



Election Dynamics In India: A Comparative Study Of The 2019 And 2024 General Election

¹Aishoriya Majumder, ²Dr. Goutam Sarkar

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, ²Associate Professor,

Department of Political Science, Raiganj University, India

Abstract: This article is determined to give a comparative and detailed analysis of the two recent election cycles. This study offers a comprehensive analysis of the 17th and 18th Lok Sabha elections, which took place in 2019 and 2024. This study analyses shifts in voter priorities and demographic changes by comparing the political landscape between these two elections. It assesses the electoral performance of different parties across different states, focusing on the factors that influence their success or failure. By comparing party performance in different regions, the article helps to highlight the dynamics behind each party's electoral outcomes. By comparing socio-economic conditions, key political issues, and media impact, the article tried to point out different factors that influenced voters over time. It helps to understand the evolving nature of voter behavior drawing data from election results and media content analysis. Various factors influence the election and electoral behaviour of voters. The aim is to find out the factors that played a key role in voting patterns in both elections. Campaigning strategies largely shape a party's electoral performance. This study also highlights the campaigning strategies of different parties that contributed to their election outcomes. This study shows how elections adapt to societal changes that is how the democratic system responds to societal transformations. Overall, it provides a crucial perspective on the changing dynamics of elections.

Key words: Election cycles, political landscape, electoral performance, campaigning strategies and democratic system

Introduction: Conducting general elections in India is described as the largest democratic exercise in the world. It is a monumental event that consists of a vast network of polling stations, and extensive logistical planning. This huge democratic exercise not only upholds the country's constitutional values but also showcases its organizational capabilities that is how capable the country is at organizing such a huge event. Lok Sabha elections in India are carried out using the first-past-post method. The country is divided into constituencies and the candidate with the majority of votes wins. The superintendence, direction and control of the entire election process is vested in the Election Commission of India by the Constitution of India. From voter registration and ballot distribution to the deployment of security forces each and every step is handled efficiently by the Election Commission of India to uphold the democratic principles of the country. The Election Commission of India is committed to conducting a free and fair election each time.

Performance of NDA and UPA in the 2019 Lok Sabha Election

NDA	Seats won	UPA	Seats won
BJP	303	INC	52
JD(U)	16	JD(S)	1
LJP	6	IUML	3
Shiv Sena	18	KCM	1
NDPP	1	RSP	1
SAD	2	NCP	4
RLP	1	DMK	23
AIADMK	1	CPI	2
AD(S)	2	CPM	2
AJSUP	1	VCK	1
INDEPENDENT BJP Supported	1	JMM	1
Total	352	Total	91

Source: Election Commission of India

In the 2019 general election in India, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) led NDA achieved a sweeping victory by winning 352 seats out of 543. This decisive win solidifies the NDA's win as the dominant political force in India. The BJP as the leading party in the alliance, achieved an unprecedented milestone by winning 3030 seats on its own, surpassing the majority mark of 272 required to form a government. This single-handed crossing of the 300-seat threshold was a remarkable achievement of the BJP. After the successive victories of the Congress in 1980 and 1984, this will be the first time any party won an absolute majority on its own in two consecutive Lok Sabha elections. The ruling Party's victory has been broad-based, gaining seats in most parts of the country.¹ The BJ got the highest share of the votes in Himachal Pradesh (69.1%), followed by Gujarat (62.2%), Rajasthan (58.5%), Arunachal Pradesh (58.2%), Madhya Pradesh and Haryana (58%).² In the 2019 general election, the BJP, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, achieved a sweeping victory across numerous states, including Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha Punjab, and Rajasthan. The "Modi Magic" was evident as the party also managed to secure seats in West Bengal, a state historically dominated by Trinamool Congress. On the other hand, the opposition alliance UPA led by the Inc faced a shameful defeat in the 2019 general election. The Congress party which was once the dominant force in Indian politics managed to secure only 52 seats, reflecting its continued decline in influence and voter support. It must be noted here that till 2019, the Congress was never out of power for two complete consecutive terms. Beyond the numbers, Congress president Rahul Gandhi losing in Amethi, his home turf, is a symbolic defeat for the grand old party. The only consolidation for the party came from the south.³

Reasons behind BJP's massive success in the 2019 election:

