

Retrospective Analysis of the 2024 Indian Elections: BJP Wins the General Elections Against the Strengthening Opposition of the INDIA Bloc

By Abdessalam Saad Jaldi

PP - 10/24

India's general elections led to a political reconfiguration of unprecedented magnitude, for the first time since the 2014 elections that brought the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to power. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will preside over a rare, third consecutive term in power, making him only the second Indian prime minister to do so after Congress leader Jawaharlal Nehru in 1962. However, although Modi has secured a third term, the BJP failed to achieve an outright parliamentary majority, falling well-short of its 370 target (400 with coalition partners) in the lower house of parliament. While the BJP will have to work with its allies from the NDA to govern India for the next five years, the 2024 election results may usher in a new political cycle of rivalry between the Indian right and left, through the prism of economic reforms, societal reforms and the new statute of India in the global balances.

POLICY PAPER

Retrospective Analysis of the 2024 Indian Elections: BJP Wins the General Elections Against the Strengthening Opposition of the INDIA Bloc

By
Abdessalam Saad Jaldi

INTRODUCTION

India went to the polls from April 19 to June 1, 2024, in the world's largest electoral exercise, with more than 900 million registered voters in the world's most populous country of 1.4 billion people. With all of the 640 million votes counted—a turnout of 66%—India's general elections led to a political reconfiguration of unprecedented magnitude, for the first time since the 2014 elections that brought the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to power. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will preside over a rare, third consecutive term in power, making him only the second Indian prime minister to do so after Congress leader Jawaharlal Nehru in 1962. With all its allies, Modi's ruling BJP also managed to secure a majority of 293 seats in the Lok Sabha, the 543-seat lower house of India's Parliament. Under India's electoral system, the party or alliance that wins more than 272 seats can form a government. However, although Modi has secured a third term, the BJP failed to achieve an outright parliamentary majority, falling well-short of its 370 target (400 with coalition partners) in the lower house of parliament.

For the first time as PM, Modi will need to rely on coalition partners of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to govern. While the BJP government had tried during the election campaign to leverage India's rising global status and its Hindu nationalist credentials during the election campaign, local livelihood issues within the framework of the new Indian welfarism and the protection of religious minorities ultimately proved decisive for voters. In return, the General Elections of 2024 were characterized by the resurgence of the Congress party around the figure of Rahul Gandhi, figurehead of the party, who defied predictions by preventing the BJP party from securing an absolute majority.

Furthermore, the election result has highlighted the strength and resilience of India's institutions of democratic representation. Contrary to expectations that a third-term Modi government would significantly weaken the Indian democratic system, the election has shown that democracy remains strong and cannot be easily overturned in a country as large and diverse as India, very committed to its democratic institutions since independence in 1947.

1. INDIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS MAJOR CONTENDERS

The Indian parliamentary elections of 2024 seemed to mark an accentuation of features that already existed in the Indian political landscape, expressed in the results achieved by two ideologically opposed poles: a center-right coalition rallying around a technocratic and market-oriented option, organized around the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), and a more assertive left-wing around India National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), which found an incarnation in the figure of Rahul Gandhi.

1.1 National Democratic Alliance (NDA)

The NDA is a coalition of center-right and right-wing political parties led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Formed in 1998 in order to contain the Indian National Congress, which had dominated Indian politics for decades, The NDA comprises a diverse range of political parties with differing ideologies, ranging from Hindu nationalist to regional and local orientations. While the BJP is the principal party in the alliance, it also includes regional parties from various states, each with its own agenda and priorities, such as including Shiv Sena, a right-wing party with a strong presence in Maharashtra; , the Janata Dal (United), a center-right party with a stronghold in Bihar; , and the Shiromani Akali Dal, representing the Sikh community in Punjab.

The NDA has experienced significant electoral success over the years, both at national and state levels. Its most notable period of governance came with the landslide victories in the 2014 and 2019 general elections, when it secured clear majorities in the Lok Sabha under the leadership of Narendra Modi. In 2014, the coalition won 336 seats out of 543 in the Lok Sabha, securing a clear majority. In the 2019 elections, the NDA won 353 seats. These victories solidified the coalition's dominance at national level. The NDA's policy agenda has typically focused on issues including economic growth, infrastructure development, national security, and cultural nationalism. Under the leadership of Narendra Modi, the coalition has emphasized initiatives, particularly 'Make in India', seeking to boost manufacturing and promote India as a global manufacturing hub, 'Digital India', aiming to expand digital infrastructure, and social welfare programs such as the 'Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana', aimed at improving financial inclusion. Meanwhile initiatives including the goods and services tax (GST) seek to streamline the tax system and boost economic efficiency. The example of digital public infrastructure is very revealing: contributing to the streamlining of welfare payments while reducing space for corruption.¹

The concept of '«Hindutva»' or Hindu nationalism has been a significant ideological component of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), particularly with the (BJP) at its helm, in opposition of to INDIA secularism. Hindutva, literally meaning '«Hinduness',» is a term coined by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in the early 20th twentieth century. It espouses the idea of a cultural and national identity rooted in Hindu civilization. Hindutva proponents argue for the protection and promotion of Hindu culture, traditions, and values, often advocating for a more assertive expression of Hindu identity in Indian society and polity. Reclaimed since 1998 by the NDA, the Indian right alliance has built its ideological identity by promoting Hindu nationalism as the dominant paradigm of its political doctrine.

Indeed, the NDA has roots in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a right-wing organization founded in 1925 that promotes a vision of a Hindu nation. The political doctrine of the movement was fundamentally at odds with the principals of the Indian nationalist movement, led by Mahatma Gandhi and his disciple Jawaharlal Nehru, who would become the first prime minister of India after independence. Gandhi, though deeply religious, advocated for Hindu-Muslim coexistence. Nehru, a staunch secularist, supported religious pluralism. The first Hindu nationalists sought to make Hinduism, an ancient religion which has no single holy text, no overarching set of beliefs, and no single place of pilgrimage, into a homogeneous, organized faith based on a set of common religious tenets. During the early years of the Indian Republic, following its independence from British colonial rule in 1947, the ideology of Hindutva had little appeal for the Indian electorate. However, since the 1990s, the NDA has become stronger in both the electoral and social arenas. Electorally, it was in power as the dominant partner in a coalition from 1998 to 2004. Later, in 2014 it emerged as a majority in parliament with substantial numbers of followers, leading to more prominence for Hindu nationalism.

1. Chietigj Bajpae. India's shock election result is a loss for Modi but a win for democracy. June 2024. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/06/indias-shock-election-result-loss-modi-win-democracy>

NDA Bloc

Baratiya Janata Party (BJP)	Right-wing
Telugu Desam Party (TDP)	Centrist
Janata Dal (United)	Center-left
Shiv Sena (Shinde)	Right-wing
Lok Janashakti Party (Ram Vilas)	Center-right
Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD)	Center-left
Janata Dal (Secular) - JD(S)	Center-left
Janasena Party	Center-right
United People's Party	Center
Asom Gana Parishad	Center-right
Apna Dal (Soneylal)	Center-right
Sikkim Krantikari Morcha - SKM	Center-right
Hindustani Awam Morcha	Center
AJSU Party (AJSUP)	Center-right
Nationalist Congress Party	Center

1.2 Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA)

The The INDIA coalition is one noteworthy new feature of the Indian general elections of 2024. On July 18, 2023, leaders from over two dozen opposition parties announced the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance, or INDIA. This coalition's name is seen as an attempt by opposition parties to use the nationalist rhetoric typical of the BJP. It is replacing the older opposition alliance, the United Progressive Alliance, which governed India until 2014, when the BJP-led NDA came into power. INDIA is headed by the Indian National Congress, and chaired by the INC's president Mallikarjun Kharge. Many of the other members are regional parties formed in opposition to the INC when it was still the dominant force in Indian politics. INDIA was formed not out of any unified policy agenda, but primarily to defeat the BJP and to oust Prime Minister Narendra Modi. According to Kharge, the main goal of the coalition is to *"safeguard democracy and the constitution,"* which the coalition claims are threatened by the Modi government. The remarks of Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the political opposition on the day after the announcement of the election results are revealing: *"the opposition's fight was not just against the BJP, but to save the country's constitution, which the BJP government had tried to destroy"*². The BJP has heavily criticized the coalition, claiming its leaders are not concerned with the development of India, but are simply power-hungry.

