



IIRF ISSUE BRIEF

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India General Election Results 2024

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India held General Elections for the Lok Sabha (House of People) the directly elected lower house of the Parliament in April-May 2024. This was held in seven phases across the two months. The results of the 2024 Election have thrown up a hung parliament. There is for the first time after 2009 the need for a coalition government.

India has a Westminster Style Parliamentary Democracy with directly contested elections using the first past the post system. There is a bicameral Parliament with directly elected Lok Sabha and indirectly elected Rajya Sabha (Council of States). The Lok Sabha is elected every five years. The Rajya Sabha is a permanent house, that is indirectly elected by State Legislatures. India has a federal structure with each state having a legislature akin to Canada or Australia.

Main Contenders

The two main political blocs were the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) headed by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA Alliance) headed by the Indian National Congress (INC). Given India's continental federal structure, both groups have several regional parties from states with varied geographies, languages, cultures etc.

NDA: The BJP led NDA has been in power in India since May 2014. This General Election saw the bloc come to power with a full majority in the Lok Sabha. Even the BJP had a full majority itself. This was a watershed since there had been coalition governments at the federal level since the General Election of 1989. The May 2019 General Elections too saw the NDA return to power with the BJP and the alliance partners improving their seat tally.

The current Prime Minister, Narendra Damodardas Modi took office in May 2014. He is from the Western Indian state of Gujarat and an ethnic speaker of Gujarati. In terms of faith he is a Hindu, and belongs to the Teli (Oil Presser) Caste, that is categorised under the Other Backward Caste (OBC) according to the Indian Government classifications for affirmative action.

The Premiership of Modi has been seen as one that has enhanced economic growth and development in India. It is also seen as having augmented India's standing on the global stage. However, there are concerns about some steps that are seen as authoritarian. Besides, economic growth has not necessarily addressed the long-standing inequalities in India.

The NDA has 293 seats in the Lok Sabha. In the 2019 election, it has 352 seats. The BJP has 240 seats down from 305 in the 2019 election (Election Commission of India, 2024). The current election results are seen as a disappointment for the BJP, NDA and Prime Minister Modi. They were expecting a full majority. The NDA has lost ground in the Hindi heartland states of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. The NDA has also lost seats in the western Indian state of Maharashtra the capital of which is the premier commercial city of Mumbai.

Specifically the main seat loss for the BJP is seen in, Chandigarh 1, Bihar 5, Haryana 2, Jharkhand 4, Karnataka 5, Ladakh 1, Maharashtra 14, Manipur 1, Punjab 2, Uttar Pradesh 29, West Bengal 6. There has been seat improvement of Andaman and Nicobar Islands 1, Andhra Pradesh 3, Assam 2, Chhattisgarh 1, Telangana 5.

INDI Alliance: The Indian National Congress lead the INDI Alliance. An earlier Congress alliance the United Progressive Alliance was in power from 2004-2014 with Dr Manmohan Singh heading a coalition government. The INDI Alliance has 234 seats in the Lok Sabha. In the 2019 elections, it had 91 seats in the Lok Sabha. The Congress Party has improved its individual tally from 52 to 99 (Election Commission of India, 2024). The main seats improvements are seen in, Bihar 2, Karnataka 8, Maharashtra 12, Rajasthan 8, Telangana 5, Uttar Pradesh 5, Manipur 2, Nagaland 1, Tamil Nadu 1, and Haryana 5. The Congress lost seats of Punjab 1, and Chhattisgarh 1. The current Congress President, Mallikarjun Kharge belongs to the Kalaburagi District of the state. He currently represents Karnataka in the Rajya Sabha. Earlier he represented Gulbarga in the Lok Sabha. Kalaburagi is located on the border of Telangana and Maharashtra.

State Wise Analysis

In the context of a massive change it is worth analysing the key states that swung the elections.

Andhra Pradesh: The state of Andhra Pradesh is on the east coast of South India. It had long been dominated by the regional Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Congress. Since 2011 there has been a breakaway Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) as a regional party in the state. The founder leader was Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. In the April 2019 State Assembly elections, the YSRCP had come to power. The YSRCP had 22 out of 25 Lok Sabha seats in the 2019 general election. However, in State Assembly elections held in May 2024 the Telugu Desam Party has swept to power. In the Lok Sabha seats too TDP has 16, BJP has 3, and alliance partner Janasena Party (JnP) has 2 seats. The YSRCP has 4 seats. This is important since the TDP has emerged as the second largest group in the NDA. They had been part of the Modi 1.0 cabinet.

