

# Impact of Geography on the Politics of Jammu and Kashmir State

## A Case Study of 2014 Assembly Elections



**Khadam Hussain**

Associate Professor,  
Deptt. of Higher Education,  
Government Degree College,  
Poonch



**Tazeem Akhter**

Student Semester III<sup>rd</sup>,  
Deptt. of Economics,  
University of Jammu,  
Jammu

### Abstract

Andre Siegfried in his monumental work threw ample light on the concept of Electoral Geography way back in 1913. However the publication of a popular monograph by Busteed and *Geography of Elections* by Taylor and Johnston further popularized the theme of elections in politico-geographic studies. Considering the three broad themes of electoral geography viz "Geography of voting", "Geographical Influences in voting" and "Geographical influence on representation", research in India has concentrated on first theme, completely neglecting the other two. This research paper attempts to incorporate the ignored themes and study the voting patterns of four major parties viz PDP, BJP, INC and NC in Jammu and Kashmir, and would study the voting patterns in areas where share of one party has remained steady with the passage of time. The socio-cultural diversity of the state paves the way for the rise of Region-dictated political parties, with strong regional roots, making state politics very complex. When it comes to crystal clear regionalization, the 2014 legislative assembly elections was a historical moment, which clearly delineated the party competitiveness in geographical entities.

**Keywords:** Elections, Geo Politics, Identity Politics, Regions, Religions.

### Introduction

Andre Siegfried in his monumental work threw ample light on the concept of Electoral Geography way back in 1913. However the publication of a popular monograph by Busteed and *Geography of Elections* by Taylor and Johnston further popularized the theme of elections in politico-geographic studies. Considering the three broad themes of electoral geography viz "Geography of voting", "Geographical Influences in voting" and "Geographical influence on representation", research in India has concentrated on first theme, completely neglecting the other two. This research paper attempts to incorporate the ignored themes and study the voting patterns of four major parties viz PDP, BJP, INC and NC in Jammu and Kashmir, and would study the voting patterns in areas where share of one party has remained steady with the passage of time.

### Aims and Objectives

The main aim and objectives of this paper are:

1. To incorporate the concept of Electoral Geography's impacts.
2. To start addressing the research gap on electoral oriented research in J&K.
3. To study the consistent voting pattern of four major parties in J&K.
4. To study how particular areas remained loyal to particular parties.
5. To explore the importance of different geographical bases of support of political party's victory.
6. To delineate the geographical regions of party competitiveness.

### Data Base

The present study is based on the secondary sources of data. Various newspaper clippings, published papers in related field, books and the electoral data by Election Commission of India have been considered for the same.

### Methodology and Techniques

In this particular study, both statistical and cartographic methods have been used to make the research more effective. As a unit of analysis, legislative constituency has been considered rather than a district, there being various legislative constituencies in a single district.

**Finding**

The northern most state of Jammu and Kashmir exhibits diverse and distinct cultures. Regarded as a dissolving vessel of diverse cultures, citizens from dissimilar social practices and religions coexist in three provinces of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. With primarily Hindu populace in Jammu province with considerable Muslim and Sikh population, Kashmir province has Muslims in majority, with Hindus and Sikhs in very minuscule number while Ladakh had mainly Buddhist and Muslim population. Moreover various sub castes and languages are there within religious which distinguish them from each other on the social front. Their identity is internally differentiated. Given the complex nature of diversities, it plays a deciding role in the nature of politics in the state. Identity politics is something that is quite evident in Kashmir province of the state, a reason that may be considered for the mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits, thus becoming a one religion society.

The socio-cultural diversity of the state paves the way for the rise of Region-dictated political parties, with strong regional roots, making state politics very complex. When it comes to crystal clear regionalization, the 2014 legislative assembly elections was a historical moment, which clearly delineated the party competitiveness in geographical entities.