INDIA has indeed faced setbacks that call into question whether or not it will remain unified enough to present a proper challenge to the NDA. On January 28, 2024, Janata Dal-United chief Nitish Kumar resigned as Bihar Chief Minister, abandoning his alliance with Rashtriya Janta Dal and INDIA to reform his government in a coalition with the BJP and others from the NDA. West Bengal Chief

2. BBC. BBC India reporters on why some voters said no to Modi. June 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5113nvjevxo>

Minister Mamata Banerjee announced that her party, the Trinamool Congress, would opt for a post-poll formulation between regional parties, as opposed to contesting the Lok Sabha elections as a part of the INDIA. These events coincided with rumors of rocky relationships between the Congress and other regional parties. More recently however, the INC has successfully reached seat-sharing arrangements with key regional parties the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) of Delhi and Punjab, and the Samajwadi Party (SP), which is the main opposition party in BJP-controlled Uttar Pradesh. Some INC members hoped that these recent successes will put the Trinamool Congress under pressure to contest the elections in alliance with INDIA.

INDIA's struggle to reach seat-sharing agreements and its lack of ideological cohesion raised questions about its capacity to oppose the NDA and BJP, despite its recent successes with the AAP and SP. The alliance got an opportunity to test its strength during by-elections in 2023. Just two months after the opposition formally announced its new alliance, seven by-elections occurred in six states. Of these elections, the BJP won two assembly seats and retained one, while each of the four remaining seats was won by an opposition party. The by-election in Ghosi, Uttar Pradesh, an incredibly important state given its population, was particularly noteworthy. In recent years, the BJP has enjoyed significant success campaigning in Uttar Pradesh. In this by-election, however, the INDIA-backed SP won by a margin of 42,000 votes. Furthermore, the good scores obtained during the 2024 elections allow the alliance to aspire to constitute an alternative to the NDA.

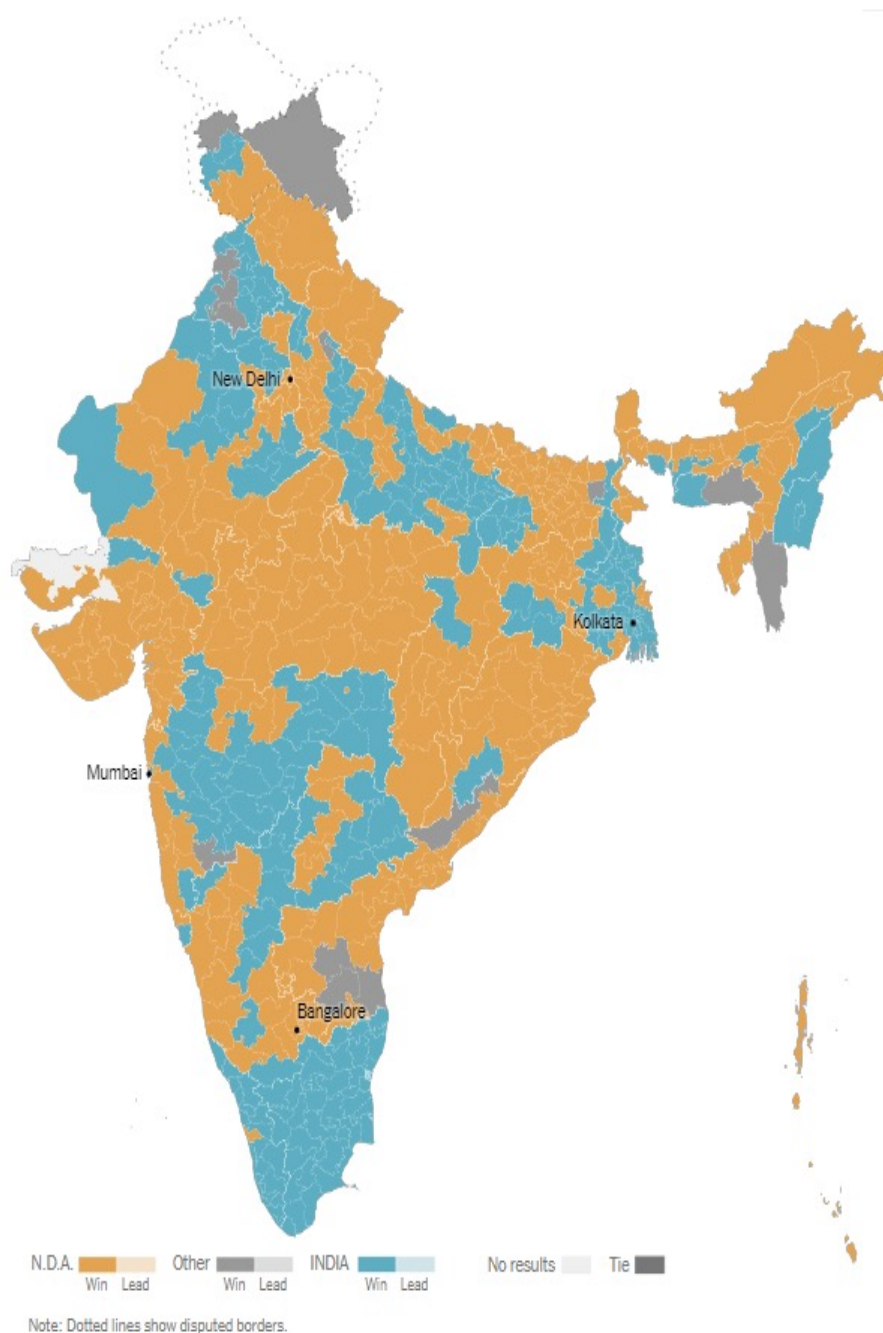
INDIA BLOC

Congress	Center-left
Samajwadi Party (SP)	Center-left
Trinamool Congress (TMC)	Center-left
Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)	Center-left
Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackrey)	Centrist
Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar)	Center-left
Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)	Center-left
Communist Party of India	Marxist
Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)	Center-left
Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)	Centrist
Indian Union Muslim League (IUML)	Center-left
Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)	Marxist-Leninist
Jammu & Kashmir National Conference (JKN)	Center-left
Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK)	Left-wing
Kerala Congress (KEC)	Center-left
Revolutionary Socialist Party	Marxist-Leninist
Rashtriya Loktantrik Party	Right-wing
Bharat Adivasi Party	Tribal
Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK)	Center-left

2. ANALYSIS OF THE 2024 ELECTIONS: A PYRRHIC VICTORY FOR THE BJP

The Indian Prime Minister's party (the BJP) won the elections with more than 240 seats. But against all expectations, the opposition, embodied by the Congress Party, won more than double the number of seats it won in 2019. The results foreshadow a reshuffling of the balance of power in the Indian political arena, characterized on the one hand by a relative weakening of the BJP, the main component of the NDA, and on the other by the resurgence of the Congress

2.1 The Relative Weakening of the BJP



The Indian legislative elections of 2024 were characterized by a relative weakening of the BJP, India's leading political force since the legislative elections of 2014. The electoral score obtained by the BJP, nearing 240 seats in the Indian Parliament, is all the more surprising given that towards the end of the electoral campaign and at the beginning of the voting operations, the BJP was widely predicted to be the clear winner, even aiming for 400 seats out of the 543 in the Lok Sabha. In the outgoing legislature, the BJP held an absolute majority with 303 seats, making unnecessary the NDA with supplementary parties, which were not able to influence decisions. However, as the electoral process progressed, ground reports indicated that BJP candidates were facing more difficulties than anticipated, and the 'Modi magic' was not working as effectively as it had in the past. Indeed, the entire BJP electoral campaign revolved around the personality of the Prime Minister, and his program for the next five years was very general, largely summed up by the slogan 'Modi ki guarantee' (Modi's guarantee), highlighting the limitations of the BJP as a political party overly focused on the personality of its leader, Narendra Modi. For example, in the BJP's 48-page manifesto, Modi's name is featured 67 times³.

