

Modi and his Hindu supremacist BJP cling to power after major Indian election losses

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4 June 2024

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu supremacist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are clinging to power after suffering a major reversal in India's general election.

Results of the seven-phase election, which began April 19 and concluded Tuesday with the tabulation of votes, are yet to be finalized. However, it is certain that the BJP, which won back-to-back majorities in 2014 and 2019, will fall 30 or more seats short of the 272-seat threshold needed to give it a majority in the 543-seat Lok Sabha (People's Assembly).

Its continued rule is now dependent on its National Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners. The final tally for the BJP-NDA will be in the 290 to 296-seat range. This is a far cry from the 353 seats they captured in 2019 and from the 400 seats that Modi and his chief henchman, Home Secretary Amit Shah, boasted the BJP-led NDA would win at the campaign's outset.

Significantly, the NDA's losses were heavily concentrated in the BJP column. The dominant partner in the NDA captured some 60 fewer seats in 2024 than in 2019. Meanwhile, gains and losses among the BJP's NDA partners effectively cancelled each other out.

The Congress Party-led opposition electoral bloc—the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance or INDIA—appears to have won more than 230 seats.

It made a calibrated and thoroughly demagogic appeal to popular anger over mass joblessness, chronic hunger, ever widening wealth and income inequality, the BJP's victimization of Muslims and other minorities and its repression of political opponents.

Congress Party leader Rahul Gandhi, himself the son, grandson and great grandson of Indian prime ministers, repeatedly attacked Modi for his “crony capitalist” ties with Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani, respectively India's and Asia's richest and second richest billionaires.

A rag-tag coalition of more than 30 parties, INDIA aims to provide the bourgeoisie with a right-wing governmental alternative to Modi and the far-right BJP. It would be no less beholden than the Modi regime to big business and, like it, committed to increasing worker exploitation through pro-investor “reform” and to the anti-China Indo-US Global Strategic Partnership that is the cornerstone of India's foreign policy.

Led by the Congress, till recently the bourgeoisie's preferred party of national government, the INDIA alliance is comprised of more than two-dozen ethno-regional and caste-ist parties—many of them erstwhile BJP allies, like the Uddhav Thackeray wing of the fascistic, Maharashtra-based Shiv Sena. It also includes the two Stalinist parliamentary parties, their Left Front allies and the Maoist CPI (M-L).

Given the right-wing record of its constituents, INDIA's claims to offer a “progressive,” secular and “pro-people” alternative to the BJP were, to say the least, not credible and no doubt were viewed as such by many. Nevertheless, large swaths of India's workers and toilers appear to have seized on it as a means to voice their opposition to the Modi government, and they have done so in the face of an immense campaign, trumpeted by

the corporate media, to intimidate the population with claims that Modi and the BJP were being propelled to a historic triumph on a tidal wave of popular support.

The Congress's share of the vote increased by 1.7 percent to 21.2 percent from its historic 2019 low of 19.5 percent, even though, in deference to its INDIA allies, it contested some 80 less seats. According to the latest projections, it will capture 99 seats, more than double its score from 2014 (44) and almost double that from 2019 (52).

Speaking Tuesday afternoon, Congress Party leader Rahul Gandhi claimed the country had voted to “save the Constitution” in the face of the BJP government's efforts to rig the elections by using the intelligence and police agencies and judiciary to harass, smear and jail opponents. “The country,” he declared, “has said that we don't want Mr. Narendra Modi and Mr. Amit Shah.” Gandhi went on to announce that the INDIA leaders would convene in the capital, New Delhi, on Wednesday to discuss whether to make a bid to form the government when parliament reconvenes.

The latter statement is likely to prove to have been nothing more than post-election hyperbole. The BJP has emerged from the polls bloodied. The cult it has constructed around Modi as a beloved “Hindu strongman” and “holy man” has taken a hit. Nevertheless, Modi and his BJP continue to be seen by the dominant sections of the Indian ruling class as the most ruthless, and hence, best instrument for pushing through further austerity, privatization, deregulation and other “pro-investor” reforms in the face of mass opposition, and to pursue their great-power ambitions on the world stage.

Some among them, may wring their hands over the BJP's “excesses” and worry that its Hindu supremacism incites opposition and could destabilize the institutions of the Indian state. But the Indian bourgeoisie, terrified of the threat from below, has long deployed communalist and caste-ist appeals as a means of channelling social anger and frustration at chronic poverty and social inequality along reactionary and divisive lines.

The Indo-US anti-China strategic partnership

A striking feature of the election campaign was the absence of any discussion of the global war initiated by US imperialism of which the NATO-instigated war with Russia over Ukraine, the imperialist-backed Israeli genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza and Washington's military-strategic offensive against China are the three main fronts.

India is providing critical support for Washington in this war, especially in regards to its drive to strategically encircle China and economically thwart its rise. Under Modi, India has been transformed into a US frontline state, evermore tightly bound to Washington through an expanding web of bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral military-strategic

ties with the US and its principal Asia-Pacific allies, Japan and Australia. Indian ports are now open for routine use for repair and resupply by US, British, French and Japanese ships.

India is also deeply implicated in the US scheme to reorder the Middle East. It is part of the I2U2 (India, Israel, US, UAE) grouping which Washington wants to transform through war, diplomatic intrigue and infrastructure development into a “Mideast economic corridor,” so as to weaken and subjugate Iran and counter Russian and Chinese influence in the region.

