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INDIA – Report on the 2024 General Elections – What are the implications?

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Understanding the results



The 18th general elections of India were conducted over seven phases between the months of April and May 2024, concluding on 1 June. At stake were 543 seats, with 272 seats required by any party or alliance to cross the halfway mark, win by a simple majority and form the government. Two major parties contested – the Hindu right wing party BJP leading the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the center-left and liberal party INC leading the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA). The results were declared on 4 June 2024.

No single party could reach 272 seats and the seats won by the contestants were as follows: NDA won 293 seats while INDIA won 234 seats. The party-wise break up of seats is provided in the table below:

Alliance: NDA	Seats won	Alliance: INDIA	Seats won
BJP	234	INC	99
TDP	16	SP	37
JD (U)	12	AITC	29
Shiv Sena	7	DMK	22
LJP (RV)	5	CPI (M)	4
JD (S)	2	RJD	4
JSP	2	Shiv Sena (UT)	9
RLD	2	AAP	3
AJSU, NCP, UPPL, SKM, Apna Dal (S), AGP, HAM	7	NCP (SP)	8
		CPI	2
		JMM	3
		IUML	3
		CPI (ML)	2
		JKNC	2
		VCK, BAP, KC, MDMK, RLT, RSP	7
TOTAL	293		234

Since the NDA reached more than 272 seats, the NDA formed the government and Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India for the third consecutive time even though his party the BJP could not secure the majority by itself. Modi has had to depend on allies, most crucially the JD (U) from Bihar state led by Nitish Kumar with 12 seats, and the combination of TDP and JSP from Andhra Pradesh led by Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan respectively with 18 seats (16+2).

Overall, compared to the 2019 elections, the BJP itself dropped 63 seats while the Congress party gained 47 seats. In that sense, even though the verdict resulted in the victory of the NDA, the popular mandate went against the BJP and Modi, and in favor of the Congress and other INDIA alliance parties such as the socialist leaning Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh led by the backward caste leader Akhilesh Yadav (37 seats, a gain of 32 seats from the 2019 elections) and the All India Trinamool Congress in West Bengal led by Mamta Banerjee (29 seats, a gain of seven seats since the 2019 elections).

The big wins and losses

Modi-led BJP won 282 seats in 2014 (ten above the required majority) and won with an even bigger majority of 303 seats in 2019. The key to the BJP's electoral success was in the northern and western region of the country that included states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Gujarat. The BJP won the maximum or near maximum number of seats possible in each of these states in the last two elections. Correspondingly, over the last two elections, the BJP has fared poorly or just about average in the eastern states and poorly in the

southern states which include states such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Punjab, West Bengal and Odisha. The 2024 elections have thus disturbed the BJP's hegemony in the northern and western belts, the so-called Hindi speaking heartland.

The following two lists show that where the BJP lost in the north and west, it gained in the south and east.

BJP results in northern and western states:

- **Uttar Pradesh (UP):** The BJP won 62 out of 80 seats in the 2019 election. It could only manage 33 seats in 2024.
- **Rajasthan:** The BJP won 25 out of 25 seats in the 2019 elections. It could only manage 14 seats in 2024.
- **Haryana:** It won 10 out of 10 seats in the 2019 elections, in 2024 it could only win five seats.
- **Maharashtra:** The BJP and allies won 41 out of 48 seats in the 2019 elections. In 2024, it could only win 17 seats.

BJP results in southern and eastern states:

- The BJP increased its vote share in Tamil Nadu, it has won one seat in Kerala for the first time in the history of independent India and in has won 20 out of 21 seats in Odisha, ending the 24-year rule of the regional party Biju Janata Dal (BJD) led by Naveen Patnaik. BJP's alliance partner the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) led by Chandrababu Naidu won the general elections in Andhra Pradesh by securing 16 seats out of 25. Another two seats were won by Naidu's partner the Jan Sena Party (JSP) led by the film actor turned politician Pawan Kalyan.