Furthermore, the stigmatization of India's Muslim minority and the limits of India's economic development model have significantly contributed to eroding the BJP vote, as illustrated by the collapse of Modi's party not only in the strategic and most populous state of Uttar Pradesh (29 seats), but also in Maharashtra (14) and West Bengal (6), accounting for a total of 49 seats.⁴ These losses were likely the result of multiple local factors rather than any single national issue. The BJP's loss in Uttar Pradesh in the north can be attributed to voters' perceptions of the BJP's arrogance, the party's failure to address rising unemployment and inflation, and its anti-Muslim rhetoric (employed to seek the Hindu vote by polarising communities).⁵ The BJP's defeat in the Faizabad constituency, home to the recently constructed temple to the Hindu god Ram in Ayodhya, which had long been the locus of sectarian tensions between Hindu and Muslims, showed this push-back.⁶ There was also concern among the low-caste Dalit voters about the BJP's perceived intention to roll back affirmative-action policies if it secured a resounding victory.⁷ In Maharashtra, the BJP failed to address discontent among the agrarian community and concerns among the Maratha and Dalit communities and underestimated the political skills of local opposition leaders.⁸ In West Bengal, the BJP's polarising communal rhetoric failed amidst internal party disagreements and the absence of a credible local leader.⁹ The impression that emerges is that Modi's ambitious slogan 'Ab ki baar, 400 paar' (This time, beyond 400 seats), failed to resonate in large parts of the country, particularly those with a more cosmopolitan and secular outlook, and parts of the country with strong regional identities, such as the south¹⁰, richer and more economically dynamic than the northern states where the BJP remains very popular. In the same vein, the BJP's 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp' action plan, which aims to transform India into a developed country by 2047, also fell flat in a country facing high levels of inequality and youth unemployment¹¹.

3. Astha Rajvanshi. 5 Surprising Takeaways From India's Election Results. Time. June 2024. <https://time.com/6985897/indias-election-results-takeaways/>

4. Rahul Roy-Chaudhury. The Modi 3.0 coalition government: challenges and priorities. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). June 2024. <https://www.iiiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2024/06/the-modi-3.0-coalition-government-challenges-and-priorities>

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Chietigj Bajpae. India's shock election result is a loss for Modi but a win for democracy. Chatham House. June 2024. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/06/indias-shock-election-result-loss-modi-win-democracy>

11. Ibid.

SEATS WON BY THE BJP BLOC

Baratiya Janata Party (BJP)	240
Telugu Desam Party (TDP)	16
Janata Dal (United)	12
Shiv Sena (Shinde)	7
Lok Janashakti Party (Ram Vilas)	5
Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD)	2
Janata Dal (Secular) - JD(S)	2
Janasena Party	2
United People's Party	1
Asom Gana Parishad	1
Apna Dal (Soneylal)	1
Sikkim Krantikari Morcha - SKM	1
Hindustani Awam Morcha	1
AJSU Party (AJSUP)	1
Nationalist Congress Party	1

2.2 The Resurgence of the Congress

The Indian legislative elections were also characterized by the resurgence of the historic Congress party in the Indian political landscape, nearly doubling its 2019 tally by obtaining 99 seats. Overall, the opposition grouped around the INDIA alliance obtained 234 seats. The famous party of the Nehru-Gandhi lineage had become a shadow of its former self after suffering two humiliating defeats in 2014 and 2019 against Modi's BJP. However, the strong electoral results achieved by the oldest Indian political party undoubtedly mark its return to the forefront of the Indian political stage. In its electoral program, the leader of the Congress party promised to provide 100,000 rupees (€1,100) annually to each poor Indian family, and jobs for young people, while also pledging to protect religious minorities, which appears to have resonated with voters¹². Furthermore, Gandhi's electoral alliance strategy with regional parties proved fruitful for both the Congress and its partners, enabling the opposition to make a strong comeback in the Lok Sabha, albeit remaining in the minority. *"The result is surprising. The opposition has managed to pull off the unexpected"*¹³, political analyst Rashid Kidwai told the BBC. According to Kidwai, the credit for the opposition's performance, largely goes to Mr Gandhi, the much-criticized scion of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty: *"He's a fifth generation dynast and came with a lot of historical baggage (...) The mainstream media in India was very hostile to him and social media didn't take him seriously. He was targeted and projected as a non-serious politician who took too many holidays"*¹⁴. But, Mr Kidwai said, he overcame the odds and, in recent years, worked hard to change that impression of himself and his party. *"During his Bharat Jodo Yatra and the Nyay March through the length and breadth of the country, he met millions of people – which added to his stature and won him lots of support. It also gave him confidence and political heft"*¹⁵.

12. La Tribune. Inde : Narendra Modi remporte les élections législatives face à une opposition grandissante. Juin 2024. <https://www.latribune.fr/economie/international/inde-narendra-modi-remporte-les-elections-legislatives-face-a-une-opposition-grandissante-999116.html>

13. Geeta Pandey. India's opposition looked down and out – now they're back. BBC. June 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cp00jze920eo>

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

Undoubtedly the Congress has regained its mojo. Be it the formation of INDIA bloc, Rahul Gandhi's yatras, Mallikarjun Kharge's leadership, Jairam Ramesh's communication controls, the determined campaigning by Priyanka Gandhi, or the Congress digital campaign, which has now begun to match the BJP—tweet for tweet—according to younger party leaders¹⁶: these, and much more, have yielded huge electoral dividends for the grand old party. *“Even if we have not succeeded in forming the government (at the Centre), we have fought a good fight and are very much in the reckoning politically,”* said former Maharashtra chief minister Prithviraj Chavan¹⁷. But he added, it is time for the party to make its presence felt in Parliament.

Some challenges for the party, however, remain. The principal issue is the revamp of the organization. This, many feel, will be the biggest impediment to its revival. *“There has been very little revival of the Congress organisation”*¹⁸, said Dr Sudha Pai, one of India's foremost Congress experts. *“There are no signs of that. For a long-term revival, now they will have to work very hard to build an organisation and build a second line of leadership in every state. Only that will help build on what the party has got”*¹⁹. The case of the Congress challenges in the Karnataka government are revealing. This was evident in the defeat of D.K. Suresh, brother of Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar in the Lok Sabha election. Kharge, who comes from Karnataka, would like to be sent back there. Congressmen feel this move could facilitate the return of a new and invigorated Rahul Gandhi for the top job, and a bigger role for Priyanka Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi's sister²⁰.

SEATS WON BY THE INDIA BLOC

Congress	99
Samajwadi Party (SP)	37
Trinamool Congress (TMC)	29
Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)	22
Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackrey)	9
Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar)	8
Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)	4
Communist Party of India	4
Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)	3
Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)	3
Indian Union Muslim League (IUML)	3
Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)	2

16. Aditi Phadnis. Party leaders say they feel they have been successful in two missions: They managed to get the party moving in the 2024 elections and checked the march of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Business Standard. June 2024. https://www.business-standard.com/elections/lok-sabha-election/lok-sabha-election-results-after-resurgence-what-next-for-the-congress-124060401819_1.html

17. Ibid.

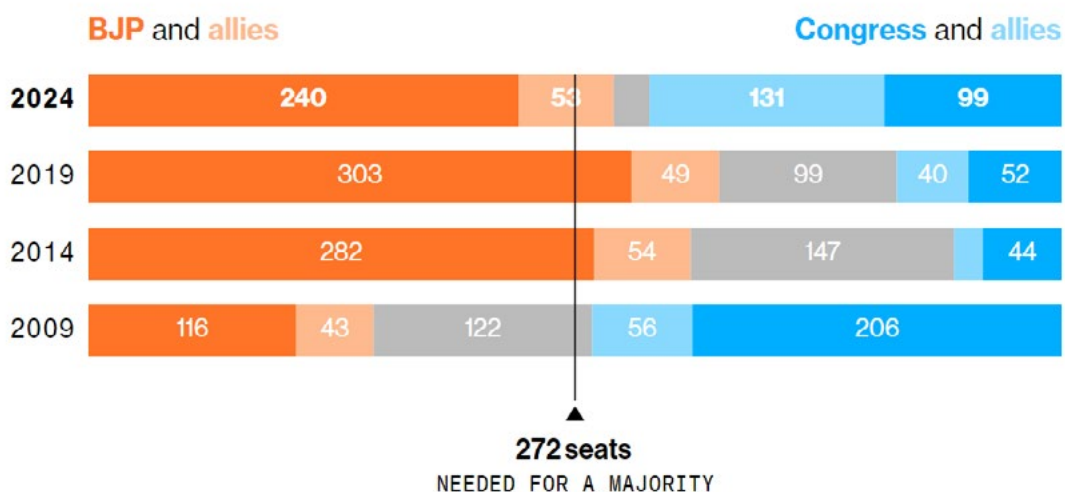
18. Aditi Phadnis. Party leaders say they feel they have been successful in two missions: They managed to get the party moving in the 2024 elections and checked the march of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Business Standard. June 2024. https://www.business-standard.com/elections/lok-sabha-election/lok-sabha-election-results-after-resurgence-what-next-for-the-congress-124060401819_1.html

