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Changing patterns of politics and leadership in Haryana from 2014 to present

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Abstract

Since 2014, Haryana has witnessed a significant transformation in its political landscape. Moving away from dynastic and Jat-dominated rule, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) reshaped state politics through non-Jat coalition-building, clean governance narratives, grassroots organization, and strategic leadership choices. Its rise was aided by Congress's internal divisions and INLD's decline. The 2024 assembly election reaffirmed BJP's position, reflecting evolving voter expectations, caste dynamics, and leadership adaptability—marking Haryana as a state of shifting political patterns and competitive democratic engagement.

Keywords: Haryana, BJP, non-Jat coalition, leadership, caste politics, voter expectations, 2024 elections

Introduction

Since 1966, when Haryana came into existence, its political narrative has been largely shaped by dynastic dominance and the tussle between national and regional forces. In early decades, the Indian National Congress held sway, with stalwarts such as Bansi Lal and Bhajan Lal using their considerable influence and administrative skill to guide the state's governance. These leaders built strong patronage networks, relying on caste and rural loyalties to hold power. As agrarian policies influenced by the Green Revolution took hold, the Congress model managed to remain in place, though murmurs of regional dissatisfaction quietly grew.

The real spark of transformation ignited with the rise of Chaudhary Devi Lal in the late 1970s and 1980s. A farmer champion and vocal advocate for rural welfare, he broke away from the Congress to form the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD). This party cultivated a strong identity centered on Jat pride and peasant aspirations—two factors critical in rural Haryana—which redirected political allegiance away from Congress's long-standing hold. His brand of politics struck a chord with the rural electorate, which felt neglected by mainstream parties. Later, his son Om Prakash Chautala upheld this legacy, keeping the INLD at the helm of Haryana politics for many years.

Come the late 1990s and early 2000s, the pendulum swung again. Bhupinder Singh Hooda emerged as a dynamic leader under the Congress banner. He implemented ambitious development initiatives and crafted a governance image that revived his party's credibility. His period in office was marked by infrastructure projects, rural development programs, and efforts to restore Congress as a credible statewide contender. However, by the early 2010s, voter fatigue with dynastic and the Cronyism associated with individual leaders began to surface, leaving the door open for a different kind of political narrative.

The 2014 Political Shift: BJP's Arrival

The 2014 state assembly elections marked a watershed moment in Haryana's political history. Riding on the momentum of Narendra Modi's national campaign, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) won all ten Lok Sabha seats from Haryana and clinched their first-ever majority in the state assembly under Manohar Lal Khattar. The BJP's rise disrupted the long-standing dominance of dynasty-based politics and reshaped the state's political identity. The party skillfully positioned itself as a platform of change, promising good governance, anti-corruption measures, and inclusive growth.

This election served as more than a momentary victory—it set the scene for a new era. By breaking INLD's hold and undermining Congress's narrative, the BJP signaled that Haryana's voters were ready to embrace a governance model centered on nationalistic aspirations and modern development rhetoric, coupled with a break from traditional power structures.

2019 Elections: Coalition and Caution

While the BJP maintained strong influence after its 2014 triumph, the 2019 assembly polls brought new subtleties. Although retaining a plurality, BJP found itself slightly short of an absolute majority. To consolidate power, it entered a post-poll alliance with the newly formed Jannayak Janta Party (JJP), led by Dushyant Chautala—the grandson of Devi Lal, the INLD patriarch. This alliance tightly bound the state's future to coalition politics.

However, cracks soon appeared. Internal disagreements and public discontent with governance began to weaken the coalition's perceived stability. Voters expected bold initiatives and noticeable results, but many felt BJP-JJP fell short on fulfilling promises related to jobs and rural development. The fallout from these tensions ultimately led the BJP to sever its alliance with JJP in early 2024—a stark reflection of both growing distances between coalition partners and public restiveness.

2024 Showdown: Congress Resurgence and BJP Reconfiguration

The **2024 assembly elections** brought intense political contestation. With **Bhupinder Singh Hooda** spearheading a revived Congress campaign, the party began to re-emerge from the shadows of BJP dominance. Congress emphasized themes of social equity, rural upliftment, and stability rooted in experienced leadership.

The BJP, meanwhile, faced the twin threats of voter fatigue and internal factionalism. Some party members felt marginalized, and local leadership struggled to maintain cohesion. Meanwhile, INLD sought to re-enter the political mainstream, but found itself unable to reclaim the charisma it once commanded. Despite forming alliances, INLD remained sidelined in an increasingly crowded political contest.

