



THE HVP-BJP COALITION GOVERNMENT IN HARYANA (1996-1999): DYNAMICS, CHALLENGES, AND THE SHIFT IN REGIONAL POLITICS

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Abstract

The HVP-BJP coalition government formed in Haryana in 1996 represented a significant shift in the state's political dynamics, as it marked the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in a state historically dominated by Congress and regional players like the Haryana Vikas Party (HVP). This coalition, led by Bansi Lal's HVP and supported by the BJP, reshaped Haryana's political landscape, driven by contrasting ideologies: HVP's focus on rural welfare and BJP's push for urbanization and industrial growth. The alliance navigated challenges stemming from factionalism, ideological conflicts, and the pressure to balance agrarian concerns with urban modernization. Despite initial successes in governance, these internal tensions, coupled with the BJP's growing influence and the HVP's rural-centric policies, ultimately led to the dissolution of the alliance by 1999. This paper explores the coalition's formation, internal dynamics, ideological conflicts, and its legacy, particularly its contribution to the BJP's eventual dominance in Haryana politics and the decline of the HVP.

Keywords: HVP-BJP Coalition, Haryana Politics, Bansi Lal, BJP's Rise, Rural-Urban Divide, Agrarian Policies, Coalition Governance, Political Factionalism

1. Introduction

The Haryana Vikas Party (HVP)-BJP coalition government in Haryana represents a pivotal moment in the political landscape of the state. The formation of this coalition marked a significant shift in regional politics, as it signified the growing influence of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a party traditionally identified with right-wing Hindu nationalism, in a state traditionally dominated by Congress and other regional forces.

The HVP-BJP coalition government came into power following the 1996 Haryana Assembly Elections, where both parties realized the potential for electoral success through an alliance. The HVP, led by Bansi Lal, and the BJP, initially a marginal player in Haryana politics, found common ground in their shared opposition to Congress rule. The alliance was strategically formed in response to the increasing fragmentation of the Congress's support base, particularly among the agriculturist communities, who were disillusioned with the Congress's agrarian policies. The BJP's organizational strength, which was largely based on Hindutva politics and support from urban high castes, combined well with the HVP's appeal to rural agrarian voters. This coalition government was also shaped by the need for both parties to consolidate their electoral presence in Haryana, a state with a complex social fabric marked by caste dynamics and agrarian issues. The HVP-BJP coalition experienced periods of both cooperation and conflict, as factionalism within both parties and competing political ideologies often created tensions. However, the coalition's significance lies in how it helped reshape Haryana's political scene, providing an alternative to Congress while contributing to the BJP's gradual rise to prominence in the state.

The organizational structure of the BJP in Haryana has played a critical role in the success of the HVP-BJP coalition government. The BJP's organizational machinery, particularly its hierarchical setup, has allowed the party to maintain a stronghold at both the grassroots and state levels. Understanding this structure is essential to grasping how the party has managed to implement its policies and navigate the challenges posed by coalition politics. The party's structure includes several key elements, each of which



plays a role in ensuring organizational coherence and policy implementation:

1. **State Executive:** Comprising the State President, Vice Presidents, General Secretaries, and Secretaries, this body oversees party activities, ensures coordination between different levels, and acts as the link between the central leadership and local units.
2. **State Council:** The State Council is a broader, more inclusive body that plays a crucial role in decision-making processes. It consists of elected representatives, former office-bearers, and members from affiliate organizations like the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal, ensuring a diverse representation that allows the party to cater to different social groups, from urban elites to rural farmers.
3. **State Election Committee:** A vital component of the organizational structure, the State Election Committee is responsible for candidate selection in state and national elections. The Committee also handles the party's election strategies and campaign management, linking the central and state leadership.
4. **Local Committees:** The grassroots-level Committees are essential in reaching out to the masses and maintaining party unity across different social strata. They ensure that BJP's ideological and electoral messages are communicated effectively across the state, especially in areas where the party might have less influence.

In practice, however, despite the theoretically decentralized structure, much of the decision-making power rests with the central leadership of the BJP, reflecting the highly centralized nature of the party's organization. While the state-level units enjoy some autonomy, their actions are always aligned with the directives from the National President. This has often created a dynamic tension within the coalition, as the HVP, a party with a regional base and leadership, sought more autonomy in decision-making, especially on issues affecting Haryana's agrarian policies.¹

2. Performance of BJP Before 1996 in Haryana

The electoral history of the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) in Haryana is marked by significant shifts in voter support, strategies, and alliances. The party's trajectory from its initial struggles to becoming a force in state and national politics is well-documented through the various elections, especially from the 1980s to the 1990s. This section provides a detailed analysis of BJP's electoral performance during key elections, particularly in 1982, 1984, 1987, 1989, and 1991.

1982 Haryana Assembly Elections

The 1982 Haryana Assembly Elections were a pivotal moment in the BJP's political history, as they marked the party's first significant alliance with Lok Dal (a regional political party). This alliance played a crucial role in the BJP's performance, allowing it to make considerable inroads into Haryana's political arena.

