

# The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

June 2024



*“Let us all work for the Greatness of India.”*

*– The Mother*

Year 15

Issue 3

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# THE RESURGENT INDIA

A Monthly National Review

June 2024



## SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

*Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella*

*Common name: Indian blanket, Blanket flower, Fire-wheels*

Year 15

Issue 3

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## **A Declaration**

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

– The Mother

(Collected works of the Mother, Vol. 13, pp. 124-25)

# THE 2024 INDIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS: A MESSAGE TO THE COUNTRY

The Lok Sabha election results have dealt an unexpected blow to the ruling dispensation, a much-needed reality check about the demographics that the ruling party had taken for granted, and a deeper message to the country and its political ruling class. It is significant that this is the first time, since 1962, that a Prime Minister is elected three times in a row, with Narendra Modi being the only Prime Minister after Jawaharlal Nehru to set this record. However, Prime Minister Modi, for the first time in his political service, will be leading a coalition government. For, while the ruling Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) did emerge as the single largest party, the heavy defeat suffered by the BJP, particularly in the Hindi heartland, is a far cry from the goal of 400 seats that it had set for its National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition. The results also betray the entirely off-the-mark projections made by the Exit Polls, many of which had projected the NDA to comfortably win between 280-300 or more seats. More significantly, the losses suffered by the BJP stand out even more starkly when compared with its own past stellar performance in the last two general elections. The results have, thus, led to immense introspection within the party. To understand the results, it is necessary to look at the performance nationwide as well as in key states where the BJP ended up losing most of its seats.

## DECODING THE NATIONWIDE MANDATE

At the national level, while the ruling BJP emerged as the single largest party with 240 seats, it was well short of the majority mark of 272. NDA received 294 seats, enabling it to

form a coalition government dependent on key allies like Nitish Kumar’s Janta Dal (United) (JD(U)) which won 12 seats, and Chandrababu Naidu’s Telugu Desam Party (TDP) which won 16 seats. In a marked contrast to the last Lok Sabha election, the Opposition’s Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) emerged with a substantial 232 seats, of which the Congress, the largest constituent of the Opposition, received 99 seats.

While the vote share of the NDA had come down from 44.4% in 2019<sup>1</sup> to 42.8% in 2024, that of the INDIA had risen from 33.7% in 2019 to 40.6% in 2024. In terms of vote-shares of the largest individual constituents, while the BJP’s vote share decline slightly from 37.7% in 2019 to 36.6% in 2024, the vote share of the Congress increased from 19.7% in 2019 to 21.2% in 2024.

Further, of the 286 seats where the BJP and the Congress were in direct contest, the BJP beat the Congress in 183 seats.

<b>Election year</b>	<b>Seats in direct contest between BJP and INC</b>	<b>Seats won by BJP</b>	<b>BJP strike rate (%)</b>	<b>Seats won by INC</b>	<b>INC strike rate (%)</b>
2014	370	236	63.8	36	9.7
2019	374	257	68.7	31	8.3
2024	286	183	64	81	28.3

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

<sup>1</sup> Excluding Shiv Sena and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) which were undivided in 2019.



However, it is notable that the strike rate of the Congress – the proportion of seats won out of those contested by the party – has vastly improved over 2014 and 2019 elections in the seats which saw direct contest with the BJP, while the BJP strike rate has gone down a little.

### Region-wise performance:

Regions	NDA (vote share %)		INDIA (vote share %)		Others (vote share %)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
Hindi heartland states	48.9	-2.3	41	11.2	10	-9
Non-Hindi northern states	20.8	2.6	49.5	4.1	29.7	-6.7
Southern states	36.7	7.6	40.4	7.1	22.8	-14.8
Western states	50.4	-14.4	34.5	12.4	15.1	1.9
Eastern states	40.3	0.7	11.6	2.5	48.1	-3.2
Northeastern states	44.1	-1.5	38.9	4.2	17	-2.7

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

From the above data broadly, the NDA saw the most significant losses in the West followed by the Hindi heartland. These include states like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, where the BJP-led coalition ended up losing most seats. The coalition saw a significant 7.6% vote share increase in the southern states and some increase in non-Hindi speaking states in the North, but this was not enough to offset the losses it had suffered elsewhere.

## State-wise breakdown of regional vote and seat shares in key states:

### West:

Party	Goa <sup>2</sup>				Gujarat <sup>3</sup>				Maharashtra <sup>4</sup>			
	Seats won		Vote (%)		Seats won		Vote (%)		Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
NDA	1	0	50.9	-0.5	25	-1	61.8	-0.5	17	-28	43.6	-22.8
INDIA	1	0	39.6	-6.3	1	1	34	1.9	30	29	44	27.6
Others	0	0	9.5	6.8	0	0	4.2	-1.4	1	-1	12.4	-4.8

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

As is evident, the major losses for the NDA in the West came from Maharashtra, where the split factions of Shiv Sena and NCP which had gone with the INDIA had won in many seats

<sup>2</sup> In Goa, INDIA included Congress and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

<sup>3</sup> In Gujarat, INDIA included Congress and AAP.