There were three states where state elections were held simultaneously with the general elections – Andhra Pradesh in the south, Odisha in the east and the northeastern state of Sikkim. BJP and its allies in the NDA did well in all three state-level elections:

- In Andhra Pradesh, the TDP defeated a fledgling Congress and the main opposition party YSCRIP, by securing 135 seats out of 175 seats. The BJP, which was in a seat-sharing agreement with TDP, managed to win eight seats compared to zero seats in 2019.
- In Odisha, the BJP won 78 seats out of 147 thereby securing the majority, while the main opposition party the BJD which was in power for the last 24 years, was reduced from 112 seats in 2019 to a mere 51 seats in 2024.
- In the state of Sikkim, the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha or SKM (translated as Sikkim Revolutionary Front), a BJP ally and NDA member since 2019 swept the state level elections winning 31 out of 32 seats.

As in 2019, Prime Minister Modi contested the constituency of Varanasi, considered a holy city for Hindus, located in the state of Uttar Pradesh. For more than three hours on the day of counting votes, he was trailing behind his opponent from the Congress, Ajay Rai. In the end, Modi won by a relatively small margin of 152,513 votes. It was one of the smallest margins ever won by a prime minister of India. Meanwhile, his main opponent Rahul Gandhi of the Congress

contested simultaneously on two seats – Wayanad in the southern state of Kerala, and Rae Bareilly in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. He won both seats comprehensively, by a margin of 364,422 and 390,030 votes respectively. Rahul Gandhi will keep the Rae Bareilly seat and vacate the Wayanad seat from where his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will contest.

The main pillar of Modi's campaign was taking credit for the construction of a Ram temple in the city of Ayodhya (the city Ayodhya comes under the Faizabad constituency of Uttar Pradesh). Modi formally inaugurated this temple on 22 January 2024 and it was broadcast live in its entirety by all television channels across the country. The BJP and its parent organization the RSS conducted large-scale, grassroots-level activities around the opening of this temple, including distributing postcards depicting the temple, distributing rice to households in the name of the temple, releasing music videos and holding celebrations. The temple was built on the ruins of a 400-year-old mosque that was destroyed by supporters and members of RSS and other affiliate organizations in 1992. For many years, the issue was locked in litigation until the Supreme Court delivered a verdict in 2019 that what happened [referring to 1992] was wrong but in order to prevent further bloodshed, awarded the rights of the disputed temple to the Hindus and permitted the construction of the Ram temple on the site. Further the Supreme Court also awarded nearby land to the Muslims for the construction of a new mosque.

The construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya fulfilled a long-standing demand of the Hindu right, championed by both RSS and BJP (as well as various other affiliate organizations) for several decades. However, in spite of all the hype surrounding the completion of the temple in January 2024, the issue failed to become a major electoral issue. The BJP lost the Faizabad constituency to the Samajwadi party by a margin of 54,567 votes. In fact, the Samajwadi Party nominated a veteran politician from the Dalit community named Awadhesh Prasad to contest in Faizabad which is a general seat (usually, Dalit candidates are only nominated for seats reserved for Scheduled Castes) and surprisingly, Prasad defeated his dominant caste rival, Lallu Singh, in spite of the propaganda around the Ram temple.

Interpreting the results

On the face of it, there is no doubt that a loss of 63 seats for the BJP could be seen as a major drawback for the legitimacy, popularity and credibility of Modi's government and its performance for the last ten years. Similarly, there is also little doubt that the voters at large have supported the manifesto and the issues raised by the opposition, notably reflected in the gain of 47 seats for the Congress party, or a gain of 32 seats for Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh.

However, on the other hand, there is also a difference between the number of seats won or lost and the vote share (number of votes secured by a party/candidate in relation to the total number of votes cast in a given constituency). In the 2019 elections, at the national level the BJP got a vote share of 37.36 percent which translated to 303 seats, while the Congress got a vote share of 19.49 percent which translated to 52 seats. In 2024, the BJP's vote share was 36.56 percent, a very small drop of 0.88 percentage points while the Congress vote share was 21.19 percent a small gain of 1.7 percentage points. Note that a drop of 0.88 translated to a loss of 63

seats for the BJP while a gain of 1.7 translated to a gain of 47 seats for the Congress. In other words, a relatively small change in vote share could potentially translate to a huge difference in terms of seats won and lost for all parties. As explained by an [article in the Times of India](#), published on 6 June 2024¹, “...the national vote share is an aggregation of states, and a party may gain vote share in a state where it is starting from such a low base that adding votes does not translate into winning seats, while losing the same amount in a highly competitive state could cost many seats”.