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Political Party	2008	2014
PDP	21	28
BJP	11	25
NC	28	15
INC	17	12
PC	0	2
CPM	1	1
NPP	3	0
PDF	1	1
PPM	1	0
IND	4	3

**Fig: Comparison of voting percentages in 2002 and 2014**

In 2014, out of 87 legislative assembly seats, the PDP party emerged as the leading party in 28 seats, whereas, in other 25 seats BJP emerged as the second leading party, presenting a much fractured mandate. NC got in its kitty 15 seats while INC had to settle only with 12 seats while seven others too scaled up the later. This is in contrary to 2008 legislative elections when PDP won 21 seats , BJP was way back at just 11 seats, NC had won 28 and INC reached the well with 17 seats whiled 9 others took the front.

Population wise, 23 % of votes went to PDP, 22.7% to BJP, NC got 21 % of total while, INC got 18% while others made up the remaining almost 15 % of the total votes.

A more detailed data since 1962 reveals more facts:

Elections	1962	1967	1972	1977	1983	1987	1996	2002	2008	2014
Total Seats	75	75	75	76	75	76	87	87	87	87
National Conference	70	08		47	46	40	57	28	28	15
Congress		61	58	11	26	26	07	20	17	12
BJP	03	03	03			02	08	01	11	25
PDP	PDP Found in 1999. Fought first election in 2002							16	21	28
Others	02	03	14	18	03	08	15	21	10	07

In this paper, degree of party competitiveness has been studied under four categories of competitiveness:

1. One Party Constituencies:  $a \geq 50\%$
2. Two party Constituencies:  $a+b \geq 60\%$
3. Multi –Party Constituencies:  $a+b \leq 60\%$

Where:

a= % share of the leading party in the constituency.

b= % share of the Second party in the constituency.

Coming to the crux of the study, the following table with help squeeze out the whole story.

S. No	Assembly Constituency	People's Democratic Party	Bharatiya Janta Party	Indian National Congress	National Conference
1	Akhnoor	1.63	53.19	41.28	1.09
2	Amirakadal	54.56	6.32	1.47	29.71
3	Anantnag	51.19	3.84	30.02	7.2
4	Banihal	23.10	17.12	30.64	22.54
5	Bhadarwah	22.69	35.32	33.29	1.19
6	Baramulla	43.75	6.32	1.47	N.A.
7	Bijbehra	48.78	3.2	2.6	42.85
8	Bandipora	32.06	0.8	37.68	10.14
9	Bani	3.31	39.13	4.20	25.69
10	Basohli	0.89	53.07	15.68	21.37
11	Batmaloo	42.56	4.42	4.08	27.87
12	Beerwah	25.29	1.64	32.86	34.17
13	Billawar	0.46	58.29	34.17	4.13
14	Bishnah	11.49	37.39	4.63	41.62
15	Budgam	39.70	1.27	0.75	43.76
16	Chadoora	48.25	N.A.	0.71	45.08
17	Chenani	4.44	50.16	19.30	1.81

