

Hindutva, The new face of the Indian capitalist class

Shehzad Arshad, Red Flag 29, July 2019 Mon, 22/07/2019 - 08:51

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The Hindutva chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party, BJP, under the leadership of Narendra Modi, has won the elections to India's lower house, Lok Sabha.

In these elections, 900 million people had the right to vote and of these, 67 percent chose to exercise it. This is the largest voter turnout in Indian history. The BJP and its allies in the National Democratic Alliance won 353 seats, 303 of these going to the BJP alone, which puts the party in a position to form the government without forming any coalition.

This is only the second time in history since 1971 that a party has been able to form a second consecutive government in Delhi without having to form a coalition. The Congress party won only 52 seats while the alliance it led managed to secure 92 seats in total. On the other hand, the election commission acted as Modi's right hand, ignoring the hate speech that he engaged in. Meanwhile, a number of opposition parties allege that the elections were rigged.

Cases against members of Lok Sabha

Nearly 50 percent of the recently elected Members of Parliament face numerous criminal cases, including accusations of rape and murder. One parliamentarian from the Congress party faces as many as 204 criminal cases, including murder and robbery. At least 232 of the 543 parliamentarians face criminal cases. Of the 52 recently elected Congress lawmakers, 29 face criminal cases. As many as 116 of the 303 BJP members have criminal cases registered against them. One BJP parliamentarian even faces a terrorism case.

Victory of the capitalist class

The Indian stock market witnessed a surge after reports of Modi's second victory started pouring in. On Thursday, when it was confirmed that Modi was about to become the prime minister of India once again, a historical increase was seen in the stock market. The joy of the capitalist class on Modi's electoral win shows they are convinced that his victory will accelerate the speed at which policies in their favour will be implemented and that further attacks will be launched against labour laws.

India is projected to leave China behind in population numbers by 2024. By then, it will have cities with the largest populations in the world and is expected to be the fifth largest economy. The trade wars and subsequent geopolitics in such times are seen by the capitalist class as an avenue for opportunities for their class interests.

Corporate elections

These elections are by far the most expensive in the history of India. A sum of \$7 billion has been spent, which is more than the amount spent on the 2016 elections in the United States (\$6.5 billion). A large chunk of the capital invested in this year's Indian elections was black money. As much as 92 percent of the fund given to parties by the corporate sector went to the BJP alone while 91 percent of the BJP's accumulated fund came from the corporate sector. This enabled the BJP to spend millions in advertising on social media. The Congress party, on the other hand, could not spend as much. All of this shows exactly where the Modi establishment gains its support. Instead of Congress, the BJP is now the true representative party of the bourgeoisie.

Modi's neoliberalism

The number of billionaires in India has increased drastically ever since neoliberal policies were introduced in the country in the beginning of the 1990s. Since then, the wealth of these billionaires has continued to multiply. All the policies of the Modi establishment have been aimed at pleasing this class. This has led to an accelerated sharpening of the divide between India's rich and poor; 80 per cent of the population has a daily per capita income of just \$3. Modi promised to create 200 million jobs every year but unemployment is currently at its highest in the past three decades. In the past five years, the wealth of Ambani and various other big capitalists has continued to multiply as the government arranged big projects they could profit from.

Meanwhile, anti-people policies such as banknote demonetisation were also taken up to please banks and financial institutions. Every citizen was forced to open a bank account by the abrupt withdrawal of 86 percent of all currency notes. The purpose was to multiply the existing capital in banks. As a result, a number of people lost their lives by standing in queue under the scorching sun. Besides this, a new GST system was introduced, which adversely impacted the small businesses and benefited the big capitalists by maximising their profits.

Attacks on the workers' movement

Neoliberal policies accelerated during Modi's five-year tenure and trade unions faced severe attacks. The legal protection for permanent employment was ended. Even before this, a large number of people were deprived of this protection and they were working on extremely low wages. Besides this, the minimum wage was not increased in line with the rising rate of inflation and the eight-hour day was also abolished.

In response to all these attacks launched by the Modi regime against the workers, protests took place on a large scale across the country. At the beginning of this year, the Indian working class staged the world's largest protest with 200 million workers going on strike. Similarly, towards the end of last year, the peasant organisation Mukti Morcha, which is politically close to the Communist Party, marched in Delhi and received support from a large number of youth, women's and workers' organisations.

Enmity with Pakistan

In the current situation, Modi has based his campaign on Hindu nationalism and enmity with Pakistan. By doing so, he has presented a picture of himself as the guardian of India in the face of the threat of the enemy. During the election campaign, a number of BJP leaders, including Modi, the BJP party president Amit Shah and various former ministers, were seen taking credit for the air attacks in Pakistan's northern Balakot region. Full advantage was taken of the suicide attack on paramilitary forces in Kashmir's Pulwama region. War hysteria was stoked up by Modi's post-Pulwama statement that "We will enter their homes and kill them?". Modi gave the Indian public the message that the country's sovereignty is in safe hands in his party's government. After the attack in Balakot, Modi's popularity ratings rose at an

unprecedented rate.