From a qualitative point of view, it became clear in the months leading up to the 2024 election that there was no overriding issue that captured the national imagination for a national election. As noted in the previous section, the hype and momentum that the BJP had hoped to garner from the Ram temple failed to materialize; instead, issues such as unemployment and inflation were prominent, i.e., local seat-level issues confined to a constituency or a state. Given the absence of an overriding factor, the elections became localized. This meant the state-level dynamics mattered, constituency-level dynamics mattered, the choice of candidate mattered, anti or pro-incumbency of the seat and candidate mattered – all of these became crucial in determining the verdict. If it had been a truly national election², then the choice of the prime ministerial candidate would have mattered – an area where the BJP had a clear advantage in Modi as the candidate whereas the INDIA alliance had refused to announce its prime ministerial candidate, preferring to explore options if they achieved an overall majority of 272 or more seats.

In such a situation, the state-level contexts became very significant. For example, in Maharashtra, the BJP had managed to gain power by breaking up opposition parties and engineering defections; onion farmers in large parts of the state were upset with unreasonable export levies that lowered their incomes; the powerful Maratha caste (roughly 32% of the population) was demanding reservations while the OBC castes were against Marathas reservation (since they argued that benefits accruing to Marathas would come at the cost of OBCs). These were underlying factors in the state of Maharashtra that contributed to significant anti-incumbency against the BJP and its allies both at the state and at the center.

Another important aspect of interpreting the election results is that of individual and group identity influencing electoral preferences. Individual and group identity refers to gender and sexuality, caste and sub-caste, religion, language, state etc.. The overall voting percentage (i.e. amongst eligible voters) declined compared to the previous election. It was 67.40% in 2019 and dropped to 65.79% in 2024.

¹ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/how-small-drop-in-bjp-vote-share-led-to-big-dent-in-tally/articleshow/110716794.cms>

² The 2019 election was indeed a national election due to the surgical airstrikes conducted by the Indian government on Pakistan. Although surgical strikes have been routine between both countries for a long time, this was the first time that the Indian government ruled by BJP publicized it as a matter of national pride and security. As a result, Modi’s campaign was fought on these issues and he got an overwhelming majority of 303 seats.

The gender factor

In terms of [gender](#) (Frontline/The Hindu, 10 June)³, the voter turnout was nearly equal. The all-India voter turn-out was 65.80% for men and 65.78% for women. However, there was no correlation between women turn-out and election outcome. For example, there were seats where more women voted than men and yet a woman candidate lost to a male candidate.

A high profile contest that illustrates the point above was the seat of Amethi in Uttar Pradesh where former minister and well-known, female BJP politician, Smriti Irani, fought against a first time contestant and ordinary, male Congress worker K.L. Sharma. In Amethi, women turn-out of 57.75% was a whole 6.49 percentage points higher than male turn-out and yet K.L. Sharma, defeated Smriti Irani by over a hundred thousand votes. While political parties have increasingly focused on women-centric welfare schemes in order to woo women voters, the results indicate that such strategies have not particularly influenced the outcomes. It is significant that more women from the Dalit and Adivasi communities have turned out and voted than compared to previous elections; this is an indicator of increasing political consciousness amongst women from the most oppressed communities.

The caste factor

In terms of [caste](#) (Frontline/The Hindu, 11 June 2024)⁴, there was a significant shift of OBCs and Dalits away from the BJP and from stand-alone parties (i.e., parties not aligned to BJP or Congress-led alliances - such as BSP) towards the Congress-led INDIA alliance. Over the last two elections, the BJP has been successful in wooing the poorest sections of the OBCs known as the Extremely Backward Classes or EBCs, primarily through offering these groups funding through schemes aimed at specific castes, symbolic recognition for their gods and goddesses, giving leaders from these castes some important posts such as Deputy Chief Minister or making them ministers in the state cabinet as well as in the Union Cabinet. As a result, 33% of Dalits and 42% of OBCs voted for the BJP in the 2019 elections.

Although detailed data on caste-based voting patterns for the 2024 elections are yet to be released, it is very likely that a significant number of OBCs and Dalits have moved away from the BJP. In Uttar Pradesh, the Samajwadi Party (SP) was able to rout the BJP, winning 37 seats, compared to the five seats they won in 2019; while the BJP was left with only 33 seats compared to the 62 seats they had won in 2019. A key reason for this is that the Dalit voter, a huge chunk of the EBC voters and most of the OBC voter has shifted from the BJP and BSP towards the INDIA alliance.

