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MANDATE

Predict the scenario after General Election

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Problem statement

The sovereign country of India is said to be the world's largest democracy. What makes it such a strong democracy is the form of government chosen by us, i.e., Representative democracy.

Since her independence in 1947, parliamentary democracy has been the central political mechanism governing India. Between 1975 and 1977, there was a brief disruption during the National Emergency Period. This disruption resulted from the crisis of the political economy beginning in the latter half of 1960's. The election system returns representatives of the people to the Lok Sabha (House of the People in the Union) as well as to State Legislative Assemblies (House of the People in the State) every five years. This system has been the pillar of the Indian democratic regime. In a sense, elections form the essence of Indian democracy.

Elections are conducted at various levels of the federal structure in India. There is the nation-wide Election for Lok Sabha (House of the People) that consists of 545 members. Of these, 543 are elected directly by the people from constituencies on the basis of the single-member electorate system (or so-called first-pass-the-post system), and the President from the Anglo-lndian community selects the remaining two members. At the State level, there is an election for the State Legislative Assembly. Members of this body are also elected directly by the people of the constituencies in the same manner as that of the Lok Sabha.' At present there are in total about 4000 Members in the Legislative Assemblies.

One level of election is related to other level of election. As a whole, this constitutes a network of election politics in contemporary India, and is the basic framework of India's democratic regime. Any research related to the politics of India necessitates study of the electoral process in one way or another.

Major parties in Lok Sabha elections till 2004:

Year	No. of Seats	Turn-out (%)	Congress		Communist Party of India		Communist Party of India (Marxist)		Jana Sangh / Bharatiya Janata Party (= BJP)		Janata Party		Janata Dal	
			Votes polled (%)	Seats obtained	Votes polled (%)	Seats obtained	Votes polled (%)	Seats obtained	Votes polled (%)	Seats obtained	Votes polled (%)	Seats obtained	Votes polled (%)	Seats obtained
1952	489	45.7	45.0	364	3.3	16			3.1	3	-	-	-	-
1957	493	47.7	47.8	371	8.9	27			5.9	4	-	-	-	-
1962	494	55.3	44.7	361	9.9	29			6.4	14	-	-	-	-
1967	520	61.2	40.8	283	5.0	23	4.4	19	9.4	35	-	-	-	-
1971	518	55.3	43.7	352	4.7	23	5.1	25	7.4	22	-	-	-	-
1977	542	60.5	34.5	154	2.8	7	4.3	22			41.3	295	-	-
1980	542	56.9	42.7	353	2.6	11	6.1	36			18.9	31	-	-
1984	542	63.6	49.1	405	2.7	6	5.7	22	7.7	2	6.9	10	-	-
1989	543	62.0	39.5	197	2.6	12	6.6	33	11.4	86	-	-	17.8	142
1991	543	55.2	36.5	232	2.5	14	6.2	35	20.1	120	-	-	11.9	56
1996	543	57.9	28.8	140	2.0	12	6.1	32	20.3	161	-	-	8.1	46
1998	543	62.0	25.8	141	1.8	9	5.2	32	25.6	182	-	-	3.2	6
1999	543	60.0	28.3	114	1.5	4	5.4	33	23.8	182	-			
2004	543	58.1	26.5	145	1.4	10	5.7	43	22.2	138	-	-	-	-

Elections of both Lok Sabha and State Assemblies were conducted simultaneously and regularly till the 1967 elections. Both levels of elections are considered to be pacesetters. Not only in electoral politics but also in India's overall political process. Politics during the Nehru era was, basically, stable, in spite of the occasional failure and turmoil, such as in the border war with China in 1962. The relatively stable politics until Nehru's death seems to be one of the main reasons why the election studies were not so flourishing in this period in comparison to the period after the 1967, though studies of these elections were conducted on every major election.

The strength of the "Congress system" until mid-1960s could be explained by the capacity of the organization of the Congress party networking the dominant social groups through, for example, factions, and linking them with the party structure. The "Congress system" was considered to be, in a sense, an effective channel for mobilizing popular support in the election, and also putting popular demand on a higher political level, like the State Legislative Assembly or Lok Sabha. With the electoral performance of the Congress party being stable, the "Congress system" could be understood as the very essence of Indian political system.

The stability of the Congress-centric one party dominant system" was shaken in the 1967 general election, when the Congress Party for the first time suffered a major setback both in the center and in many states. Destabilization of the "Congress System" was at its highest in the declaration of a national emergency in 1975. This lasted until 1977 when Congress, led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, lost the Lok Sabha election for the first time at the center. The period between the 1967 Lok Sabha election and that of 1977 was a period of increasing turbulence and fundamental transformation of Indian politics in accordance with deep-rooted socio-economic changes in Indian society. Hitherto downtrodden people, like SCs, STs, and so-called "Other Backward Classes" began to assert themselves in a more dignified manner within the context of a weakening tie of feudalistic social relations and social modernization.

With increasing social conflict and political turmoil, this period of transformation was also a period of decline in the ruling party's ability to govern, whether in Congress or elsewhere. Within the above process, the Congress System finally disappeared, and an era of frequent changes in the ruling parties, development of a multi-party system, and formation of a coalition government at the center emerged at the end of the 1980's.

Questions to be answered by participants.

(Make sure you back up your answers with analysis along with the sources.)

1. What issues, according to you, will be key to success for the political parties? (E.g., Anti-incumbency, division of Andhra Pradesh, corruption charges against ministers etc.)

2. What, according to you, will be the national level scenario after the results of the elections? (You may divide the nation into several regions according to geography, politically or otherwise. Gather the individual results to predict the national level scenario.)

3. What will be the impact of the communist parties in India at the national level, according to you? What will be the impact of the newly made Aam Aadami party?

4. How important will be the participation of regional parties in the formation of national level government? Why do you think they will support the central government (In both scenarios, before and after the elections)?

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