The 2024 results reaffirmed that Haryana's political climate remains unpredictable. Voters continued to fluidly shift allegiances based on performance, leadership credibility, and immediate concerns, rather than pledging loyalty to any single party. The election outcome showcased that even in a politically mature state like Haryana, the interplay of caste, leadership, and policy efficacy can quickly reshape the electoral arena.

Current Realities and Future Implications

- **Caste-Based Coalition Building:** BJP advanced its position by forging ties beyond Jat voters, bringing in other caste blocs—OBCs, Dalits, Brahmins, and Punjabis—creating a durable support base.
- **Strategic Leadership Decisions:** The replacement of Khattar with Nayab Singh Saini as party leader exemplifies BJP's ability to realign internal leadership for electoral advantage.
- **Organizational Strength:** BJP's grassroots machinery—supported by RSS frameworks—allowed for meticulous booth-level outreach, voter engagement,

and campaign execution.

- **Opposition Weakness:** Congress's resurgence under Hooda was counterbalanced by INLD's failures and BJP's assertive adaptation to changing sentiments.
- **Dynamic Voter Expectations:** Voter mobility and issue-based voting became increasingly dominant—especially on employment, agricultural support, and health-care initiatives.

In summary, Haryana's post-2014 political evolution presents a compelling narrative of transformation—from dynastic stability to coalition complexity and factional realignments. BJP's arrival marked a systemic shift, but it faces ongoing challenges from both opposition revival and voter volatility. Moving ahead, the state's political compass will likely continue to revolve around leadership choices, coalition agility, and governance outcomes—making every election a reflection of evolving public priorities.

Below is a detailed, original, and long-form analysis of the key factors shaping Haryana's politics and leadership since 2014, written in clear, simple language to ensure originality and avoid plagiarism while drawing on current sources for authenticity.

1. Break from Jat Dominance and Social Coalition-Building

One of the most important changes in Haryana politics after 2014 comes from a decisive move away from traditional Jat control. Until then, powerful Jat families like those of Devi Lal, Bhajan Lal, and Hooda had shaped state politics. However, when the BJP came to power in 2014 under Manohar Lal Khattar—who is not a Jat—it broke this long-held pattern. Instead of focusing solely on Jat support, BJP reached out to non-Jat castes such as Brahmins, Punjabis, OBCs, SCs, and others. This "non-Jat coalition" became the foundation of their electoral success and remains a central strategy even today.

2. Strategic Social Engineering and Symbolic Leadership

BJP reinforced its reach by selecting leaders who represented communities beyond the Jats. Initially through Khattar, and later with the appointment of Nayab Singh Saini—an OBC MP and state party head—as Chief Minister in 2024, the party demonstrated an ability to adjust leadership to reflect voter diversity. By choosing leaders from key groups, BJP strengthened its appeal among marginalized segments, sending a strong signal that their voices mattered—for example, OBCs felt heard and supported by Saini's rise to power.

3. Strong Ground Organization and Booth-Level Campaigning

Another key factor driving BJP's dominance is its highly disciplined party machinery. A robust local network connected to RSS-backed structures and meticulous booth-level planning has enabled steady voter outreach, especially in the GT Road and Ahirwal regions. Through door-to-door campaigns and targeted local initiatives, BJP stays visible and responsive. In Manesar's municipal elections in early 2025, seven independent councillors switched to BJP—a sign of confidence in its strong organizational base.

4. Policy Focus: Clean Governance and Job Opportunities

BJP has carefully crafted its governance model around the promise of clean administration and fair job opportunities. Its slogan “No Parchi, No Kharchi”—meaning no favoritism or bribes during recruitments—signals a break from the corrupt practices associated with past regimes. State-run programs under Saini and Khattar, especially in police and youth employment, have been positioned as open and transparent, with examples of fair hiring gaining public attention.

5. Capitalizing on Opposition Weakness and Fragmentation

BJP's rise benefited from both Congress's focus on Jat voters and INLD's internal conflicts. Congress failed to build a broader coalition beyond its traditional base, while INLD was weakened by internal splits that led to the formation of JJP. This meant non-Jat voters had fewer alternatives, and splits in Jat votes often worked to BJP's advantage. Congress's internal disputes—exposed in recent efforts to reorganize district leadership—have limited its ability to challenge BJP effectively.

6. National Branding, Symbolic Events, and Cultural Messaging

National party leaders like PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah regularly hold events in Haryana, adding a sense of broader momentum and credibility. Cultural symbolism also matters—for example, sponsoring events that celebrate local heroes, farmers, and Dalit icons helps BJP connect emotionally across communities. These efforts go beyond caste; they build a shared cultural ethos that aligns with BJP's broader vision.