Several leaders of the BJP had said in their campaign that the BJP needed a huge majority of 400 seats because this would enable them to change the Constitution. There was a sense of fear and anxiety amongst the oppressed castes that if BJP came back to power with a huge majority then the Constitution would be at risk, the single most important document in the country that affords rights and protections for Dalits and Adivasis. Another reason for the EBCs and Dalits

³ <https://frontline.thehindu.com/politics/women-voting-patterns-india-2024-lok-sabha-election/article68266079.ece>

⁴ <https://frontline.thehindu.com/election-2024/caste-india-lok-sabha-election-2024-nda-bjp-india-bloc-caste-politics-ayodhya-obc-vote/article68267201.ece>

moving towards the INDIA alliance was the fact that SP leader Akhilesh Yadav gave a large number of EBC candidates the chance to contest the elections while historically the SP had mostly nominated the dominant caste Yadav and Muslim candidates to fight elections. With increased political representation, a significant portion of the EBC community is very likely to have shifted their vote to the opposition.

To complicate matters further, several dominant castes (such as Rajputs, Jats, Marathas) were upset with the BJP after some BJP leaders made some statements that offended their caste pride. In many states, these dominant castes either voted for the BJP candidate's opponent, or stayed at home, boycotting the elections altogether. Either way, the BJP candidate's vote share was reduced.

In terms of religion, religious minorities consolidated their vote in favor of the INDIA alliance.

The Muslim vote

The Muslim vote in earlier elections was split between various parties such as AIMIM, BSP, AIUDF and this split in Muslim votes contributed to BJP victories in several seats of Uttar Pradesh, Assam and West Bengal. This time, these parties lost both vote share and seats while the INDIA alliance won seats and increased vote shares. This pattern strongly suggests that Muslims voted more strategically in favor of INDIA rather than voting for a Muslim candidate on the basis of the candidate's religious identity. Overall, the results of the 2024 elections confirms the long-term trend of decreasing [Muslim representation in Parliament](#) (The Wire, 5 June 2024)⁵. In fact, the total number of Muslim candidates has dropped – from 119 in 2019 elections to 78 in 2024. Of these 78 contestants, only 24 Muslims have made it as Members of Parliament. If their representation was proportional to their population, there should have been 75 MPs in Parliament, but now the 24 MPs are proportional to about 5% of the Muslim population. There are reasons for the continually decreasing representation of religious minorities in the Indian Parliament.

Over the last ten years, hardline Hindutva has enabled incidents of extreme violence upon religious minorities (e.g., lynchings, rapes and murders), with perpetrators enjoying near total impunity. The entire 'system' comprising of administration, police, courts, mainstream media etc. are all explicitly in favor of Hindutva. This kind of environment has created a fear amongst religious minorities. Although Muslims, Christians and Sikhs have held large-scale protests against the government on these issues in the past, in the months leading up to the elections these communities remained relatively quiet. The assumption made was that a vocal and visible religious minority would polarize the electorate and consolidate the Hindu vote. To avoid this polarization, religious minorities chose to remain quiet and show their purpose through their voting, i.e., by voting out the BJP.

This assumption suits the political narrative of the BJP – they claim that they are a secular party (since their digitized mode of welfare distribution reaches all poor citizens regardless of religion) and yet religious minorities voted for the opposition, the implication being that they are there-

⁵ <https://thewire.in/politics/muslim-vote-lok-sabha-election>

fore anti-national or want special treatment. For example, the chief minister of Assam and hardline Hindutva supporter Himanta Biswa Sarma said in a [public statement](#) after the elections (video posted on X, 5 June 2024)⁶ that leaders from the religious minority communities had interfered in the elections, thus causing the BJP to be defeated in the states of Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Assam.