<sup>4</sup> In Maharashtra, NDA included BJP, Shinde-led Shiv Sena (SHS) and Ajit Pawar's NCP. INDIA included Congress, Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) and Uddhav Thackrey-led Shiv Sena (SHS (UBT)).

where they were in direct contest with their split counterparts. The unpopularity of Ajit Pawar's NCP may have also affected NDA's vote share. The political atmosphere was also vitiated due to the Maratha quota stir, which exacerbated the divide between Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Maratha and worked to the disadvantage of the NDA. Surprisingly, Congress, with 13 seats, emerged as the single largest party in the state, thereby making a significant comeback. The BJP won 9 of the 28 seats it had contested.

### **Demographic breakdown in Maharashtra vote shares (%):**

	Congress (17%)	Congress allies (27%)	BJP (26%)	BJP (17%)	Others (13%)
Rural	16	32	23	13	15
Urban	18	19	30	24	9
Upper caste	18	20	33	25	4
Maratha-Kunbi	14	25	27	19	16
OBCs	11	28	33	17	11
Dalits	19	27	24	11	19
Adivasis	23	32	30	5	10
Men	17	29	26	18	10
Women	17	25	27	16	15
Poor	15	42	17	15	11
Rich	18	22	35	18	7

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

Further, the BJP, after the splintering of Shiv Sena and NCP, lost complete control over the Mumbai-Thane-Nashik urban areas. It also lost clout in rural areas of Vidarbha and Marathawada.

### **Caste/community wise vote share (%) in Gujarat:**

	Congress	BJP
Upper caste	25	71
Patel/Patidar	6	80
Kshatriya	39	58
Other OBCs	23	68
Dalit	46	54
Adivasi	41	49
Muslim	59	29
Others	9	80

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

In Gujarat, the BJP's dominance continues unbroken. Its core vote base remains upper caste, Patidars and other OBCs. Despite much political controversy, the party managed to retain substantial Kshatriya vote share too. Amongst the Dalits and Adivasis, the vote share was split between Congress and BJP. The 'Modi factor' played an important role, with nearly 27% of the voters averring that had Modi not been the PM candidate, they would have voted differently.

## Non-Hindi North:

Party	Jammu and Kashmir				Ladakh			
	Seats won		Vote (%)		Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
INDIA	2	-1	42.2	5	0	0	27.6	10.8
NDA	2	0	24.4	-22.5	0	-1	23.6	-10.3
Others	1	1	33.4	17.5	1	1	48.8	-0.5

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

J&K results saw a deadlock between NDA and the Opposition, with BJP and NC winning two seats each. Interestingly, two former Chief Ministers – Mehbooba Mufti from PDP and Omar Abdullah from NC – lost from Baramulla and Anantnag-Rajouri. While Mr. Abdullah lost to AIP-backed independent candidate Engineer Rashid who has been in jail on charges of separatism, Ms. Mufti lost to NC’s Mian Altaf Larvi. BJP won both its seats from Hindu-majority Jammu region, but with much reduced margins and vote share compared to 2019. In Srinagar, NC defeated the PDP. All BJP-backed candidates lost in Kashmir valley.

In Ladakh, BJP slipped to the third position, as an independent candidate, Mr. Haji Hanifa Jan, won. He was supported by a section of people from Congress and NC and could therefore defeat the INDIA candidate by winning over 65,000 votes. While the INDIA candidate secured 37,397 votes, BJP came third with 31,956 votes. Over the past two years, Ladakh has seen consistent protests and discontent against the central government, with agitations for key demands like grant

of statehood and inclusion of Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule in order to protect its land and jobs from ‘outsiders.’

Party	<b>Punjab</b>			
	Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
INC	7	-1	26.3	-13.8
NDA	0	-2	18.6	8.8
AAP	3	2	26	18.6
SAD	1	-1	13.4	-14
Others	2	2	15.5	0.5

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

While Punjab voted heavily against the BJP, the results revealed a return of communal polarization with the victory of two separatist Sikh candidates, Amritpal Singh and Sarabjeet Singh Khalsa. While one is in jail, the other is the son of former Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi’s assassin.

