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## What Went Wrong in Crucial Bihar Election for Mr. Narendra Modi, Why, What's At Stake and What he Must Do

**Shashanka**  
**Shekhar Panda**

[South Asia Democratic Forum](#) (SADF)

19 Avenue des Arts 2<sup>nd</sup>  
floor, 1210 Brussels,  
Belgium

[info@sadf.eu](mailto:info@sadf.eu)  
[www.sadf.eu](http://www.sadf.eu)

+12 026 834 180;  
+32 2 808 42 08

Reg. Num. BE 833606320

### BIHAR ELECTIONS

Bihar, a highly backward state in India, witnessed the announcement of the results of the election to the state's Legislative Assembly on 8 November, 2015. Bihar is the third largest state (province) by population with a size of 104 million people. It has approximately 67 million registered voters (more than the entire population of France) of which 56.8% voters (9% more than the entire population of Canada) exercised their voting right in this election. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) constituting the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its alliance partners, viz., the Hindustani Awami Morcha Secular (HAMS), Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) and the Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RLSP) have lost to the MahaGathBandhan (MGB) or "The Grand Alliance" constituting Janata Dal United (JDU), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and Indian National Congress (INC).

Out of the 243 assembly constituencies (seats) in the Bihar Legislative Assembly elections that elect a Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) for each constituency in a first past the post system, MGB has won 178 seats while NDA won 58 seats. A state assembly is chosen for a period of five years in India and is controlled by a political party or alliance that has a simple majority in the state assembly (greater than 50% of the seats). Therefore, the MGB now controls the state assembly.

The Chief Minister (CM) would continue to be JDU's Mr. Nitish Kumar with support from RJD, led by Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav, a veteran politician with both national and regional appeal in Bihar, especially the latter.

#### Keywords:

**Indian Politics, Bihar Elections, Narendra Modi, BJP, Nitish Kumar**

Both Mr. Nitish Kumar and Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav are known for their ‘social engineering’ political skills, i.e. attracting votes by appealing to their respective castes which they hail from (the "*Kurmi*", "*Koeri*" for Mr. Nitish Kumar and the "*Yadav*" for Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav). Both parties openly follow a policy of political appeasement of *Muslims* as a religious community. Mr. Kumar has tried to project an additional image of a 'pro-development' leader. However, Mr. Yadav remains a vocal votary of “social justice” driven politics – a sentiment that he reiterated on multiple occasions in the bygone assembly election. “Social justice” is a euphemism for a caste-based reallocation of public goods and services.

## THE CALCULUS OF CASTE

JDU’s Mr. Nitish Kumar has been the CM of Bihar since October 2005 with support from BJP, as he never had a full majority in the state for all these years until now. He was re-elected to his second term owing to the electorate’s approbation of the work of the BJP-supported JDU’s Nitish Kumar led Bihar’s state government in 2010. The wholehearted support of the BJP continued in the second term as well. However, Mr. Nitish Kumar saw the emergence and thereafter the nomination of BJP’s Mr. Narendra Modi as the “*Hindu*” Nationalist (erroneously called “Right wing”) party’s Prime Ministerial candidate for the 2014 General Election to the Lok Sabha in India as a threat to his own Prime Ministerial ambitions as also to his *Muslim* vote-bank. So acerbic was the dislike of Mr. Narendra Modi by Mr. Nitish Kumar that the latter wouldn’t even be seen on the same stage as the former or invite him to an official state lunch. Therefore, sans any regard to the long-standing relationship with BJP, Mr. Kumar broke away from the BJP but continued as the CM with the support of the INC till 2014. Mr. Nitish Kumar resigned, post drubbing in the 2014 Lok Sabha Election in the Lok Sabha constituencies in Bihar, but installed a dummy CM in the name of Mr. Jitin Ram Manjhi, a hitherto relatively unheard of political figure with political base in the “*Ati-pichda-jati*” (“Extremely Backward Caste” or EBC) caste-segment. Keeping the caste configuration in mind, Mr. Kumar wanted to be seen as being supportive of and a champion of the EBC constituency. However, the real purpose was to install a pliant CM who would be remotely controlled. The purpose was well served, many would say.