The Christian vote

A consolidation of the Christian vote in favor of the INDIA alliance does seem to have occurred in the Northeastern states with a Christian majority population, mostly comprised of ethnically diverse tribal groups. The Congress party wrested four seats from BJP allies in the states of Manipur (2 seats), Meghalaya (1 seat) and Nagaland (1 seat). Undoubtedly, the violence that Kuki-Zo (mostly Christians) faced at the hands of the Meitei (a large part of whom are Hindu) in Manipur since May 2023 played a role in reminding Christians across the Northeastern states about the dangers of BJP returning to power.

However, it should also be noted that not all Christians across the country voted for the INDIA alliance. Take the example of the southern state of Kerala. In Kerala, politics is dominated by the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI (M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF). Although in all other states the CPI(M) and Congress are allies and members of the INDIA alliance, in Kerala the Congress and CPI (M) are contesting against each other, thereby relegating the BJP to third position. There was significant anti-incumbency in Kerala against both the LDF which has been in power in Kerala at the state level for the last two terms, and anti-incumbency against BJP at the central level. As a result the UDF swept the election winning 18 out of 20 seats, while the LDF won only one seat in spite of being in power at the state level.

The BJP [made history](#) by winning one seat for the first time in Kerala, namely the Thrissur constituency (Hindustan Times, 6 June 2024)⁷. Moreover the BJP was able to increase its vote share in Kerala from 15.64% in 2019 to 19.23% in 2024. Christians (18%) and Muslims (26%) make up nearly 45% of the state's population. The BJP and the RSS have been attempting to create divisions between the Muslims and the Christians for several years. In the months leading up to the elections, prominent Christian leaders in Kerala [espoused support for the BJP in Kerala](#), while remaining silent on the persecution of Christians or Muslims elsewhere in the country (The Hindu, 22 April 2024)⁸. A major reason for the Christians to shift towards the BJP were influential sections of the Kerala Christian community, especially the Syrian Christians and the Catholic Christians [endorsing and circulating](#) the anti-Muslim propaganda of 'Love Jihad' – a popular conspiracy theory amongst the right where it is alleged that young Muslim boys are deliberately getting Christian and Hindu women to fall in love with them, get married to them and subsequently convert them to Islam (Onmanorama, 19 March 2024)⁹. It is very likely that Hindus

⁶ <https://x.com/NobleIndian2/status/1798279496124211640>

⁷ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ndas-vote-share-in-kerala-grew-from-13-to-16-68-this-lok-sabha-elections-101717618711520.html>

⁸ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ndas-vote-share-in-kerala-grew-from-13-to-16-68-this-lok-sabha-elections-101717618711520.html>

⁹ <https://www.onmanorama.com/news/kerala/2024/03/19/love-jihad-common-fears-bjp-christians-lok-sabha-elections.html>

and Christians who had voted for UDF or LDF in previous elections shifted their vote to the BJP, enabling it to win the seat of Thrissur and increase their vote share across Kerala. Overall, because of the improved performance of the INDIA alliance, there are now 10 Christian MPs in the Indian Parliament: Five from Kerala, two from Meghalaya, one each from Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland.

The Sikh vote

A similar pattern emerges in the case of Sikhs who are concentrated in the state of Punjab. With the backdrop of a [long lasting farmers movement](#) protesting against regressive farm laws (BBC News, 6 March 2024)¹⁰, and amid increasing hostility towards Punjabis, often [branding them as Khalistani separatists and terrorists](#) (The Wire, 21 February 2024)¹¹, the BJP was already very unpopular in Punjab even before the elections. However, on the other hand, the opposition consisting of the Congress party and the Aam Admi Party (AAP) were fighting separately even though they were members of INDIA alliance and fighting together in other states such as Delhi and Haryana. To complicate matters further, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) which was an ex-ally of the BJP but decided to break the alliance in light of the latter's unpopularity, also decided to contest elections. The BJP was routed in Punjab, unable to win even a single seat out of 13 seats. The Congress party won seven seats while the AAP won three seats, the SAD won one seat and two independent candidates won one seat each.

One of the independent candidates who won from the Khadoor Sahib constituency was Amritpal Singh, the leader of a radical Sikh organization called Waris Punjab De (translated as 'Heir of Punjab'). This organization is accused of having links to the separatist movement of Khalistan and there have been instances of Singh's supporters [acting hostilely towards Christians](#), i.e., to Sikhs who have converted to Christianity (Indian Express, 18 October 2022)¹².