### **East:**

Party	<b>Odisha</b>			
	Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
INDIA	1	0	13.2	-1.5
NDA	20	12	45.5	7.1
BJD	0	-12	37.5	-5.3
Others	0	0	3.8	-0.3

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

Party	<b>Sikkim</b>			
	Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
NDA	0	0	4.9	0.2
INDIA	0	0	0.6	-0.5
SKM	1	0	42.7	-4.8
SDF	0	0	20	-23.9
Others	0	0	31.8	29

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

Party	<b>West Bengal</b>			
	Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
AITC	29	7	45.8	2.5
INDIA <sup>5</sup>	1	-1	11	4.2
NDA	12	-6	38.7	-1.7
Others	0	0	4.4	-5.1

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

In West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee's All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) made big improvements compared to 2019 elections. It not only swept the southern parts of the state, but also made inroads into BJP strongholds of Jangalmahal and north Bengal. In north Bengal, the BJP won 6 out of 8 seats, including 2 in Jangalmahal and in regions bordering Bangladesh where Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) resonated with the people.

<sup>5</sup> INDIA in West Bengal consisted of INC and Left parties. INC gained one seat, while Left parties got zero seats. The vote-shares were INC (4.7%); CPI (0.2%); CPI-M (5.7%); AIFB (0.2%); RSP (0.2%).

## Hindi Heartland:

Party	Bihar <sup>6</sup>			Chhattisgarh <sup>7</sup>			Delhi <sup>8</sup>		
	Seats won		Vote (%)	Seats won		Vote (%)	Seats won		Vote (%)
	2024	2019	2024	2024	2019	2024	2024	2019	2024
	(+/-)	(+/-)	(+/-)	(+/-)	(+/-)	(+/-)	(+/-)	(+/-)	(+/-)
NDA	30	-9	47.3	10	1	52.7	7	0	54.4
INDIA	9	8	39.2	1	-1	41.3	0	0	43
Others	1	1	13.5	0	0	6	0	0	2.6
			-1.1	0		-1.7	0		-0.2

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

<sup>6</sup> In Bihar, NDA had many constituents. BJP received 12 seats with 20.4% vote; JD (U) received 12 seats with 18.6% vote; LJP (RV) received 5 seats with 6.5% vote; HAMS received 1 seat with 1.1% vote; RLM received 0 seats with 0.6% vote.

INDIA also had many parties. INC received 3 seats with 9.3% vote; RJD received 4 seats with 22.4% vote; CPI-ML-L received 2 seats with 3% vote; VSIP received 0 seats with 2.8% vote; CPI-M received 0 seats with 0.8% vote; CPI received 0 seats with 1.3% vote.

<sup>7</sup> In Delhi, INDIA consisted of AAP and INC. Both received 0 seats. The vote share of INC was 18.9%, while that of AAP was 24.1%.



## Caste/community wise vote share (%) in Bihar:

	NDA	NDA: Change from 2019 (+/-)	INDIA	INDIA: Change from 2019 (+/-)
Upper caste	53	-15	10	2
Koeri+ Kurmi	67	-12	19	9
Yadav	26	8	73	9
Other OBCs	54	-21	14	<1
Dusadh/Pasi	65	-19	35	28
Other SCs	58	-18	42	38
Muslims	12	6	87	7

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

In Bihar, while NDA broadly retained its core vote bases, it lost votes across all communities and only made some gains among Muslims and Yadavs. INDIA, on the other hand, made significant gains among the Dalits, including Pasis, while retaining its core Muslim-Yadav vote bank.

## Caste/community wise vote share (%) in Delhi:

	Congress	AAP	BJP
Upper caste	14	12	71
OBCs	19	20	58
Dalits	20	28	49
Muslims	34	49	14
Poor class	21	24	52
Middle class	16	32	50
Upper class	20	19	59

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

In Delhi, the combined vote share of Congress and AAP (the INDI Alliance) increased a little compared to 2019. Despite that, its combined vote share was 11 percentage points lower than that of the BJP. The BJP received support across all castes and classes. The arrest of Mr. Kejriwal and the sympathy wave that the Opposition hoped to create around it backfired spectacularly.

Party	Himachal Pradesh				Haryana				Jharkhand <sup>8</sup>				
	Seats won		Vote (%)		Seats won		Vote (%)		Seats won		Vote (%)		
	2024	2019	2024	2019	2024	2019	2024	2019	2024	2019	2024	2019	
	(+/-)		(+/-)		(+/-)		(+/-)		(+/-)		(+/-)		(+/-)
NDA	4	0	56.4	-12.7	5	-5	46.1	-12	9	-3	47.2	-13.2	
INDIA	0	0	41.7	14.2	5	5	47.8	18.9	5	3	39-6	9.5	
Others	0	0	1.9	-1.5	0	0	6.1	-7	0	0	13.2	3.7	

<sup>8</sup> In Jharkhand, NDA consisted of BJP and AJSUP. BJP received 8 seats with 44.5% vote share, while AJSUP received 1 seat with 2.7% vote share.

INDIA consisted of INC, JMM, CPI-ML-L and RJD. INC received 2 seats with 19.2% vote, JMM received 3 seats with 14.7% vote, CPI-ML-L received 0 seats with 2.3% vote and RJD received 0 seats with 2.9% vote.

