

THE 1984 LOK SABHA ELECTIONS: Verdict for India's Federal Unity

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Main Aspects

The landslide four-fifth majority victory of the Congress (I) under Rajiv Gandhi's new stewardship in the 8th General Elections can be attributed to the following reasons.

a) Unity and Stability

Before and during the election campaign, which lacked focus on any single issue, it appeared as though the poll would be a non-issue election. The Congress (I) poll managers even expressed their worry over the indifference and reluctance of the electorate and expected a low turnout of votes as more likely. (1) Judging by the voter turnout in the poll and the Congress (I) share of it, these assumptions were disproved. Obviously the poll managers of all the parties including the Congress (I) had no inkling of the massive impact which Mrs. Gandhi's assassination had on the electorate.

As this intangible factor articulated itself politically, it can be surmised that people saw her assassination as a dramatic substantiation of the repeated warning given by Mrs. Gandhi that the nation's unity and integrity were in serious jeopardy. It would, thus, seem in retrospect that this subliminal factor provided the primary motivation for the electorate to assert themselves to defend the country's integrity and stability not only by turning out in large numbers but also by voting into power the Congress (I) which had taken up this as the main theme of its election campaign. This explains the highest ever turnout of the electorate and also the highest ever majority of the Congress (I).

In a manner of speaking, this was the last election of Mrs. Gandhi won by her posthumously. With Mrs. Gandhi alive, most observers felt that the party would definitely have secured a much lower majority. But with Mrs. Gandhi assassinated, her son and political heir, Rajiv Gandhi, successfully impressed himself on the electorate as the best guarantee for the future unity and stability of the country.

b) Centralizing versus Federal Forces

The re-emergence of a "dominant party system" despite doubts to the contrary before the poll was predominantly motivated by the above mentioned national issue. Rajiv Gandhi's party was returned with an overwhelming mandate far larger than Jawaharlal Nehru had ever secured. The disunited opposition parties with their leaders being too well known for their continuous quarrelling and their psychological inability to adjust to each other were almost wiped out. The voters clearly opted for a strong party at the centre and rejected the idea of a coalition government which would, at best, only function on a minimal consensus between the rival party leaders.

Simultaneously with this unambiguous verdict a contrary phenomenon appears to be emerging in the Indian polity. This is the emergence of the Telugu Desam Party as the single largest opposition in the Parliament. This party is entirely a regional party which posed no threat whatever to national unity, but at the same time had acquired strong grass-root support among the people in Andhra Pradesh. Thus, one can see this phenomenon as a message that as long as a regional party did not have a secessionist motivation, it would not be suspect among the electorate. This implies that as the national political system is emerging in the coming years, the emphasis would be on a federal structure. This had tended to get eroded by far too great an emphasis on a mechanistic view of a "strong centre" for which Mrs. Gandhi had stood. In other words, the poll taken in its entirety can be seen as a re-assertion of the pluralistic character of the Indian polity.

c) Continuity and Change

An issue which definitely co-determined the election outcome is the fact that the new Prime Minister personifies a change in generation. For the first time, a representative of the post-independence generation has taken over political power. Rajiv Gandhi's family background combined with his so far clean image projected him as the most able person to initiate an evolutionary change from within the system without breaking with the nation's traditions and upsetting the development process introduced by his grandfather and mother. While the Congress (I) cashed in votes on this issue, the old guard of opposition leaders did not realize its importance.

Besides these three substantive issues, other factors also contributed to the election outcome. To name only one, the electoral system in India is a copy of the British

model, namely a simple majority system. Thus, distortions between votes polled and seats won are inbuilt and generally favour the strongest party. Illustrations will be given below.

As detailed post-election investigations are yet to come, this analysis will concentrate on the three major issues and outline their impact on the future development of India's political system.

Election Results

By analyzing the seat distribution, one can discern the characteristic features of the 8th Lok Sabha Elections. If the share of seats is contrasted with the share in votes of all the parties in the various regions and states, the election outcome appears to be strongly distorted in favour of Congress (I) due to the Indian electoral system. Against this background, weakness and strength of the opposition parties have to be re-assessed.

a) Seat Distribution

In terms of seats won, the Congress (I) swept the polls (the first three rounds were held on December 24, 27 and 28, 1984) and drastically reduced the entire opposition. Out of the 542 seats in the Lok Sabha, 508 seats were contested in December. Of these, Congress (I) won 401 seats (one seat was unopposed). In Tamil Nadu, the Congress (I) ally, i.e. AIADMK, secured 12 seats. In Kerala, its partners in the Congress (I) led United Democratic Front(2) won four seats. In a fourth round, elections were held in five constituencies on January 28, 1985, because they had been countermanded. Of the five contested seats, Congress (I) won two, the remaining three seats were secured by regional opposition parties (Telugu Desam: 2; DMK: 1).