The other independent candidate who won in the Faridkot constituency was Sarabjeet Singh Khalsa. Khalsa is the son of Beant Singh, the former bodyguard turned assassin of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984. In spite of the BJP winning zero seats in Punjab, it should be noted that it managed to increase its vote share from 9.6% in the 2019 elections to 18.6% in 2024. However, because it did not have allies who could build on top of this increased vote share, the BJP could not translate this increased vote share into seats. The continued prominence and popularity of Amritpal Singh, the erstwhile Sikh majoritarian radical and now Member of Parliament is likely to encourage members of his organization Waris Punjab De, to continue persecuting Christians in Punjab.

¹⁰ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-68476463>

¹¹ <https://thewire.in/communalism/totally-unacceptable-sikh-ips-officer-called-khalistani-by-bjps-suvendu-adhikari>

¹² <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/jalandhar/christians-protest-sikh-preacher-jalandhar-8214835/>

Future implications

At the 2024 elections, since the BJP was voted in as the single largest party (240 seats), the President of India invited BJP to form the government. On 9 June 2024, the BJP-led NDA formed the government with Modi becoming the Prime Minister for the third consecutive time. Soon thereafter, Modi announced his cabinet of ministers, an important occasion that indicates the distribution of power at the highest levels between BJP and alliance partners.

Since the BJP has only 240 seats, 32 seats short of simple majority, the current Modi government needs the support of allies. The support of two parties is the most crucial – 18 seats, of which 16 are provided by Chandrababu Naidu-led TDP, plus two seats of JSP; and 12 seats of Nitish Kumar-led JD(U) who was with the opposition as late as January 2024. Both Nitish Kumar and Naidu are seen as largely secular leaders who are trying to revive their political careers in their respective states of Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. Naidu is coming back after a decade in the political wilderness while Nitish is forced to operate in Bihar as the third player in an electoral field dominated by the RJD and BJP. Nitish Kumar was in alliance with the RDJ until early 2024 but switched sides and instead allied itself with the BJP to form the government in Bihar.

Given this dependence on allies like Naidu and Nitish Kumar, it was expected that the Modi government would give his allies important ministries such as Home Ministry, Defence Ministry, Finance Ministry, Railway Ministry, Agriculture Ministry and so on. The Home and Defence Ministry gives the minister complete control over investigative and law enforcement agencies (including investigation of economic offences) such as Income Tax (IT), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Enforcement Directorate (ED) and of course the police and other special security forces. The BJP used these agencies to [harass opposition leaders](#) in President Modi's last term (New Indian Express, 26 May 2024)¹³, which even led to chief ministers being arrested on yet to be proven charges of corruption. The finance, railway and agriculture ministries have policy-making powers that would affect the lives of the majority, not to mention huge revenue generating ministries. To the surprise of many, the BJP has essentially [kept all the most important ministries to itself](#) (The Hindu, 11 June 2024)¹⁴, mostly using the same ministers from Modi's previous government, while allies have been given what are seen as largely insignificant ministries. For example, a senior leader from the JD(U) has been given the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, while a TDP leader has been given the Ministry of Civil Aviation (a sector where most civil aviation is controlled by the private sector, leaving a minimal role for the government).

In terms of governance, the BJP continues to dominate the most important state apparatuses even while crucial allies have no significant influence in the government. However, the key question is that while retaining this power, will the BJP be able to exercise this power and influence it as it has done over the last ten years? In other words, what will happen to the authoritarian tendencies of the BJP as a party that has been used to doing things its own way?

¹³ <https://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/2024/May/26/the-misuse-of-draconian-laws-for-political-gain>

¹⁴ <https://www.thehindu.com/elections/lok-sabha/full-list-of-portfolio-of-council-of-ministers-modi-government/article68274098.ece>

While Modi and Shah’s authoritarian tendencies and intentions are unchanged, their modus operandi will be affected drastically. So far, their modus operandi has been to completely centralize power: Within the BJP, they have removed Nitin Gadkari as the Party President and installed their own man, J.P. Nadda. In the wider Sangh Parivar network, they have often taken decisions that have been opposed by RSS organizations, while J.P. Nadda has gone on record to say that the BJP does not need RSS any more. In governance and administration, Modi and Shah have extended tenures of directors of key institutions, installing ‘yes-men’ who are willing to do their bidding even if goes against constitutional propriety, rules and conventions of democracy.

