

# Review of: "Indian National Congress's Hits and Misses in General Elections 2024"

Joydeep Bhattacharyya

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

## Why I liked the article

Praveen Rai's "Indian National Congress's Hits and Misses in General Elections 2024" is worth reading chiefly because of its precise diagnosis of the reasons behind the decline of the Indian National Congress over the post-independence decades and the critically informed projection of the necessary course corrections for the future of the party after the 2024 Lok Sabha election. The party's unquestionable political hegemony in Indian politics for around four decades has eroded in a manner that was not visible to many when it happened. As a result, the moment the disease surfaces through the skin, its entire body seems to have cascaded down to the ground, to the shock of many. The 2024 Lok Sabha election has brought jubilation, but it remains to be seen whether this jubilation can be called a revival or a fluke. The article has admirably intervened in this two-fold political course of history of the Congress party to understand its future in the perspective of its past and present.

Praveen Rai has captured the reasons for the downfall of the grand old party, which M. K. Gandhi wanted to see disbanded after independence despite its pivotal role in the freedom struggle, in a meticulous manner with academic integrity. The use of data to corroborate the arguments is praiseworthy. The author has justly refrained from using tons of data in such a lucidly written article and instead used only the relevant ones. The article enriches itself from its in-depth analysis aided by lucid articulation.

The article has done justice to its clearly stated objectives, which are to make a post-mortem of the Congress's result in the 2024 Lok Sabha election and analyze various organizational capitals and deficiencies, potentials, and challenges that the party has faced and is going to encounter in the days to come. The challenges have been correctly pointed out, such as "dynasticism, factionalism, leadership succession, and defunct conciliation mechanisms," while the potentials are also laid out as the "sublimity of the dynast's personal qualities and inherited family legacies." The suggestions, in the conclusion, are insightful and grounded in political reality. The party needs to continue its electoral revival in the forthcoming elections by performing the necessary course corrections. Otherwise, the so-called revival may turn into a temporary electoral gimmick.

## Recommendations

All said, there seem to be some scopes for improvement that the review likes to recommend.

## Recommendation 1

In the first paragraph under “Introduction,” the NDA campaign for “Viksit Bharat @ 2047” [Developed India in 2047] can also be mentioned while the author writes, “It was a referendum on the Modi government, which propagated the primacy of Hindus and cultural nationalism ...”.

## Recommendation 2

In the second paragraph under the section headed “Political Party System and Electoral Performance in 2024,” some further factors behind Congress’s 2024 success can be added – first, the unprecedented consolidation of the Muslim vote against the Narendra Modi-led BJP across the country (Muslim voters; Muslim Voting); second, the unprecedented role of social media, sometimes even “scaremongering” issues, to effectively influence public opinion. To some extent, BJP’s much-hyped media cell seems to have been outperformed this time by the Congress’s media cell. Influencers such as Dhruv Rathee have played a major role through their videos watched by millions, though often challenged by the BJP for their partisan biases (Dhruv Rathee; Lok Sabha 2024; Lok Sabha elections). Simultaneously, Congress should also remember that social media may not always work in elections as it has happened with the BJP this time.

## Recommendation 3

...

Another recommendation would be to avoid using media-coined jargon in academic discourse. For example, in sentences such as “The disaggregation of Congress seats reveals that it won 62 seats out of 215 seats in direct contest with the saffron party.” (para 7), the term “saffron party”, which relates to a sign culturally held sacred to a large group of people irrespective of its use in party politics, should be avoided. Instead, the actual name of the party, i.e., BJP, or even “Hindutvavadi party”, which is the declared ideological base of BJP, can be used.

## References

“Are Muslim voters the real game changers of 2024 Lok Sabha elections?”, *India Today*, June 7, 2024. <https://www.indiatoday.in/diu/story/lok-sabha-election-result-2024-parliament-muslim-voters-game-changers-2550475-2024-06-07>

“Did Dhruv Rathee sway BJP’s election results?”, *The Times of India*, June 18, 2024. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/voices/did-dhruv-rathee-sway-bjps-election-results/>

“Lok Sabha elections 2024: How social media emerged as a key battlefield for BJP vs Congress”, *The Times of India*, June 14, 2024. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/lok-sabha-elections-2024-how-social-media-emerged-as-key-battlefield-for-bjp-vs-congress/articleshow/111002045.cms>

“Lok Sabha 2024: The influencers driving India's big election”, *BBC*, May 5, 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-68920953>

“Muslim Voting Pattern and 2024 Lok Sabha Elections: Decoding the divergent behaviour”, *Organiser*, June 24, 2024. <https://organiser.org/2024/06/24/244216/bharat/muslim-voting-pattern-and-2024-lok-sabha-elections-decoding-the-divergent-behaviour/>