organisation among the Hindutva groups. Both originated in the 1920s as a response to the political mobilisation of pro-British forces perceived to be dominant, as well as the Indian National Congress' demands for independence. Two things must be noted regarding the RSS as an important BJP base: on the one hand, the outcome of the election has confirmed Modi as a leadership figure. On the other hand, the formation of the cabinet indicates that the new Prime Minister will seek to marginalise the RSS.

11 | "Narendra Modi's invite to Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa not acceptable: DMK", *The Times of India*, 23 May 2014, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/articleshow/35508763.cms> (accessed 26 May 2014). In addition, Chief Minister of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee declined to participate, citing other commitments, in protest of the invitation of Bangladesh's head of state.

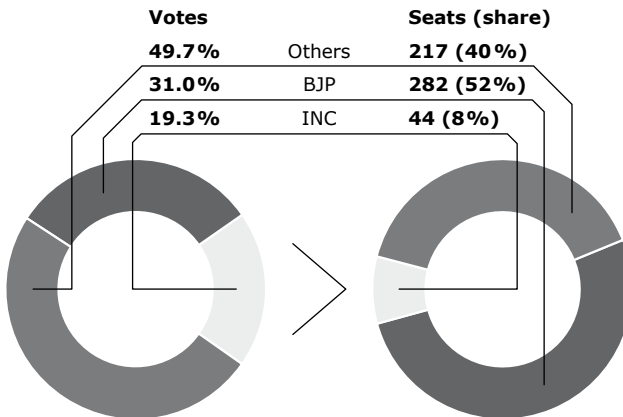
12 | "Indian media: Modi's foreign policy 'masterstroke'", *BBC*, 22 May 2014, <http://bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-27514160> (accessed 26 May 2014).

ANALYSIS OF ELECTION RESULTS

Indian MPs are elected by a first-past-the-post system, which leads to “(intentional) distortion” “because the winning MPs’ parties are under-represented in Parliament as measured by the number of votes. The defeated candidates’ parties are equally under-represented, since their votes will no longer be considered.”¹³ In the elections for the 16th Lok Sabha, the BJP was able to accumulate a total of 31 per cent of the vote, whereas the INC achieved a share of only 19 per cent of the vote. The BJP availed itself of the majority vote with around 60 per cent of the vote in Gujarat, Modi’s home state and the state with the highest share of the vote, and in Tamil Nadu as the state with the lowest share (approximately five per cent), the BJP benefited from the first-past-the-post system.¹⁴

Fig. 1

Proportion of votes according to first-past-the-post and in parliamentary seats



Source: ECI, n. 1.

The BJP’s electoral success came as no surprise and can be attributed to the following factors: an intensified sentiment of wanting to vote out the Congress in recent months, a concentrated personalisation of the BJP election campaign focused on Modi, which is why the outcome of the elections

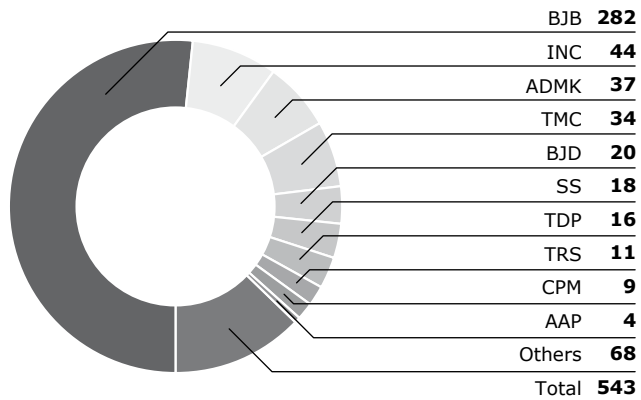
13 | Christian Wagner, *Das politische System Indiens: Eine Einführung*, Wiesbaden, 2006, 148.