1. **Modi-wave:** "Modi-wave" stands for the overwhelming support the BJP leader Narendra Modi got from the people of the country. He is one of the most popular politicians in the whole country. His popularity was amplified by his image as a decisive leader with a strong stance on national security and economic reforms. Narendra Modi was the face and voice of his party, the engine behind much of its charisma. In a way, a part of any vote for a BJP candidate is a vote for him. This "Wave" was further bolstered by effective communication strategies including social media and rallies. This "Modi Wave" was the driving force of the BJP's massive win in 2019.⁴
2. **No PM face of the opposition:** while the BJP-led NDA had an undisputed leader in Prime Minister Narendra Modi, there was no such face in the opposition alliance. INC president Rahul Gandhi was a favourite only to a couple of its alliance partners. There was no unanimity among the opposition alliance about the face of the future PM. This somehow created a confusing picture for the voters.
3. **Divided Opposition:** The lack of unity among the opposition allies played a significant role behind UPA's heavy downfall. We could see fragmented opposition in key states. In Uttar Pradesh BSP and SP joined hands, but notably left the Congress out. Similarly, in Kerala and West Bengal, the Congress and the left parties did not join hands. This miscommunication gave a chance to the NDA alliance to mock them as "mahamilawati" They even gave the example of oil and water which do not gel together even though they are mixed.
4. **Negative campaign by the opposition:** The negative campaign by the opposition parties led to their downfall. Instead of presenting their own plan, and communicating their future goals with the people of India, they focused more on mocking the opposition leader Narendra Modi. Rahul Gandhi's "chowkidar chor hai" slogan backfired him. This jibe has been rejected by the voters.
5. **National security:** During the election campaigning PM Narendra Modi, along with the then BJP president Amit Shah and other party leaders, highlighted the February 26 balakot airstrikes, carried as revenge for the Pulwama terror attack. They also reminded voters about the 2016 surgical strike as a testament to the government's commitment to national security. Modi also sought to remind the people of India that the internal security situation had never been as secure as it was in the last five years. This message resonated well and contributed to the party's success.
6. **Developmental activities:** In their election campaigns, the leaders not only highlighted the air strike and surgical strike they also highlighted schemes they have undertaken or in future going to undertake. They highlighted various welfare schemes designed to improve the quality of life for citizens such as efforts to build toilets, distribute gas cylinders, and electrify households. Then they talked about schemes like the Mudra Yojana which provides funding to start small businesses, and the Ayushman Bharat Yojna, aimed at offering health insurance. This campaigning resonated with the people of India.⁵
7. **Clean image:** Mr. Modi has established a clean image of himself even in the minds of his opponents. He has made every possible effort to make sure that there are no corruption cases associated with him or his party. Over the past five years,

¹Ten charts that explain the 2019 Lok Sabha verdict. (2019, May 24). Mint

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there has not been any significant scandal. Rahul Gandhi's corruption accusations about the Rafale deal against Modi did not sway the voters.⁶

Reasons behind the UPA alliance's setback:

1. **Failed to pick the real issues:** During the campaign, they failed to pick up the real concerns of the common man like unemployment, rural distress and increased intolerance. They could have turned them into a nationwide movement and created an environment against the incumbent government. Instead of doing this, the Congress party tried to counter the BJP on the issues where BJP was inherently strong. And here it fell into a trap.
2. **Attacking the honest image of Modi failed:** Over time Rahul Gandhi's "chowkidar chor hai" campaign got bitter and personal, it could not create the impact the Congress party had expected. Rather the "Main bhi chowkidar" campaign launched by the BJP to encounter it. Became a bigger success, and this explains the crucial strategy of the Congress party to attack the honest image of Narendra Modi; in fact, the personal attacks created sympathy for Modi.⁷
3. **Overconfident leadership:** There was a sense of complacency among the party's leaders who took the voters for granted. The party miscalculated and fielded many new faces instead of leaders who had contested elections previously. They just assumed that new faces would get them more votes.
4. **Unfulfilled promises:** Campaigning for the assembly polls, Congress chief Rahul Gandhi promised to waive off agricultural loans if his party won. This was a key reason why a substantial section of the farming community voted for the party in these heartland states. However, farmers claim that nearly half of them are still waiting for their loans. This failure to keep the promise damaged the party's prospects.⁸
5. **'Soft-Hindutva' backfired:** The Congress was seen copying BJP's Hindutva agenda. The BJP made it a point to tell the country that it was BJP which forced Congress and other opposition leaders to show respect for Hinduism and its traditions. They fell into the trap and also irked its traditional vote base of minorities which backed regional parties instead of the Congress.⁹

Performance of the NDA and I.N.D..IA alliance in the 2024 Lok Sabha election

NDA	Seats won	I.N.D..IA	Seats won
BJP	240	INC	99
TDP	16	SP	37
JD(U)	12	DMK	22
SHIV SENA	7	SHIV SENA (UBT)	9
JD(S)	2	NCP (SP)	8
LJP	5	AITC	29
NCP	1	RJD	4
AD(S)	1	CPM	4
AGP	1	JMM	3
JSP	2	IUML	3
RLD	2	AAP	3
AJSU	1	VCK	2
HAM	1	CPI	2
SKM	1	CPI (ML) (L)	2
UPPL	1	JKNC	2
		BADVP	1
		MDMK	1
		RSP	1
		KC	1
		RLTP	1
Total seats	293	Total seats	234