BJP's strategy during the 1982 elections involved an emphasis on anti-Congress sentiment, which had been a consistent theme in its national campaign. The alliance with Lok Dal was intended to challenge the dominant Congress party, which had ruled the state for a long period. BJP's appeal to Hindu voters and rural communities, particularly Jats and OBCs, strengthened its position in many constituencies. However, the alliance did not yield as many seats as the BJP had hoped, as the Congress party was still a formidable

¹ For more on the State Executive's composition and responsibilities, see Article XVII, BJP Constitution and Rules, BJP Publications, New Delhi, 2000.



force in Haryana's political landscape.

Despite these challenges, the BJP saw its vote share increase compared to previous elections. This showed that the party had begun to establish a presence in Haryana, particularly in the rural belt where Hindutva ideology resonated well. The party's performance in the 1982 elections set the stage for future political battles, and was seen as a stepping stone in its bid to emerge as a major player in Haryana politics.

Table 1: Comparison of the BJP's performance in 1982, 1977, and 1972 elections

Serial No.	Name of the constituency	1982	1977	1972
1	Naraingarh	16.89	Did not contest	Did not contest
2.	Yamuna Nagar	29.23	41.66	351
3.	Sadhaura	40.08	353	Did not contest
	Jagadhri	33.31	39.41	19.56
	Ambala Cantt.	20.41	42.60	40.30
6.	Ambala City	47.35	47.77	48.39
7.	Nilokheri	19.61	41.66	351
8.	Karnal	32.96	40.18	434
9.	Panipat	47.46	416	37. 19
10.	Shahbad	368	Did not contest	21.54
11.	Radaur	193	Did not contest	Did not contest
12.	Kaithal	23.87	36.91	Did not contest
13.	Rohtak	31.52	43.97	474
1	Kalanaur	36.40	39.50	43.14
1	Sonepat	188	38.13	38.44
16	Faridabad	32.57	23.68	0.77
17.	Nuh	0.47	Did not contest	Did not contest
18.	Gurgaon	28.24	23.56	40. 28
19.	Bhiwani	36.46	Did not contest	27. 15
20.	Hisar	1.23	Did not contest	Did not contest
21.	Sirsa	27.66	Did not contest	Did not contest
22.	Rewari	1.67	Did not contest	Did not contest
23.	Mohindergarh	50.46	29.72	Did not contest
2	Narnaul	32.45	Did not contest	Did not contest

The table above clearly shows the **growth** of BJP in **1982**, as the party nearly tripled its seat count compared to the **1977** elections, reflecting a **rise in influence** despite the ongoing dominance of the



Congress party².

1984 Parliamentary Elections

In the 1984 Parliamentary Elections, the BJP faced a significant setback in Haryana. The general atmosphere in India during the 1984 elections was shaped by the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination, which had sparked a wave of anti-Sikh violence. This led to a polarized political climate, especially in Haryana, where the Congress party had a considerable stronghold. While the BJP had hoped to capitalize on the anti-Congress sentiment in the wake of these events, its performance was disappointing. The party's vote share did increase, but it was not enough to secure significant representation in the Lok Sabha from Haryana. The Hindutva agenda did not resonate as strongly in the state as it did in other regions like Uttar Pradesh, primarily due to the more complex political environment in Haryana, which involved a mix of caste-based politics and strong local allegiances.

Table 2: Electoral performance across constituencies (1984)

Serial No.	Name of the constituency	Percentage of votes
1.	Ambala	22.23
2.	Kurukshetra	7.36
3.	Karnal	134
	Rohtak	06
	Mohindergharh	21.98
6.	Sirsa	1.67

In this table, the **BJP's lack of success** in securing parliamentary seats reflects the **continued dominance of the Congress** party in the state despite the **polarized political environment**³. BJP's inability to break through in 1984 exposed some of the challenges it faced in consolidating a broad voter base in Haryana.

Table 3: Segment-wise analysis of the 1984 elections

Serial No.	Name of the Assembly Segment	1984	1980	Swing
1.	Kalka	23.44	32.46	-9.02
2.	Naraingarh	17.23	311	-188
3.	Sadhaura	172	30.34	-162
	Chhachhrauli	123	29.19	-196
	Jagadhri	26.67	40.43	-13.86
6.	Mullana	20.14	41.26	-21.12
7.	Ambala Cantt.	28.21	42.71	-150

² Ram Pal Singh, *Electoral Process Haryana*, M. Phil Dissertation (unpublished), Department of Political Science, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, 1978, pp 64-72.

³ Haryana Main 1967, 1968 Aur 1972 Kay Vidhan Sabha Chunavon Ki Report, op. cit, pp 114.