Taken all rounds of polling together, out of 513 contested seats Congress (I) secured 403 seats and its allies another 16 seats. So far as the opposition parties are concerned, none secured the minimal strength of 55 seats required for the status of an officially recognized opposition party. This is borne out by table 1a and 1b.

Another outstanding feature of the 1984 elections is that the parties which had a national spread and had a tradition of having contested the successive elections since 1952 secured the lowest number of seats ever in the parliament, this in spite of the fact of the largest ever turnout of the electorate of 61.8% (table 2, line 3). This

is an exception of the known trend that a higher turnout worked in favour of the opposition parties. This is because the opposition parties were in a better position to mobilize the protest vote. A lower turnout always went in favour of the ruling party which had better organisation and access to resources.(3)

The electoral strength of the opposition parties as reflected in the poll has a varying pattern. Thus, in Andhra Pradesh the Telugu Desam won 30 of the 42 constituencies. In West Bengal, however, the CPI (M) which can claim a strong regional support base was returned with its strength reduced compared to the earlier election. Although it emerged as the second largest opposition party, its representation in the Lok Sabha fell from 36 to 22 seats.

Taking all these trends into consideration, the outcome of the 1984 elections can be interpreted as (i) an impressive restoration of the single party system, (ii) a drastic reduction of the national opposition, and (iii) the emergence of a new type of opposition parties which have a strong regional background.

b) Regional Shifts in the Congress (I) Support

Without going in full details,(4) the Indian system of a simple majority functioned in such a way that it submerged the pluralistic range of opposition parties at the benefit of the ruling party. On the other hand, it contributed to a stable government at the centre, because the winning party was always returned to power with a strong majority in terms of seats.

The striking distortions in favour of congress (I) (except in 1977) can be seen from table 2 (lines 5.1. - 5.5.). The latest election outcome aptly illustrates this point. Rajiv Gandhi's party won 403 seats, i.e. 78.6% of all seats with the support of 115.2 million voters which accounted for 49.1% of all valid votes and 30.3% of the whole electorate.(5)

Table 3 presents the state-wise and party-wise voting pattern of the 1984 elections. For the previous elections in 1971, 1977 and 1980, JÜRGENMEYER has given a corresponding break up.(6) Longterm changes in the state-wise party preference can be investigated on the base of these statistics.

In this context it is necessary to examine if and to what extent there have been regional shifts in the electoral support base of the Congress (I) between 1980 and 1984. Table 4 summarizes the relevant data.

Table 1a: Lok Sabha Results in 1977, 1980 and 1984
(in 1984, the first 3 rounds of polling were held on
December 24, 27 and 28).

Parties	1977		1980		1984	
	% of votes	no. of seats	% of votes	no. of seats	% of votes	no. of seats
1. Congress (I)	34.5	152	42.7	353	49.16	401
2. Congress (O)/ Congress (U)	1.7	3	5.3	13	-	-
3. Indian Congress (Socialist)	-	-	-	-	1.46	4
4. Janata Party	41.1	295	18.9	31	6.97	10
5. Janata Party (Secular)	-	-	9.4	41	-	-
6. Lok Dal/DMKP	-	-	-	-	5.96	3
7. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	-	-	-	-	7.66	2
8. CPI	2.8	7	2.6	11	2.62	6
9. CPI (M)	4.3	22	6.2	36	6.04	22
10. Telugu Desam	-	-	-	-	4.10	28
11. Other Parties	9.8	52	8.5	33	8.25	27
12. Independents	5.5	9	6.4	9	8.39	5
13. Total contested seats	-	540	-	527	-	508

SOURCE: Press Information Bureau, Govt. of India, Lok Sabha Elections 1984.

NOTES: 1. Charan Singh re-named his party several times: Bharatiya Lok Dal (part of Janata Party in 1977) to Janata Party (Secular), changed into Lok Dal in 1980, altered into Dalit Mazdoor Kisan Party shortly before the 1984 elections.

2. Among the independents in 1984 is Nar Bahadur Bhandari, ousted Chief Minister in Sikkim.

Table 1b: Results of countermanded constituencies in 1984
(4th round of polling: January 28, 1985)

Party	seat	% of votes	state
Congress (I)	1	47.05	Uttar Pradesh
	1	61.73	Madhya Pradesh
Telugu Desam	2	61.08	Andhra Pradesh
		+ 60.37	
DMK	1	52.20	Tamil Nadu

SOURCE: Hindu, 30.+ 31.1.1985; Newstime (Hyderabad), 30.1.1985.