14 | Adam Ziegfeld, “India’s election isn’t as historic as people think”, *The Washington Post*, 16 May 2014, <http://wapo.st/1pfdJ1R> (accessed 26 May 2014).

is seen as his own victory. Already last year, the party's election campaign had focused exclusively on the top candidates. Key issues such as inclusive economic growth, job creation, improving infrastructure and combating corruption were presented to voters exclusively in connection with Modi's accomplishments. The Indian media – especially television as the main medium – had contributed to Modi's popularity in the primary election campaign for their part and helped him achieve a record media presence in India through contributions and broadcasting time.¹⁵

Fig. 2

Distribution of seats by party in the Lok Sabha



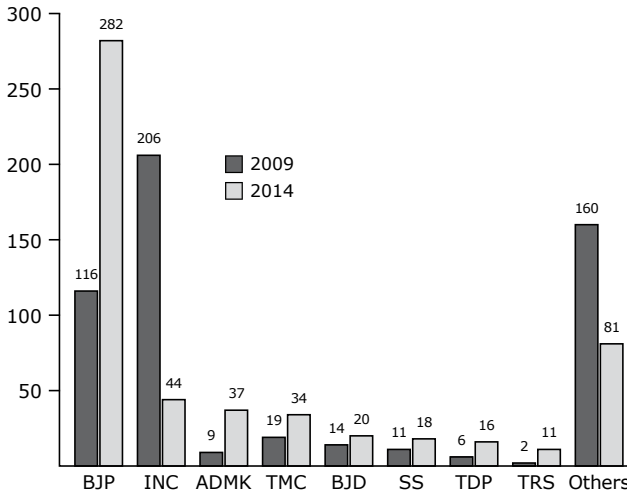
- Indian National Congress (INC)
- All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK)
- All India Trinamool Congress (TMC)
- Biju Janata Dal (BJD)
- Shiv Sena (SS)
- Telugu Desam Party (TDP)
- Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS)
- Communist Party of India (CPM)
- Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)
- Bharatiya Janata Party (BJB)

Source: ECI, n. 1.

15 | "Modi got most prime-time coverage: study", *The Hindu*, 8 May 2014, <http://thehindu.com/elections/loksabha2014/article5986740.ece> (accessed 26 May 2014).

Fig. 3

Distribution of seats in the 2009 and 2014 parliamentary elections



Source: ECI, n. 1.

As a former tea salesman from humble circumstances and a member of the lower Ghanchi caste, 64-year-old Modi also succeeded in credibly presenting himself as a man of the people.¹⁶ In contrast to the Nehru-Gandhi family, who are perceived as elitist, he has no political dynastic roots. Even Modi's debatable role as Chief Minister of Gujarat during the anti-Muslim riots in 2002, where some 1,000 Muslims were killed by mob violence, could not detract from his popularity. At the time he and his government were alleged to have deliberately delayed the intervention of the security forces. Local and international protests forced the Indian government to set up a commission to investigate the incidents. As a result, Modi resigned from his office as Chief Minister, but was re-elected as head of government as part of the BJP's victory in the next elections and as a result of his unfractured popularity. The EU have kept their distance from Modi with an unspoken boycott, as has the U.S. by formally denying him entry clearance, even though the commission investigating the matter was ultimately

16 | Designated an Other Backward Caste (OBC) by the government 1994.

unable to implicate him.¹⁷ During the campaign, the INC hardly addressed the Gujarat riots. For many analysts, it is clear that the party leadership of the Congress has deliberately avoided this in order not to provoke a counter-attack by the BJP. Such a manoeuvre would have brought into focus the 1984 pogroms directed against the Sikhs of Delhi in response to the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The INC would then have been hard-pressed to explain their failure to manage the crisis under Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.¹⁸



The St. Thomas church in the state of Tamil Nadu: In the province of Kanyakumari, where 44 per cent of the population are Christian, the majority of that group voted for the local BJP candidate Radhakrishnan | Source: Koshy Koshy, flickr ©.

Clearly the hope of the people that a stable government under Modi would have positive effects on the stagnant economy, the employment situation and the country's long delayed political will for reforms won out. It also paid off that Modi consistently avoided using anti-Muslim rhetoric during the election campaign. Instead, he emphasised an interfaith and inclusive approach in the interests of national unity. The election results of the majority Muslim constituencies, some where over 70 per cent voted for the BJP, further show that the majority of Muslim voters regard the

17 | Subhajit Roy, "EU ends ,boycott' of Modi, envoys had lunch with him last month", *Indian Express*, 8 Feb 2013, <http://indianexpress.com/news/eu/1071142> (accessed 26 May 2014).