A brief reflection on the leader of the RJD, Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav, famous for his clownish one-liners and comic antics, is in order. Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav, a Bihar political veteran and a self-proclaimed satrap of the ‘*Yadav*’ caste, ruled the state as a CM for 7.5 years till 1997. He was subsequently arrested on charges of rampant corruption in what came to be known as the “*Fodder Scam*”. He resigned, but in a political move that threw all ethics to the wind and razed all standards of good conduct to the ground, he installed his wife, Ms. Rabri Devi, as the CM of Bihar, thereby ruling the state of Bihar for another 7.5 years by proxy. Ms. Rabri Devi had neither any political experience, nor was she literate. His conviction in the Fodder Scam in 2013 by the Supreme Court saw his disqualification as a Member of Parliament and a debarment on contesting any election for 6 years thence. The political career of Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav was nigh over.

The bygone 2014 General Election to the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Indian Parliament) saw BJP’s national leader Mr. Narendra Modi led NDA (BJP – 22 seats, LJP – 6 seats, RLSP – 3 seats) rout the JDU (2 seats), RJD (4 seats) and the Congress (2 seats) in a contest for 40 Lok Sabha seats. The writing was on the wall. The popular appeal and charisma of Narendra Modi, who alone straddled the political horizon of Bihar and fanned across the state as a hurricane, hammering home the singular idea of “*India First*” and “*Vikas*” (“Development”), was simply too overwhelming for the incumbent power structures in the states to outmatch.

So, on the one hand, both Mr. Nitish Kumar and Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav saw their political career dwindle and on the other hand saw the rise of the colossal political stature of Mr. Narendra Modi and took no

time in realising the threat of political extermination. Hence, once bitter foes, the two came together, along with INC to form the MGB with a seat sharing of 101-101-41 for JDU-RJD-INC respectively. The *raison d'être* behind the coalition was simple arithmetic of caste – the vote of the respective castes, as evident in the previous election of 2010, that could challenge that of the BJP and that the election could be fought and won on the plank of caste-politics, combined with that of "development", at the periphery. This strategy has been conventional wisdom in Bihar, with a 90% rural population, literacy rate (63%), 10% points lower than the national average (73%) and a very poor rank of 21 out of 23 on the Human Development Index (HDI), signalling wide spread poverty and ignorance. All these circumstances make it easier for political satraps to not just win elections on caste configuration that are eternal, but to perpetuate the politicization of caste and therefore mainstream the empty slogan of 'social justice' even as social injustice is carried on endlessly. As a result the relative HDI ranking remains unchanged.

## THE HOPE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCOURSE OF DEVELOPMENT

Being conventional wisdom, there were many pre-poll analyses that informed and affirmed the potential victory of a JDU-RJD combine. However, BJP, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP President Amit Shah, was determined on altering and transforming the political discourse of Bihar by exhorting the populace to focus on developmental issues rather than on the crass bane of caste politics. Mr. Narendra Modi was obviously seeking to leverage on his immense popularity, that shows no sign of waning, in hard selling an idea that has never worked in Bihar. The persistence of Mr. Narendra Modi and Mr. Amit Shah in ignoring caste combination or religious polarization has as much to do with the unarguable necessity of establishing issues of governance, as the central focal point of the Indian democracy, as with the personality, character and style of the Modi-Shah duo, which is that they not only like to win, but want each victory to be a transformative message. They believe, and rightly so, that this is how legitimate and respected political leadership is established. Mr. Modi, even before the elections to Bihar Assembly were announced by the Election Commission of India, repeatedly appealed to the people of Bihar to vote on the issues of governance and development and not on caste, even as it kept the status quo on the constitution of the NDA, that appealed to various caste configurations that was expected to be an insurance against the shock of caste politics, intact – LJP, RLSP and HAMS. The NDA went in with a seat share of 159-40-23-21 for BJP-LJP-RLSP-HAM respectively in the 243 seat Bihar Assembly.

Mr. Narendra Modi, in keeping with his long standing tradition and belief in overcoming and surmounting obstacles with extreme hard work, mounted an unprecedented broadside on the MGB, addressing 30 rallies in all, addressing three rallies in a day, his voice growing increasingly hoarse. Mr. Amit Shah camped in the state and mobilized the unparalleled cadre-strength of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a much-misunderstood social and cultural organization<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> For obvious reasons this issue shall be discussed at a later date in another paper.