NOTE: One last round of polling is yet to come in summer 1985 in 2 constituencies (1 in Himachal Pradesh, 1 in Jammu and Kashmir).

Table 2: Break up of the 1st 8 Lok Sabha Elections

	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984
1. Electorate (in mill.)	171.7	193.7	216.4	249.0	274.1	320.9	355.6	379.8
2. Valid votes (in mill.)	105.9	120.5	115.2	145.9	146.6	188.9	197.4	234.6
3. % vote turnout	45.7	47.7	55.4	61.3	55.3	60.5	56.9	61.8
4. Total no. of contested seats	489	494	494	520	519	542	527	513
5. Congress/ Congress (I)								
5.1 no. of seats	357	359	358	279	352	152	353	403
5.2 % of all seats	73.0	72.7	72.5	53.7	67.8	28.0	66.98	78.6
5.3 votes (in mill.)	47.7	57.6	51.5	59.5	64.0	65.2	84.4	115.2
5.4 % of valid votes	45.0	47.8	44.7	40.8	43.7	34.5	42.7	49.1
5.5 % of electorate	27.8	29.7	23.8	23.9	23.3	20.3	23.7	30.3

SOURCE: compiled and calculated from V.B. Singh/Shankar Bose (eds.):

Elections in India. Data Handbook on Lok Sabha Elections 1952-80, New Delhi et al. 1984; Press Information Bureau, Govt. of India, Lok Sabha Elections 1984; Hindu, 30. + 31.1.1985; Newstime (Hyderabad), 30.1.1985.

NOTES: 1. The figures for 1984 include the 5 constituencies which were contested on January 28, 1985.

2. for the 508 seats contested in December 1984, the vote turnout was 63.4%.

The most crucial region in all General Elections has been and continues to be the Hindi belt. In the 1984 elections, its performance was characterized by three features. First, all states of the region displayed a uniform voting pattern. The only other region with the same feature was the West. The Western region comprises just two states without marked political differences and two Union Territories. Therefore, a uniform voting pattern is rather likely to occur. Secondly, the Congress (I) made a clean sweep of almost all seats in the Hindi belt as well as in the West and the North East by winning between 96% and 80% of the respective seats. Thirdly, the Congress (I) remarkably increased its share in seats in the Hindi belt. This was also the case in the North East, although in quantitative terms, it does not have any great relevance. This region has only 10 constituencies. It is noteworthy, however, that in the 1984 elections the Congress (I) won 8 of these constituencies as well as doubled its share of votes there.

With nearly the entire Hindi belt with it, the Congress (I) acquires a strategic stronghold in the domestic politics. The Hindi belt functions as the most important determinant both in terms of deciding the election outcome as well as in influencing the Central Government's policy. If one includes Punjab (13 seats) and Chandigarh (1 seat) in the Hindi belt, this region accounts for 239 out of the total number of 542 seats, i.e. 44.1% of the Lok Sabha strength. Even if Punjab and Chandigarh are excluded in view of their special role in recent domestic politics, the remaining 7 member states still account for 226 seats (= 41.7%). Both in 1977 and 1980, the majority in Punjab and Chandigarh voted in conformity with the rest of the Hindi belt.

Due to the reciprocal impact between Hindi belt and Central Government, this region suffered most under the emergency policy. As a consequence, it uniformly rejected the Congress (I) in 1977 and thereby brought about its electoral defeat. The Congress (I) had won only 2 out of 239 seats. In 1984, the situation was reversed. Except for 8 seats, the Congress (I) secured nearly all seats (96.4%) in the Hindi belt (table 4). In 1980, it had already reconquered 66.4% of the seats with as little as 39.1% of the votes polled.

Factionalism is a notorious feature of Indian party politics, both in the Congress (I) and in the opposition camp. In the latter case, however, it directly effects the election outcome, because a disunited opposition fails to agree on seat adjustments and consequently splits the oppo-

sition votes among several opposition candidates. In 1980, 2,583 candidates contested for the 226 seats in the Hindi belt (excluding Punjab), i.e. 11.4 candidates per seat. In 1984, the number was raised to 3,082 candidates for 225 seats, i.e. 13.7 candidates per seat. This is reflected by the multiplier which measures the distortions between the share in votes and seats (note 5). In 1980, the Congress (I) benefited from a multiplier of 1.7, while the latter rose to 1.8 in 1984. The 1984 All-India multiplier in favour of Congress (I) was 1.6. In other words, in case of a high multiplier, the Congress (I) will win disproportionately more seats in comparison to its votes polled. This was one of the reasons for the Congress (I) sweep in the Hindi belt.

The remaining regions, namely the North, East and South, did not display a uniform performance. In all the cases, the Congress (I) faced regional opposition strongholds. These will be analyzed later in more detail.