18 | Ramachandra Guha, "Renown and Rubble – Where, then, does the Congress go from here?", *The Telegraph India*, 17 May 2014, http://telegraphindia.com/1140517/jsp/opinion/story_18348408.jsp (accessed 26 May 2014).

BJP's inter-religious message of reconciliation as credible. This could likewise be the case for other religious minorities: in the southernmost constituency of Kanyakumari (Tamil Nadu), the BJP candidate and party leader in Tamil Nadu, Pon Radhakrishnan, was able to establish himself this time around. In all previous Lok Sabha elections, the voters in this constituency, which has one of the highest Christian populations (44 per cent), had followed the calls of the local Catholic Church leaders to vote for the ruling local government party in Chennai.

The BJP leader in Tamil Nadu was Minister of Youth Affairs in the Vajpayee government and is considered a close confidant of Modi's. Since the 1990s, Radhakrishnan has been one of the leading figures of the Hindu Munnani. This organisation, which is influential in the Tamil regions in southern India, has dedicated itself to the preservation and defence of Hinduism, including passing a ban on conversion for Christians. Despite his history and despite the Church's calls to choose the party with the most credible concessions to Christians in the region, a majority of Christian voters favoured the BJP candidate, primarily because he avoided the subject of religion and rather emphasised the topics of infrastructure and supporting the Tamil fisheries sector.¹⁹ Overall, the BJP had focused their campaign on Modi's successful economic leadership of Gujarat. Thus the subject of economic reforms, which the electorate deemed a key issue for a future BJP government, were a major influence on voting behaviour.

Despite the Church's calls to choose the party with the most credible concessions to Christians in the region, a majority of them favoured Modi primarily because he avoided the subject of religion.

Initially, Modi faced fierce competition from within the BJP from former party leader Nitin Gadkari²⁰ with vehement opposition to his ascent and official appointment as prime ministerial candidate. Meanwhile, however, he has enjoyed the full loyalty of the next party president and the new Home Minister, Rajnat Singh, who has made an impression as the number two in the power structure of the newly

19 | T.E. Narasimhan, "Division in Christian votes: Modi wave could help BJP in Kanyakumari", *Business Standard*, 24 Apr 2014, http://business-standard.com/article/elections-2014/114042400187_1.html (accessed 26 May 2014).

20 | Nitin Gadkari has been appointed to the cabinet as Minister for Transport and Infrastructure.

inaugurated government. The December 2012 elections in Modi's home state of Gujarat were certainly an important milestone on the way to victory and also a precondition for his nomination as the BJP's leading candidate for the post of prime minister: although he narrowly missed the two-thirds majority that was expected, he was reaffirmed as chief minister for the third time, and this victory was decisive for his jump to the national policy stage.

The 2012 Gujarat elections also served as a testing ground for Modi to promote changes in India's political culture through new methods of campaigning, such as the massive use of new media and public relations: Supported by

Media experts and volunteers from student groups close to the BJP conducted the 2014 primary election campaign and broadcast the appearances of the party leadership digitally in real time.

the U.S. lobbying group Apco Worldwide,²¹ the "Modi brand" was put in place in Gujarat and was disseminated using the television station *NaMo* which was privatised under his leadership, the Internet and mobile technology and in 2012 produced its first resounding successes with spectacular appearances by the candidate flanked by monumental stage shows and 3D hologram projections of the politician.²² In the design of its campaign and the communication of its program, the party remained a technological leader: hundreds of media experts, social media managers and volunteers from student groups associated with the BJP conducted the 2014 primary election campaign²³ and broadcast the appearances of Modi and the party leadership digitally in real time. In the final stages of the primary campaign, the top BJP candidate completed a total of 440 events nationwide and had a significantly

21 | Apco, which had already drafted image campaigns in the past for the governments of Nigeria and Kazakhstan, was consulted by the Gujarat government in 2009 for the "Vibrant Gujarat" investment campaign and, in addition to its location-based advertising for Gujarat, has overseen Modi's election campaigns ever since.

22 | By 1998, the BJP had already become the first political group to address their constituencies via email and to regularly update its website. Adrienne Lee Atterberry, "Nationalism on the Net: Exploring the ideology of India's Bharatiya Janata Party", *Media Studies – Theses*, No. 11, Dec 2012, http://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1010&context=ms_thesis (accessed 26 May 2014).