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

Jammu & Kashmir National Conference (JKN)	2
Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK)	2
Kerala Congress (KEC)	1
Revolutionary Socialist Party	1
Rashtriya Loktantrik Party	1
Bharat Adivasi Party	1
Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK)	1

2.3 The resuscitated NDA alliance



Besides the relative weakening of Modi’s political party, the new trends emerged from the 2024 elections compelled the Indian PM to rely on allies of the NDA to form a government for the first time since 2014. The BJP’s dependence on its principal coalition partners, the southern Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the eastern Janata Dal (United) (JD (U)), is likely to result in changes to the government’s domestic political programme.²¹ Both these regional parties tout their secular ideologies and have Muslim and Other Backward Class (OBC; a classification of castes that are perceived as educationally or socially backward) vote-banks, contradicting the BJP’s majoritarian Hindutva politics. One of Modi’s signature initiatives, a Uniform Civil Code that would constrain traditional Muslim practices related to marriage, divorce and other personal matters, will now likely be deferred.²² “Modi will have to act in a more consultative, deliberative, and inclusive manner,” says Milan Vaishnav, director of the South Asia Program at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace²³. “This is anathema to the PM who, going back to his days as Gujarat chief minister, has never had to truly worry about coalition politics”²⁴. For now, the BJP has ensured that

21. Rahul Roy-Chaudhury. The Modi 3.0 coalition government: challenges and priorities. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). June 2024. <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2024/06/the-modi-3.0-coalition-government-challenges-and-priorities>

22. Ibid.

23. Astha Rajvanshi. 5 Surprising Takeaways From India’s Election Results. Time. June 2024. <https://time.com/6985897/indias-election-results-takeaways/>

24. Ibid.

only five of the 30 ministerial positions in the cabinet are held by members of the coalition parties, with the top four ministerial portfolios continuing to be held by the BJP: defence, home affairs, finance, and external affairs²⁵. Of the 72 members of the Union Council of Ministers, 11 are drawn from the BJP's coalition partners.²⁶ Some coalition partners are already resentful, however, and seek an expansion of the ministerial council.²⁷ Both the TDP and the JD (U) have been fickle partners, having both previously been members of the opposition coalition (the TDP rejoined the NDA in March 2024 and the JD (U) in January 2024).²⁸

Furthermore, there are also upcoming elections in several states, including Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Haryana²⁹. These will be important in the context of the BJP's position in the upper house of parliament (Rajya Sabha) where the party still lacks a majority³⁰. States determine the composition of the upper house and a strengthened BJP position in both houses of parliament will make it easier to pass legislation³¹. On the other hand, Modi's weakened position also makes it less likely that he will stand for a fourth term in 2029. This will renew debates within the BJP on succession plans³². The party's poor performance in Uttar Pradesh—India's largest and most electorally consequential state—will undermine the standing of the state's chief minister, Yogi Adityanath, who has been seen as a potential successor to Modi³³. Finally, the election outcome will likely impact India's policymaking efficacy within the framework of the NDA coalition, making it more difficult to make progress on some of the more politically sensitive economic reforms, such as land acquisition and labor reforms. These were challenging even before the election, as seen in 2021 when large-scale farmers' protests undermined progress on implementing agricultural reforms. However, policymaking is also likely to become more consensus-based and less prone to abrupt shifts, such as the government's sudden COVID-19 health crisis lockdown in 2021.

3. INDIA GENERAL ELECTIONS CHALLENGES

There were several significant issues for voters in the general elections of 2024, and they can often vary from state to state. The major concerns for voters were the economy, unemployment, welfare, Hindu nationalism, and foreign policy projection.

3.1 The Dilemmas of India's Economic Development: Economic Growth Not Benefiting the Indian Population

Since coming to power in 2014, Prime Minister Modi has initiated a proactive transformation of the Indian economy, the initial successes of which played into his re-election in 2019. These successes are undeniable, whether it be the accelerated development of renewable energies, IT services,

25. Rahul Roy-Chaudhury. The Modi 3.0 coalition government: challenges and priorities. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). June 2024. <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2024/06/the-modi-3.0-coalition-government-challenges-and-priorities>

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Rahul Roy-Chaudhury. The Modi 3.0 coalition government: challenges and priorities. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). June 2024. <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2024/06/the-modi-3.0-coalition-government-challenges-and-priorities>

29. Chietigi Bajpae. India's shock election result is a loss for Modi but a win for democracy. June 2024. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/06/indias-shock-election-result-loss-modi-win-democracy>

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

or a high-performance pharmaceutical industry. The meteoric rise of certain conglomerates under the Modi era, reminiscent of the Japanese Sōgō-Shōsha or the Korean Chaebols of the last century, has been at the heart of India's economic transformation. The 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-sufficient India) public policies, which aim to increase manufacturing's share of value added to 25% by 2025, have helped strengthen the country's industrial base and export capacity. Technology transfers are now a recurring theme in India's economic policy not only in the defense sector, where industrial offset requirements make it possible to impose them on the supplier, but also in civil sectors deemed strategic, including quantum computing, electronics, energy (photovoltaic, hydrogen and nuclear), and civil aeronautics and space. These levers are aimed at strengthening an attractiveness that is essentially based on cost-competitiveness, although the temptation of national preference is an underlying factor. Benoit Gautier described the configuration as: "*a controlled opening in a mercantilist approach*"³⁴.

Yet the performance of the Indian economy is still far from matching that of the Asian tigers in the second half of the twentieth century. It is true that India's GDP has overtaken that of most European economies to reach fifth place in the world, and should rise to third place by 2030, but double-digit growth has still not been achieved and growth is even on a downward trend, weakened by structural issues that the BJP government is failing to address³⁵. This situation is consequential on the one hand for the limits of the Indian growth model, which focuses on services, and on the other hand, in terms of the structural weaknesses of the Indian economy. On the first point, Indian growth is essentially based on the services sector, which has become the country's largest employer, accounting for 31% of the working population. In 2021, services accounted for 60% of GDP, while manufacturing contributed less than 20%, and employed only 15% of the workforce. As a result, India's industry has not been able to absorb the low-skilled labor released by agriculture, despite efforts to attract foreign investment, and its share of the world market in manufactured goods has plateaued at 1%. The impression that emerges is that India's industrial sector remains the weak link in the Indian economy. However, without strong industry, there can be no strong economy.

The second point exacerbates the structural weaknesses of the Indian economy. The central objective of the Modi government's economic strategy has been to make up for the development lag accumulated by India, and to position India as an industrial substitute for China in global value chains. However, difficulties continue to persist. India's GDP grew by 8% in 2023. However, Economists have argued that India makes no progress on the Human Development Index (HDI)³⁶, placing the country 134 out of 193 countries and territories in the just released 2023/24 Human Development Report (HDR).³⁷ They note that declining private consumption and contracting government consumption are worrying trends and say that other issues, such as unemployment and growing inflation, are cautionary flags over India's economic growth³⁸. Furthermore, India may have overtaken China in terms of population in 2022, but whereas the two countries were at a comparable level of development in 1980, India is now far behind in terms of GDP, accounting for just 3.5% of global GDP compared with 18% for China. Moreover, India only accounts for 1.5% of world trade in goods, compared with China's 13%. Above all, India remains highly dependent on China for its supplies of manufactured goods and its integration into global value

34. Benoît Gautier. Le mercantilisme modien à l'épreuve de la réalité. Ambassade de France en Inde : Service économique régional de New Delhi. Janvier 2023. <https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Articles/85e8d201-f069-4352-8a3d-02a9d690cc54/files/9254184f-542a-4795-a27d-3f80be466913>

35. Ibid.

36. Manjari Chatterjee Miller. India's 2024 General Election: What to Know. Council on Foreign Relations. April 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/indias-2024-general-election-what-know>

37. India shows progress in Human Development Index, ranks 134 out of 193 countries. UNDP : United Nations Development Programme. March 2024. <https://www.undp.org/india/press-releases/india-shows-progress-human-development-index-ranks-134-out-193-countries>

38. Manjari Chatterjee Miller. India's 2024 General Election: What to Know. Council on Foreign Relations. April 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/indias-2024-general-election-what-know>

chains, as demonstrated by its record trade deficit with China in 2022, and the need for foreign manufacturers established in India to maintain large proportions of their supplies in China, or even to encourage their Chinese suppliers to set up in India.