Critical Issue Influencing the Poll Outcome

The spectacular victory in terms of seats easily misleads one to attribute it only to the voters' emotional reaction to Mrs. Gandhi's assassination. There is no doubt that this was the one outstanding issue, even though its importance was not discernible to such an extent during the campaign period. Various press reports indicated a mild "Rajiv wave" but not such a massive sweep. If one looks beyond the over-shadowing tragic event, the election outcome can be explained as a combination of a spontaneous reaction and responses to long-term developments in the political system.

In terms of votes polled, the Congress (I) performance of 49.1% exceeded the 1980 result by 6.4% (increase in vote turnout: 4.9%). Yet, it cannot be said to have been such an outstanding performance as is suggested by the increase in the number of seats it won. Thus, compared with the Nehru era, its cumulative votes exceeded Nehru's best performance in 1957 only by 1.3% (see table 2, line 5.4). Except for the already mentioned Hindi belt and North East, the Congress (I) also gained votes in Orissa (1.4%), Kerala (7.0%), Tamil Nadu (8.9%) and - interestingly - in the CPI (M) opposition stronghold West Bengal (11.7%).

These results suggest that the "unity issue" caused a uniform, nation-wide wave. One can argue that the Congress (I) debacle in Andhra Pradesh, where it lost 14.4% of valid

votes, is such an isolated case due to the special circumstances there that it does not contradict this explanation. But why then did the Congress (I) suffer setbacks, though minor ones, in three states, namely Gujarat (loss of 1.6% votes and 1 seat), Maharashtra (loss of 2.2% votes, gain of 4 seats) and Karnataka (loss of 4.7% votes and 3 seats)? Obviously, other factors - partly national, partly local - also influenced the election outcome, though to a lesser degree.

Detailed post-election investigations are yet to come and will make possible more differentiated analysis. Here, only general trends can be indicated, based on opinion polls done during the campaign period. Table 5 illustrates the voters' response to the respective issue.

As has been said before, "unity" figures as the most important issue attracted voters who normally tend to refrain from voting. Interestingly enough, however, "inflation" ranked rather high and also "corruption" caused remarkable concern among the voters. Both issues concern the long-term performance record of the Congress (I) rule. It seems that Rajiv Gandhi attracted those voters with the help of his image as "Mr. Clean" and "Mr. Efficient" (as he was projected by Congress (I) propaganda) and by his assumed ability to reform the political system from within (issue of "continuity and change"). Surprisingly, the issue of "regional autonomy", i.e. strengthening the federal structure, was hardly of any concern among the vast majority, though it did figure as important issue in certain oppositional regions.

If the national ranking of issues is contrasted with their respective response in the three states where Congress (I) suffered slight setbacks, the following picture emerges. In Gujarat, "unity" was only of secondary concern (31%), the most important factor being "inflation" (45%). "Corruption" (15%) corresponded with the All-India ranking, "regional autonomy" had only a negligible impact, while the share of "undecided votes" (8%) exactly reflected the national margin of floating votes.⁽⁷⁾ Thus, a higher response to the "unity issue" might have raised the Congress (I) vote share.

In Maharashtra, the surprising feature was the high rate of "undecided votes" (36%). "Unity" came next with 30%, thus having a strong, but not overwhelming impact. "Inflation" (19%), "corruption" (10%) and "regional autonomy" (5%) were of minor importance. Congress (I) regained the votes (and seats) of supporters of the former Congress (I) opponent Y.B. Chavan who had died in the meantime.⁽⁸⁾ The

Table 4: Congress (I): Regional Voting Pattern 1980 and 1984

	1980	1984
HINDI BELT		
1. total seats contested	226	225
2. Congress (I)		
2.1. no. of seats won	150	217
2.2. % of seats won	66.4	96.4
2.3. of votes polled	39.1	53.3
NORTH		
3. total seats contested	6	5
4. Congress (I)		
4.1. no. of seats	1	2
4.2. % of seats	16.7	40.0
4.3. % of votes	18.7	31.3
WEST		
5. total seats contested	77	77
6. Congress (I)		
6.1. no. of seats	65	69
6.2. % of seats	84.4	89.6
6.3. % of votes	53.3.	51.7
EAST		
7. total seats contested	64	64
8. Congress (I)		
8.1. no. of seats	24	36
8.2. % of seats	37.5	56.2
8.3. % of votes	40.9	50.4
NORTH EAST		
9. total seats contested	9	10
10. Congress (I)		
10.1 no. of seats	4	8
10.2 % of seats	44.4	80.0
10.3 % of votes	22.8	47.3
SOUTH		
11. total seats contested	130	130
12. Congress (I)		
12.1 no. of seats	94	69
12.2 % of seats	72.3	53.1
12.3 % of votes	53.3	42.0
ISLANDS		
13. total seats contested	2	2
14. Congress (I)		
14.1 no. of seats	1	2
14.2 % of seats	50.0	100.0
14.3 % of votes	44.2	53.1

SOURCE: as table 2.