6

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The 2024 Lok Sabha election was a significant event in India's political landscape which highlighted the dynamic nature of Indian democracy. Intense competition among major political parties, unexpected outcomes and a significant shift in voter allegiance made this election a considerable event in India's political landscape. In this election, we've seen emerging of new alliances as a strong opponent to challenge the incumbent. Despite a tough electoral battle, Prime Minister Narendra Modi seems poised to form the government for a third consecutive term with the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance securing a majority in the Lok Sabha. The Bhartiya Janata Party has fallen short of a majority of its own. BJP won 240 seats, falling short of the 272 mark that indicates a majority in the Lok Sabha. NDA with its allies, has still secured 293 seats. The 2024 election numbers contrast dramatically with the results of 2019. In 2019 BJP alone got the majority by winning 303 seats but in 2024 they fell short of the majority. This result reflects a notable downturn in the BJP's performance. This decline suggests a loss of the overwhelming support it once enjoyed. On the other hand, the opposition alliance Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) led by Rahul Gandhi's Indian National Congress has made significant gains in the 2024 election by securing 234 seats. INC alone got 99 seats indicating a significant surge from its performance in 2019 when it managed to secure only 52 seats. This resurgence of Congress and its allies indicates a Renewed opposition, capable of challenging the ruling party more actively. The increased numbers highlight the success of the INDIA alliance in connecting a wider range of voters. This Election was a significant event for the INC since they started to regain their position in the Indian political landscape.

Uttar Pradesh with 80 parliamentary seats holds the key to determining who governs New Delhi. BJP had a dominant position in UP since 2017. In the 2019 election, NDA won 64 seats from the state, of which BJP alone secured 62 seats while the Congress managed to win only one seat but this year the scenario has completely changed. We have witnessed an unexpected outcome from the state. In the 2024 election, The SP won 37 seats and Congress 6 – totalling 43 for the INDIA alliance. On the other hand, the BJP managed to win 33 seats. This decline in numbers indicates the loss of their dominant position in UP.

The BJP and its allies suffered a big loss in the Maharashtra also. The INDIA alliance won 30 seats of the state's 48 seats. The Congress alone won 13 seats, while the BJP won 9. In Rajasthan also BJP saw a notable loss. In West Bengal BJP had placed high hopes of expanding its influence but instead of gaining ground, BJP lost 6 of its seats in the State.

Kerala, the southern state has long been a bastion of the left where the BJP, has struggled to win. In, Karnataka though BJP emerged as the biggest winner, it lost 8 of its seats in the state. In the Northeast also BJP struggled to make any influence.

Factors contributing to BJP's setback and SP-INC's gains in Uttar Pradesh

- "Threat to Constitution" Narrative by the opposition did some damage to the BJP's prospects to win Dalit votes. Many senior state BJP leaders talked about changing the constitution if the party got 400-plus seats. It sent the wrong message to the Dalits and the OBCs. The slogan insisting that the BJP-led alliance would win 400 seats frightened many Dalits, who feared that the party could change the constitution and deny them the reservation. The BJP party failed to justify it.¹⁰
- Akhilesh Yadav has diligently worked to make inroads into the non-Yadav OBC vote. It is for this reason that he fielded only five candidates from the Yadav community, all from his family in its 62 seats. The party's vote share increased when it joined hands with smaller parties, which drew the support of non-Yadav OBCs.
- In an attempt to gain more votes, the SP chief modified his 'M-Y' or Muslim-Yadav formula to "PDA" or "pichde, Dalits, alpasankhayak."¹¹
- There was an anti-incumbency attitude among the people of the state. Many sitting MPs of the party had not bothered to keep in touch with the electorate in their respective constituencies. But the party re-nominated them as a result as many as 26 sitting MPs lost the polls.¹²
- The RSS was also not involved in the way it was in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections and the 2017 and 2022 Assembly polls. RSS volunteers were not as active as before especially in Western UP areas.
- The short-tenure Agnipath scheme that came with an uncertain future, and the leak of competitive exam papers contributed to disenchantment among the youth on the lookout for Jobs.¹³

10

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Reasons behind BJP's downfall in the 2024 Lok Sabha election

Economic Mismanagement: Economic issues were a significant factor in the BJP's electoral downfall. The government's failure to effectively tackle rising unemployment, persistent inflation, and agrarian distress led to growing dissatisfaction among voters. Since the GDP growth rate slowed and the economic policies of the government failed to alleviate the hardship of middle and lower-income groups, public confidence significantly diminished in the BJP's ability to manage the economy.

Social and Communal Polarization: Though the Social and communal polarization as a political strategy once solidified BJP's support base eventually it led to unintended consequences. A wider sector of the population has been alienated because of the party's increased focus on religious nationalism and divisive expression. This strategy backfired BJP since minority communities felt increasingly marginalized and targeted by the BJP's agenda. The electorate's growing sense of exclusion contributed to BJP's setback.

