

Transformation of backward politics in India. The case of Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

Twenty-five years after the peaks of the reservation debate and of Ayodhya campaign, electoral politics in the state of Uttar Pradesh has undergone profound changes. A historical trend of government instability gave way to three consecutive single majorities, obtained by three different parties. A long phase of explicitly caste and religion-based electoral politics has given way to inclusive political discourses and electoral strategies that have produced more diverse assemblies, in terms of caste and communities composition. At the same time, a new political class has emerged, grounded in local business networks and using electoral politics as a form of investment to further a variety of local political and private business interests. As assemblies become more diverse in terms of caste, representation becomes also more homogeneous in socio-economic terms, a trend that is observable in other states as well. The past twenty years or so have seen the emergence in Indian politics of new forms of elitism and a reconfiguration of the old equation tying local domination to the democratic process. This evolution has far reaching implications for our understanding of backward politics.

Speaker Profile

Gilles Verniers is Assistant Professor of Political Sciences at Ashoka University, Director of the Trivedi Centre for Political Data, which he founded with Sudheendra Hangal, and a Research Associate at the Centre de Sciences Humaines, New Delhi. His research focuses on the study of India's political class, matters of political representation, and the intersections between electoral politics and local and state governance in India. He is a regular contributor to the Indian Express' oped pages. He is based in New Delhi since 2005.

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