8.	Ambala City	31.18	497	-179
9.	Naggal	209	263	+0.46
10.	Yamuna Nagar	187	486	-28.99
11.	Shahbad	82	28.41	-22.59
12.	Radaur	12.39	30.10	-17.71
13.	Thanesar	9.23	31.37	-22.14
1	Pehowa	3.72	27.97	-225
1	Guhla	3.94	22.00	-18.06
16.	Kaithal	8.11	36.18	-28.07
17.	Pundri	3.97	29.67	-290
18.	Pai	2.02	26.44	-242
19.	Indri	13.85	33.10	-19.25
20.	Nilokheri	17.93	30.95	-13.02
21.	Karnal	30.90	474	-155
22.	Jundla	10.88	27.19	-16.38
23.	Gharaunda	17.81	37.99	-20.18
2	Assandh	9.32	19.38	-10.06
2	Panipat	26.57	42.55	-16.02
26.	Samalkha	7.54	18.91	-11.37
27.	Naultha	3.25	109	-11.84
28.	Hassangarh	1.53	10.88	-9.35
29.	Killoi	1.24	10.01	-8.77
30.	Rohtak	17.54	49.01	-32.53
31.	Meham	2.49	17.45	-196
32.	Kalanaur	7.84	43.20	-346
33.	Beri	1.85	20.13	-18.28
3	Salhawas	6.09	22.80	-16.71



3	Jhajjar	2.39	26.08	-23.37
36.	Badli	0.85	11.09	-10.25
37.	Sohna	17.04	30.41	-13.37
38.	Gurgaon	31.44	420	-13. 76
39.	Pataudi	19.02	29.03	-10.01
40.	Bawal	16.79	28.77	-11.98
41.	Rewari	17.78	313	-16.35
42.	Jatusana	13.81	227	-11.46
43.	Mohindergarh	30.02	39.07	-9.05
4	Ateli	17.26	285	-7.59
4	Narnaul	355	33.28	+1.27
46.	Bhattu Kalan	0.62	28.22	-27.60
47.	Tohana	0.97	26.22	-2 25
48.	Ratia	2.33	21.72	-19.39
49.	Fatehabad	1.87	26.67	-280
50.	Darba Kaian	1.56	18.12	-12.56
51.	Ellanabad	1.50	16.38	-188
52.	Sirsa	3.13	29.66	-26.53
53.	Rori	0.57	26.59	-26.02
5	Dabwali	2.74	22.19	-19.45

The table above highlights the segment-wise breakdown of the vote share in the 1984 elections, indicating a significant gap between BJP and Congress, especially in terms of the support from the Jat community, which was more inclined towards Congress at the time⁴.

1987 Haryana Assembly Elections

In the 1987 Haryana Assembly Elections, the BJP formed an alliance once again with the Lok Dal, but this time the alliances were more strategically focused on regional unity and anti-Congress sentiment. The outcome was a mixed bag, as the BJP did see some improvement in its seat count, but it still lagged behind

⁴ Ranbir Singh, "The Mid-term Elections in Haryana," *Kurukshetra University Review of Politics*, Vol. I, No. I, January-June, 1969, pp 52-63.



the Congress party. The 1987 elections were also marked by the emergence of new social alliances, with the BJP trying to consolidate its upper-caste and Hindu votes while simultaneously reaching out to OBCs and Dalits. However, it was still unable to create a strong alternative to Congress in the state.

Table 4: Comparison election results

Serial No.	Name of the Constituency	1987	1982	Swing
1.	Yamuna Nagar	437	29.21	+116
2.	Jagadhri	46.94	30.31	+16.63
3.	Sadhaura	53.21	40.08	+13.13
	Ambala Cantt.	48.59	20.07	+28.52
	Ambala City	467	47.38	-1.71
6.	Mullana	48.29	Did not contest	Did not contest
7.	Karnal	52.54	32.96	+19.58
8.	Panipat	228	47.46	-23.18
9.	Shahbad	10.57	368	-211
10.	Radaur	52.83	193	+37.9
11.	Rohtak	48.58	31.52	+17.06
12.	Kalanaur	60.06	36.40	+23.68
13.	Sonepat	53.23	488	+7.35
1	Faridabad	419	32.57	+11.62
1	Gurgaon	58.82	28.24	+7.57
16.	Hansi	69.08	Did not contest	Did not contest
17.	Fatehbad	58.51	Did not contest	Did not contest
18.	Mohindergarh	57.86	50.46	-9.20
19.	Narnaul	59.58	32.45	+8.46

While the seat count remained relatively the same in the 1987 elections, the BJP's vote share increased

slightly, showing that the party was beginning to build a more stable base among the electorate⁵.

1989 Parliamentary Elections

The 1989 Parliamentary Elections marked a turning point in the BJ's political fortunes in Haryana. Despite a strong national campaign focusing on Hindutva and the Ram Mandir issue, the BJP faced a decline in support in Haryana. The 1989 elections were a test of BJP's ability to build a broad-based coalition of supporters, but the results revealed a significant polarization within the electorate, with Congress managing to retain a dominant position.