## Caste/community wise vote share (%) in Haryana compared to 2019:

	INC	BJP
Jat	64 (+31)	27 (-23)
Upper castes	30 (+12)	66 (-8)
OBCs	51 (+29)	44 (-29)
SCs	68 (+40)	24 (-34)

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

In Haryana, the BJP lost vote shares among all castes. Some of the main issues that adversely affected the ruling BJP in Haryana were anti-incumbency, farmer discontent, misconceptions around the Agniveer scheme, unemployment, inflation etc. The Congress successfully penetrated the non-Jat base of BJP, making inroads among baniyas, upper castes, and OBCs. Even the SC vote, which used to be traditionally split between BJP and BSP, moved heavily towards the Congress.

Party	Madhya Pradesh				Rajasthan				Uttarakhand			
	Seats won		Vote (%)		Seats won		Vote (%)		Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
NDA	29	1	59.3	1.2	14	-10	49.2	-9.3	5	0	56.9	-4.1
INDIA	0	-1	32.9	-2.1	11	10	45	8.6	0	0	32.7	1.3
Others	0	0	7.7	0.9	0	0	5.7	0.6	0	0	10.4	2.8

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

### Caste/community wise vote share (%) in Rajasthan:

	Congress-led INDIA	BJP	Others
Upper caste	26	65	9
Hindu OBCs	39	59	3
Hindu Dalits	46	37	17
Hindu Adivasis	40	46	14

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

In Rajasthan, Congress performed well in the northern and eastern parts of the state which share borders with UP, Haryana and Punjab and saw active farmers protests as well as discontent against the Agniveer scheme. The BJP managed to retain its strongholds in central, south-eastern and western Rajasthan. While Congress drew greater support among economically and socially marginalized sections, BJP's support came mainly from rich and upper caste voters.

### **Demographic breakdown in vote share (%) in Madhya Pradesh:**

	Congress	BJP	Others
Rural	28	62	9
Urban	41	53	6
Men	31	59	10
Women	34	60	6
Hindu upper caste	20	72	8
Hindu upper OBC	28	63	9
Hindu lower OBC	23	71	6
Hindu Dalits	36	53	11
Hindu Adivasis	24	70	5
Muslims	86	6	8

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

In Madhya Pradesh, the BJP's nationalist narrative, combined with its welfare outreach, played an effective role in helping the party clean sweep the state.

Party	Uttar Pradesh			
	Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
NDA	36	-28	43.7	-9.1
INDA <sup>9</sup>	43	37	43.2	18.8
BSP	0	-10	9.4	-9.9
Others	1	1	3.7	0.2

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

## Caste and community vote share (%) in UP:

	INDIA	NDA	BSP	Others
Upper caste	16	79	1	4
Yadav	82	15	2	2
Kurmi-Koeri	34	61	2	3
Other OBCs	34	59	3	4
Jatav Dalits	25	24	44	7
Non-Jatav Dalits	56	29	15	1
Muslims	92	2	5	1

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

<sup>9</sup> INDIA, in Uttar Pradesh, consisted of INC, SP and AITC. INC received 6 seats with 9.5% vote share. SP received 37 seats with 33.6% vote share. AITC received 0 seats with 0.5% vote share.

Uttar Pradesh (UP) threw up, possibly, the harshest surprise for the BJP. The state delivered heavy defeats to the BJP and prevented the party from reaching the majority mark of 272 seats at the national level. Of the 62 Lok Sabha seats that the BJP had won from the state in 2019, it lost 24 to the Samajwadi Party and 5 to the Congress. The state handed defeat to big BJP leaders like Smriti Irani from Amethi, and Maneka Gandhi from Sultanpur, while delivering a landslide victory to Rahul Gandhi from Rae Bareilly and a victory with much reduced margins to PM Modi from Varanasi. While BSP drew a blank, Dalit leader, Chandrashekhar Azad emerged victorious in Nagina constituency. The most talked about setback in the UP result was the BJP defeat in Muslim-majority Faizabad constituency (which houses Ayodhya) to the Samajwadi Party.

The BJP suffered defeats in western and central UP, with the sharp polarization between Jats and Rajputs in western UP working to the disadvantage of the party. It seems that allying with the RLD – to offset the effects of farmer protests and women wrestlers – has backfired for the BJP in western UP, where the Rajputs and Thakurs felt betrayed by the party's tilt towards the Jats and Gurjars. BJP's Sanjeev Balyan accused the RLD of undercutting the BJP. At the same time, Sangeet Som, a BJP Thakur leader, also clashed with Jat leader, Mr. Balyan. The region saw intense discontent within the BJP's Rajput/Thakur cadre who felt disgruntled by the special treatment being meted out to the late entrants among Jats and Gurjars. Out of 26 seats in the region, the BJP won only 13 seats, down from the 18 seats it had won in 2019, with the biggest upset coming from Muzaffarnagar.