18	Chhamb	1.09	60.53	35.68	0.39
19	Charar e Sharief	50.84	1.30	1.42	42.85
20	Darhal	31.57	15.46	24.09	25.01
21	Devsar	32.45	6.77	35.08	20.15
22	Doda	3.28	36.62	30.60	24.47
23	Dooru	37.58	2.10	37.25	17.08
24	Eidgah	37.65	N.A.	7.79	41.37
25	Ganderbal	35.26	1.25	5.95	36.38
26	Gandhinagar	8.86	51.17	36.02	0.99
27	Gool Arnas	14.04	31.69	43.52	4.33
28	Gulabgarh	19.95	15.61	32.00	28.76
29	Gulmarg	33.80	N.A.	N.A.	13.65
30	Gurez	3.24	N.A.	47.26	48.28
31	Habba Kadal	8.48	22.21	8.32	42.40
32	Handwara	14.48	N.A.	1.64	35.20
33	Hazratbal	44.86	8.93	3.12	33.33
34	Hiranagar	1.23	69.14	20.11	1.31
35	Homshali Bugh	35.54	5.35	13.40	39.99
36	Inderwal	19.82	27.89	46.93	0.42
37	Jammu East	8.70	61.69	25.72	0.73
38	Jammu West	2.45	70.63	19.27	4.80
39	Kalakote	12.48	38.14	15.90	28.78
40	Kangan	44.50	1.06	1.62	47.11
41	Kargil	27.35	5.10	50.51	27.35
42	Karnah	1.43	39.10	7.88	0.76
43	Kathua	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
44	Khan Sahib	36.57	N.A.	0.92	22.04
45	Khanyar	40.00	4.12	1.26	40.75
46	Kishtwar	10.40	45.37	1.26	40.75
47	Kokernag	42.29	3.20	34.33	14.36
48	Kulgam	38.06	3.65	0.97	15.55
49	Kupwara	34.25	1.10	0.78	24.21
50	Langate	30.60	1.02	1.92	3.21
51	Leh	N.A.	41.34	57.28	N.A.
52	Lolab	41.06	8.14	18.76	22.98
53	Marh	8.14	42.35	18.76	22.98
54	Mendhar	33.92	2.25	11.10	47.74
55	Nagrota	6.67	32.35	7.99	39.02
56	Noorabad	48.36	1.09	2.37	42.11
57	Nowsherra	36.92	49.47	7.07	1.45
58	Nubra	13.66	18.79	37.99	22.37
59	Pahalgam	43.06	3.43	3.80	44.66
60	Pampore	44.37	5.51	11.10	34.81
61	Pattan	40.40	N.A.	12.62	22.63
62	Poonch Haveli	25.56	14.81	13.49	20.96
63	Pulwama	38.55	2.22	5.16	35.13
64	Rafiabad	32.31	1.14	28.10	27.01
65	Raipur Domana	1.88	66.99	23.16	3.77
66	Rajouri	30.63	27.80	27.61	5.55
67	Rajpora	36.94	N.A.	3.92	28.22
68	Ram Nagar	N.A.	55.70	1.68	3.73
69	Ramban	7.79	42.29	9.41	33.34
70	R. Singh Pura	19.59	41.65	5.94	9.48
71	Reasi	N.A.	25.25	21.71	10.84
72	Samba	4.62	53.08	14.11	3.45
73	Sangrama	31.32	N.A.	26.83	17.29
74	Shangus	33.22	4.00	37.07	19.15
75	Shopian	34.19	8.11	6.33	12.66
76	Sonwar	41.87	3.22	2.36	27.85
77	Sonawari	40.02	N.A.	15.01	40.52
78	Sopore	17.75	N.A.	26.38	12.76
79	Suchetgarh	16.67	38.81	18.82	20.51
80	Surankote	12.59	3.22	46.44	34.20

81	Tral	38.56	9.14	11.33	25.79
82	Udhampur	1.35	23.70	1.46	1.69
83	Uri	29.91	2.04	26.72	39.25
84	Vijaypur	3.91	43.44	17.73	29.75
85	Wachi	42.47	2.84	2.50	37.56
86	Zadibal	42.66	1.95	5.00	26.34
87	Zanskar	1.58	14.63	39.57	

Red : BJP Green : PDP Blue : Congress Brown : NC

### One Party Constituencies

In all, there are 18 one party constituencies; 13 in Jammu province, 3 in Kashmir province and 2 in Ladakh province, where a single party obtained more than 50% of the total votes casted. Akhnoor (53.19), Amira Kadal (54.56), Anantnag (51.19), Basohli (53.07), Billawar (58.29), Chenani (50.16), Chhamb (60.53), Charar e Sharief (50.84), Gandhinagar (51.17), Hiranagar (69.14), Jammu East (61.69), Jammu West (70.63), Kargil (50.51), Kathua, Leh (57.28), Rajpur Domana (66.99), Ram Nagar (55.70) and Samba (53.09). Out of these 18 one party constituencies, 13 seats went to BJP all falling in Jammu province, 3 seats went to PDP, all in Kashmir province and the remaining 2 went to INC, both in Ladakh province. This shows a clear regionalization of political parties.