Bihar: Nitish Kumar of the Janata Dal United, JD(U), has long dominated the politics of Bihar. He has been Chief Minister since February 2015. Earlier he had been Chief Minister from Nov 2005 to May 2014. During his tenures since 2015 and earlier he has been in coalition with either the BJP or the Congress. Other coalition partners have included the Rashtriya Janata Dal along with the Congress. Currently, the JD(U) is part of the NDA. Other parties from Bihar include the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), LJP (RV) of Chirag Paswan, and the Hindustani Awam Morcha of Jitan Ram Manjhi. Currently the seat distribution of NDA parties from Bihar is BJP 12, JDU 12, LJP (RV) 5, and HAM 1.

The JDU is seen as a major partner in the NDA that could tilt the balance. A total of 18 Non BJP NDA MPs are from Bihar. Given that JDU is the third largest constituent of NDA it is seen as an important part of any government formation at the centre.

Haryana: The North India state Haryana borders the National Capital Territory of Delhi on three sides. The BJP and Congress have long been dominant in the state. There are however regional parties that have a presence in some places. The October 2019 Assembly Elections threw up a hung assembly. The BJP being the single largest party formed the government with the support of the Jannanayak Janta Party. The result in this Lok Sabha election reflects the position in the State Legislature.

Karnataka: The State of Karnataka has had a Congress government since May 2023. The Chief Minister is Siddharamiah belongs to the Kurba Gowda community classified as OBC. Earlier the BJP was in power in this state. The BJP is believed to have lost due to anti-incumbency and polarisation of the dominant Lingayat community against the party. While the BJP did win the majority of Lok Sabha seats the Congress too has support in this state. The regional Janata Dal (Secular) party of the previous Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy too was part of the NDA for this election.

Maharashtra: The State of Maharashtra currently has a coalition government with the participation of the BJP. The state of Maharashtra is geographically the third largest state in India. It extends from the Western coast to the Centre of India. The southern parts of the state form part of the Deccan Plateau and it is often categorised along with Telangana and Northern Karnataka as the Deccan. Before 1956 large parts of the state were part of the erstwhile Bombay State along with parts of current day Gujarat. Even today much of the economic activity in Mumbai is controlled by ethnic Gujaratis.

The state has long had a presence of the Congress party with it holding power ever since the creation of the State of Maharashtra in 1960. There was a BJP coalition along with the Shiv Sena from Feb 1995 to Oct 1999. Thereafter, the Congress was in power until Nov 2014 when the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance again formed the state government headed by Devendra Fadnavis. The Shiv Sena is a nativist party that started in Mumbai and surrounding districts to oppose the economic migrations of South Indians and later Hindi speakers. The party later changed its rhetoric to a form of Hindutva. Currently, the party has expanded across the state. Another regional party in the state is the Nationalist Congress Party founded by veteran politician Sharad Pawar. Pawar had a long tenure in the Congress and quit in 1999 due to differences with Sonia Gandhi. However, he was part of the UPA Ministry in 1999-2004. He has since been the leader of the NCP which mainly has a presence in Maharashtra.

The State Assembly elections of October 2019 gave a majority to the NDA of BJP and Shiv Sena. However, they failed to form a government. A coalition government was formed by Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena under the banner of Maha Vikas Aghadi in November 2019. It is noteworthy that the lone Shiv Sena Cabinet Minister Aravind Sawant resigned from the BJP led Union Cabinet at this time.

This coalition lasted until June 2022. A breakaway faction of the Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde, currently Chief Minister, formed a coalition with the BJP. The other faction is led by Uddhav Bala Thackeray son of the original founder Balasaheb Thackeray. This situation was further complicated when in July 2023, the NCP split with Sharad Pawar's nephew Ajit Pawar joining the coalition. Both Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar are Deputy Chief Ministers.

The game of political musical chairs in the state has created four regional parties, besides the two national parties. The NDA is formed of the BJP, Shiv Sena, and NCP. The INDI bloc has the Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and the NCP (SP). There are 30 MPs from the INDI Alliance and 17 from the NDA with one Independent from Maharashtra in the current Lok Sabha.

The electoral results from the state are a reflection of the underlying instability of the past few years. The electorate are often confused as to which faction to support of the NCP and Shiv Sena. In the current scenario the upcoming State Assembly elections later this year will be interest to watch.

National Capital Territory of Delhi: The NCT of Delhi has seven Lok Sabha seats. The main parties are the Aam Adami Party (AAP) of Arvind Kejriwal and the BJP. The AAP holds power in the State Assembly since Feb 2020. In the May 2019 General Elections, the BJP had won all 7 Lok Sabha seats. Recently Kejriwal was arrested by Tax authorities for alleged corruption. This was seen in some quarters as a misuse of power by the BJP. He had been granted bail to campaign for the elections. However, the clean sweep by the BJP creates doubt about supposed political victimisation since given the high level of education and awareness among the population in the NCT they could easily have outvoted the BJP.