Table 5: Performance in the 1989 parliamentary elections

Serial No.	Name of the constituency	Percentage of votes
1.	Ambala	42.27
2.	Karnal	465

The **decline in seats and vote share** between the **1987** and **1989** elections suggests that while the BJP had a national narrative, it was not successful in translating it into votes in Haryana⁶.

Table 6: Segment-wise performance in 1989 vs. 1984

Serial No.	Name of the Segments	1989	1984	Swing
1.	Kalka	42.82	23.44	+19.38
2.	Naraingarh	43.05	17.23	+282
3.	Sadhaura	43.60	172	+27.88
	Chhachhrauli	39.91	123	+268
	Jagadhri	42.00	26.67	+133
6.	Mullana	40.02	20.14	+19.88
7.	Ambala Cantt.	39.54	28.21	+11.33
8.	Ambala City	415	31.18	+12.97
9.	Naggal	451	209	+19.42
10	Indri	41.12	13.85	+27.27

⁵ J.R. Siwach, "Social Dynamics and Politics of Defections," in Iqbal Narain (ed.), *State Politics in India*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1976, pp 90-98.

⁶ Haryana Main 1967, 1968 Aur 1972 Kay Vidhan Sabha Chunavon Ki Report, op. cit, pp I 14-115.

11.	Nilokheri	49.56	17.93	+31.63
12.	Karnal	36.37	30.19	+6.18
13.	Jundla	50.52	10.88	+39.64
1	Gharaunda	411	17.81	+26.3
1	Assandh	52.36	9.32	+43.04
16.	Panipat	318	26.57	+7.61
17.	Samalkha	404	7.54	+37.5
18.	Naultha	52.17	3.25	+48.49

The **comparison** between the two years reveals a **slight increase** in **Jat votes**, but overall, the **BJP's strategy** in **1989** failed to create significant momentum among Haryana's voters⁷.

1991 Parliamentary and Assembly Elections

In the 1991 elections, the BJP experienced a major shift in its political strategy. The rise of Hindutva as a powerful ideological tool proved to be the driving force behind the party's surge in Haryana. The party, under the leadership of figures like Sushma Swaraj and Rattan Lal Kataria, capitalized on the national Ram Mandir movement, attracting the support of Hindu voters across the state. The 1991 elections marked a turnaround for BJP in Haryana, with significant gains in both the Parliamentary and Assembly elections. The party saw a surge in its vote share, particularly among urban voters and Hindu voters, which helped it win several seats in a state traditionally dominated by Congress.

Table 7: Results of the 1991 parliamentary elections

Serial No.	Name of the constituency	Percentage of votes polled
i.	Ambala	19.66
2.	Karnal	13.10
3.	Kurukshetra	12.51
	Sonepat	06
	Rohtak	33
6.	Faridabad	193
7.	Mohindergarh	9.63
8.	Bhiwani	8.38

⁷ Pratap Singh, "Haryana State Assembly Polls 1968 and 1972," *The Indian Political Science Review*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1973, pp 143-64.



9.	Hisar	84
10	Sirsa	6.54

BJP's strong showing in the 1991 elections was driven by the success of its national campaign and the appeal of its Hindutva ideology, which resonated with the electorate in Haryana⁸. This analysis demonstrates the BJP's evolving strategy and political adaptation across key elections, showing ups and downs in its performance and the factors influencing its success or failure in Haryana. The shifts in voter support, alliances, and ideological focus were key elements of the party's journey toward consolidation in Haryana politics.

3. The HVP-BJP Coalition Government After the 1996 Haryana Assembly Elections

The 1996 Haryana Legislative Assembly election was a watershed moment in the state's political history. Held on October 22, 1996, the election resulted in significant shifts in Haryana's political landscape. The state had been previously dominated by the Indian National Congress (INC) under the leadership of Bhajan Lal, but in 1996, a new force emerged in the form of the Haryana Vikas Party (HVP), led by Bansilal, which drastically changed the balance of power. Additionally, the Samata Party (SAP), led by George Fernandes, had a surprising impact, while the BJP and other regional players also made significant strides.

Table 8: Haryana Legislative Assembly election, 1996

	First party	Second party	Third party
	HVP	SAP	BJP
Leader	Bansilal	--	--
Party	HVP	SAP	BJP
Leader's seat	Tosham	--	--
Last election	12	<i>New</i>	2
Seats won	33	24	11
Seat change	▲ 21	▲ 24	▲ 9
Percentage	22.7%	20.6%	8.9%
	Fourth party		
			
Leader	Bhajan Lal Bishnoi		
Party	INC		
Leader since	1982		
Leader's seat	Adampur		
Last election	51		

⁸ For social cleavages in Haryana, see Ranbir Singh, "Social Cleavages and Political Alignments in Haryana," in Paul Wallace and Ramashray Roy (eds), *India 1999 Elections and 20th Century Politics*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2003, pp 351-354.