NOTES: 1. All figures for 1984 include the results of the 5 constituencies contested on January 28, 1985.

2. Assam and Punjab are excluded in both years.

3. One seat each in the Hindi Belt and in the North will have elections in summer 1985.

4. In 1980, polling for one seat in the North East (Meghalaya) did not take place.

5. In 1984, one seat in the North East (Mizoram) went unopposed to Congress (I).

6. FBL = All India Forward Block (The Left Front in Bengal comprised CPI (M), CPI, RSP, and FBL).

Table 5: Important issues in the 1984 Elections (in %)

	Sex		Age groups				Location		Religion		
	Men	Women	30	40	50	+	Urban	Rural	Hindu	Muslim	
All age groups			21	31	41	50					
Unity	42	45	37	42	41	45	39	48	40	42	44
Inflation	27	24	33	30	27	25	28	24	28	28	25
Corruption	17	19	13	15	18	15	16	16	16	16	15
Regional Autonomy	4	5	3	5	5	4	3	4	5	4	5
None/Do not know	10	7	14	8	9	11	14	8	11	10	11
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

SOURCE: Pranoy Roy, An Analysis of the 1984 Lok Sabha elections, In: Arun Shourie et al.: The Assassination and After, New Delhi 1985, p. 110.

controversial Congress (I) rebel A.R. Antulay did not succeed in splitting the Congress (I), as he had thought he would. Infighting in the Congress (I), might have resulted in the relatively high undecided share of the voters, but further studies are necessary to investigate this point.

In Karnataka, the remarkable feature seems to be that voters clearly distinguished between National and State Assembly Election and issues of respective concern. The marked response to "unity" (62%) and the insignificant one to "regional autonomy" (2%) with a share of "undecided votes" of 15% substantiates this. In the 1980 National Elections, Congress (I) won with 56.3 %, but lost the State Assembly Elections in 1983 with only 40.3%. Its increase of 11.3 % of the votes in 1984 over its 1983 result is entirely due to the voters' worry about the nation's unity.(9) This explains why Karnataka was not effected by the quest for greater regional autonomy in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. This feature is even more remarkable because the Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde not only survived the Congress (I) attempt to topple his Janata State Government with the help of defectors, but also managed to rule the state with a minority government for two years and demonstrated strong support for N.T. Rama Rao when the latter was ousted as Chief Minister in August 1984. One has to wait for the State Assembly Elections in March 1985 to see if this distinction will continue to govern the voters' preferences.

Performance of the Opposition

The national opposition parties were handicapped by two disadvantages. The first one was Mrs. Gandhi's death which robbed the opposition of its main target of attack. To defeat Mrs. Gandhi had, more or less, been the only common ground for any opposition adjustment.

The second disadvantage was a self-inflicted one, namely the failure to overcome rivalry between the non-left opposition leaders. Although the opposition camp, in fact, had reached seat adjustments in more than 200 constituencies and had the second highest Index of Opposition Unity since 1962,(10) the embarrassing spectacle of a long series of fruitless negotiations created an impression of complete disunity.

The efforts of the non-left opposition parties to project themselves as a credible alternative to the Congress (I) turned out to be totally counterproductive. Their pled-

ge to provide a stable government was belied by the structural weakness of their parties. Most of them had not passed through an organic evolution. They rather resembled conglomerations of disgruntled politicians who had joined the opposition camp because they had been denied election tickets from the parties they previously had belonged to.

As a natural consequence, none of these parties had an integrated character. The leadership of the different parties was therefore aware that certain party members would leave their new party again in case they would be denied tickets for the 1984 elections. This difficulty resulted in fruitless wrangling over seat adjustments which was not done in private but publicized. Hence, the electorate refused to vote them into power.

The only opposition parties which survived or even excelled in the poll were those (i) with a strong regional grass-root support and/or (ii) which had recently been under direct attack from Mrs. Gandhi. In the first category falls the CPI (M) which has regional strongholds in West Bengal and Tripura. The second observation is substantiated by the performance of regional opposition forces in Sikkim, Jammu and Kashmir and in Andhra Pradesh.

These three states have one phenomenon in common. In all three cases, the oppositional Chief Ministers were ousted by the Central Government with the help of defectors. The Governors departed from the neutral role they are constitutionally obliged to follow and exercised their power in favour of the Congress (I) backed new Chief Ministers. In these states, the elections resulted in a clear defeat of the Congress (I) and in a rehabilitation of the ousted Chief Ministers.(11)

In all three cases, the voters' verdict was obvious. If the ruling party at the centre misused its powers for interfering in the state's policy, the federal forces had to be strengthened so that they could function as counter-balances in the Indian political system.