3.2 Unemployment as the BJP Government's Achilles Heel

Unemployment is a critical issue that continues to challenge the economic landscape in India. As one of the world's most populous nations with a diverse workforce, fluctuations in the unemployment rate have far-reaching implications for the country's growth and development³⁹. While India faces a major demographic transition, many Indian young people are left unemployed in a market that prioritizes highly skilled labor⁴⁰. At the end of 2023, the unemployment rate among young people aged 20–24 was 44.9%, while the overall unemployment rate stood at 8.7%⁴¹. A report by the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) finds that India is at a turning point: it needs to create at least 90 million non-farm jobs by 2030, while despite accelerating rural exodus and urbanization, 60% of the population still lives in the countryside.⁴²

Furthermore, the Indian economy is not creating enough jobs (3 to 4 million a year since 2015, probably fewer since the pandemic crisis), because of the modernization of services and the substitution of capital for labor in industry. The government's decision to demonetize high-value currency notes in 2016 caused economic disruption, particularly in the informal sector, resulting in temporary job losses⁴³. In the same vein, the introduction of the GST aimed to simplify the tax structure but caused short-term disruptions in the economy, affecting businesses and employment⁴⁴. The predominance of informality (80% of the working population) acts as a buffer against economic shocks but also acts as a brake on the mobilization of savings to finance the economy, while investment in human capital (education, vocational training, research, and development) and in physical infrastructure is constrained by the lack of budgetary leeway. Only 10% of workers in industry and 28% in services have regular jobs with written contracts and social security cover⁴⁵. Finally, the COVID-19 health crisis further reinforced the duality of the economy, with the part of the economy that is integrated into global value chains accounting for just 40% of GDP.

The unemployment rate impacts the Indian economy by influencing spending, growth, and job opportunities. Consequently, continued vigilance and effective policy measures remain crucial to foster sustainable job growth and secure the nation's future prosperity⁴⁶. Recent weather patterns across the country have brought about significant changes in economic conditions. As the rains have covered large parts of India, impacting nearly half of the agricultural land, expectations of higher farm production have risen. This positive development has the potential to contribute to

39. Forbes India. Unemployment rate in India (2008 to 2024): Current rate, historical trends and more. February 2019. <https://www.forbesindia.com/article/explainers/unemployment-rate-in-india/87441/1>

40. Manjari Chatterjee Miller. India's 2024 General Election: What to Know. Council on Foreign Relations. April 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/indias-2024-general-election-what-know>

41. Forbes India. Unemployment rate in India (2008 to 2024): Current rate, historical trends and more. February 2019. <https://www.forbesindia.com/article/explainers/unemployment-rate-in-india/87441/1>

42. McKinsey Global Institute. India's turning point : An economic agenda to spur growth and jobs. August 2020. <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Featured%20Insights/India/Indias%20turning%20point%20An%20economic%20agenda%20to%20spur%20growth%20and%20jobs/MGI-Indias-turning-point-Executive-summary-August-2020-vFinal.pdf>

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Benoît Gautier. Le mercantilisme modien à l'épreuve de la réalité. Ambassade de France en Inde : Service économique régional de New Delhi. Janvier 2023. <https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Articles/85e8d201-f069-4352-8a3d-02a9d690cc54/files/9254184f-542a-4795-a27d-3f80be466913>

46. Forbes India. Unemployment rate in India (2008 to 2024): Current rate, historical trends and more. February 2019. <https://www.forbesindia.com/article/explainers/unemployment-rate-in-india/87441/1>

overall economic growth and improve labor demand in the agriculture sector⁴⁷. On the other hand, startup registration and an increased number of tax returns, which suggests a different picture of people choosing to be entrepreneurs and micro-entrepreneurs, highlight the importance of diversifying economic activities to create more employment opportunities and bolster the country's financial resilience⁴⁸.

Year	Unemployment rate (percent) since BJP arriving to power
2024	8,1 (April 2024)
2023	8,3%
2022	7,3
2021	5,9
2020	8
2019	5,27
2018	5,33
2017	5,36
2016	5,42
2015	5,44
2014	5,44
2013	5,42

3.3 The New Indian Welfarism: Between Benefits and Limits

Welfare schemes will play a key role in PM Modi's new five-year term; the BJP government has made its delivery of a new kind of welfare program a central issue. As former chief economic adviser Arvind Subramanian noted, a critical pillar of the Modi government's economic program consists of what he termed "*new welfarism*"⁴⁹, in which the government subsidizes the provision of essential private goods such as electricity, housing, bank accounts, and cooking gas, as well as giving out cash payments⁵⁰, contrary to the traditional welfare models in Europe or the U.S. Welfare since the arriving of the BJP in 2014 has been coupled with the government's embrace of direct cash transfers, which have funneled government benefits directly into household bank accounts while cutting out leaky intermediaries⁵¹. According to the BBC, India's government has spent more than 34 trillion rupees (\$400 billion, £316 billion) in the past decade, delivering direct cash benefits to low-income households and reaching over 900 million people⁵². A yearly handout of 6,000 rupees to more than 110 million farmers constitutes one of the world's largest cash transfer programs⁵³. The transfers, officials claim, have cut corruption and slashed

47. Ibid.

48. Forbes India. Unemployment rate in India (2008 to 2024): Current rate, historical trends and more. February 2019. <https://www.forbesindia.com/article/explainers/unemployment-rate-in-india/87441/1>

49. Abhishek Anand, Vikas Dimble, Arvind Subramanian. New welfarism of India's Right. 2020. https://ashoka.edu.in/static/doc_uploads/file_1608617954.pdf

50. Milan Vaishnav. Decoding India's 2024 Election Contest. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. December 2023. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/12/decoding-indias-2024-election-contest?lang=en>

51. Manjari Chatterjee Miller. India's 2024 General Election: What to Know. Council on Foreign Relations. April 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/indias-2024-general-election-what-know>
Ibid.

52. Soutik Biswas. Free water, housing, food: Modi's \$400bn welfare bet to win Indian elections. BBC. May 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-68236697>

53. Soutik Biswas. Free water, housing, food: Modi's \$400bn welfare bet to win Indian elections. BBC. May 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-68236697>

costs⁵⁴. In the same vein, surveys show voters identify welfare programs with the ruling parties, and that the number of households reporting using clean cooking fuel, toilets, and women's access to bank accounts has increased since Mr Modi came to power a decade ago⁵⁵. Distributing free bicycles to girls attending schools and colleges in various states has increased access to education⁵⁶.

Although the conventional narrative holds that the BJP fought and won the 2024 election on the back of nationalism induced by a national security crisis involving the Muslims of India within the framework of the Indian Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and India's National Register of Citizens (NRC), economics played a distinct role. In the months leading up to the election, the BJP announced the extension of a pandemic-era scheme to provide free food grains to 800 million citizens for an additional five years, with a 150,000-rupee cash transfer to every girl child in Mizoram, and an annual 12,000-rupee payment for married women in Chhattisgarh, if it were brought to power (amounting to \$1,800 and \$144, respectively)⁵⁷. The political opposition also promised welfare schemes to influence voting behavior. In Telangana, the BRS promised 100,000 rupees (\$1,200) to the families of low-income and Muslim brides⁵⁸. In Rajasthan, the state Congress Party promised 10,000 rupees (\$120) to every female head of household, tacking on a commitment to provide women with smartphones and free internet access⁵⁹. Among other aspects, this denoted the importance of social welfare programs in voters' electoral behavior in India.