23 | In the process, the *Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad* Students' League, founded in 1948 (ABVP), found their way into the BJP or the RSS through renowned politicians like Modi himself, Sushma Swaraj or Arun Jaitley.

greater presence than the leading INC candidates or the head of the AAP, Arvind Kejriwal.

Likewise, the major parties went in for door-to-door campaigns to increase voter mobilisation, which the AAP had used for the elections in Delhi in late 2013, engaging some 7,000 volunteers. In contrast, INC commissioned media reports comparatively late, in late 2013 – after clear losses in four of the five states in the last regional elections – and hired Dentsu, a Japanese advertising agency, to run an image campaign for their candidate, Rahul Gandhi, for the equivalent of around 50 million euros.²⁴ In addition, the INC leadership sought the help of international consultants such as Stephanie Cutter, one of the U.S. president's closest confidantes and campaign coordinator for the Obama administration²⁵ and brought in the international PR agency Burson-Marsteller to bring the party's internal media department up-to-date with the clearly superior BJP competition for the primary elections.²⁶ With an estimated total of approximately five billion U.S. dollars spent on the campaigns of all the parties, the 16th Lok Sabha elections tripled the cost of the 2009 elections. In the process they became the most expensive elections worldwide after the 2012 U.S. presidential elections (seven billion U.S. dollars).

VOTING OUT THE CONGRESS GOVERNMENT

The ever so slight positive balance of the last Congress government under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, whose achievements have received a positive response in the

24 | "Congress ropes in Japanese firm for RS 500 cr makeover for Rahul Gandhi", *Daily Bhaskar*, 7 Jan 2014, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/gandhi/1/334891.html> (accessed 26 May 2014).

25 | Rasheed Kidwai, *24 Akbar Road: A Short History of the People behind the Fall and Rise of the Congress*, 2nd edition, 2013.

26 | Akash Deep Ashok, "With Modi, AAP taking early lead, can global PR firms better Rahul Gandhi's poll prospects in 2014?", *India Today*, 7 Jan 2014, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/gandhi/1/334891.html> (accessed 26 May 2014). In addition, in the final weeks of the primary campaign, the TV campaign "Bharat Nirman", a presentation of the UPA government's achievements in rural development, was broadcast nationwide. The total cost of around twelve million euros was borne by the Ministry of Information.

end,²⁷ and INC's poor image have significantly contributed to the air of change in India. Prime Minister Singh's government was unable to provide for a sustainable economic recovery and to combat rampant inflation in the last legislative period, surely also because of the blockade of the opposition and smaller coalition partners in their United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in parliament. Thus, economic growth has more than halved since 2010 from 10.3 per cent to an estimated 4.9 per cent in 2014.²⁸ At the same time, India is struggling with high inflation rates of approximately nine per cent.²⁹ Prices for food and fuel in particular have risen massively and led to dissatisfaction with the government. In addition, leading politicians in the Congress Party have repeatedly been involved in corruption cases. Neither did the INC-led coalition government succeed in implementing necessary economic reforms and making the country more attractive to lenders.



The Congress Party campaigning in Kerala: The less positive balance of the last Congress Government under Prime Minister Singh, as well as the negative image of the party have contributed to a mood for change in India. | Source: Gordon Tour, flickr ©1130.

- 27 | Swaminathan S Anklesaria Aiyar, "History will be kind to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh", *The Times of India*, 15 May 2014, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/news/articleshow/35136406.cms> (accessed 26 May 2014).
- 28 | However, the worst appears to be over and economic recovery is emerging. Cf. The World Bank, "GDP growth (annual %)", 2014, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG> (accessed 26 May 2014).
- 29 | Global Rates, "Inflation 2013 – Übersicht internationale Inflationsraten", 2014, <http://de.global-rates.com/wirtschaftsstatistiken/inflation/2013.aspx> (accessed 26 May 2014).