## WHAT WENT WRONG: VISCREAL REALITY OF BIHAR'S VOTING PATTERN

### Caste Arithmetic

The results are interesting and tabulated below on the two most important metrics, i.e. Vote Share % (percentage of total votes polled by each political party) and Seats Won (constituencies/seats won by each political party), in the previous (2010) and the current (2015) Bihar Assembly Elections

Alliance	Political Party	Seats Contested		Seats Won		Vote Share %	
		2010	2015	2010	2015	2010	2015
<b>MahaGathBandhan (MGB)</b>	JDU	141	101	115	71	22.61%	16.8%
	RJD	168	101	22	80	18.84%	18.4%
	INC	243	41	4	27	8.38%	6.7%
<b>National Democratic Alliance (NDA)</b>	BJP	102	159	91	53	16.46%	24.4%
	LJP	75	40	3	2	6.75%	4.8%
	RLSP	NA*	23	NA*	2	NA*	2.6%
	HAMS	NA*	21	NA*	1	NA*	2.3%

NA\*: Not applicable, as these parties didn't exist in 2010.

BJP is the only party that has seen an expansion in vote share and it is a great expansion of 8% points. Yet, it suffered a huge setback in number of seats won as it saw a deficit of 38 seats since 2010. Further, within the MGB, JDU, the incumbent political party, won just 71% of the seats contested, whereas the RJD and the INC saw a better seat conversion at 80% and 66%. The better RJD and INC seat conversion is clear indication that the MGB didn't win on issues of governance. RJD is not equated with good governance, given the notoriety of Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav as a rampantly corrupt politician who has been convicted in the Fodder Scam. As for INC, the party has been virtually absent from the political scene of Bihar since 1990. The obvious upshot is that the simple arithmetic of caste combination trumped the clarion call of Narendra Modi for good governance and "Vikas".

### Muslim Polarization

The fifth and the last phase of the Bihar Election was the Muslim dominated region of Seemanchal. BJP won 23 seats in the 57 seats in the region in 2010. This time, it won only 10. Clearly, the Muslims consolidated against the BJP. This also shows, amongst other indicators, that BJP never tried to consolidate the Hindu vote, even as it remains much maligned, perhaps falsely so, for consolidating Hindu votes by fanning fires of fanaticism, as the refrain often goes. It must be said that if the Hindus had consolidated, there is no way that BJP could lose the election, as only 17% in the state are Muslims.

It's also inferred that the consolidation of Muslims has perhaps been a silent, covert operation and was done out of plain sight, through an undercurrent of a messaging campaign. Considering the intensely adversarial posturing of the media and instances of cherry picking communally embarrassing events that

paint Mr. Narendra Modi in bad light, it may be said that the media might have chosen to ignore such an undercurrent though fully cognizant of it. A Hindu polarization would have been red-flagged, though.

### No State Leadership

Bihar Assembly Election was a repeat of the 2015 Delhi Assembly Election debacle for BJP. BJP chose not to project the state leadership, even nebulously. Apparently, in Delhi, BJP couldn't find a leader to match the charisma of Mr. Arvind Kejriwal. In Bihar, the opponent turned out to be Mr. Nitish Kumar. It was a very centralized election campaign. BJP's Bihar campaign was also conspicuous for the posters of Mr. Amit Shah along with that of Mr. Narendra Modi, instead of that of state leaders.

### Negative Campaign

Another commonality with the 2015 Delhi Assembly Elections was the shrillness of the campaign. Innocuous statements, words and symbolisms were deliberately twisted to give unintended slants. His jibe on the #PoliticalDNA of Mr. Nitish Kumar was painted as a racist affront to all of Bihar and could have contributed to slippages in vote share. However, to not throw the baby out of the bathwater, there has been excessive analysis of these aspects. There has been an over analysis of his humorous references to Mr. Nitish Kumar's predilections for "*Tantriks*" (loosely – "magicians") and his other comments such as using the bombastic comments of Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav himself against Mr. Nitish Kumar.

### The Bugbear of Intolerance

Certain incidents, that would otherwise pass off as another ordinary crime were curiously played out, ad nauseam, in TV news studios. All of this was boiled down into one 'friendly' 'trendable' Twitter hashtag - #Intolerance. These events might have led to the consolidation of Muslim votes, served as a distraction to resources, wasted time and energy of the BJP leaders, if they hadn't a direct impact on the election itself.