The strength and continuity of the kinds of welfare programs spearheaded by the BJP will be an important issue, but the evidence of welfare translating into social progress is mixed. Arvind Subramanian warned the government of against "*competitive populism*", emphasizing the strain placed on public funds by too many welfare schemes. India's public debt (federal and state governments) exceeds more than 80% of GDP, according to IMF data. In a December 2023 report, the IMF flagged India's "*elevated public debt levels and contingent liability risks*"⁶⁰. "*States are playing with fire*", said Mr Subramanian. "*These schemes have become permanent entitlements. I don't know how this will end*"⁶¹. Furthermore, the jury is still out on whether 'New Welfarism' is hurting the exchequer. And experts warn that these schemes are insufficient to lift people out of poverty; investments in healthcare and education are also essential⁶². They argue that the new welfarism does not accurately reflect India's lack of progress on the Human Development Index (HDI), an UN-developed tool that measures a country's development based on a combination of factors, including average life expectancy, income, and education level. India country ranked 134 globally in 2022. While India spends less than 1 percent of its GDP on health, and spending on education has been slashed, extending the free grain program to over 800 million people until 2028 also points to a struggling rural economy. "*So while there is much that is commendable about the New Welfarism, one worries that it might be at the cost of building systems that matter for long-term productivity and growth*"⁶³.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Milan Vaishnav. Decoding India's 2024 Election Contest. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. December 2023. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/12/decoding-indias-2024-election-contest?lang=en>

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Soutik Biswas. Free water, housing, food: Modi's \$400bn welfare bet to win Indian elections. BBC. May 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-68236697>

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. Soutik Biswas. Free water, housing, food: Modi's \$400bn welfare bet to win Indian elections. BBC. May 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-68236697>

3.4 The Status of Muslims in India: The Weakest Link of Indian Democracy

The protection of Muslims in India as Indian citizens has become the weakest link of Indian democracy during the ten years of BJP rule. This observation is closely dependent on the Hindu nationalism doctrine advocated by the BJP as an ideological stance. When Prime Minister Modi came to power in 2014, he made three key elections promises: first, he would overturn the autonomous status of Kashmir, second build a temple to the Hindu god Ram at the holy site of Ayodhya, and finally impose a uniform civil code that would create one law for all, regardless of religion. Six months after Modi was elected in May 2019 for his second term, the Hindu nationalists had already made headway in achieving two of their aims. In August 2019, the Indian government stripped the Muslim majority state of Kashmir of its autonomous status, essentially giving New-Delhi more control over the region's affairs. That same month, nearly two million people in Assam on the border with Bangladesh were left off a controversial new National Register of Citizens (NRC), which critics feared could be used to justify religious discrimination against Muslims in the state. Indeed, the NRC is a list of people who can prove they came to India before 24 March 1971, a day before neighboring Bangladesh became an independent country. Many indigenous groups in Assam fear that giving citizenship to large numbers of immigrants, who came over the porous border with Bangladesh following independence in 1971, would change the unique ethnic make-up of the region and their way of life, regardless of religion, considering that illegal migration from Bangladesh has long been a concern in the state.

However, in November 2019, India's Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision, granted Hindus permission to build a temple at the centuries-old Ayodhya holy site (a religious flashpoint for more than 400 years), while giving Muslim representatives a separate five acres of land in the town, ending one of the country's most politically-charged land disputes. The ruling on the Ayodhya site was a blow to Muslims and came at a time when Muslims increasingly see themselves as second-class citizens. To settle the ownership question, India's top court was asked to consider ancient texts, including a 500-year-old diary written by a Mughal emperor, travelogues from medieval merchants, and colonial-era surveys and archaeological records. The Islamic Waqf Board, an elected legal body that oversees Sunni Islamic properties endowed for religious or charitable purposes, argued that there is no proof that a temple was ever destroyed to build the mosque, but stated that they respect the Supreme Court's decision. However, a group of Hindu monks called Nirmohi Akhara claimed the land in its entirety and asked for the right to build a temple there. The Hindu deities Ram Lalla Virajman have also claimed that: *"the deity of Lord Ram has jurisdictional rights and as such its right could not be divided and the entire piece of land should be handed over to the deity"*⁶⁴.

More recently, relations between the Muslim and Hindu communities have once again become tense with the adoption of the Indian Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). This makes foreign undocumented migrants and religious refugees (including Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians) from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan eligible for Indian citizenship, but not if they are Muslim. The BJP government declared that the act only seeks to protect religious minorities who fled persecution in the aforementioned countries. The text violates a number of constitutional principles. Indeed, under the Indian Constitution, while certain rights are available only to citizens, others including the right to equality mentioned in the Constitution's Article 14, and the right to life and liberty mentioned in Article 21, were interpreted by the Indian Supreme Court in the Kesavananda Bharati Case in 1973 as available to all individuals, and not exclusively to Indian citizens. Indeed, the Indian Constitution stipulates that a non-citizen is certainly a person, and is therefore also entitled to those rights. As Atul Kumar, a Supreme Court advocate, told India Today: *"the migrants or refugees from these countries may be of any religion. Once they have come to India by whichever means then excluding Muslim refugees from the benefit of CAB*

64. Helene Regan, Swati Gupta and Manveena Sura. Hindus allowed to build on disputed holy site, India's Supreme Court rules. CNN. November 9, 2019. <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/11/08/asia/ayodhya-dispute-india-ruling-intl-hnk/index.html>

2019 would prima facie violate Articles 14 (...) Articles 14 and 15 are not confined to the citizens. It gives benefits of equality to any person within the territory of India even to a foreigner⁶⁵. In other words, Article 14 is the fundamental core of Indian Constitutional law and applies not only to citizens but also to non-citizens, because the words used in the article are, "any person". *National Human Rights Commission Vs State of Arunachal Pradesh* in 1996 centered on Chakma refugees, who were undocumented immigrants from Bangladesh. The Court observed that the fundamental rights to life and liberty guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution also applied to Chakma refugees, though they were not Indian citizens. In light of that, the ICAA is unconstitutional because it violates both Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution, as well as Article 15 concerning the prohibition of discrimination on ground of religion.

Most importantly, the ICAA seems incompatible with the ideals of Indian secularism⁶⁶. Even though the word 'secular' was introduced in India in 1976, the Supreme Court in the 1973 *Kesavananda Bharati vs State of Kerala* judgment⁶⁷ observed that secularism is part of the basic structure of the Constitution. The basic structure arguably consists of the following features: (1) supremacy of the Constitution; (2) republican and democratic form of government; (3) secular character of the Constitution; (4) separation of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary; (5) federal character of the Constitution. The Indian Constitution does not uphold any religious text; all individuals are entitled to freedom of religion, and particular religious beliefs are not prerequisites to holding official positions. Thus, by assigning automatic disqualification on the basis of religion, the ICAA denies socio-economic and political justice, which is inscribed in the preamble of the Constitution. It also goes against the freedom of faith and worship, which is incorporated in the preamble.