With Modi and Shah dependent on Naidu and Nitish for remaining in power and with a strong opposition of 234 MPs, it will be difficult for the BJP to ride roughshod over parliamentary procedures. This means that every single legislation that the BJP brings to Parliament will be severely debated and contested by the opposition, and every single time, the BJP will wonder whether their own allies, the TDP and JD(U), will support them. Both these regional parties depend on support from religious minorities to win elections in their states – Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. They are unlikely to support BJP when it comes to overt discrimination against religious minorities. There will be challenges for the BJP in terms of controlling the floor of the Parliament, too: For example, the position of Speaker of the Lower House (Lok Sabha) is crucial since the Speaker decides on the legitimacy of MPs defecting from one party to another. The Speaker also retains the deciding vote if the floor of the house returns a tied verdict. Surprisingly, both TDP and JD(U) did not stake their claim to nominate a MP from their party to be elected as Speaker. The BJP succeeded in nominating their MP, Om Birla as Speaker of the Lower House. Birla is now Speaker for the second consecutive time. During his term as Speaker from 2019-2024, Birla had [blatantly favored the BJP and targeted opposition leaders](#), thus ignoring the sanctity and neutrality of the Speaker (The Wire, 27 June 2024)¹⁵. It is expected that he will continue in the same vein during this term too.

However, unlike the last term of the Modi government where the Deputy Speaker post was kept vacant, this time the INDIA alliance will propose a Deputy Speaker. This post is significant in case the Lower House proposes a no-confidence motion against the Speaker and succeeds, then the Lower House will be controlled by the Deputy Speaker. If BJP’s allies (e.g., JDU and TDP) decide in the future to move away from the BJP, then it is possible that the Speaker could be removed through a no-confidence motion and the Deputy Speaker (proposed by the opposition) could take over.

In his election campaigning, Modi was [particularly virulent](#) (CNN, 28 May 2024)¹⁶ in his speeches targeting Muslims and, to a lesser extent, the Christian community. He has made inflammatory speeches in various parts of the country accusing Muslims of having too many children, of being infiltrators, of taking away the reservation benefits of Dalits and OBCs. He also alleged that the Congress party would snatch the wealth of Hindus and redistribute it to Muslims. In Jharkhand, Modi targeted opposition party Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and said that [Sunday is a Christian holiday](#) and not linked to Hindus (News18, 28 May 2024)¹⁷. Towards the end of the

¹⁵ <https://thewire.in/politics/om-birlas-unenviable-track-record-as-speaker>

¹⁶ <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/05/28/india/india-narendra-modi-hate-speech-analysis-intl-hnk/index.html>

¹⁷ <https://www.news18.com/politics/sunday-holiday-is-not-linked-to-hindus-but-to-christian-pm-modi-accuses-jmm-of-indulging-in-communal-appeasement-politics-8907458.html>

election period, Modi even stated in a TV interview that his energy was not of biological origin (Business Today, 23 May 2024)¹⁸ and claimed to be a divine messenger. Given the strong opposition and reduced mandate, it is unlikely that Modi or the top level BJP leadership will continue to resort to such grandiose and egotistical statements or explicit hate-speech against religious minorities.

Further, there are three crucial Assembly elections due in 2024, for the states of Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Haryana. The BJP lost heavily in all three states in the 2024 general elections, and they are very much on the backfoot even in the state-level elections. If the INDIA alliance succeeds in winning these Assembly elections in these three states, it will further dent the popularity, credibility and legitimacy of both Modi as well as the BJP. Subsequently, many dissenting voices may emerge from the NDA, from within the BJP and from the RSS.