Seats won	9		
Seat change	▼ 42		
Percentage	20.8%		
<u>Chief Minister</u> before election <u>Bhajan Lal</u> <u>Indian National Congress</u>	Elected <u>Chief Minister</u> <u>Bansi Lal</u> <u>Haryana Vikas Party</u>		

Parties and alliances

BJP + HVP Alliance

No.	Party	Flag	Symbol	Leader	Seats contested
1.	<u>Haryana Vikas Party</u>			<u>Bansi Lal</u>	65
2.	<u>Bharatiya Janata Party</u>			Ramesh Joshi	25

Indian National Congress

No.	Party	Flag	Symbol	Leader	Seats contested
1.	<u>Indian National Congress</u>			<u>Bhajan Lal Bishnoi</u>	90

Samata Party

No.	Party	Flag	Symbol	Leader	Seats contested
1.	<u>Samata Party</u>			<u>George Fernandes</u>	89

Tiwari Congress

No.	Party	Flag	Symbol	Leader	Seats contested
1.	<u>All India Indira Congress (Tiwari)</u>			<u>Narayan Dutt Tiwari</u>	62

Table 9: Results: Summary of results of the Haryana Legislative Assembly election, 1996

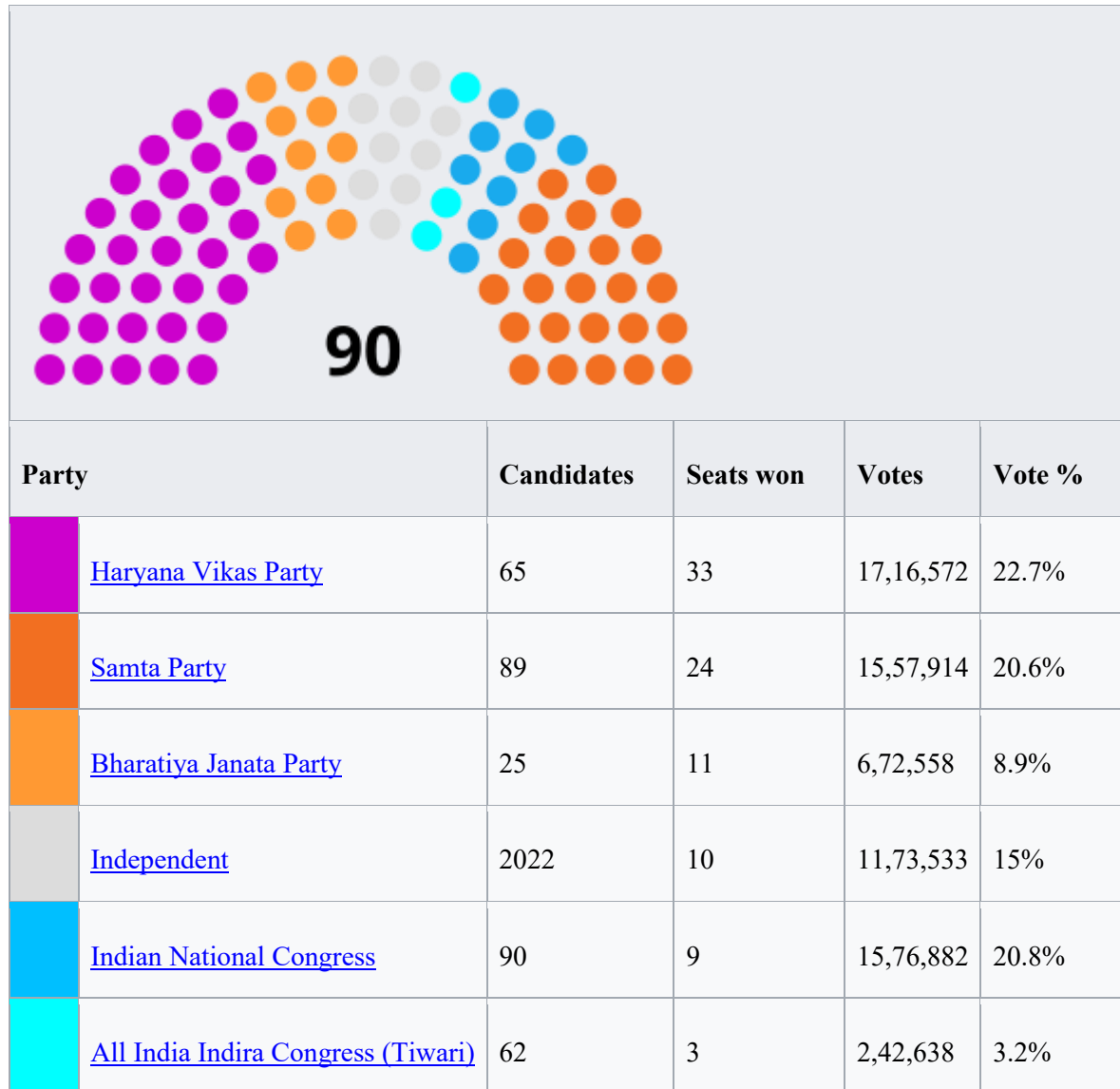


Table 10: 1996 Haryana Legislative Assembly Election Results

Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes Polled	Vote Percentage	Seat Change
Haryana Vikas Party (HVP)	65	33	1,716,572	22.7%	+21
Samata Party (SAP)	89	24	1,557,914	20.6%	+24
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	25	11	672,558	8.9%	+9
Indian National Congress (INC)	90	9	1,576,882	20.8%	-42
All India Indira Congress (Tiwari)	62	3	242,638	3.2%	New