### The #Daal Dalli

Inflation, under the reign of Mr. Narendra Modi, has been in a spectacular goldilocks zone – an economists' dream come true – not too high to bust consumption and not too low to trigger stagflation. Yet, the price of one commodity, that of "*daal*" (pulses), became a political sounding board. No surprises for guessing, the media was only too eager to make it sound like a commentary on the general price level in India, which was not true. However, the blame stuck, and contributed, in part, to the electoral debacle.

### Voices From Within: Of Discontent, Spreading Discontent

Voices of discontent in varying measure have been raised, such as that of Ram Jethmalani, Arun Shourie, and Bihar leaders, the visible ones being that of Shatrughan Sinha and perhaps Yashwant Sinha have also been cited by various reports. An ill-timed 'Reservation' comment by the RSS Chief also raised eyebrows. Mr. Amit Shah has dismissed it as a factor contributing to the defeat. However, it must be said that while this statement by the RSS Chief might not have been deliberately intended to hurt the chances of the BJP in the Bihar Election, it did hurt. There is a general consensus amongst political observers that the statement, single-handedly, in all absoluteness, achieved what RJD-JDU-Congress together were looking ill equipped to achieve. At the time of its utterance, it was called the turning point of the election. Now we know the result.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

### A Political Template

Much as certain leaders in the BJP might like to deny, Bihar results have emerged as a template for political opposition to copy and replicate in other states, especially wherever the INC is in a weak position. The regional parties are also likely to get emboldened, as would allies that would squeeze the BJP, in its moment of weakness. Similar alliances, driven by caste, doffing the development issues, would be carved out against BJP, especially in the critical state of Uttar Pradesh, which is similarly rife with equally strong, if not stronger, currents of caste politics and communal social engineering.

Also, there is another aspect of this political 'templization' that's not evident in conventional politics. This aspect plays out in the form of institutions and amorphous systems that are not captured in the definitional framework of a "political party" and yet act as part of the broad anti-Narendra Modi coalition. These institutions are the 'Aristocracy-Intellectuals' and the Main Stream Media (MSM), both ideological *Siamese Twins* of the Left-Liberal hyphenated identities. There is every possibility that encouraged by the storm that these two systems/ institutions were able to create, such a din would be repeated around the eve of, or in the midst of, other state elections.

Twitter-trending hashtags as #Intolerance, emanating from a few incidents, at least one of which turned out to be false, orchestrated by elements working in concert with elements in the international media to paint a general picture of chaos, that also invited a much needed push back from sympathetic sections such as one led by a leading Indian actor Anupam Kher, definitely tended to distract from the central focus on developmental issues and blocked resources and energy of the government as also that of Mr. Narendra Modi and Mr. Amit Shah in simply battling these perceptions. All of it did contribute in gaining support for a communal Muslim consolidation.

### Muslim Consolidation is Tactical but Hindu Consolidation is Communal!

Moreover, given the fact that the Indian media might enjoy all the freedom without all the commensurate responsibility and answerability to any regulatory body except to itself, which openly takes political stands, masquerades opinions as news dished by "celebrity news anchors", might have meanings for the combination of Aristocratic-Intellectual system and the MSM institution to lodge a one-two punch on the Narendra Modi political dispensation. Just as in the case of Bihar, MSM might decide to do a 'Kansas City Shuffle' even as Muslims consolidate silently and call it tactical, that too only when forced to, but to meet any attempt to counter that by an equal tactical response of a Hindu consolidation with cries of Mr. Narendra Modi communalizing the elections. Just in the case of Bihar, the media can get hordes of empathetic intellectuals to paint a general picture of intolerance to impede such tactics. This is a dangerous game, one that puts democracy itself in peril. But the prospects of such a strategy is more real now than ever, given its successful deployment in Bihar.

### The Reform Agenda

The loss in states of Delhi and Bihar reduces the political capital of the BJP-led NDA government. An aggressive INC, led by a very aggressive Mr. Rahul Gandhi, an intensely adversarial Ms. Sonia Gandhi would not lose time in seizing this opportunity in derailing the reform agenda and throwing a spanner in the Rajya Sabha, stalling work, suspending the sessions in order to make the government come to a halt as far as big-ticket reforms are concerned. This would hurt the GDP, the median incomes, Indian private business and foreign investments.