3.5 India's Foreign Policy

The statute and the position of India in the world are increasingly becoming important for Indian voters. The government's yearlong, high-voltage marketing campaign celebrating its inaugural G20 presidency served as recognition that the way India is perceived globally is a matter of domestic political salience⁶⁸. As Rohan Mukherjee has noted, rising powers like India care deeply about their status in the global hierarchy of powers⁶⁹. While India has long emphasized, from Jawaharlal Nehru to Manmohan Singh, its moral exceptionalism and civilizational greatness⁷⁰, Indians do not always believe that non-Indians share their perceptions of their country's global significance⁷¹. The Modi government has worked overtime to propagate in India the idea that India has not only transitioned from being a 'balancing' power to a 'leading' one, but also the idea that this transition has partly

65. Prabhash K. Dutta. Why Citizenship Amendment Bill needs to pass Article 14 test. December 9, 2019. <https://www.indiatoday.in/news-analysis/story/does-citizenship-amendment-bill-violate-fundamental-right-to-equality-1626641-2019-12-09>

66. Nikhila Henry. CAB : Even Hindus Must Fear the BJP's Citizenship Law, A Legal Expert Explains Why. December 12, 2019. https://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/citizenship-amendment-bill-why-hindus-must-also-fear-it_in_5df1b3b5e4b06a50a2e9e06f

67. *Kesavananda Bharati vs State of Kerala*. Supreme Court of India. April 24, 1973. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/257876/>

68. Milan Vaishnav. Decoding India's 2024 Election Contest. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. December 2023. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/12/decoding-indias-2024-election-contest?lang=en>

69. Milan Vaishnav. Decoding India's 2024 Election Contest. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. December 2023. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/12/decoding-indias-2024-election-contest?lang=en>

70. Milan Vaishnav and Caroline Mallory. In India, Foreign Policy Is on the 2024 Ballot. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. April 2024. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/04/in-india-foreign-policy-is-on-the-2024-ballot?lang=en>

71. Milan Vaishnav. Decoding India's 2024 Election Contest. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. December 2023. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/12/decoding-indias-2024-election-contest?lang=en>

been achieved⁷². Today, it is not uncommon for Indians to remark that Modi has “*put India on the map*”⁷³, in particular by adopting a balancing position in terms of the conduct of foreign policy. This shift in thinking appears to resonate with a wide swath of Indians, who have aspirations for India domestically that are matched by their desire for the country to project power internationally.

To support its claim, the BJP points to the fact that India is currently the world’s fastest-growing major economy, boasts the world’s largest population, and is a much-sought-after partner for both the advanced industrialized world and the Global South⁷⁴, within the framework of the multi-alignment policy. In the Middle East, India has formed strong relationships with Arab nations as well as Israel⁷⁵. India also leads the biennial multi-nation naval exercises known as MILAN. In 2024, the navy of India’s close strategic partner, the United States, participated in MILAN alongside the navies of Iran and Russia, two countries with which India has long had cordial relations⁷⁶. Furthermore, during the last summit of G7 in Italy, New Delhi has given a strong sense of continuity by carrying forward most of his Cabinet members and in particular in the realm of foreign policy and national security.⁷⁷ With Amit Shah as the home minister responsible for internal security, S Jaishankar at the helm of the Ministry of External Affairs, Ajit Doval as National Security Advisor (NSA), the team that has negotiated the nation’s during the last decade will now be shepherding India again.⁷⁸

India’s projection as a great power has also positioned it to claim a leading position among Global South nations. At the Group of Twenty (G20) summit in 2023, India suggested that it had the ability to champion Global South interests and build bridges with the West. This posture is explained by the new shift in India’s foreign policy doctrine. While previous Indian prime ministers supported the concept of ‘polyvocality’—the notion that international order should be shaped by a range of voices representing the interests of both the developed and the developing world—the Modi government has gone even further, arguing for a global order based on the principle of multipolarity in which India serves as one of the principal poles⁷⁹. This trajectory became even more apparent during the G20 summit in New Delhi in September 2023. With a steadfast commitment to principles such as ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ (the world is one family) and the vision of ‘One Earth, One Future, One Family’, India successfully brokered a New Delhi Leaders’ Summit Declaration, garnering unanimous consensus on developmental and geopolitical issues. The African Union’s (AU) inclusion in the G20, facilitated by PM Modi during India’s G20 presidency, marks a significant milestone. This significant decision, marking the first expansion in over two decades, highlights the dedication of New Delhi to international cooperation.

On the other hand, India’s position within the framework of BRICS, the alternative multilateral grouping that ought to inclusively represent the interests of the Global South, reiterates the consistent stances of Indian foreign policy towards the Global South. India’s perspective on BRICS is characterized by so-called multi-alignment, i.e. a foreign and security policy perspective that does not adhere strictly to a single

72. Milan Vaishnav and Caroline Mallory. In India, Foreign Policy Is on the 2024 Ballot. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. April 2024. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/04/in-india-foreign-policy-is-on-the-2024-ballot?lang=en>

73. Ibid.

74. Milan Vaishnav and Caroline Mallory. In India, Foreign Policy Is on the 2024 Ballot. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. April 2024. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/04/in-india-foreign-policy-is-on-the-2024-ballot?lang=en>

75. Manjari Chatterjee Miller. New Delhi’s Balancing Act In A Chaotic Middle East. Council on Foreign Relations. March 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/article/new-delhis-balancing-act-chaotic-middle-east>

76. Jerusalem Post. The US, Iran, and Russia cooperate in a joint naval exercise in India. 2024. <https://www.jpost.com/international/article-790649>

77. Harsh V. Pant. A Guarantee Of Continuity. Observer Research Foundation (ORF). June 2024. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/a-guarantee-of-continuity>

78. Ibid.

79. Milan Vaishnav and Caroline Mallory. In India, Foreign Policy Is on the 2024 Ballot. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. April 2024. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/04/in-india-foreign-policy-is-on-the-2024-ballot?lang=en>

geopolitical center of power, but is characterized by participation in various forums⁸⁰. Here, the Modi government's multi-alignment is modelled on India's policy of non-alignment in the East-West conflict and defending the interest of the Global South. At the BRICS summit in August 2023, PM Modi emphasized that the expansion and modernization of the BRICS is a sign that the world's institutions need to adapt to the changing times⁸¹.

Finally, India eyes Africa in its quest for superpower status. While Africa's strategic importance is rising as countries on the continent emerge as key 'swing states' in the geopolitical tussle, India, within the framework of its strategic autonomy, has become a trusted interlocutor. This conviction has resonated in Africa, where African countries struggle to assert their own agendas.

India's biggest masterstroke toward Africa was its effort to ensure the AU's inclusion in the G20. This arduous process required months of canvassing through vehicles like the Voice of Global South Summit (to which all global south countries that aren't G20 members were invited), which India held at the start of its G20 presidency⁸². Its objective was to *"provide a common platform to deliberate on the concerns, interests and priorities that affect the developing countries"*.⁸³ India garnered huge credibility through these efforts because African leaders felt listened to and represented. As Vera Songwe wrote in the Financial Times, *"India's presidency of the G20 delivered one of the most significant shifts in global governance in a decade: representation for [1.4 billion] people at the world's premier economic co-ordination body"*⁸⁴.

Furthermore, in addition to geopolitical heft, New Delhi can leverage several comparative advantages for its African charm offensive, starting with trade. India and Africa command a relatively small share of global trade: 2.8% and 3% respectively. Secondly, India's role as the 'pharmacy of the world' is well known, and its ability to deliver affordable and scalable solutions across Africa will help tackle a critical priority area for countries on the continent. Thirdly, India's reliance on brown growth means that Africa has a critical role in supporting India's growth story, mainly through clean and renewable energy sources. Africa is a cheap source of fuels and other minerals and can serve as a 'carbon sink' through offsetting initiatives. Equally, India can provide the investment, infrastructure, and technology to maximize brown growth while expediting the green transition. Finally, India offers a different development model to China, based on South-South cooperation. Many aspects among others denote the depth of Indo-African relations and their strategic nature.

80. Hans-Dieter Holtzmann, Anna Marti, Inge Herbert, Martin Kothé, Carsten Klein, Jörg Dehnert, Siegfried Herzog, Akim van der Voort. BRICS enlargement - a "non-event" or a stage victory against the West? Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung. March 2024. <https://www.freiheit.org/latin-america/brics-enlargement-non-event-or-stage-victory-against-west>

81. Hans-Dieter Holtzmann, Anna Marti, Inge Herbert, Martin Kothé, Carsten Klein, Jörg Dehnert, Siegfried Herzog, Akim van der Voort. BRICS enlargement - a "non-event" or a stage victory against the West? Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung. March 2024. <https://www.freiheit.org/latin-america/brics-enlargement-non-event-or-stage-victory-against-west>

82. Ronak Gopaldas. India eyes Africa in its quest for superpower status. Institute for Security Studies. January 2024. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/india-eyes-africa-in-its-quest-for-superpower-status>

83. Ibid.

84. Ronak Gopaldas. India eyes Africa in its quest for superpower status. Institute for Security Studies. January 2024. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/india-eyes-africa-in-its-quest-for-superpower-status>

CONCLUSION

India's ruling BJP hoped for a landslide victory in the country's six-week general election. However, the party, led by PM Narendra Modi, scored 240 parliamentary seats in the final tally. It needed the help of its coalition partner, the National Democratic Alliance, to meet the requirement of 272 seats to form the government. The electoral performance of the BJP can be explained in the Modi government's failure to realize that while economic benefits had been substantial, their distribution has been uneven, as well as the stigmatization of Muslims in India. Indeed, India has seen a growth in inequality and persistent unemployment, in both rural and urban areas, in a country where the territorial disparities between the rural north controlled by the BJP, and the industrial south controlled by the Congress, are stark. Unemployment of those aged 20 to 24 years is at a high of 44.49%. And that is the overall national number; that data does not tell us that it may be much worse in certain regions. The other explanation is that Modi's exploitation of historic Hindu-Muslim tensions seems to have run its natural course, which has turned against him.