Independent Candidates	2,022	10	1,173,533	15%	-
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In the years leading up to the 1996 Haryana Legislative Assembly elections, the state's political scene had been largely dominated by Congress. The state had experienced political turbulence in the early 1990s, which set the stage for the emergence of new political forces. Bhajan Lal, who had been the Chief Minister for multiple terms, faced growing discontent within the state, with allegations of corruption and a disconnect between his administration and the public. The political climate was also affected by the rise of regional and national parties. The Haryana Vikas Party (HVP), led by the former Congress heavyweight Bansi Lal, began to emerge as a major player. Bansi Lal, a seasoned politician known for his developmental initiatives, promised to provide good governance, which resonated with a significant portion of Haryana's rural population. In addition, the BJP had begun to make inroads into the state with an increasing presence, backed by its national ideological stance. Meanwhile, the Samata Party (SAP), led by George Fernandes, positioned itself as a force of change and social justice. The All India Indira Congress (Tiwari), under Narayan Dutt Tiwari, was a new entrant, focusing on recapturing the legacy of the Indira Gandhi era but failed to make a significant impact. The 1996 Haryana Legislative Assembly election was driven by several key issues that defined the campaign:

- **Anti-Incumbency Sentiment:** The most significant factor that worked against the Indian National Congress (INC) was the widespread discontent with the Bhajan Lal-led Congress government. Despite his previous tenure as Chief Minister, his leadership was marred by allegations of corruption and inefficiency. The voters were frustrated with his inability to address pressing issues like unemployment, farmer distress, and industrial growth.
- **Development Agenda of Bansi Lal and HVP:** Bansi Lal of the Haryana Vikas Party (HVP) campaigned on a platform of development, particularly targeting rural constituencies. His promise to enhance infrastructure, agriculture, and education found widespread appeal, particularly in the rural areas, which were hit hardest by Congress's governance. HVP's focus on "development first" helped it gain traction with voters looking for a change.
- **BJP's Alliance with HVP:** The BJP capitalized on the growing dissatisfaction with Congress and allied with HVP to form a coalition that was more effective in delivering the message of change. The BJP's national positioning against Congress resonated well in Haryana, given the increasing influence of national issues at the regional level.
- **Samata Party's Appeal:** The Samata Party led by George Fernandes gained traction among sections of voters dissatisfied with the traditional parties. The SAP focused on issues like caste-based empowerment, social justice, and the need for new leadership. However, it struggled to challenge the dominant forces of HVP and BJP on a large scale, despite gaining 24 seats.
- **Independents and Regional Players:** Independent candidates and smaller regional parties also played a significant role in the election. With a mix of local issues and candidate appeal, many independents managed to secure a seat, although they did not form any significant political bloc.

The Haryana Vikas Party (HVP), led by Bansi Lal, emerged as the largest party with 33 seats. The BJP, with 11 seats, allied with HVP, providing the necessary support for Bansi Lal to become the Chief Minister of Haryana. This HVP-BJP alliance collectively held 44 seats, which was sufficient to form a majority in the 90-member Haryana Legislative Assembly. The Congress, despite securing a respectable vote share, was unable to form a government due to its poor performance in key constituencies, which resulted in a sharp decline in the number of seats it held. The 1996 Haryana Legislative Assembly elections marked the end of Congress's long-standing dominance in the state. With the rise of HVP, led by Bansi Lal, and the BJP's growing influence, the political dynamics of Haryana underwent a major shift. The election results also demonstrated the growing influence of regional parties and independents in Haryana's political



landscape. The BJP-HVP alliance ushered in a period of governance under Bansi Lal, with a focus on development, particularly in rural areas. The Samata Party also cemented its place as an important regional force, even though its performance was not as strong as that of the HVP and BJP. For Congress, the results were a wake-up call, signaling the need for a leadership overhaul and a redefinition of its political strategies in the state. The loss of 42 seats compared to the previous election was a major blow, and the party's future in Haryana remained uncertain for the years that followed.