Rahul Gandhi, 43, currently Deputy INC Chairman, whom the party led by his mother Sonia Gandhi named as their top candidate late – too late in the eyes of many observers – but was never officially nominated by the party, was able to convey the main points at the end of the primary campaign despite sporadic advances. In Amethi, the traditional constituency of the Nehru-Gandhi family in the most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, the BJP had former actress Smriti Irani challenge Rahul Gandhi. Even though Gandhi had won a clear victory in the 2009 elections with 72 per cent of the vote, this time he was only able to narrowly defend his constituency.³⁰ Overall, the 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh, considered decisive for an election victory, served as another surprise when the BJP clearly exceeded all election forecasts and was able to win more than 73 seats. Compared to Modi, Rahul Gandhi is considered politically inexperienced and has never been a formal member of the government. Rahul Gandhi was unable to live up to expectations of modernising the party and particularly of addressing young voters. Even his mother Sonia, who was able to exert considerable influence on the Singh government as chairperson of the Congress, placed little emphasis on the campaign trail. Only in the final phase Rahul Gandhi's sister, Priyanka, was temporarily able to revive the campaign. Just how much the INC leadership will change over the coming years in opposition will ultimately depend on Sonia Gandhi's future role, as her party leadership is set to end in 2015.³¹ Just a few days after the defeat both mother and son offered their resignation of all party offices to the members of the central Congress leadership committee; the committee, however, refused.³² The full scope of the government and the INC being voted out once again became clear in early June when Rahul Gandhi

Rahul Gandhi was unable to live up to expectations to modernise the party and particularly to address young voters.

30 | Rohini Sing, "Lok Sabha polls 2014: Narendra Modi's Amethi rally under Election Commission scanner", *The Economic Times*, 12 May 2014, <http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-05-12/news/49795198> (accessed 26 May 2014).

31 | On the occasion of the appointment of her son Rahul as the Deputy Chairman of the INC in January 2013, the now 68-year-old Sonia Gandhi had announced she would leave politics when she turned 70.

32 | "CWC rejects Sonia Gandhi, Rahul's offer to resign", *The Times of India*, 20 May 2014, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Home/Lok-Sabha-Elections-2014/News/articleshow/35353957.cms> (accessed 26 May 2014).

declined the offer to become chairman of the INC in the opposition in favour of Mallikarjun Kharge, who has scarcely made an appearance within the party hierarchy over the past few years and who did not belong to Sonia Gandhi's inner circle.

Without a single seat from Delhi, the newly founded protest party AAP led by Arvind Kejriwal had to match the Congress and clear the field for the BJP.

The performance of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which had temporary success in the 2013 regional elections for the government of Delhi, is another surprise: without a single seat from Delhi, the newly founded protest party led by Arvind Kejriwal had to match the Congress and clear the field for the BJP, which was able to win all seven seats. Nationally the AAP won just four seats. Kejriwal succumbed Narendra Modi, as did INC candidate Ajay Rai in the Varansi, Uttar Pradesh constituency, which is a safely conservative Hindu stronghold; he also emerged as the strongest candidate by far in Vadodara, Gujarat.³³ Two other regional parties achieved clear gains in the elections and neither party belonged to the two coalition alliances, UPA or NDA: the AIADMK from Tamil Nadu in southern India under Chief Minister Jayalalitha Jayaram won 37 of 39 seats, while its counterpart, the head of government of the state of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, secured 33 of the 40 seats with her Trinamool Congress Party (TMC).

PRESSURE FOR SUCCESS ON THE NEW GOVERNMENT

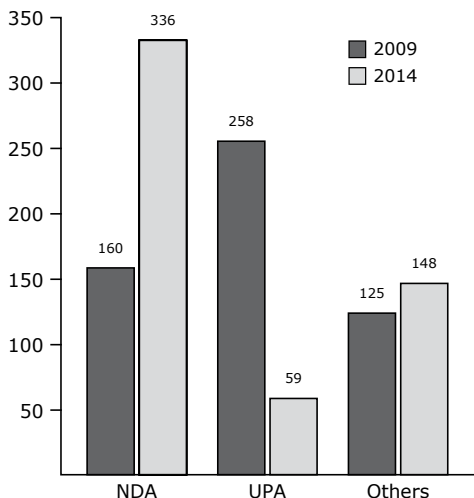
The BJP and Modi are now facing the following challenges as the winners of the election: according to the Indian Constitution, the BJP has been instructed to form a government as the strongest party by President Mukherjee. Despite its absolute majority, it will try to govern in a coalition and expand its existing NDA alliance (after tallying 332 MPs) in the process. It can rely on the support of its coalition partners, such as the Hindu nationalist Shiv Sena Party in the state of Maharashtra (18 MPs) and both of the regional parties from Andhra Pradesh, Telugu Desam Party (16 MPs) and Telangana Rashtra Samithi (13 MPs), which

33 | The loss of all the *Bahujan Samaj Party* (BSP) seats under four-time Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mayawati, whose main constituency are the outcaste classes, was also unexpected.

with the recent splitting of the state of Andhra Pradesh³⁴ may have achieved a clear ascent.

