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India

# On the elections in India

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**There is a tremendous euphoria, a little bit of which is legitimate, after the election results. The elections of 2024 were the least democratic in Indian history. The state apparatus, including anti-corruption branch, political police, tacitly the Election Commission of India, (which refused to take action against the Prime Minister despite his aggressive communal campaign), were all pressed into service. The bulk of the mainstream media, especially most television channels, were likewise going all out for the NDA, with particular stress on Modi and how he was going to get an immense victory.**

The election results were a considerable blow to the media-created aura of invincibility that Modi paraded. The BJP ([Bharatiya Janata Party](#)), far from getting close to 350 seats, was cut to 240, and the NDA ([National Democratic Alliance](#)) as a whole went down to 293 seats.

The biggest shock came from Uttar Pradesh. In 2019 the BJP and its allies had won 64 seats, the [Bahujan Samaj Party](#) won 10 seats, the [Samajwadi Party](#) won 5 (these two and the RLD had been in an alliance) and the [Congress](#) had won just 1 seat. In 2024, the BJP got 33 and its allies 3 seats, the SP got 37, the Congress 6, and the independently contesting [Azad Samaj Party](#) leader Chandrashekhar Azad won with over 51% of the votes cast in the Nagina constituency in Bijnore, UP. c.

In Maharashtra, the manipulative politics failed to pay dividends, and the Congress-[Nationalist Congress Party-Sharad Pawar](#)—[Shiv Sena-Uddhav Thackeray](#) bloc got 30 out of 48 seats.

In West Bengal, the [TMC](#) got 29 seats, with the Congress-Left alliance getting only one seat for the Congress but pulling away a large part of the anti-incumbency votes to itself rather than all of it going to the BJP. Voting figures suggest that in about a dozen seats, the left vote increase actually saved the TMC. The BJP did manage to steamroller the opposition alliance and any other party in MP, in Odisha, in Gujarat (where however Congress won one seat after two terms).

We can say that Narendra Modi as BJP leader and the BJP as a key element in the [RSS combine](#) had the following agenda.

1. Establish the ideological dominance of Hindutva. Regardless of whether one calls it fascist, fascist type, or post fascist with a strong kinship with Zionism, this means a deeply right-wing nationalism based on hatred directed at certain Others, and a homogeneous "nation". This also involves the imposition of a firm control over education and the mass media, and institutionalizing the ideological arguments of Hindutva.
2. Destroy where possible all political parties and bring under control where destruction is impossible.
3. Control and subvert the judiciary, the bureaucracy, the military and others. Empty the content of democracy and federalism while claiming to uphold the constitution.
4. Push ahead with the RSS agenda in civil society and use systematic violence against Muslims, but also against atheists and rationalists. Selective assaults on Christians (as in Manipur) and stronger assaults on Christian institutions working for Adivasis.

The election results have demonstrated the limits of the second item. The INDIA ([Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance](#)) bloc has been able to severely shake the apparently unchallengeable power of BJP and of Modi personally. Electorally speaking, it was able to shift the conversation to the constitution and to aspects of the economy, thereby weakening the appeal of the BJP.

The project of further destroying what remains of the federal structure has to be put on hold, or may even be slightly rolled back. Economic hardships have grown, and this election saw economic issues become much more important, despite Modi's recurrent attempts to communalize them. Socially, the Hindutva project repeatedly hits an internal contradiction. While it wants to show the Muslims above all as the Other, it is also a dominant caste project. Given the substantial degree of overlap between oppressed caste identity and exploited class identity, a kind of class based electoral political move could be seen.

But the repressive machinery is not going to slow down. As the move against author Arundhati Roy in a UAPA case shows, keeping the Home Ministry with Amit Shah was not just a gesture of defiance to the allies. It had the goal of pursuing repression more aggressively.

Hollowing out the institutions of democracy and silencing civil liberties have met with only sporadic resistance from the parties of opposition. The Supreme Court has over the decade bent quite a bit in the saffron direction, including in its Ram Mandir Babri Masjid judgements. The Election Commission has become blatantly partisan.

New Criminal Laws that make India more and more of a police state are coming into force from July next month. They will not be opposed by the new partners of the BJP. We will have to wait and see if the INDIA bloc led by the Congress will try and launch mass mobilizations and public resistance against them.

The election results have punctured Modi's aura of invincibility. They have opened up a space, and it is for independent mass mobilisations that will show far we can resist BJP now?

## The Left faces a complex challenge now

The great temptation before the left is to go for a stable bloc with the so-called Centre-Left parties. In the first place, this is perennially a drive when the FPTP system in particular throws up a strong right-wing party or alliance. But the Congress, and several other parties that are currently in or supporting the INDIA bloc are far from even being centrist. The Radical Socialist election stand had explained: Ever since the beginnings of globalization, Indian big capital and its hired economists, management specialists and media persons have been saying that labour laws must change, that industry must get greater flexibility, that big capital must get full access to agriculture. The Congress had tried all of these but had been only partially successful. This was where the BJP, in the second Modi government, made the decisive push.

A bloc where the focus will be on removing the BJP 'at any cost', while 'other things' come later, will be a bloc that silences or marginalises the demands of workers, peasants, various oppressed groups, ethnic, linguistic, religious, gender-sexual minorities.

While the politics of such a bloc moves in a rightward direction, the definition of a "realist" left will correspondingly shift, in order to increase by a few the meagre tally of the left parties. Yet, even with bloc formation, it is significant that out of the 9 MPs of the left parties, 7 come from areas where the left has fought on its own for years.

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Should the Left prioritise popular front politics, this independent mass struggle will be subordinated to bourgeois parliamentarism, with a long-term aim of moving to a stable two-bloc system, where the deepening of the extreme right will mean that mere palliatives will be given exaggerated importance. Instead, combining parliamentary and extra-parliamentary means, the left has to try and push back harder. It is the expansion and success of struggles outside parliament that will be key in the effort to progressively erode Hindutva.

*18 June 2024*

*PS:*

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