While New Delhi has not submitted to US demands to break its strategic ties with Russia, it is working with Washington to lessen its dependence on Russia armaments and otherwise intensify its collaboration with Washington globally. More fundamentally, the support New Delhi is providing US imperialism in the Indo-Pacific arena is emboldening the US to pursue its drive for global hegemony everywhere. Last summer the Indian military announced it was answering an urgent Pentagon request as to what support it would provide in the event of a US-China war over Taiwan.

Yet none of this was the subject of any debate in what was trumpeted as the world’s largest exercise in democracy.

Insofar as there was any discussion of India’s foreign policy, it largely revolved around the Congress Party’s attacks on Modi for being “too soft” on China. This under conditions where for the past four years, India and China have been locked in a military stand-off along their disputed Himalayan border, with the Modi government forward deploying tens of thousands of troops, tanks and war planes.

There are two reasons for the conspiracy of silence over the Indo-US strategic partnership and India’s role in the developing global war. First, the Indian ruling class and its political parties all stand four-square behind the reckless strategy of transforming India into a great power by clutching at the bedraggled coattails of US imperialism as it desperately seeks to offset its economic decline through aggression and global war.

Second, they are keenly aware that among the Indian masses there is enormous latent anti-imperialist sentiment and fear that it would be galvanized were the working class and oppressed toilers to gain any insight into the extent to which India has been transformed into a satrap for US imperialism and the threat this poses to the people of the region and world.

A particularly pernicious role in all this is played by the twin Stalinist parties—the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPM and the smaller, but older Communist Party of India (CPI)—and the Maoist CPI (M-L). They profess to be opposed to the Indo-US strategic alliance. But so as not to embarrass their INDIA partners and even more importantly arouse working class opposition to their partnership with the enablers of US imperialism, they confine their “opposition” to the occasional press release. For like reasons, the Stalinists called off the protests they belatedly organized last November against the Israeli assault on the Palestinians of Gaza.

Another critical question that was excluded from the election campaign was India’s ruinous “profits-before-lives” response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Officially India acknowledges some 533,000 COVID-19 deaths, but the real figure, as indicated by excess deaths, is in the order of 10 times that. The pandemic laid bare the Modi government’s utter indifference to the well-being of working people and the deplorable state of the public healthcare system. But the opposition parties said next to nothing about this as they were entirely complicit in India’s pandemic policy. In the states where they formed the government, they press-ganged people to return to work even as the virus spread like wildfire.

As the WSWS previously noted, there were indications that as the seven-phase election unfolded, the BJP became apprehensive as to its outcome. After the first phase in the voting, the BJP largely ditched its promises of economic development and celebratory proclamations of India’s “world-beating” economic growth and increasing influence on the world stage. Instead, Modi, Shah and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, its chief campaigners, doubled down on the most reactionary and vile communal appeals. This included claims the opposition parties wanted to steal the wealth of India’s “mothers and daughters” so as to give it as to “infiltrators,” “jihadis,” and those who have “large numbers of children”—all code words for Muslims.

This appears to have backfired. In several states in the north Indian Hindi belt, the BJP’s traditional heartland, it suffered significant losses. This was especially true in Uttar Pradesh, India’s most populous state, and where Modi’s protégé the Hindu priest and criminally-indicted instigator of anti-Muslim violence Yogi Adityanath has ruled with an iron fist. In UP, the BJP-NDA lost 26 seats and saw its vote share fall by almost 10 percentage points.

Among the BJP MPs to go down to defeat was the representative for Faizabad (Ayodhya), where the temple to the mythical Hindu god Lord Ram has been constructed on the site of the razed Babri Masjid, a 16th century mosque illegally demolished 30 years ago by fundamentalist fanatics mobilized by the BJP and its RSS allies. In January, Modi inaugurated the temple as part of a nationally televised spectacle that was meant to both launch the BJP re-election campaign and signal India’s “rebirth” as a “Hindu nation.”

Given the right-wing character of the forces involved, including the so-called Left parties, the Indian elections could give only a pale and highly distorted indication of the mass but as yet inchoate anger, against the BJP and indeed the entire rotten Indian capitalist social order. Recent years have seen myriad bitter working class struggles, including by autoworkers, Maharashtra State Road Transport Commission (MSRTC) workers, teachers and healthcare workers, as well as major peasant-farmer agitations, and repeated massive one- and two-day protest general strikes. But these struggles have been systematically isolated by the trade unions and politically bound by them and the Stalinist CPM and CPI to the right-wing anti-BJP bourgeois opposition.

The elections have underlined that far from being an unstoppable force, the Modi government is a regime of extreme crisis that sits atop a political and social volcano.

But to defeat communal reaction, the re-elected BJP government’s renewed assault on the social and democratic rights of working people, and the ruling class’s harnessing of India to American imperialism’s global war, the working class must unite its struggles and mobilize its independent class strength against Indian capitalism and all its political representatives.

The Stalinist CPM and CPI, the Maoists and their affiliated trade unions will seek to use the revived fortunes of the bourgeois opposition to Modi to politically subordinate the working class in the INDIA alliance, while systematically suppressing the class struggle. In opposition to these efforts, the working class must blaze a new path based on the Trotskyist strategy of permanent revolution, which animated the 1917 October Revolution and the struggle against its nationalist-Stalinist degeneration, which culminated in the restoration of capitalism and the liquidation of the USSR.

The working class must rally the rural toilers behind it in the fight for a workers’ government and the development of a global working class offensive for socialism. The fight for social equality and to defend democratic rights must be tied to the fight against imperialist war and the Indo-US strategic alliance.

The Modi government: A regime of extreme crisis



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