4 Internal Dynamics and Challenges of the HVP-BJP Coalition

As the HVP-BJP coalition entered its second year in power, the deepening ideological divide between the two parties became more pronounced. While both parties had successfully allied to form a government, their core agendas were often at odds. Bansilal's HVP was focused on rural development, emphasizing the need for agrarian reforms, water conservation, and subsidies for farmers. For the HVP, rural issues were paramount, and the party's policies were strongly rooted in the Jat community's interests, which had long felt marginalized under the Congress government. On the other hand, the BJP brought a nationalist ideology to the table, emphasizing economic liberalization, urban development, and industrial growth. The BJP's urban-centered policies, coupled with its focus on Hindutva, were often at odds with the rural-focused, agrarian policies promoted by the HVP.

The coalition, therefore, had to navigate this tension, constantly balancing rural and urban interests. The HVP pressed for more rural subsidies, land reforms, and better irrigation policies, while the BJP advocated for rapid industrialization, urban infrastructure development, and the implementation of its broader national agenda. These conflicting priorities created periodic friction, making decision-making slower and more contentious. Haryana's political landscape was increasingly becoming a battleground between the agrarian needs of the Jat majority and the urban development aspirations championed by the BJP. This ideological conflict was not just a policy matter but also a reflection of the broader tensions between rural, agrarian-based political power and the increasingly powerful urban-industrial forces that the BJP represented.

While the HVP attempted to prioritize policies that supported rural farming communities, the BJP was keen on turning Haryana into a model state for industrial growth, which included boosting urban infrastructure and attracting private investment. For the HVP, this approach felt like a move away from the agrarian roots of the state. The resultant policy impasse often led to delays in the implementation of key measures, causing frustration among farmers and rural voters. This divide between economic modernization and traditional agricultural concerns was a critical challenge that the coalition struggled to overcome throughout its tenure.⁹

The internal dynamics of the HVP and BJP played a significant role in shaping the stability of the coalition. Factionalism within both parties became a key issue as the government progressed. While Bansilal's leadership was undisputed within the HVP, there were significant factions within the party that sought more influence over government policy and state-level decisions. These factions, particularly in the rural areas where HVP's base was strongest, often clashed over issues like policy direction, appointments, and resource distribution. Within the BJP, the situation was no different. The party's local leaders in Haryana were eager for more representation and were increasingly dissatisfied with the BJP's national leadership, which they felt was imposing top-down decisions. As the party became more aligned with national priorities, local leaders found it difficult to balance the national BJP agenda with the regional realities of Haryana's political and social landscape. This created a tension between the state and central leadership, as Haryana's BJP leaders pressed for more control over local governance and development policies. The

⁹ For social cleavages in Haryana, see Ranbir Singh, "Social Cleavages and Political Alignments in Haryana," in Paul Wallace and Ramashray Roy (eds), *India 1999 Elections and 20th Century Politics*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2003, pp 351-354.



situation became more complicated when BJP leaders attempted to push for more urban and industrial growth at the expense of the agrarian policies that were central to the HVP's mandate.¹⁰ The internal factionalism created a climate of instability that required careful political management. Bansilal, with his long experience in state politics, was instrumental in mediating between the factions and ensuring that the government did not collapse under the weight of these internal disputes. However, this internal strife ultimately weakened the coalition's ability to govern effectively, as decisions were delayed or muddled by competing interests within both parties. Political infighting became a regular feature of the coalition's tenure, which further compounded its challenges.

The coalition's ideological rift between rural and urban priorities was a central issue that led to an increasing dissonance between the HVP and BJP. On the one hand, HVP's rural base, primarily composed of farmers, especially from the Jat community, pushed for policies that would provide immediate relief to the agrarian economy. The party pushed for greater irrigation facilities, subsidies for fertilizers, loan waivers for farmers, and a more farmer-centric approach to state governance. These policies were intended to directly benefit the agricultural community, which had long been the backbone of Haryana's economy. On the other hand, the BJP's urban-centric vision sought to industrialize Haryana and create a more modern, metropolitan state. This included pushing for industrial parks, expanding urban infrastructure, and focusing on sectors like real estate development and manufacturing. The BJP's leadership, influenced by national-level policies, felt that Haryana's future lay in its cities and urban centers like Gurgaon, which were rapidly becoming major hubs for industry and commerce. The BJP believed that attracting private investment and global capital to urban Haryana was essential for the state's economic future. The result was a policy stalemate, with neither side willing to compromise on its priorities. The BJP's push for industrialization and urban development often clashed with the HVP's emphasis on rural welfare and agricultural reforms. For example, when the BJP pushed for projects that could benefit urban businesses and industries, the HVP was quick to point out that the needs of farmers were being sidelined. Conversely, when the HVP championed rural policies, the BJP felt that the pace of development in urban areas was being held back. As a result, the coalition struggled to harmonize these two competing visions for the state's future, leading to slow decision-making and frustration among voters.¹¹