The narrative of the Opposition centered around issues like inflation, unemployment and caste census. Importantly, the Opposition was able to effectively play caste politics and peddled the narrative that if BJP returns to power with a majority, it will change the Constitution and the reservation system assured to lower castes. The BJP could not do much to counter this narrative, except pay lip service to the Constitution. The party did start mobilization around Hindutva and nationalism, but this came too late. Putting BJP on the backfoot, allowed the Opposition to set the agenda first.

The Samajwadi Party was also smart in ticket distribution. Having meticulously cultivated the PDA alliance (pichde, Dalits, Alpsankhyak/backwards and minorities), the party gave tickets to OBC and Dalit candidates, while fielding only five Yadavs, as the SP's Muslim-Yadav base was assured. The special outreach towards Dalits, and OBCs, including Kurmis, Koeris and Nishads helped the party. For BJP, the most damaging performance was the failure to get non-Jatav Dalit votes, which was mainly responsible for the party's defeat in UP.

Another reason for the blow suffered by the BJP in UP was the botched-up ticket distribution. Much to the disgruntlement of the party cadre, many sitting MPs of the party – who had not kept in touch with the ground – were renominated by the party. This led to a defeat of 26 sitting MPs from the BJP. Further, reports that the central BJP leadership had interfered too much with the state, in attempts to sideline the role of Yogi Adityanath, exacerbated internal political tussles within the BJP.



## South:

Party	Andhra Pradesh <sup>10</sup>			
	Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
NDA	21	18	53.5	7.1
INDIA	0	0	3.2	1.8
YSRCP	4	-18	39.5	-9.6
Others	0	0	3.9	0.8

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

## Caste/community wise vote share (%) in Andhra Pradesh:

	TDP+JSP	BJP	YSRCP
Upper caste	27.8	5.6	55.6
Reddy	29.6	5.6	62
Kamma	64	4	32
Kapu	47.2	15.1	28.3
Golla and Kuruma	47.5	3.4	44.1
Goud	57.1	19	23.8
Other BCs	43.3	14.3	35.7
Madiga	52	4	44
Mala	41.5	9.2	47.7
Other SCs	38.5	11.5	46.2
STs	40.7	14.8	25.9
Muslims	32.4	4.2	53.5
Christians	33.3	3.7	55.6
Others	47.1	15.9	25.5

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

<sup>10</sup> In Andhra Pradesh, NDA consisted of BJP, TDP and Pawan Kalyan's JnP. BJP received 3 seats with 11.4% vote; TDP received 16 seats with 37.7% vote; JnP received 2 seats with 4.3% vote.

The primary drivers behind the TDP-JSP-BJP alliance in Andhra Pradesh were the Kapus and the Backward Classes. The alliance won 21 Lok Sabha seats and 164 assembly seats. Jagan Mohan Reddy's YSRCP has been reduced to 11 assembly seats and 4 Lok Sabha seats.

Party	Karnataka <sup>11</sup>			
	Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
NDA	19	-7	51.7	-9.4
INDIA	9	8	45.4	13.5
Others	0	1	2.9	-4.1

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

### **Caste/community wise vote share (%) in Karnataka:**

	Congress	NDA	Others
Upper caste	22	71	7
Vokkaliga	56	44	-
Lingayat	20	76	4
Other OBCs	31	66	3
Dalits	66	33	1
Adivasi	44	56	-
Muslim	92	8	-
Others	41	56	4

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

<sup>11</sup> In Karnataka, NDA consisted of BJP and JD (S). BJP received 17 seats with 46.1% vote. JD (S) received 2 seats with 5.6% vote.

In Karnataka, while Congress' support base came from Vokkaliga, Dalits and Muslims, BJP's garnered widespread support among upper castes, Lingayats, other OBCs and Adivasis. Further, the Congress performed well among women (10 percentage point lead) and older voters, while BJP performed well among men (10 percentage point lead) and younger voters. The gender divide may have been impacted adversely for BJP due to the JD (S)'s Prajwal Revanna rape case.

Party	<b>Kerala</b>			
	Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
LDF	1	1	33.4	-0.6
UDF	18	0	45.1	-0.9
NDA	1	1	19.2	4.4
Others	0	-2	2.3	-2.9

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

Party	<b>Tamil Nadu</b>			
	Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
INDIA	39	3	46.9	-3.3
NDA	0	0	17.4	8.5
AIADMK+	0	-1	23	1.7
Others	0	-2	12.7	-7

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

## Caste/community wise vote share (%) in Tamil Nadu:

	Congress	DMK+	BJP	BJP+	AIADMK
Upper caste	12	26	13	7	27
OBCs	10	28	13	8	15
Dalits	13	29	12	4	19
Muslims	25	47	-	-	29
Christians	12	28	18	3	20

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

The performance of the DMK-led alliance in Tamil Nadu is the first time since 1991 that a Dravidian party has registered back-to-back landslide victories in Lok Sabha elections. Even the Congress, an ally of DMK, won in all the 10 constituencies that it had contested. However, despite not winning a single seat and in a state where politics for more than half a century has been dominated by Dravidian parties, the BJP made impressive inroads in terms of vote share. It is undeniable that the BJP worked hard over the past two years under the leadership of Mr. Annamalai, whose yatra covered every single constituency in the state. However, the party has, yet, to mobilize any particular social group and its vote share remains evenly divided among various groups.