Anti-Incumbency Sentiment: After two terms in power, the BJP encountered significant anti-incumbency sentiments since voters grew increasingly dissatisfied with the party's governance. The dissatisfaction emerged from the perceived arrogance and centralization of power. This dissatisfaction was further fueled by the party's failure to address pressing issues effectively. Further, Corruption scandals exacerbated the anti-incumbency mood, making it difficult for the BJP to maintain its stronghold since voters began to seek alternatives.

Narendra Modi's waning Popularity: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, once the BJP's most potent electoral asset, saw a decline in his popularity. The election results show that Brand Modi has lost some of its shine. The inability to deliver on promises such as employment, improved agricultural incomes and effective pandemic management tarnished his image. Modi's magnetic charm was no longer enough to overcome the rising frustration with his government's performance.¹⁴

The Manipur incident: The BJP also underestimated the power of the backlash from women and youth in states like Manipur where violence and unrest had taken hold due to the government's failure. The Congress has won both the seats of Manipur. The opposition blames the BJP government, both at the Centre and in the state, for failing to curb the year-long violence between Kukis and Meitis.¹⁵

Favors to Adani: Other factors such as Adani matters contributed to the downfall of the BJP. BJP cleared 370-acre forest land for the Adani group to install and run a power plant. Development cannot take place by destroying nature. This went against the BJP. It dominated headlines and disrupted economic narratives.

Negative campaign: Instead of bringing in some agenda and discussing their manifesto in their political campaigns. BJP has been seen only highlighting the Ram Mandir issue and mocking some opposition leaders such as Arvind Kejriwal and Rahul Gandhi.

Agniveer Resentment: This scheme was launched in 2022. Under the Scheme, youngsters in the 17.5 years- 21 years age group are inducted for four-year period. There is a provision to retain 25 per cent of these recruits for 15 more years. The remaining will be given a financial package as their service comes to an end. The announcement of the scheme triggered violent protests in several parts of the country. The opposition has turned it into a key plank in their Lok Sabha election campaign. The party argued that the scheme would leave Agniveers unemployed at the age of 25.¹⁶

Factor's driving I.N.D.I.A Alliance's gains

Formation of robust Coalition: The INDIA alliance, comprising various regional and national parties, presented a united front against the BJP. The coalition's strength derived from its diversity and the capacity to unite parties with different ideologies. They were unified by a common objective of defeating the BJP. By drawing on their collective strengths, the coalition aimed to present a formidable opposition.

INDIA bloc outreach: Leaders of the INDIA bloc appeared to have succeeded in bringing together Minorities, OBCs, and Dalits in every section of people. By integrating such a wide spectrum of voices and interests, the bloc has strengthened its position.

Key political figures and their Contributions: Rahul Gandhi emerged as a central figure in the INDIA alliance. His persistent campaign against the BJP's economic and social policies struck a chord with voters. Then Akhilesh Yadav, leader of SP brought a youthful energy and a focus on social justice to the alliance. West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee's role was crucial in uniting various factions within the alliance and presenting a cohesive front.¹⁷

Two Yatra by Rahul Gandhi: The Bharat Jodo Yatra and the Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra saw Rahul Gandhi crisscrossing the country to connect with its supporters and mobilize the voters. While the yatra may have failed to dent the BJP in several of its strongholds, it did help the grand old party make significant gains in some states.¹⁸

14

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18

Effective Campaign Strategy: The India Alliance adopted innovative and effective campaign strategies, involving social media and grassroots movements to reach a wider audience. The alliances focused on key issues like unemployment, economic development and social justice, starkly contrasting the BJP's polarizing tactics.

Conclusion: To conclude, it can be said the study underscores the evolving landscape of Indian democracy. It underscores the dynamic nature of the Indian political landscape. In, 2019 we saw an absolute decisive victory for the Bhartiya Janata Party. They have held their dominant position in the whole country. Whereas the opposition alliance led by INC faced a humiliating defeat due to their poor strategy. Since they failed to influence the electorate, we lack a significant opposition. In 2024, the scenario has slightly changed. We have seen shifting voting preferences. Though NDA led by the BJP formed government for the third consecutive year, they lost some of their seats. There is a decline in the popularity of BJP and PM Narendra Modi. This year's result highlighted the dynamic nature of Indian democracy. Since the BJP was unable to secure an absolute majority on its own, it found itself dependent on its NDA allies, a situation that is relatively unusual for the party. These dynamics underscore both the fragmented nature of the current political scene and the Significant challenges involved in upholding a stable coalition. On the other hand, I.N.D.I.A alliance led by the Indian National Congress improved their position by adopting the correct strategy. They have learnt from their previous mistakes and this time raised the real key issues which comparatively attract the people of India more.