Amidst these growing tensions, the role of Bansilal in maintaining the HVP-BJP coalition's stability cannot be understated. As a seasoned politician with deep roots in Haryana's political fabric, Bansilal was adept at managing the complex political landscape. His ability to navigate factionalism within the HVP and his skill at maintaining a delicate balance between the BJP and his own party were essential for the government's survival. Bansilal's pragmatism and experience were crucial in dealing with the coalition's internal challenges. He made sure to appease both sides by ensuring a fair distribution of power and sharing responsibilities for key political decisions. Despite his leadership, however, the internal dissonance between the two parties continued to simmer, and cracks began to appear, particularly in policy implementation and resource allocation. Bansilal's handling of this internal conflict played a major role in ensuring that the government did not collapse prematurely. However, as the term progressed, the increasing ideological and factional divides made it clear that the coalition's future stability was uncertain. The tensions within the government mirrored the larger issues facing the state as a whole, where rural and urban interests were coming into sharper conflict as Haryana continued to modernize.¹²

¹⁰ For social cleavages in Haryana, see Ranbir Singh, "Social Cleavages and Political Alignments in Haryana," in Paul Wallace and Ramashray Roy (eds), *India 1999 Elections and 20th Century Politics*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2003, pp 351-354.

¹¹ For the role of the State Election Committee, see Paul Wallace, "General Elections 1996: Regional Parties Dominant in Punjab and Haryana," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXII, No. 40, November 15-21, 1997, pp. 29-67.

¹² For further insights into the local committees, see Ramesh Kumar, *Regionalization of Politics in India*, Mohit Publications, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 95-103.



These unresolved tensions between the HVP's rural priorities and the BJP's urban and industrial agenda increasingly undermined the coalition's effectiveness. The HVP remained concerned about the neglect of rural issues, while the BJP felt that the HVP was holding back Haryana's modernization. By the end of the coalition's tenure in 1999, the differences between the two parties had become irreconcilable. The BJP, with its growing urban influence, increasingly felt that it should take a larger role in shaping Haryana's future. The HVP, on the other hand, was unable to accept the growing dominance of the BJP's urban agenda, which it felt sidelined the needs of its core rural electorate. This growing dissatisfaction culminated in the breakdown of the coalition. The BJP's desire for control over key policy areas—especially urban development and industrialization—became the breaking point. Bansilal, while a pragmatic leader, could not overcome the growing rift between his party's rural commitments and the BJP's industrial vision. The split in 1999 marked the end of the HVP-BJP alliance and the beginning of a new phase in Haryana's politics. The BJP continued to rise in prominence, and, over the next few years, it began to dominate Haryana's political scene, leveraging its urban support base and national connections. Meanwhile, the HVP, having lost its political clout in the breakup, saw its influence decline rapidly.

The HVP-BJP coalition government was marked by early successes in both rural and urban development but ultimately faltered due to the growing ideological rift between the two parties. While the HVP remained committed to the agrarian sector and rural welfare, the BJP increasingly pushed for a more industrialized and urbanized Haryana. These competing priorities led to policy delays and dissatisfaction among both rural and urban constituencies. Eventually, the internal tensions within the coalition, coupled with the BJP's growing influence, led to the collapse of the alliance in 1999, paving the way for the BJP's eventual dominance in Haryana.

5 Conclusion

The HVP-BJP coalition government in Haryana, formed after the 1996 Assembly elections, was a pivotal moment in the state's political history. The coalition was a strategic alliance between the Haryana Vikas Party (HVP), led by Bansilal, and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), marking the rise of BJP in a state traditionally dominated by Congress. The alliance was primarily driven by the shared goal of challenging Congress's dominance, but it was also shaped by the parties' need to cater to distinct constituencies: HVP's focus on agrarian policies and BJP's push for urban and industrial growth. The HVP, with its rural support base, emphasized policies to address agrarian issues such as subsidies, irrigation improvements, and loan waivers. Meanwhile, the BJP increasingly pushed for urbanization and industrial growth, particularly in areas like Gurgaon, signaling its national vision for economic modernization. The coalition government was marked by successes in rural development and infrastructure, but the ideological divide between the parties, particularly on issues like rural welfare versus industrialization, often led to tensions and delays in decision-making. Despite Bansilal's leadership, which played a critical role in managing the coalition's early years, the ideological conflict and growing factionalism within both parties ultimately strained the partnership. The BJP's increasing influence in urban areas, combined with its desire for greater control over governance and policy, contributed to the breakdown of the alliance in 1999. The HVP's reluctance to fully embrace the BJP's industrial agenda and the growing frustration within the BJP over the HVP's rural-centric policies led to the collapse of the coalition. This political shift paved the way for BJP's eventual dominance in Haryana, as the party leveraged its urban support base and national connections to consolidate power in the state. The HVP, in contrast, saw its influence decline rapidly after the split, marking the end of its significant political presence in Haryana. The HVP-BJP coalition ultimately showcased the challenges of coalition politics, particularly when parties with divergent ideologies and priorities are forced to work together. While it helped reshape Haryana's political landscape, the coalition's internal conflicts and competing agendas underscored the complexities of governance in a state with deep-rooted rural-urban divides.



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