Fig. 4

Share of the vote of the Coalitions in 2009 and in 2014



Source: ECI, n. 1.

The BJP will try to expand its NDA alliance. If they are not only in majority in the Lok Sabha but also in the second chamber of parliament, the Council of State (Rajya Sabha, 245 seats), they could minimise intervention by the opposition in parliamentary functioning, which is still currently under the banner of the UPA coalition with 80 seats but will be re-formed due to the INC's electoral defeat. With 67 elected representatives currently in the upper house, the BJP and its old and new NDA partners also depend on non-coalition support from parties like the BJD, the TRS or the YSR Congress.³⁵ In all probability, the BJP will only be able to reverse this structural minority in the upper house in 2016 when approximately one third of its MPs³⁶ are re-elected at the end of their term.

34 | Now, as of 2 June 2014, to be divided into two states, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh by an Act of Parliament and with the approval of the President of India.

35 | "BJP's minority problem to continue in Rajya Sabha", *The Economic Times*, 20 May 2014, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/35355222.cms> (accessed 26 May 2014).

36 | 233 Rajya Sabha MPs represent the states and are elected by the states proportional to their population size and twelve MPs are appointed by the president.

Before the election, and in spite of the party's ultimately almost complete permeation and commitment ("The Party is Modi") to its top candidate, it remained unclear until the very end whether the inner circles within the party surrounding party bigwigs Lal Krishna Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi and parts of the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), affiliated with the BJP, would be able to form an opposition to Modi within the party after the elections. But Modi's clear victory and the rapid formation of a government currently make this unlikely. In addition, Modi was smart enough – or at least appears to be – to temporarily promote Advani's and Joshi's integration in the new government. Speculation swirling Advani would be appointed as the new Speaker of Parliament and Joshi as a candidate for the Ministry of Defence proved to be wrong. Neither of them was entrusted with a cabinet post. Making Advani chairman of the NDA alliance is unlikely, since Modi himself is seeking this influential position as well as forming the policy framework upon which his government will be formed through his determination in all key positions in the new government.

The new government cabinet line-up was sworn in with the Modi as the new Prime Minister of India.³⁷ As already mentioned in the BJP's election manifesto under the banner of "minimum government, maximum governance", the new government will be leaner: Instead of the previously 81 members of cabinet, due to consolidations and restructuring, the new government will be comprised of 44 posts in addition to the prime minister and probably increase to up to 60 in the next three months. The following leading BJP politicians will be allocated: Arun Jaitley, BJP leader in the Rajya Sabha since 2009, will take over the Ministry of Finance as well as take on temporary double duties in the Ministry of Defence. The previous BJP parliamentary party leader in the Lok Sabha, Sushma Swaraj, who had also already gained ministerial experience in the BJP-led Vajpayee administration (1998 to 2004), is Minister of External Affairs and fits in behind

Instead of the previously 81 members of cabinet, the new government will be comprised of 44 posts in addition to the prime minister and probably increase to up to 60 in the next three months.

37 | Modi had urged that 21 May be the deadline for the formation of a cabinet, which was sharply rejected by the Congress because that day also marked the 23rd anniversary of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Rajnath Singh in third place in the government hierarchy. Overall, the BJP can present a number of experienced senior government officials. Thus former BJP president Venkaiah Naidu is also a part of the inner circle as Minister of Parliamentary Affairs. Gujarat Energy Minister, Saurabh Patel, or Yashwant Sinha, former foreign minister, are on the short list of possible future MPs.



Inauguration of the new Prime Minister on May 27: The clear vote for Modi and the BJP is an expression how people long for a stable government. | Source: Photo Division (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of India) via Narendra Modi ©©©.