Rajasthan: The State of Rajasthan located in Northern India is the largest by area. It is however largely desert and is sparsely populated. The Congress and BJP are the two parties in the state, with there being no major regional party. The BJP has held power in the State since December 2023. In the general elections seats the BJP has 14 and the Congress 8 seats. The other three seats have to minor parties. This is a loss of 10 seats for the BJP. The seat share in the general elections reflects the position in the State Legislature.

Telangana: The State of Telangana is located in South Central India. The capital city of Hyderabad-Secundrabad is a major Information Technology hub. The State was created in June 2014 with the bifurcation of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. The main political parties in the state are the Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) and the Congress. There is a three-cornered contest in the state. In terms of seats the BJP and Congress have 8 each. The All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen, a Muslim oriented party headed by the maverick Asaduddin Owaisi has won the lone seat of Hyderabad.

Both the NDA and INDI are seen as benefiting from the decimation of the BRS. In State Assembly elections held in Dec 2023, the Congress came to power unseating K Chandrashekhara Rao of the BRS. The general election results reflect the position in the State Legislature.

Uttar Pradesh: Uttar Pradesh is India's most populous state and sends eighty members to the Lok Sabha. It is seen as political important and has given maximum number of Prime Ministers and other leading politicians to the country. The Congress and its ally Samajwadi [Socialist] Party (SP) have won forty four seats. Of these the SP has won 38 seats. The Congress has six seats. The majority of seats are in rural and semi urban areas.

The SP is headed by Akhilesh Yadav of the influential Yadav caste which is also classified as an OBC. One reason for the success of this party in the elections is seen as careful selection of candidates from OBCs other than Yadavs. Besides this party has long had the support of Muslims, who are twenty percentage of the state's population. This consolidation of the OBC vote is seen as a strategy that had earlier given good results to the BJP.

Rahul Gandhi won his own seat in Rae Bareilly. The neighbouring seat of Amethi too has been won by the Congress. Former Prime Ministers Late Mrs Indira Gandhi and Late Rajiv Gandhi has represented these seats. Besides the Congress has four seats in mainly urban areas. These have been won by political stalwarts with high personal premium.

The Bharatiya Janata Party came to power in the state in March 2017. The Chief Minister has since been Yogi Adityanath. This government was re-elected in 2022. It is seen as having a strong developmental agenda for the state. However, there are concerns around the government been heavy-handed in handling law and order issues.

The loss of seats for the BJP has mainly been in rural areas. This includes the seat of Faizabad that houses the newly built Ram Janmabhoomi temple. These losses can be attributed to a combination of anti incumbency and caste factors. Besides the Muslim vote has turned against the BJP.

West Bengal: The State of West Bengal has long been dominated by the Trinamool Congress (TMC) led by Mamata Banerjee which has held power since 2011. She had been in the NDA and was a Minister in the Vajpayee government of 1999-2004. In 2009 she aligned with the erstwhile UPA and held Ministerial office in the Manmohan Singh government from 2009-2011. In 2011 she shifted to state politics and has since been the Chief Minister. While nominally part of the INDI Alliance she did not have any seat sharing with them in the 2024 General elections. The reduction in the seat share of BJP is not entirely unexpected since this has benefited the TMC.

Comment

The relatively poor performance of the NDA is seen as having been unexpected. There may be several reasons for such a result.

Individual states especially large ones often reflect their state politics in voting for the Lok Sabha. In many BJP ruled states there has been anti-incumbency. The BJP has lost ground in major states of Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.

At another level states that had State Assembly elections in the past year reflect their legislative position in the general election. This is seen in Telangana, Haryana, Rajasthan and Karnataka.

The BJP having lost ground in the Hindi heartland has improved in South India, especially due to help of allies. Currently, there are 27 Telugu speaking Lok Sabha MPs in the NDA. Besides the BJP has for the first time won a seat in the southern state of Kerala.

There is a view that the BJP has been denigrating civil liberties such as freedom of the press. Awareness of such issues would more be of an urban phenomenon. Large urban conglomerations have all voted in favour of the BJP. The NCT is the best example of this trend.

A noteworthy point is that notwithstanding having a simple majority in the last two Lok Sabhas the BJP never had a two-third majority needed to implement many major constitutional amendments including the abrogation of Article 370. The earlier two governments had participation by NDA partners as Ministers of State. Hence the experience of working with coalition partners is not entirely new even to Modi.

Indian elections can be seen as cyclical between full majority and coalition governments. After two terms of full majority it is no unusual for a hung parliament to be elected.

Bibliography

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