Party	Telangana			
	Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
INDIA	8	5	40.5	10.6
NDA	8	4	35.2	15.3
BRS	0	-9	16.6	-24.7
AIMIM	1	0	3	0.2
Others	0	0	4.8	-1.3

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

### **Caste/community wise vote share (%) in Telangana:**

	Congress	BJP	BRS	AIMIM	Others
Upper caste	29	53	16	-	2
OBC	38	42	17	-	4
SC	45	24	21	-	11
ST	58	29	9	-	4
Muslims	33	4	11	42	11
Others	47	25	23	-	5

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

In Telangana, the BJP and Congress were neck-to-neck, although the overall gain of the Congress was more in terms of vote share. The BRS was badly damaged, losing nearly 25% of the vote share and not getting any seat. In the state, while BJP's core vote base centers around upper castes and OBCs which have shifted to the BJP from the BRS, Congress has made tremendous inroads among SCs and STs, besides getting a third of Muslim votes despite the competition by Owaisi-led AIMIM.

Party	Puducherry			
	Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
NDA	0	0	35.8	4.4
INDIA	1	0	52.8	-3.5
Others	0	0	11.4	-1

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

## North-East:

Party	Arunachal Pradesh				Assam <sup>12</sup>				Manipur			
	Seats won		Vote (%)		Seats won		Vote (%)		Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
NDA	2	0	48.5	-18.1	11	2	46.3	1.6	0	-2	35.4	-23.4
INDIA	0	0	30.4	9.4	3	0	40.9	5.2	2	2	47.6	14.7
Others	0	0	21.1	8.7	0	-2	12.7	-7	0	0	17	8.7

Party	Meghalaya				Nagaland				Tripura			
	Seats won		Vote (%)		Seats won		Vote (%)		Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
NDA	0	-1	24.3	-5.9	0	-1	46.1	-5.1	2	0	70.9	17.7
INDIA	1	0	34.1	-14.2	1	1	52.8	4.7	0	0	23.9	-1.4
Others	1	1	41.7	20.2	0	0	1	.03	0	0	5.2	-16.3

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

<sup>12</sup> In Assam, NDA included three parties. BIP secured 9 seats with 37.4% vote; AGP secured 1 seat with 6.5% vote; UPPL secured 1 seat with 2.4% vote.

Party	Mizoram			
	Seats won		Vote (%)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
MNF	0	-1	28.5	-16.4
NDA	0	0	6.8	1.1
INDIA	0	0	20.1	20.1
Others	1	1	44.6	-4.8

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

## Rural-Urban divide:

Areas	NDA (vote share %)		INDIA (vote share %)		Others (vote share %)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
Urban	49.1	-1.2	35	7.6	15.9	-6.4
Semi-urban	42.1	-1	36.6	10.7	21.2	-9.8
Semi-rural	41.8	2.5	37	8.9	21.2	-11.4
Rural	43.9	-2.2	36.5	8.8	19.6	-6.5

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

In terms of the rural-urban divide, the NDA saw the most substantial losses among the rural voters. It lost vote share in urban areas as well. The INDI Alliance, on the other hand, performed well across both rural as well as urban areas, seeing a significant rise in its vote share. Issues like unemployment and price rise may have caused discontent in rural as well as urban areas. Food inflation may have been a significant issue.



## The SC-ST factor:

	NDA (vote share %)		INDIA (vote share %)		Others (vote share %)	
	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)	2024	2019 (+/-)
SC	42.8	1.8	38	12.4	19.2	-14.2
ST	45.5	-1.3	38.5	7.2	16	-5.9
General	44.8	-0.7	38.6	11.1	16.6	-10.4