Further, the BJP does not have a majority in the Rajya Sabha, the Upper House. It needs to increase its strength in the Rajya Sabha. Its loss in Delhi and now in the Bihar Assembly Elections in 2015, are lost



opportunities from that perspective, which unfortunately push the clock back in speeding up the governance agenda. State elections in Uttar Pradesh and other states would present a fresh opportunity in 2016 and 2017 to undo the damage but even so, those are some time away and the task of obtaining those states would be anything but easy.

### Mr. Narendra Modi's Reputation

Mr. Narendra Modi relentlessly campaigned for the BJP and staked his personal reputation on the Bihar Election. He addressed 30 rallies. He launched vociferous warrior-like broadsides at Mr. Nitish Kumar and his record on governance as also that of RJD and INC, who between them have gripped the reigns of power in Bihar, all in the name of 'social justice' that has only seen Bihar sink on all metrics of development, in spite of being a resource rich state, and with a phenomenally rich history – it's the birthplace of what has come to be known as Buddhism, no less.

Personal attacks on Mr. Modi are expected to get even shriller. Mr. Modi is no stranger to personal attacks that are well orchestrated by the political opposition, supported by the mainstream media both domestic and foreign and a vast army of opinion makers, including the aristocratic intellectual class with clear and often overt Left-Liberal political leanings that have occupied academic and cultural institutions nurtured over decades of dynastic rule of INC.

Also brought into question would be the political acumen of Mr. Modi. He did control the campaign from the top and the inability to penetrate the caste combination would definitely rankle.

### Mr. Amit Shah's Reputation

BJP President Mr. Amitbhai Anilchandra Shah, who masterminded BJP's strategy in the Bihar Assembly Election, has a formidable reputation as a master election strategist, not for nothing. Mr. Shah won 28 big and small elections before he burst onto the national scene in 2014 after the then Prime Ministerial candidate Mr. Narendra Modi despatched him to Uttar Pradesh to ensure maximization of seats in the 2014 General Elections to the Lok Sabha in Lok Sabha seats of Uttar Pradesh, even as he oversaw the nation-wide election strategy of BJP along with Narendra Modi. Amit Shah delivered 73 seats out of a total of 80 seats, up an unimaginable 630%, from 10 seats in 2009 General Elections to the Lok Sabha.

Post advent to power in Lok Sabha, Mr. Amit Shah continued with his winning ways, delivering four state election victories, including the very pleasant surprise in Jammu and Kashmir, a Muslim dominated state, where the election results, for the first time in the history of the state, saw the Hindu nationalist party, i.e. BJP form a coalition government. However, Mr. Amit Shah lost Delhi Legislative Assembly Election in February 2015, in a massive rout, in which BJP won just 3 seats out of 70, the rest going to the avant-garde Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) led by civil rights activist turned politician Arvind Kejriwal who rose to the post of Chief Minister on the single most important plank of Jan Lok Pal (Ombudsman) and other populist promises such as free electricity, water, even Wi-Fi. Thus came to a halt the pristine run of Mr. Shah's election strategizing genius.

Bihar was supposed to restore Mr. Shah's aura of invincibility that had touched stratospheric levels after the mammoth victory of Narendra Modi in a presidential verdict within the parliamentary framework of the Indian General Elections of 2015 and the subsequent 4 state victories. The victory in Bihar was also important from the perspective that it was also made out to be a battle of wits between Mr. Shah and Mr. Prashant Kishor, the election campaign manager of Mr. Nitish Kumar. Mr. Prashant Kishor had been part of Mr. Narendra Modi's 2014 General Election Campaign and said to have done a competent job of it. It was also rumoured that he was sidelined post victory and he defected to the Nitish Kumar camp, as he

sought to make a point – that he wasn't a one-trick-pony. As the end game unfolded, it seems that that point has been made, adding insult to injury.

Hence, Mr. Amit Shah's reputation is bound to be called into question. He might survive the rambunctious opposition from within but would have to show good results on other elections that are lined up in 2016 and especially the big one in 2017, viz., Uttar Pradesh.