Conclusion

The 8th Lok Sabha Elections were undoubtedly given a unique character by the fall-out of Mrs. Gandhi's assassination. This overwhelming factor was effectively projected by Rajiv Gandhi as a symptom of the disintegrative tendencies in the country. The electoral verdict can unmistakably be seen as a response to Rajiv Gandhi's focus on the issue of unity.

If, however, one assesses the poll in the context of the electoral tradition, which, by now, is well established in the Indian political system, another aspect acquires greater importance. It is highlighted by the slogan "continuity and change".

The re-emergence of a "dominant party system" links the 1984 poll with the political situation which prevailed during the Nehru era. At that time, political power was dispersed in such a way that the Congress found itself compelled to function both as a ruling and an opposition party. After the 1984 elections, the Congress (I) seems to be placed in a similar situation.

Yet, the political culture as well as the set-up in which counterbalancing forces operate in the political system have undergone changes in the meantime. In spite of the present almost non-existence of an opposition within the parliamentary frame, the electorate has become conscious of its power to vote a party into government or to dismiss it in case of disappointing performance. The ruling party, howsoever strong its parliamentary representation might be, has to be aware that it was entrusted with the mandate to govern the country only until the next election. Thus, even if no strong opposition is formally returned to the parliament, an opposition movement can, at any time, arise from the electorate. Past experience has shown that, if necessary, a political agent will emerge as a new focal point for oppositional forces.

Coinciding with this, regional opposition centres have asserted themselves by now and have acquired a new role in the dispersal of political power. During the Nehru era, not only the interplay between "government" and "opposition" was operative within the Congress frame, i.e. between different factions of the dominant party, but also the interplay between the advocate of a unifying centre, i.e. the Prime Minister, and the agents of the federal forces, i.e. the Chief Ministers in the various states. Until the mid-sixties, the central government as well as the state governments were recruited from members of the dominant party. While Jawaharlal Nehru tried to establish working relations with strong "oppositional" personalities or factions and with strong Chief Ministers, Mrs. Gandhi favoured a different strategy in a different political set-up. During her rule, the Congress neither enjoyed undisputable political supremacy nor functioned as the sole gate-way to political sinecures any more. She reacted to this new situation in a two-fold way. To consolidate her position in the party, she started eliminating strong personalities who might

turn into potential rivals, and to ensure her party's dominance, she disturbed the sensitive balance between the central and the federal forces and distorted them in favour of the central government. As a consequence, political opposition to her rule and the call for re-enforcing the federal character of the Indian polity merged in the quest for greater regional autonomy and found advocates in regional opposition leaders.

Thus, even though the Congress (I) was returned as the dominant party to the 8th Lok Sabha, it has to operate now in a political context which is characterized by more diversified opposition forces. The overwhelming mandate for Rajiv Gandhi implies that he is expected to introduce a more consensus oriented decision-making process as far as controversial issues in national politics and in his own party are concerned. A first step in this direction was the manner in which he piloted the anti-defection bill in February 1985. Acknowledging the immense impact of the bill on the operation of the entire political system, he consulted the opposition and accommodated it to see that the bill was unanimously passed in parliament.

SUMMARY

The 8th Lok Sabha Elections at the end of 1984 have to be assessed in connection with Mrs. Gandhi's assassination. Disintegrative tendencies were projected by Radjiv Gandhi and led to the issue of unity which was favourably taken by the electorate who confirmed Congress (I) with 401 out of 508 contested seats as against 353 of 527 contested seats in 1980.

The re-emergence of a dominant party system in a way links the 1984 elections with the political situation during the Nehru era, when Congress had to function both as a ruling and an opposition party. But now a new element has entered the political culture: the electorate has become conscious of its power and will vote according to the performance of the party.

Regional opposition centres have acquired a new role in the distribution of political power. Mrs. Gandhi had suppressed political rivals and had distorted the sensitive balance between central and federal forces to the disadvantage of the latter. Consequently the call for re-enforcing the federal character of the Indian government system merged in the quest for greater regional autonomy, advocated by regional opposition leaders. Congress (I), as the

dominant party in the 8th Lok Sabha, has to operate in a context characterized by more diversified opposition forces. Rajiv Gandhi is expected to act in a more consensus directed way taking into consideration both oppositional and regional issues.