Hindutva

Narendra Modi is a hard-core Hindu nationalist leader and he unabashedly promotes the ideology of Hindutva. He also took a dip in the sacred waters of the Ganges at Sangam on the occasion of the Kumbh Mela, which is something that perhaps no prime minister has done before. In the last week, he also meditated in a holy cave. Meanwhile, Pragya Singh Thakur, who won Bhopal on BJP's ticket, said that Nathuram Godse, the Hindu nationalist who assassinated Gandhi in 1948, was a patriot. Godse has always had an important status in Hindutva ideology and a number of BJP leaders have previously hailed him. Pragya Singh's statement about Godse received applause from Anant Kumar Hegde, a senior minister in the government, and Lok Sabha member Nalin Kumar Kateel.

Similarly, Modi's role in the Gujarat riots is no secret. During his regime, attacks against Muslims and other minorities rose and they find themselves unsafe in the rapidly changing times. It is clear that Modi does not shy away from expressing his extremist Hindutva ideology, that is, Hindu chauvinism as opposed to Hinduism as a religion, and that he has made hatred the foundation stone of his politics. Hindutva ideology pins the blame for poverty and unemployment, which are in reality caused by economic crises, exploitation and corruption, on Muslims and Dalits so that, instead of fighting against the capitalist system, the people are divided along religious lines and extremism can rise. This situation has led to the demise of Indian secularism and fascist tendencies are gaining currency. If the economic crisis worsens, the possibility of a fascist regime in India cannot be ruled out. The BJP already has semi-fascist characteristics, which pose a major danger to Indian society.

Media's support

Another major reason for Modi's victory is the fact that almost all the big media houses backed him. Where the BJP faced any kind of difficulties, the government used all manner of undemocratic methods to remove media freedoms. Some of the renowned journalists, who would criticise the regime, were killed. In this way, an atmosphere of fear was created in which, instead of raising questions about the government's performance, Modi was hailed by the media as the only one who can protect India and make it a superpower.

Dynastic politics

The Congress, under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi, suffered a massive defeat in this year's elections. While its electoral support has risen as compared to the previous few years, its performance in the election shows that the Indian public has rejected the idea of dynastic politics. Since Independence from the British Raj, the Congress governed for the longest period with a brief exception where some alliances came into power. Yet it was unable to give the masses the good living standard which was promised under Nehruvian socialism. Instead, its rule turned into a large-scale improvement in the increased dominance of just one family. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the foundation for neoliberal policies was laid by the Congress in the 1990s. It is those policies that Modi has today implemented with further force. The Indian people are, therefore, aware of the fact that the Congress cannot ameliorate their living standards. At the same time, the party has lost its status as the traditional representative of the bourgeois class.

Failure of the Left Front

In this scenario, the Left Front, the CPI-led alliance that ruled West Bengal for decades, failed to offer an alternative political and economic programme. Instead, it became the sidekick of the Congress party. Their

stance is that Indian secularism is under threat due to the rising popularity of the BJP. However, they ignore the fact that the Congress' record with secularism has also not been stellar. In fact, it has worsened and, on top of that, it is the Congress that introduced neoliberalism in India. The Left Front's stance did not dent the BJP's support base in any way. On the contrary, the BJP popularity scores kept rising.

The Indian left, which was the third most popular force in the 2005 elections, today stands limited to five seats in total. Of these, at least three seats were won through the alliance made with the Dravidian Progressive Conference, DMK, in Tamil Nadu. Bengal, where the communists remained in power for a long time, has now shifted towards the BJP. This is due to the communists' support for capitalist ventures, attempts to seize peasants' lands, and corruption. In fact, one of the BJP's successful candidates is a former state MP of the Left Front.

In the last elections, the Left Front won 29.9 percent of the votes. This year, it has managed to secure only 7.1 percent. On the other hand, the BJP, with only 17 percent last time, secured 40.3 percent this time. The main reason for this is that the communist parties failed to defend their social base against the attacks of the Trinamool Congress party in the past five years. As a result, the BJP was able to present itself as the alternative. Similarly, in Kerala, the communists lost despite the CPIM being in power.

A working class party

The defeat of the radical student leader, Kanhaiya Kumar, and other comparatively radical figures shows that change cannot come about through reformist parties and programmes. The young leaders who stand against the BJP's neoliberal and fascist tendencies will have to break away from reformism and agitate on revolutionary grounds. They need to organise in the workers' movement on the basis of a revolutionary programme while, at the same time, proposing united fronts on specific issues with forces such as the Left Front, the trades unions and various social movements to maximise the impact of workers' struggles. Such a movement must be completely independent of the Congress or any other bourgeois parties.

Revolutionary forces should also take up the defence of the interests of the peasants and the rural poor. In this way, the struggle against the Modi regime can be turned into a struggle against the capitalist system.

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