## WHAT NARENDRA MODI MUST DO

### Stop Negative Attacks

Mr. Modi is now the Prime Minister, with an excellent track record as evidenced by most important metrics of development. He is no longer a 'wannabe' candidate for the post of the PM and he is certainly not the Chief Ministerial opponent. Mr. Modi is also a very good communicator, a master orator, with an astute sense of deploying the device of sarcasm, humour and rhetoric. So, even a mild negative attack gets articulated with vehement force and vigour and tends to stick very firmly. This attack, when seen from the prism of an unkind media, to be charitable, tends to get quoted out of context, often inaccurately and then it takes a life of its own. Mr. Modi needs to be aware of the excessive strength of his own communication skills – what's a monosyllabic utterance for him is a song for the media. All those negative attacks must be replaced with humour and banter-teasing, at which he is particularly good. That would also be – playing to his strengths.

In mass electoral politics, it is always better to appear a martyr, impaled at the stake of unjustified personal attacks, as were made on him through the 12 year long persecution as the Chief Minister of Gujarat from 2002 – 2014, than be the one to deliver them. Defensive responses and rebuttals against personal attacks on oneself are the best offense.

### Act Fast On Committed Acts of Corruption

Mr. Narendra Modi has done a fantastic job of stemming corruption at the top in his regime. However, let not the backdrop against which he came to power be forgotten. Before Mr. Narendra Modi burst on the national scene with his epoch making 2014 General Election, single handed campaign, there was the agitation against corruption of the United Progressive Alliance government headed by the titular Prime Minister Mr. Manmohan Singh with the real power vested in Ms. Sonia Gandhi, her pet National Advisory Council (NAC), Mr. Rahul Gandhi and Mr. Pulock Chatterjee, Principal Secretary at the Prime Ministers' Office. People came out in support of the aged social activist Mr. Anna Hazare, straining every nerve and sinew, in what could be called was the '*Indian Spring*', across the length and breadth of India. In Mr. Narendra Modi they found a man who was incorruptible and had the ability to wipe out that corruption. In effect, people want action against the acts of huge corruption committed by the previous political dispensation. Mr. Narendra Modi must act fast, lawfully, transparently and conscientiously and with conviction in acting against those deeds of corruption.

### Use Talent as a Tool of Creative Disruption, Governance and to Stem Discontent

Subramanian Swamy, the chief-architect of the legal action on corruption who started the wheels in motion that unmasked the many acts of corruption that led to the Anna Hazare agitation, a maverick genius, has been crying himself hoarse over how Mr. Narendra Modi has to act on corruption. Yet, his has remained a lonely march, in cases such as the "National Herald" case and the "Aircel Maxis Deal" and others. He needs to be made the head of a special task force that has the ability to prosecute in cases of high-corruption. Mr. Modi should consider seriously the prospect of combining the energies of Mr. Ram Jethmalani, a celebrated lawyer in this long pending task.



Arun Shourie, is a rare Hindu Right Wing (a misnomer of a term, that misinterprets, but being used for contextual understanding) political thinker with many a critically acclaimed book to his name, also needs to be utilized similarly. He can do wonders to BJP's stated agenda of revival of universally accepted and celebrated ancient traditions of India. India's rich heritage, history and culture are at the forefront of an undeclared asymmetric warfare and are crying for the nuanced handling of a stalwart like Arun Shourie.

### Weed Out The Counterproductive, Talentless Ones

Even as the scale of justice must tilt towards assimilation and not towards dismissal, there would be a few unproductive and counterproductive ones who are also talentless. They need culling. Mr. Narendra Modi has been good at shunting out 'blockers', who create bottlenecks, throw attitude and are unable to put in unadulterated hard work. He has been more successful doing this with the bureaucracy than with the political satraps within BJP. Such discontented ones need to be shown the door.

### Develop State Level Political Leadership

Mr. Amit Shah has fought and won elections in the state of Gujarat from within the state with a ready and present state leadership of Mr. Narendra Modi. The 2014 General Election was also fought under the very popular and generally endorsed leadership of Mr. Narendra Modi. So, in both cases, it was the leadership that won in concert with the secret political sauce that Mr. Shah is so good at concocting.

One might ask how those other four elections are to be explained where Mr. Shah won on the back of the appeal of Mr. Narendra Modi? Well, perhaps the answer lies in 'Momentum'; perhaps it lies in the coincidence of special circumstance in each state. But that's another matter. What's important is for state level leadership to be developed. Regional parties would throw up strong regional leaders that would need to be countered by equally competent state leaders.