7. Youth, Employment and the Agniveer Surge

Unemployment, particularly among youth, remains a political flashpoint in Haryana. BJP's Agniveer scheme—short-term military recruitment—has been embraced by some such as Dalit and backward caste youth who view it as new opportunity. Despite criticism, BJP continues to promote vocational training and modern employment options. This strategy positions BJP as a party that offers tangible solutions to the state's economic anxieties.

8. Adapting to Anti-Incumbency and Internal Debate

Recognizing voter fatigue, BJP has shown flexibility in leadership and candidate selection. In addition to the Saini appointment, the party changed candidates in many constituencies before the 2024 elections—cutting risks of internal dissent and anti-incumbency backlash. This adaptability extends to internal debates: BJP has proven more agile at handling internal criticism, while Congress struggles with persistent factionalism and dynastic control.

Overall Analysis and Outlook

From 2014 to the present, Haryana's politics underwent a major transformation—from dynastic Jat dominance to a modern political system built on non-Jat coalitions, grassroots organization, smart leadership choices, and clean governance narratives. BJP's strong structure, strategic messaging, and ability to counter opposition weaknesses have given it a durable hold on the state. But as voter expectations rise—especially around job creation, rural development, and transparency—BJP will need continuous innovation to maintain momentum. The 2024 results

indicate that this is possible, but future stability depends on bridging policy delivery with evolving public demands and preserving internal unity.

From 2014 onwards, Haryana's politics changed completely. Before this, the state was mostly ruled by **Congress** and regional parties like INLD, which were heavily influenced by Jat leaders and family-based politics. But things took a sharp turn when the BJP, under the influence of Narendra Modi's popularity, won big in both the 2014 Lok Sabha and state assembly elections.

The BJP's success was due to many reasons:

- It gained support from non-Jat communities like Brahmins, OBCs, and Dalits.
- It promoted a new kind of leadership through Manohar Lal Khattar, a non-Jat leader known for honesty.
- The party promised clean governance and fair job opportunities, using slogans like “No Parchi, No Kharchi” (no bribes, no favoritism).
- Congress lost popularity because of corruption, bias towards Rohtak region, and land scams involving political leaders.
- BJP also gained from strong ground-level campaigning and support from various social and religious groups.

In the 2019 elections, BJP won all 10 Lok Sabha seats and later formed a coalition government with JJP in the state assembly because it didn't win a majority on its own. Despite differences in ideology, the BJP gave the post of Deputy Chief Minister to Dushyant Chautala of JJP.

The main opposition parties—Congress and INLD—suffered from internal problems and were unable to connect with voters like before. Over time, smaller parties like BSP, HJC, and AAP also became weak.

Although BJP became strong in Haryana, its real test now lies in meeting people's expectations, especially in areas like jobs, rural development, and fair governance. The future of politics in Haryana depends on good leadership, smart alliances, and public satisfaction.

In the October 2024 Haryana Assembly election, the BJP secured a historic third consecutive win, earning 48 seats in the 90-member assembly, maintaining its majority. This outcome again highlighted shifting caste and regional loyalties, as the BJP successfully retained both urban and rural areas, gaining significant support from non-Jat communities such as OBCs, Dalits, and Brahmins.

Despite a close popular vote—BJP at 39.94% vs. Congress at 39.09%—the BJP's well-organized, grassroots campaign and clear messaging helped secure more seats. In contrast, Congress improved its rural vote share, capturing 37 seats, but internal divisions and rebel candidates weakened its ability to form a government.

Key highlights include:

- Nayab Singh Saini, an OBC leader appointed earlier in 2024, proved to be instrumental for BJP, consolidating support among backward-class voters.
- The non-Jat vote grew stronger as BJP appealed to multiple caste groups beyond its traditional base.
- Congress internal strife, overdependence on the Hooda family, and failure to unite behind AAP or other regional parties diluted anti-BJP votes.
- Regional parties like INLD and JJP saw dramatic declines—the INLD won just 2 seats, and JJP lost all of its previous seats—further consolidating BJP and

Congress dominance.

Summary

- BJP wins 48 seats, retains majority.
- Congress wins 37 seats, improved vote share but lost due to fractured alliances and internal issues.
- Election outcome reflects strong non-Jat coalition, effective leadership under Saini, and quality local campaign work.
- Political dynamics reveal the importance of caste alignment, leadership strategy, and opposition unity in Haryana's evolving political arena.

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