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

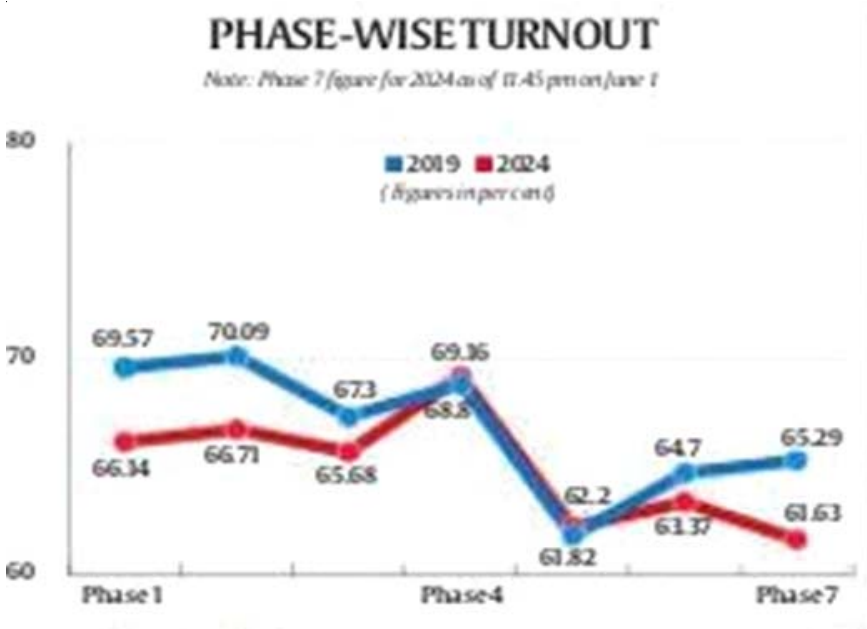
While the NDA barely made any improvement in its vote share among Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and General category, the INDIA made massive gains across all categories, especially SCs.

## Examining BJP's Underperformance

Many reasons have been attributed to BJP's losses in these elections. They range from low voter turnouts to an extremely long-drawn election during a heat wave to botched-up ticket distribution due to internal politicization within the party in key states. Many factors, thus, contributed to BJP's loss, which are examined below as follows:

First, the 2024 general election were the second longest in the history of Independent India, with longest election being the first election held in 1951-52. The election spanned a total of 44 days from after the mid of April to early June over a period of seven phases. Held in the middle of one of the worst episodes of heatwaves the country has witnessed, the duration acted as a great dampener, both for the electorate as

well as the political leaders who were campaigning. This was visible in the extremely low voter turnouts in key states of Hindi heartland, especially Uttar Pradesh.



Source: The Indian Express (2024)

While the BJP’s overconfident promise of crossing 400 seats had made many traditional supporters complacent, those who took this messaging otherwise – such as Dalits and Muslims – thinking that achieving 400 seats would enable it to change the Constitution, came out in large numbers to vote against the ruling coalition. Thus, the core BJP vote-base did not turn out to vote in as large numbers as in 2019 election.

Second, as has been assessed by BJP and RSS insiders, the overconfidence and arrogance of the ruling party played a key role in its decline. The entrapment of the leaders in a social

media bubble compromised their ability to remain in touch with the ground level. The micro-level mobilization of the cadre was also not seen to the same extent as in the past two general elections. Further, not just the common citizens, but even the RSS and BJP workers were increasingly finding it difficult to get in touch with not just Ministers, but even MPs and MLAs. This has, to an extent, created a perception of rising corruption, isolationist attitude and inability to get work done.

Third, the polarization along caste and community lines played a major role in BJP's underperformance.

	Congress: Vote (%) in 2024	Congress: change from 2019 (+/-) (%)	Congress allies: Vote (%) in 2024	Congress allies: change from 2019 (+/-) (%)	BJP: Vote (%) in 2024	BJP: change from 2019 (+/-) (%)	BJP allies: Vote (%) in 2024	BJP allies: change from 2019 (+/-) (%)
Hindu upper caste	14	2	7	1	53	0	7	-1
Hindu upper OBC	20	5	15	6	39	-2	9	-2
Hindu lower OBC	18	3	7	4	49	1	9	-1
Hindu Dalits	19	-1	13	8	31	-3	5	-2
Hindu Adivasis	23	-8	8	2	48	5	3	1
Muslims	38	5	27	15	8	-1	2	1
Christians	25	-14	7	1	14	3	14	9
Sikhs	30	-9	2	1	10	-1	1	-19
Other minorities	19	6	12	5	31	-1	14	10

Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post Poll Survey (2024)

From the voting shares across castes and communities, there has been some fragmentation of the Hindu vote which has worked to the advantage of the Congress and its allies. However, broadly, the BJP has managed to protect its core vote base among upper caste Hindus, OBCs and Adivasis and prevented losing the Dalit vote too much. The state of UP saw a greater fragmentation of BJP's core vote base in favour of the Opposition, thereby affecting the party badly. While Hindu OBCs and Adivasis have solidly stood behind the BJP, there has been a shift of upper castes and Dalits towards the Opposition as well. This shift was more marked among the Dalits, who became highly insecure of reservation being taken away from them through Constitutional changes in case BJP comes back with a huge majority. The Opposition played its Constitution-centric narrative well in this election, especially in states like UP and Rajasthan, which saw greatest fragmentation in BJP votes.

Fourth, one of the biggest factors contributing to the decline of the BJP is the internal politics within the party organization. This was visible in terms of two trends – the increasing role of the high command which verged on arbitrary decision-making and backfired at state level and attempts by the BJP high command to marginalize the role of the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (RSS), the BJP's ideological parent organization.

