

COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)

Central Committee

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Electoral Tactics of CPI(M)

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Context of the 17th General Elections

The BJP has been controlling the Central government after being elected with a majority of its own in the 16th general elections held in 2014. The 17th Lok Sabha elections will be held after the completion of one full term by this BJP government led by Narendra Modi. The policies pursued by the Modi government in economic, political, social and foreign policy spheres sharply demonstrate how harmful the continuation of the BJP government would be for people's livelihood and for the unity and integrity of our country.

Under this Modi government, the RSS has been systematically entrenching itself in the State apparatus and sharpening communal polarization all over the country. The RSS consolidation over State power enables it to further its fascistic Hindutva agenda.

The Modi government has unleashed a vicious four-pronged attack on the Indian people and our country's unity and integrity. It aggressively pursued neo-liberal economic policies; viciously sharpened communal polarization marked by a heightened attack on the Dalits and Muslims; systematically undermined various institutions of our parliamentary democracy and the education system displaying high levels of authoritarianism; and it has reduced India to the status of a subordinate strategic ally of US imperialism.

The Modi government has aggressively pursued pro-rich, pro-imperialist, neo-liberal economic policies that have weakened our economic sovereignty and imposed unprecedented burdens on the vast majority of our people. This Modi government has betrayed its popular mandate and has privatized public sector assets handing them over to Indian and foreign big business. In this process, it has cemented the 'two India' divide and exponentially widened economic and income inequalities – the rich becoming richer and poor becoming poorer.

Demonetisation of high currency notes destroyed the livelihood of crores of people, rendered those surviving on cash transactions unemployed and virtually ruined the country's informal sector. The manner in which the

GST is being implemented has destroyed the backbone of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) – the largest employment provider after agriculture. All promises made to the people have been betrayed.

Apart from mounting such vicious attacks on people's livelihood, this Modi government has indulged in the worst form of crony capitalism. The alarming rise in loan defaults is crippling our banking and financial systems. The looters of our public monies have been allowed to leave our country and escaped both punishment and repaying of the loans. The favouring of chosen corporates for execution of economic projects has been brazen. The Rafale jet plane deal with France is turning out to be a mega scam and on no instance of corruption and sleaze has the Modi government moved to either check, or, prosecute the culprits. On the contrary, the Modi government seems to be patronizing them.

No section of the Indian society – barring the superrich – has been spared by this economic onslaught. Backbreaking price rise is crippling the livelihood of overwhelming sections of our people. In particular is the unbearable rise in the price of petroleum products that is making the lives of a majority of households in the country miserable. Unemployment is growing and jobless youth are on the streets. Peasants continue to commit distress suicides groaning under debt burden. The peasantry is in the midst of militant struggles in various parts of the country. The working class, likewise, is in struggles against the neo-liberal economic policies and indiscriminate privatization of the public sector and against the living conditions of the workers which is constantly deteriorating. The workers, peasants and agricultural workers are coming together in powerful protest movements.

The assaults on women are mounting. Horrific dehumanization of our society is seen in the horrendously growing incidents of child rapes and murders. The poor are denied their entitlements under the Public Distribution System and subsidized food. Welfare schemes like the MNREGA are being starved of funds, thus, denying the rural unemployed their legal right. Crores of adivasis have yet to receive the legal possessions of their land under the Forest Rights Act.

State patronage to private armies in the name of *gau rakshaks*, or, moral policing have claimed the lives of innocent Dalits, Muslims and religious minorities. Hate campaigns are leading to gruesome incidents of mob lynching. The education system is systematically being communalized. RSS workers are being positioned in all institutions of higher education and research. Hindu mythology is replacing the study of India's syncretic history and Hindu theology is replacing the rich traditions of Indian philosophy.

Federalism and the rights of the elected state governments are under severe assault. Under the Modi government, Centre-State relations have deteriorated sharply. With the implementation of the GST, the financial rights of the states have been negated. The squeeze of the states

resources has intensified as a result of shrinking of opportunities for the states to raise resources to implement the promised they made to their people. This is depriving the elected state governments of implementing their mandate.

There has been no other government since independence which has reduced India to the status of being an appendage to the global strategic concerns of US imperialism as done by this Modi government. India's famed independent and non-aligned foreign policy has been jettisoned. India's relations with all its neighbours have deteriorated.

Since 2014, the RSS-BJP have specifically targeted the CPI(M) and the Left. In West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, the attacks on the CPI(M) cadres have sharply risen. In Tripura, following the recent assembly elections, the RSS-BJP have mounted murderous assaults on CPI(M) cadre, destroyed CPI(M) offices and offices of its mass organisations associated with it. Opposition candidates, particularly the CPI(M) are violently prevented from even filing their nominations in the local body elections. The RSS-BJP sees the CPI(M) as the main ideological enemy and most consistent and determined in its opposition of the communal forces.

Main Task

In the background of these developments, the main task before the CPI(M) and the Left and democratic forces in the forthcoming 17th Lok Sabha elections and in the Assembly elections that will be held in some states is to defeat the BJP and its allies. Accordingly, the CPI(M) will work to ensure that a secular government is formed following the general elections. Defeating the BJP is essential for ensuring, through the pressure of popular struggles, that India progresses on the basis of the principles laid down in the Indian Constitution and moves further towards strengthening secular democracy, economic sovereignty and self-reliance, federalism and social justice.