Each time, the currency of the popularity of Mr. Narendra Modi can't be put at stake. He is also the Prime Minister with onerous responsibilities. A 'tac team' of a strong state leader with the overlying layer of Mr. Narendra Modi must be inculcated. As against popular advice to Mr. Amit Shah, by arm chair critics who make the mistake of thinking of India as another Gujarat, he actually might have to think of India as more of a 'Gujarat' and not less – but with special and significant alterations. He should look at India as a 'Gujarat' with the states as municipal corporations truly autonomous of the control of a Chief Minister, as against being administratively controlled by him, absolutely.

In other words, unlike municipal corporation elections, in state elections, the state leadership does matter. In Bihar, Mr. Shah should have been inconspicuous and in the strategy back rooms only instead of on posters and should have let four, five or even more leaders to share the poster with Mr. Narendra Modi in various areas of Bihar, as and where relevant.

### Keep Calm and Bash on Regardless

Narendra Modi's work as the Prime Minister of India has been inspirational. It's evident vastly from information captured in data. So, he really is competing with himself and not with the previous UPA government, in comparison to which his work is exceptional, already. The fact that he is unable to push certain reforms that require legislative action in both the Lok Sabha (where he has requisite majority) and the Rajya Sabha (where he doesn't have requisite majority) can easily be circumvented by legislating a bill as a money bill through well known and legitimate techniques available with the executive that would then not need a necessary nod from the Rajya Sabha and can be passed as law even without it. There is nothing unethical about this and it's far, far better than the 'Ordinance' route that has already earned the reprimand of the President of India himself.

Also, Modi's record on election still remains 4-2. He has won 4 states for the 2 that he has lost. If one considers the fact, as it should be, that Delhi is a glorified municipality masquerading as a state, given it's absolutely logical Constitutional status as a Union Territory and not a full-state, the electoral record is actually 4-1.

### Media Circus Needs a Ring Master

Mr. Modi has rightly recognised and understood the Left-Liberal political leanings of the mainstream media. The media had always been unkind to him. Now it has started indulging in gross political messaging which is only getting incrementally overt and brazen. This would become an unstoppable force for the worse, if it does not meet the unmovable object of regulation. There is need, room and demand for legislation to sift journalism from political campaigning. The extreme freedom that the Indian media enjoys needs extreme responsibility and extreme answerability. The people who occupy the positions of celebrity news anchors are as human as the rest of us and if there are checks and balances and strict regulations for all pillars of democracy, viz., the Parliament, the Executive and the Supreme Court, one sees no reason why the fourth pillar, i.e. the Indian Media should be bereft of a transparent regulatory system that serves and not enslaves the Indian democracy to sustain its interests, often parochial. In short, there is no such thing as “self regulation”. This has to be clearly understood.

### Hunt Strong, Emerging, Dependable Strategist for Election Management and Communication Strategy Who Understands Policy

Post exit of the seemingly vastly overambitious Mr. Prashant Kishor, there is a vacancy that needs to be filled. In the days before the nomination of Mr. Narendra Modi as the candidate for the post of the Prime Minister of India by the BJP, Mr. Modi had started meeting experts and talent from all fields of study, across professions to gain from their ideas on technological innovation across sectors such as waste management, urban development, information technology etc.

An important case in point is the slogan of #IndiaFirst that not only became a rallying point that projected Mr. Narendra Modi's priority unambiguously in the entire 2014 General Election campaign, it sustained thereafter and has become the hallmark of his national priorities and remains the least questioned, disparaged and ridiculed, unlike #AachheDinAaneWaleHain (“The Good Days Our Here”) or #SabkaSaathSabkaVikas (“Partnering Everybody in Development for All”). The slogan came about as an acronym devised by the author of this paper, as part of a presentation on talk-points for the 2014 General Elections given to Mr. Narendra Modi, then CM of Gujarat on 8 August, 2013. The acronym stood for “Inclusive National Development Integrated Agenda For Institutionalized Reconstruction and Sustainable Transformation” – INDIA FIRST.

Strategists who find such brilliant, election-winning, game-changing ideas, who straddle the arenas of both general policy strategy and policy communication must be considered for forming a dependable communication team as a counter to the asymmetrical warfare of the media and the opposition.