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## INDIA MATTERS

### The Uttar Pradesh Paradox: Insights on Indian Electoral Politics



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Indian elections have long been a cornerstone of the nation's political landscape. The recently concluded 18th Lok Sabha Elections have proven to be one of the most intriguing and transformative events in the history of Indian politics. These elections marked a substantial shift and a turning point in political developments as they progressed. The results were particularly striking and notable within the context of Indian politics. While the outcome was a shock for some, it was a relief for the majority. This relief stemmed from the affirmation that democracy in India remains vibrant and robust, providing the much-needed confidence that had been sought for a long time.

As the world's largest democratic exercise culminated with the announcement of the 2024 Lok Sabha election results, the noteworthy outcomes which provided a significant boost to the INDIA opposition bloc in both vote share and seats signaled a marked departure from the BJP's previous hegemonic dominance and scale of victory as seen in 2019 and 2014.

In the recent parliamentary elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged as the clear leader securing 240 seats, significantly ahead of its closest competitor, the Indian National Congress (INC), which won 99 seats. This result underscores the BJP's dominant position and effective campaign strategies. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Janata Dal (United) (JD(U)) gained modest representation with 16 and 12 seats respectively. Meanwhile, the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Trinamool Congress (TMC) also made notable impacts, securing 37 and 29 seats respectively. Additionally, 109 seats were distributed among various regional parties and independents, reflecting the diverse political landscape and significant regional influences. Overall, the BJP's decisive win positions them as the leading force in parliament, while the INC, despite trailing significantly, remains a key player. The election results highlight the varied political dynamics across the country, with regional parties continuing to play a crucial role.

Uttar Pradesh (UP) has long been regarded as the heart of Indian politics due to its substantial share of Lok Sabha seats—80 out of 543. The state's electoral outcomes are often a barometer for national trends, making it pivotal in determining the composition of the central government. In the 2024 general elections, the shift in voter dynamics within UP was a major factor in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) failing to secure a majority on its own.

The situation in Uttar Pradesh highlights several critical issues that contributed to the lack of trust and faith in the existing government, as reflected in the electoral outcomes. Uttar Pradesh, being a significant region in terms of electoral politics due to its substantial number of seats, saw a shift in voter sentiment that the BJP could not counteract to secure a majority. The result was disheartening for the party, and it is attributed to a combination of administrative shortcomings, ignorance, and overconfidence. Two primary factors that adversely affected the region were the escalating unemployment rates and the lack of substantial groundwork, overshadowed by mere superficial measures.

The events in Ayodhya and Faizabad exemplify these issues. The significant financial investment in the Ayodhya Ram Mandir inauguration, while symbolically important, failed to resonate positively with many locals. The people affected by displacement and demolition to make way for the temple did not feel their hardships were acknowledged or mitigated by the government. This insensitivity towards the displaced communities eroded trust and amplified discontent.

Moreover, the administration's inability to address the core issues such as unemployment and proper governance further alienated the electorate. The government's focus on grandiose projects without ensuring the welfare of the affected populace created a perception of neglect and mismanagement.

The culmination of these factors resulted in a noticeable decline in support for the BJP, indicating that the electorate's priorities were not aligned with the government's actions. The lack of trust and faith was not just a momentary reaction but a reflection of deeper systemic issues that need addressing to restore confidence in the leadership.

The electoral outcome in Uttar Pradesh was a direct consequence of administrative failures, insensitivity towards displaced communities, and a lack of focus on essential issues like unemployment. The government's inability to connect with and address the real concerns of the people significantly contributed to the loss of trust and faith, ultimately affecting their electoral performance. It also showcases the slight awareness for the not-so-assumed Uttar Pradesh region to be a region that showed it's not about 'glitters and gold' but 'roti,' 'kapda,' and 'makan.'

## The BJP's performance in the 2024 elections was significantly impacted by several factors:

- The BJP struggled with balancing caste equations in Uttar Pradesh. The non-Yadav OBC and non-Jatav Dalit voters shifted their support to the opposition, weakening BJP's stronghold in this crucial state. The INDIA bloc, an alliance of opposition parties, capitalized on this shift, winning 43 of the 80 seats in UP.
- The opposition's campaign that the BJP would change the Constitution if re-elected resonated with voters. The BJP's inability to effectively counter these allegations contributed to its diminished support. Statements from BJP members about potential constitutional amendments further fueled these concerns.
- The Agnipath scheme for military recruitment, criticized by opposition leaders, did not gain traction with voters, particularly in states like Rajasthan and Haryana. These regions, which traditionally send many youths to defense forces, showed a notable decline in BJP support.
- The BJP faced internal issues, including lack of coordination between the government and party members. The decision to field incumbent MPs in most seats, along with the inclusion of turncoat candidates, was not well-received by the electorate. Additionally, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) showed indifference towards the BJP's campaign efforts, further weakening the party's performance.

## Conclusion

The implications of these results for the BJP are profound and multifaceted. The party must reassess its approach to caste dynamics, striving to rebuild its coalition among OBCs and Dalits through more inclusive policies and better engagement with these communities. Additionally, the success of the opposition's

grassroots campaign strategy suggests that the BJP might need to pivot towards more community-centric campaigning, focusing on localized and personalized voter engagement rather than large-scale rallies.

The electoral outcomes in Uttar Pradesh have also significantly altered the political landscape, underscoring the need for the BJP to recalibrate its strategies. By addressing the highlighted issues and adapting to evolving voter expectations, the BJP can work towards regaining its political foothold in future elections. The lessons learned from UP's voter dynamics will be instrumental in shaping the party's approach across India, potentially influencing its overall electoral strategy and policy focus.

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