The youngest member of the cabinet is the 38-year-old former actress and Deputy BJP Chairman Smriti Irani as Minister of Human Resource Development. Although she narrowly lost the election against Rahul Gandhi in the Gandhis' core constituency and, like Arun Jaitley, has no claim to a seat in the Lok Sabha, both were already considered top candidates for cabinet posts as members of the Rajya Sabha before the elections. Following the appointment of General Vijay Kumar Singh as Minister of State for the North East Region and with competencies of a Minister of state³⁸ under the future Minister of External Affairs Swaraj, a former army chief (2010 to 2012), perhaps India's most popular, is taking the political stage: after his military service and some initial sympathy for the protest movement surrounding Anna Hazare, Kumar only joined the BJP in March this year. He won by a large margin, the nation's

38 | A Minister of State (independent charge) functions as an independent cabinet minister in assigned ministries and reports directly to the Prime Minister. In contrast, a Minister of State is directly attached to a cabinet minister at the State or Union level.

highest after Narendra Modi's dual constituency victory.³⁹ The 74-year-old Dr. Najma Heptulla, who belongs to the elite founding family of the Indian state as the great-niece of independence fighter Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, is the only Muslim cabinet member in the new government and will be responsible for the Ministry of Minority Affairs.⁴⁰

BETWEEN OPTIMISM AND EXPECTATION

Overall, for India and its future development as the most populous country in the world after China, the 2014 parliamentary elections set an important tone that India is a rising economic power and a confident geopolitical regional power: Modi's and the BJP's clear victory primarily conveys the desire of the majority of the country for a stable government, a country that has recently been impacted by a political standstill. As a result, the elections and the change of government have given rise to a clear spirit of optimism that has not been so readily apparent for a long time. At the same time, Modi and his government will begin their official duties under considerable pressure from the expectation to quickly deliver on its campaign promises. Above all, this means determinedly promoting bureaucratic reforms and the fight against corruption, as well as the rapid expansion of infrastructure and the country's energy supply. India's new government must also quickly achieve success in the area of economic reforms: only through a resolute reduction of trade and investment barriers can the Prime Minister increase India's attractiveness to investors and potential trade partners. The main idea for the socially inclusive development of India that was included by the BJP in their election manifesto –

The BJP's clear victory primarily conveys the desire for a stable government, a country that has recently been plagued by a political standstill.

39 | "Gen VK Singh: MoS for Development of North Eastern Region, External Affairs and Overseas Indian Affairs", *India Today*, 26 May 2014, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/modi/1/363625.html> (accessed 26 May 2014).

40 | After she was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1986, she has been re-elected in every election since, but in 2007 ran an unsuccessful campaign as the NDA vice presidential candidate; now she is once again playing a central role in the new cabinet, not least due to her seniority and her prominent Muslim descent.

“Participation for all, development for all!”⁴¹ – will only be fruitful as a result of stable economic growth and modernising the country.

In terms of foreign policy, Modi will be judged on his promise to continue to pursue the course of reconciliation in India’s relations with Pakistan and China that Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee set forth during his time in office. Inviting Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to the swearing-in of the new government was a positive signal in this direction even before Modi took office. However, this diplomatic coup during the most recent idle bilateral rapprochement efforts have raised high expectations that, in the garden of the presidential palace on 26 May and before the eyes of the world, this gesture will emphatically deepen the reconciliation between India and Pakistan. Even if the meeting of the heads of state of India and Pakistan is mainly of symbolic value, Modi’s break with protocol that only after being sworn in does he receive a briefing as Prime Minister by the National Security Council,⁴² the commanders of the armed forces and members of the Joint Intelligence Committee comprised of representatives from all intelligence agencies on the state of bilateral relations was met with great sympathy in India. And finally it should be mentioned that, with regard to Germany’s traditionally good relations with India and the great mutual interest the two countries have in intensifying trade and economic relations, this only stands to gain from serious efforts by the government in Delhi in further cutting red tape, reducing taxation and allowing for greater legal certainty to create an environment that is friendly to investment. How the relationship between the two countries will ultimately be formed can only be evaluated once Modi and his cabinet have settled into their official duties.

41 | BJP, “Election Manifesto 2014. Eek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat” (One India, Excellent India), 7 Apr 2014, <http://bjpelectionmanifesto.com/pdf/manifesto2014.pdf> (accessed 26 May 2014).

42 | The National Security Council (NSC) was established by Atal Bihari Vajpayee himself in November 1998 and has been significantly built up to become the central decision-making body for security issues.