Electoral Tactics

The electoral tactics adopted by the Party must dovetail the political line set out in the Political Resolution of the 22nd Congress of the Party. This is as follows:

"(i) Given the experience of the nearly four years rule of the Modi Government it is imperative to defeat the BJP government in order to isolate the Hindutva communal forces and reverse the anti-people economic policies.

(i) Thus, the main task is to defeat the BJP and its allies by rallying all the secular and democratic forces.

(ii) But this has to be done without having a political alliance with the Congress Party.

(iii) However, there can be an understanding with all secular opposition parties including the Congress in parliament on agreed issues. Outside parliament, we should cooperate with all secular opposition forces for a broad mobilization of people against communalism. We should foster joint actions of class and mass organisations, in such a manner that can draw in the masses following the Congress and other bourgeois parties.

(iv) The Party will fight against the neo-liberal policies being pursued by the BJP government at the Centre and by the various state governments including those run by the regional parties. The Party will strive to develop united and sustained actions on the issues of people's livelihood and against the onslaught of the economic policies.

(v) Joint platforms for mass movements and united struggles at all levels must be built up. Resistance to the anti-people policies should be intensified. The united actions of the class and mass organisations must seek to draw in the masses following the bourgeois parties.

(vi) Given the serious challenge posed by the Hindutva forces both inside and outside the government it is essential to build platforms for the widest mobilisation of all secular and democratic forces. The emphasis should be on building unity of people to fight the communal forces at the grassroots. These are not to be seen as political or electoral alliances. Similarly, broad unity to fight against the authoritarian attacks on democratic rights should be forged.

(vii) The Party will give priority to developing and building the independent strength of the Party. It will work to broaden and strengthen Left unity.

(viii) All Left and democratic forces should be brought together on a concrete programme to conduct united struggles and joint movements through which the Left and democratic front can emerge. In states, the various Left and democratic forces should be rallied to form a platform around a concrete programme. At the national level, the Left and democratic alternative should be projected in our political campaigns and to rally all those forces who can find a place in the Left and democratic front.

(ix) Appropriate electoral tactics to maximize the pooling of the anti-BJP votes should be adopted based on the above political line of the Party."

It is based on the above political line that the electoral tactical line for the Lok Sabha election is formulated.

The main task in these elections is to accomplish the following:

- a) To defeat the BJP alliance

- b) To increase the strength of the CPI(M) and the Left in the Lok Sabha; and
- c) To ensure that an alternative secular government is formed at the Centre.

There cannot be an all India alliance to fight the BJP. We have to therefore work out state-wise election tactics based on the overall electoral tactical line. We should rally the secular and democratic forces in the different states so that the widest forces can be mobilised to defeat the BJP and its allies.

We should strive to have an understanding with the non-Congress secular-regional parties who are fighting the BJP alliance.

The Political Resolution has spelt out the grounds on which we are opposed to the economic policies and the basic positions of the Congress. The political line has spelt out specifically what type of understanding is possible with the Congress party such as cooperation in parliament and in the broad anti-communal mobilization.

The Political Resolution has pointed out that our line is not of equidistance between the BJP and the Congress. Hence in states where the main contest will be between the BJP and the Congress, such as **Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh** and others) we should fight just one or two seats and campaign generally for the defeat of the BJP.

In **Tamilnadu** and **Bihar**, where the main forces fighting the BJP alliance is a regional party like the DMK and RJD, we can have an understanding with these parties even if they enter into an understanding with the Congress. In this situation, we should refrain from projecting any state level front or alliance with the Congress.

In **Uttar Pradesh** where the SP-BSP alliance will be likely to be the main force against the BJP, even if we do not get any seat to contest, we should support the SP-BSP alliance and call upon the people to defeat the BJP.

In **Telangana** and **Andhra Pradesh**, where the BJP is not a major force, we cannot have any understanding with the ruling parties – TRS or TDP. We can try for some understanding with certain other smaller parties and fight a limited number of seats.

In **Maharashtra** the main contest would be between the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance and the Congress-NCP. We can have some understanding with the NCP and bring together other left and secular regional parties like the Peasants and Workers Party, Samajwadi Party, Swabhimani Party of Raju Shetty, BSP and others.

In **Odisha**, where the main contest will be between the BJD and the BJP, we should confine ourselves to fighting only one seat and campaigning

generally for the defeat of the BJP. In **Assam** too, the Left parties can unitedly contest a few seats and campaign for the defeat of the BJP.

It is by adopting such electoral tactics in the above states that we can contribute towards maximizing the pooling of anti-BJP votes based on our political line.

In **West Bengal, Kerala** and **Tripura**, where the Left have a strong base, we are fighting against heavy odds in both West Bengal and Tripura.

In West Bengal, we have to fight both the BJP and the TMC. Our aim would be to maximise the pooling of anti-BJP anti-TMC votes.

In **Kerala**, steps to include some of the smaller parties in the LDF must be taken.