In terms of the implications for religious minorities and vulnerable communities such as Dalits and Adivasis, the verdict leads to a mixed outcome. On the one hand, the BJP is unlikely to make any overt efforts to reduce reservations for Dalits and Adivasis in government jobs and education. It will also be much more likely to expand its welfare programs in order to reach out to these groups. Further, the BJP is unlikely to attempt any major Constitutional amendments given that they lost a large part of the Dalit vote due to this fear. However, on the ground, it is likely that incidents of extreme violence will continue against religious minorities in various states (see below):

- In the tribal areas of Central India and Northeastern states, the RSS is likely to try and create divisions between those tribals who follow indigenous faiths (such as Meiteis who follow Sanamahism in Manipur, or the Oraon who follow the Sarna faith in Jharkhand) and Christian tribals.
- In Kerala, a segment of the Christian community is becoming more aggressive towards Muslims, increasing the likelihood of Christian-Muslim conflict in the future.
- In other states, such as Odisha where the BJP for the first time has consolidated power by winning 20 out of 21 seats, the violence against Christians may rise drastically in the coming months. The new Chief Minister of Odisha, Mohan Charan Majhi is a tribal BJP leader who was seen at a protest in 2022 demanding the release of Dara Singh (The Hindu, 22 September 2022)¹⁹. The latter is in prison for the murder of Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two minor sons in 1999. Also in Odisha, on 14 June 2024, just ten days after the election results, a bomb was hurled at a church in Cuttack district, severely damaging the floor of the building (The New Indian Express, 9 June 2024)²⁰.
- In the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh too, the BJP won 10 out of 11 seats, a gain of one seat from their 2019 performance. This state is now controlled by the BJP both at the state and at the central level. In 2022 and 2023, there was large-scale persecution of Christians in South Chhattisgarh, especially the Bastar region. Also in Chhattisgarh, on 9 June 2024,

¹⁸ <https://www.businesstoday.in/india/story/god-has-sent-me-convinced-that-my-energy-is-not-biological-prime-minister-narendra-modi-430606-2024-05-23>

¹⁹ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/sudarshan-tv-editor-in-chief-denied-permission-to-meet-dara-singh-in-odishas-keonjhar/article65919547.ece>

²⁰ <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/2024/Jun/15/cuttack-miscreants-hurl-bomb-at-baptist-church>

two Muslim men transporting cattle were lynched in by unknown assailants (Indian Express, 9 June 2024)²¹.

- It is likely that in both Odisha and Chhattisgarh, Christian and other tribal groups will face a deadly mix of unregulated mining of valuable mineral resources, destruction of forests, displacement of entire villages and continued persecution of Christians.
- In many other states of India, whether they are ruled by BJP or opposition parties, the elections results have little or no effect on the continued vigilantism of hardline Hindutva organizations affiliated to the RSS. The BJP is also likely to continue targeting political dissenters just as it has done since assuming power in 2014. Just days after coming back to power, the Modi government is likely to seek the arrest of renowned author and activist Arundhati Roy as well as Kashmiri former professor of law, Sheik Showkat Hussain under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (BBC News, 18 June 2024)²². This legislation is notorious for being used as a weapon to target dissent, since the accused almost never get bail and instead spend years in jail until their trials are completed.

At the time of writing, it has been nearly a month since the election results were announced. Currently, it seems that the alliance partners on whom the BJP depends to form the government have not applied any pressure or gained any strategic influence in the Modi government. It appears that the regional parties in the NDA – such as TDP and JD(U) – will cooperate with the BJP on policy and governance as long as their respective states (Andhra Pradesh and Bihar) get significant funding from the union government²³. The next six months are going to be a crucial test for the BJP in two domains – how and to what extent they can control the floor of the Parliament; and whether the poor electoral performance under Modi’s leadership will continue or change, with the BJP bouncing back in the forthcoming Assembly elections. Both domains are open and will be keenly contested by a strengthened opposition. The fate and future of millions of vulnerable communities across religions, but especially those from religious minorities, hang in the balance.

²¹ <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/chhattisgarh-2-transporting-cattle-found-dead-family-claims-lynched-9378955/>

²² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3ggzy13m2po>

²³ Chandrababu Naidu wants funding from the union government to build a new capital city for the state, namely the city of Amravati, as well as funding to clear the staggering debt that the state has accumulated over the last few years (The Tribune, 12 June 2024, <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/india/naidu-is-andhra-cm-eyes-1l-cr-for-amravati-project-630212>). Meanwhile, Nitish Kumar has been demanding that Bihar be accorded the status of special category, which entails a whole host of benefits such as increased funding from the union government for all government schemes as well as provisions for infrastructural development (Mint, 8 June 2024, <https://www.livemint.com/politics/news/nitish-kumar-tasked-to-accord-special-category-status-to-bihar-what-does-it-mean-and-why-the-state-wants-it-11717856029177.html>).