### Two Party Constituencies

There are 48 constituencies where two major parties together made up to be equal or greater than 60% of the total vote share. Bhadarwah (BJP + NC=68.61%), Bijbehra(PDP+NC=91.63%), Bandipora (PDP+INC=69.74%), Bani (BJP+NC=64.82%), Batmaloo (PDP+NC=70.43%), Beerwah (NC+INC=67.03%), Bishnah (NC+BJP=79.01%), Budgam (PDP+NC=83.46%), Chadoora (PDP+NC=93.33%), Devsar (INC+PDP=67.53%), Doda (BJP+INC=67.22%), Dooru (PDP+INC=74.83%), Eidgah (NC+PDP=79.02%), Ganderbal (NC+PDP=71.64%), Gool Arnas (INC+BJP=75.21%), Gurez (NC+INC=95.54%), Hazratbal (PDP+NC=78.19%), Homshali Bagh (NC+PDP=75.53%), Inderwal (INC+BJP=74.82%), Kalakote (BJP+NC=66.92%), Kangan (NC+PDP=91.61%), Khanyar (NC+PDP=80.75%), Kishtwar (BJP+NC=86.12%), Kokernag (PDP+INC=76.62%), Lolab (PDP+NC=64.04%), Marh (BJP+NC=65.33%), Mendhar (NC+PDP=81.66%), Nagrota (NC+BJP=71.37%), Noorabad (PDP+NC=90.47%), Nowsherra (BJP+PDP=86.39%), Nubra (INC+NC=60.36%), Pahalgam (NC+PDP=87.72%), Pampore (PDP+NC=79.18%), Pattan (PDP+NC=63.03%), Pulwama (PDP+NC=73.68%), Rafiabad (PDP+INC=60.41%), Rajpora (PDP+NC=65.16%), Ramban (BJP+NC=75.63%), R.S. Pura (BJP+PDP=61.24%), Shangus (INC+PDP=70.29%), Sonwar (PDP+NC=69.72%), Sonawari (PDP+NC=80.54%), Surankote (INC+NC=80.64%), Tral (PDP+NC=64.35%), Uri (PDP+NC=69.16%), Vijaypur (BJP+NC=73.19%), Wachi (PDP+NC=80.3%) and Zadibal (PDP+NC=69%).

### Multi Party Constituencies

As per this study, in 21 constituencies, no single party got majority of the votes, presenting a much scattered mandate. Banihal, Baramulla, Darhal, Gulabgarh, Gulmarg, Habba Kadal, Handwara, Karnah, Khan Sahib, Kulgam, Kupwara, Langate,

Poonch Haveli, Rajouri, Reasi, Sangrama, Shopian, Sopore, Suchetgarh, Udhampur and Zanskar, where no two parties succeeded in making up the 60% floor of total votes.

	No	Percentage
One party Constituencies	18	20.6 %
Bi party Constituencies	48	55.17%
Multi Party Constituencies	21	24.13%

### Conclusion

All of the BJP seats came from Jammu region as the party drew a blank in the valley, where PDP ruled the roost. Ladakh voted for Congress in three of the total four seats. The BJP polarized the elections, sweeping the Hindu dominated Jammu region winning 25 out of 37 seats but in Kashmir all its candidates lost their deposits. The PDP won its 25 seats from Kashmir and three other seats came from Muslim dominated Poonch, Rajouri and Darhal. Congress was clearly voted by Muslim dominated seats Gool Arnas, Gulabgarh, Surankote, Inderwal and Banihal, failing to get a single seat in Hindu dominated areas of Jammu. The mandate, reflecting the social and geographical diversity of the state has clearly exhibited the vast gulf between the political aspirations of Hindu electorate and those of Kashmir and other Muslim majority areas and cross-regional perceptions, producing a hung assembly with no party getting a majority.

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