Notes

- (1) See e.g. G.K. Reddy, Cong (I) worried over voter apathy, In: Hindu, 6.12.1984.
- (2) The main constituent parties of the United Democratic Front are the Congress (I), the re-united Kerala Congress and the re-united Muslim League.
- (3) See Frontline (Madras), Vol 1. No. 3., 29.12.1984-11.1.1985, p. 16.
- (4) Jürgenmeyer, Clemens: Die 7. Parlamentswahlen in Indien. In: Internationales Asienforum. Part I: vol. 12 (1981), 1, pp. 5-44; Part II: vol. 12 (1981), 2/3, pp. 117-141; here: Part I, pp. 16-23.
- (5) Due to multi-cornered contests, i.e. more than two candidates compete for one seat. E.P.W. Da Costa, In: Times of India, 13.12.84, calculated the following multipliers working in favour of the Congress Party: 1952: 1.65; 1957: 1.58; 1962: 1.63; 1967: 1.33; 1971: 1.56; 1977: 1.22 (in favour of Janata); 1980: 1.57. The multiplier is calculated as such: per cent of votes divided by per cent of seats.
- (6) Jürgenmeyer, Clemens, op. cit., Part I, Tables IV + V, pp. 28-31. (7) Roy, Pranoy, Analysis of the 1984 Lok Sabha Election. In: Arun Shourie et al.: The Assassination and After, New Delhi 1985, pp. 99-125; here see p. 115.
- (8) Roy, Pranoy: op. cit., p. 120.
- (9) Roy, Pranoy: op. cit., p. 117.
- (10) The Index of Opposition Unity (IOU) is calculated for any particular constituency as follows:

$$\text{IOU} = \frac{\text{votes of largest opposition party}}{\text{votes of all opposition parties (incl. independents)}} \times 100$$

On this base, Roy, op. cit., p. 102 and 111-112, calculated the All-India IOU: 1962: 67; 1967: 67; 1971: 71; 1977: 90; 1980: 65; 1984: 7. (11) In Sikkim, where he was dismissed in early May 1984, Nar Bahadur Bhandari contested as an independent and won the sole seat with an overwhelming majority of 72.44% of the

votes polled. In Jammu and Kashmir, Farooq Abdullah was replaced by his brother-in-law Gulam Mohammed Shah on July 2, 1984 after Farooq's sister had initiated a party split. The elections re-established Farooq Abdullah's faction of the National Conference as the dominant regional party. The National conference (Farooq) won 3 of the contested 5 seats with 43.99% of the votes polled. In Andhra Pradesh, the Congress (I) paid a high price for the ousting of the Chief Minister with its most spectacular election debacle. N.T. Rama Rao was dismissed on August 16, 1984, but his successor Bhaskara Rao failed to prove his majority after a month-long futile attempt to encourage further defections. On September 16, N.T. Rama Rao finally had to be re-installed as Chief Minister. The electorate returned his Telugu Desam Party with a majority of 44.82% of the votes and a mandate of 30 out of the 42 seats.

State	Contested Seats	Seats Won	Percentage of Seats Won	Percentage of Votes Polled
Andhra Pradesh	42	30	71.43	44.82
Assam	10	5	50.00	35.12
Bihar	10	5	50.00	35.12
Goa	2	2	100.00	55.12
Gujarat	10	5	50.00	35.12
Haryana	10	5	50.00	35.12
Karnataka	10	5	50.00	35.12
Kerala	10	5	50.00	35.12
Madhya Pradesh	10	5	50.00	35.12
Madras	10	5	50.00	35.12
Mizoram	2	2	100.00	55.12
Nagaland	2	2	100.00	55.12
Nagaland	2	2	100.00	55.12
Orissa	10	5	50.00	35.12
Punjab	10	5	50.00	35.12
Rajasthan	10	5	50.00	35.12
Tamil Nadu	10	5	50.00	35.12
Uttar Pradesh	10	5	50.00	35.12
West Bengal	10	5	50.00	35.12
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	2	2	100.00	55.12
Chandernagore	1	1	100.00	55.12
Daman and Diu	2	2	100.00	55.12
Lakshadweep	1	1	100.00	55.12

NOTES: 1. The table includes 1984 Lok Sabha Elections. 2. Congress (I) - Jagjivan Ram's Congress Party. 3. INC - Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (Farooq Abdullah faction). 4. INC - Poonacha and Workers Party. 5. BSP - Revolutionary Socialist Party. 6. JBL - All India Forward Block. 7. JSP and GBL were merged into the JBL. 8. The Independent in Bihar was Mr. Dhanraj Shekhari. 9. ICA - Kerala Congress (Joseph group). 10. ML - Muslim League.