India General Elections of 2024 will reshape India's political landscape for the next five years and beyond. The BJP will have to work with its allies from the NDA to govern India for the next five years. This can sometimes lead to tensions and political compromises. In return, the Congress, under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi, will continue its restructuring efforts, particularly by expanding its support base and developing attractive policies and programs for the voters, with the aim of regaining power in 2029. In this context, the way the BJP manages its coalition, and the strategies the Congress implements for its restructuring, will be key elements to watch in the years to come. Unlike the BJP, which has built a solid organizational base across the country, the Congress party has done little to revitalize its political foundations, which eroded in the 1970s after then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed a state of emergency and a non-Congress government came into power for the first time. However, the 2024 election results, characterized by a relative weakening of the BJP and the resurgence of the Congress, may usher in a new political cycle of rivalry between the Indian right and left.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abhishek Anand, Vikas Dimble, Arvind Subramanian. New welfarism of India's Right. 2020. https://ashoka.edu.in/static/doc_uploads/file_1608617954.pdf
- Aditi Phadnis. Party leaders say they feel they have been successful in two missions: They managed to get the party moving in the 2024 elections and checked the march of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Business Standard. June 2024. https://www.business-standard.com/elections/lok-sabha-election/lok-sabha-election-results-after-resurgence-what-next-for-the-congress-124060401819_1.html
- Astha Rajvanshi. 5 Surprising Takeaways From India's Election Results. Time. June 2024. <https://time.com/6985897/indias-election-results-takeaways/>
- BBC. BBC India reporters on why some voters said no to Modi. June 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5113nvjevxo>
- Benoît Gautier. Le mercantilisme modien à l'épreuve de la réalité. Ambassade de France en Inde : Service économique régional de New Delhi. Janvier 2023. <https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Articles/85e8d201-f069-4352-8a3d-02a9d690cc54/files/9254184f-542a-4795-a27d-3f80bc466913>
- Chietigi Bajpae. India's shock election result is a loss for Modi but a win for democracy. June 2024. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/06/indias-shock-election-result-loss-modi-win-democracy>
- Forbes India. Unemployment rate in India (2008 to 2024): Current rate, historical trends and more. February 2019. <https://www.forbesindia.com/article/explainers/unemployment-rate-in-india/87441/1>
- Geeta Pandey. India's opposition looked down and out – now they're back. BBC. June 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cp00jze920eo>
- Hans-Dieter Holtzmann, Anna Marti, Inge Herbert, Martin Kothé, Carsten Klein, Jörg Dehnert, Siegfried

- Herzog, Akim van der Voort. BRICS enlargement - a “non-event” or a stage victory against the West? Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung. March 2024. <https://www.freiheit.org/latin-america/brics-enlargement-non-event-or-stage-victory-against-west>
- Harsh V. Pant. A Guarantee Of Continuity. Observer Research Foundation (ORF). June 2024. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/a-guarantee-of-continuity>
- Helene Regan, Swati Gupta and Manveena Sura. Hindus allowed to build on disputed holy site, India’s Supreme Court rules. CNN. November 9, 2019. <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/11/08/asia/ayodhya-dispute-india-ruling-intl-hnk/index.html>
- India shows progress in Human Development Index, ranks 134 out of 193 countries. UNDP : United Nations Development Programme. March 2024. <https://www.undp.org/india/press-releases/india-shows-progress-human-development-index-ranks-134-out-193-countries>
- Jerusalem Post. The US, Iran, and Russia cooperate in a joint naval exercise in India. 2024. <https://www.jpost.com/international/article-790649>
- La Tribune. Inde : Narendra Modi remporte les élections législatives face à une opposition grandissante. Juin 2024. <https://www.latribune.fr/economie/international/inde-narendra-modi-remporte-les-elections-legislatives-face-a-une-opposition-grandissante-999116.html>
- Manjari Chatterjee Miller. India’s 2024 General Election: What to Know. Council on Foreign Relations. April 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/indias-2024-general-election-what-know>
- Manjari Chatterjee Miller. New Delhi’s Balancing Act In A Chaotic Middle East. Council on Foreign Relations. March 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/article/new-delhis-balancing-act-chaotic-middle-east>
- McKinsey Global Institute. India’s turning point : An economic agenda to spur growth and jobs. August 2020. <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Featured%20Insights/India/Indias%20turning%20point%20An%20economic%20agenda%20to%20spur%20growth%20and%20jobs/MGI-Indias-turning-point-Executive-summary-August-2020-vFinal.pdf>
- Milan Vaishnav. Decoding India’s 2024 Election Contest. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. December 2023. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/12/decoding-indias-2024-election-contest?lang=en>
- Milan Vaishnav and Caroline Mallory. In India, Foreign Policy Is on the 2024 Ballot. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. April 2024. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/04/in-india-foreign-policy-is-on-the-2024-ballot?lang=en>
- Nikhila Henry. CAB : Even Hindus Must Fear the BJP’s Citizenship Law, A Legal Expert Explains Why. December 12, 2019. https://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/citizenship-amendment-bill-why-hindus-must-also-fear-it_in_5df1b3b5e4b06a50a2e9e06f
- Olivier Da Lage. Inde : une victoire à la Pyrrhus pour Narendra Modi. Institut français des relations internationales et des études stratégiques (IRIS). Juin 2024. <https://www.iris-france.org/186852-inde-une-victoire-a-la-pyrrhus-pour-narendra-modi/>
- Prabhash K. Dutta. Why Citizenship Amendment Bill needs to pass Article 14 test. December 9, 2019. <https://www.indiatoday.in/news-analysis/story/does-citizenship-amendment-bill-violate-fundamental-right-to-equality-1626641-2019-12-09>
- Rahul Roy-Chaudhury. The Modi 3.0 coalition government: challenges and priorities. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). June 2024. <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2024/06/the-modi-3.0-coalition-government-challenges-and-priorities>
- Ronak Gopaldas. India eyes Africa in its quest for superpower status. Institute for Security Studies. January 2024. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/india-eyes-africa-in-its-quest-for-superpower-status>
- Soutik Biswas. Free water, housing, food: Modi’s \$400bn welfare bet to win Indian elections. BBC. May 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-68236697>

About the Author,

Abdessalam Saad Jaldi

Abdessalam Jaldi is an International Relations Specialist, with a focus on International Law and International Relations. He is currently working in the Policy Center for the New South as a core member of an analytical study examining the Maghreb mutations, the Euro-African relations, the new tendencies of international law and the influence of India and Africa. Ph.D Doctor in Law from France in 2018, he has four years of experience working in non-profit, social research and electoral observations.

About Policy Center for the New South

The Policy Center for the New South (PCNS) is a Moroccan think tank aiming to contribute to the improvement of economic and social public policies that challenge Morocco and the rest of Africa as integral parts of the global South.

The PCNS pleads for an open, accountable and enterprising "new South" that defines its own narratives and mental maps around the Mediterranean and South Atlantic basins, as part of a forward-looking relationship with the rest of the world. Through its analytical endeavours, the think tank aims to support the development of public policies in Africa and to give the floor to experts from the South. This stance is focused on dialogue and partnership, and aims to cultivate African expertise and excellence needed for the accurate analysis of African and global challenges and the suggestion of appropriate solutions.

Read more

Policy Center for the New South

Mohammed VI Polytechnic University, Rocade Rabat-Salé, 11103

Email : contact@policycenter.ma

Phone : +212 (0) 537 54 04 04 / Fax : +212 (0) 537 71 31 54

Website : www.policycenter.ma