Table 3: State-wise Break up of the Lok Sabha Elections 1984

Regions/States	Congress (I)		Janata		B J P		C P I		C P I (M)		Lok Dal/DMKP		Congress (S)		Regional Parties/ Independents (=Ind.)		
	Total no. of seats	seats	%votes	seats	%votes	seats	%votes	seats	%votes	seats	%votes	seats	%votes	seats	%votes	seats	%votes
HINDI BELT																	
1. Bihar	54	48	52.06	1	6.74	0	6.75	2	8.08	0	1.06	1	13.58	0	0.66	Bihar	
2. Haryana	10	10	54.95	0	1.44	0	5.45	0	0.88	0	0	0	19.10	0	0	Congress (J):	
3. Himachal Pradesh	4	3	67.60	0	4.49	0	21.84	0	1.22	0	0	0	1.37	0	0	1s / 1.17%	
4. Madhya Pradesh	40	40	57.08	0	2.74	0	29.99	0	0.88	0	0	0	1.08	0	0.03	Ind.: 1s / 9.09%	
5. Rajasthan	25	25	52.72	0	3.77	0	23.68	0	0.33	0	0.18	0	11.24	0	0.06		
6. Uttar Pradesh	85	83	51.06	0	3.61	0	6.41	0	1.64	0	0.05	2	21.66	0	0		
7. Delhi	7	7	68.71	0	3.33	0	18.85	0	0	0	0	0	5.21	0	0		
8. Chandigarh	1	1	66.02	0	23.56	0	5.60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
NORTH																	
9. Jammu + Kashmir	6	2	31.33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.12	0	0	JKN: 3s / 43.99%	
WEST																	
10. Gujarat	26	24	53.24	1	16.59	1	18.64	0	0.10	0	0.07	0	2.31	0	0	Maharashtra:	
11. Maharashtra	48	43	51.12	1	7.62	0	10.05	0	0.95	0	1.45	0	0.36	2	11.21	PWP: 1s / 2.12%	
12. Dadra and Nagar Haveli	1	0	40.39	0	3.56	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Ind.: 1s / 14.25%	
13. Goa, Daman, Diu	2	2	46.21	0	3.05	0	3.04	0	1.52	0	0.44		1.31	0	0	Dadra:	
EAST																	
14. Orissa	21	20	57.51	1	32.01	0	1.18	0	1.49	0	1.81		1.03	0	0	Ind.: 1s / 56.05%	
15. West Bengal	42	16	48.16	0	0.02	0	0.40	3	3.76	18	35.92		0.01	0	0.05	West Bengal:	
16. Sikkim	1	0	25.81	0	0.73	0	0	0	1.02	0	0	0	0	0	0	RSP: 3s / 4.62%	
NORTH EAST																	
17. Arunachal Pradesh	2	2	43.32	0	4.21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	FBL: 2s / 4.13%	
18. Manipur	2	2	34.94	0	0	0	6.96	0	9.46	0	0	0	0.84	0	0	Sikkim:	
19. Meghalaya	2	2	62.42	0	0	0	0	0	3.69	0	0	0	0	0	0	Ind.: 1s / 72.44%	
20. Mizoram	2	2					unopposed										
21. Nagaland	2	2	64.64	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
22. Tripura	2	0	45.61	0	0	0	0.77	0	0	2	50.47	0	0	0	0		
SOUTH																	
23. Andhra Pradesh	42	6	41.81	1	1.21	1	2.22	1	1.85	1	1.78	0	0	1	1.03	Andhra:	
24. Karnataka	28	24	51.62	4	35.09	0	4.68	0	1.01	0	0.10	0	0.49	0	0	Telugu D: 30s /	
25. Kerala	20	13	33.27	1	2.13	0	1.75	0	5.38	1	24.27	0	1.71	1	4.38	44.82%; Ind: 1s /	
26. Tamil Nadu	39	25	40.53	0	4.22	0	0.07	0	3.42	0	2.85	0	0	0	0	5.25%	
27. Pondicherry	1	1	58.86	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.66	Kerala:	
ISLANDS																	
28. Andaman + Nicobar	1	1	52.85	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12.46	0	31.34	0	0	KCJ: 2s / 5.49%	
29. Lakshadweep	1	1	54.47	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	MUL: 2s / 5.29%	

SOURCE: as table 2.

NOTES: 1. The table includes the results of the 5 constituencies in which polling was held in January 1985.

2. Congress (J) = Jagjivan Ram's Congress Party.

3. JKN = Jammu and Kashmir National conference (Farooq Abdullah faction).

4. PWP = Peasants and Workers Party.

5. RSP = Revolutionary Socialist Party.

6. FBL = All India Forward Block. (RSP and FBL were in alliance with the CPI (M)).

7. The independent in Sikkim was Nar Bahadur Bhandari, the ousted Chief Minister.

8. KCJ = Kerala Congress (Joseph group).

9. MUL = Muslim League.