The case of Uttar Pradesh – which is single handedly responsible for preventing the BJP from reaching majority, is a testament to both these trends. The pre-election decision-making process showed attempts by the high command, led by the central BJP leadership, to marginalize Yogi Adityanath's decisions. Underneath such friction was the attempt to

personally cut Yogi down to size due to his rising popular appeal within UP and beyond. The list of candidates sought to be fielded by Yogi in UP was rejected by the central BJP leadership, including in Faizabad (which houses Ayodhya) in favour of sitting MPs. This was despite the complaints and discontent against many sitting MPs. This move massively backfired, resulting in losses for the BJP and a lot of discontent among the cadre.

Further, Yogi is also seen as being close to the RSS. Not only was he appointed as UP's Chief Minister at the RSS's behest, but also, after the 2024 election debacle, had a long meeting with the RSS chief to take stock. In this election, the central BJP leadership attempted to play smart with the RSS, with many central leaders claiming that the BJP no longer needs the support of the RSS. Such lack of unity has considerably disillusioned the party cadre, created confusion and impaired local-level mobilization.

Finally, this election has brought to the fore the limitations of nationalist Hindu consolidation. The wave of nationalism and Hindutva that was visible during the last two general elections was greatly diluted this time. In key states of the Hindi heartland, this dilution was visible in the division of the Hindu vote-bank, primarily along caste lines, even as Muslim religious polarization continued unabated. The BJP was also slow in realizing this. It realized what was happening after two phases were already over. By the time its campaign picked up momentum around core Hindutva issues, considerable damage had already been done.

Prior to that, the BJP's campaign was focused on the self-aggrandizing agenda of crossing 400 seats with ease and around

issues like *vikas*/development. Much like the ‘India Shining’ campaign of BJP spectacularly backfired in 2004, the present government’s campaign of making India a developed economy by 2047 and of making larger themes like ‘*amrit kaal*’ center around the pitch of material prosperity and welfare also backfired this time.

In the initial pre-election months, the ruling party had rightly come up with the theme focusing on ‘women, youth, farmers and the poor’ as the four main castes. This was done to counter the caste-based divisive mobilization unleashed by the Opposition in the wake of the Bihar caste census. It could have been a very effective instrument to counter the polarizing impact of the Opposition’s campaign, had it been integrated into the larger theme of Hindutva and nationalism, the core ideas behind the BJP’s political existence. However, instead of doing this, the party ended up diluting this theme by linking it to the toothless ‘development’ narrative.

While the Prime Minister linked development to the myriad welfare schemes offered by his party and to statistics which showed the trends in poverty alleviation under the BJP, results on the ground showed the opposite picture that in those constituencies where multidimensional poverty declined due to government programmes, BJP took a hit while Congress doubled its seat tally. Of the constituencies that saw a decline in poverty since 2015-16, the BJP lost 63 seats compared to the 2019 elections (Das, 2024). The recent results show that not only is there no correlation between implementation of successful welfare schemes and political mobilization, but also raise questions about the risk in making such a petty, counterproductive theme a central pitch to mobilize people.

# The Only Way Out

*“When difficulties besiege you, know that the Divine Grace is with you” – The Mother (CWM 14, P. 96).*

The decline of the BJP in these elections has been a big moment of introspection for the party. This was visible in the days and weeks immediately following the results, when despite successfully forming the government at the Centre, the BJP, especially the Prime Minister, had been withdrawn and circumspect. The BJP is rightly taking this victory as a defeat and has gone into introspection. Despite the blow suffered, the demeanour with which the Prime Minister comported himself has been commendable, representing both strength and maturity. From a wider perspective, it is important to see behind this unique victory-cum-defeat the clear hand of Divine Providence. It is only the fortunate few who receive the blows of the Divine and are directed onto the correct path. Such blows are not a sign of defeat, but rather of Divine Grace. It, therefore, calls for utmost respect for the person who has been at the receiving end. In an activity like politics, such an explicit intervention is especially rare to find. It is, perhaps, common to see a world leader going astray, drunk with the illusion of power, but it is rare to find a powerful world leader humbled and yet not finished, shown a path to emerge stronger from adversity. More than anything else, this should be the first takeaway from the present election. This shows how actively the Divine Grace is working to lead the country, beyond inexplicable human factors.

The circumspect victory speech given by the Prime Minister in the aftermath of the election results reflected the psychological churning that may have been taking place. Unlike



the victory speech of 2019, where the Prime Minister focused on the vapid slogan of development and secularism (*sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas*), in the present address, the focus was on working towards fulfilling the commitments made to the nation. It is, perhaps, time that the ruling political class of India attempts to realize that the deeper, spiritual destiny of the country lies in being the ‘*vishwaguru*’ and not ‘*vikasapurush*.’ The two can never be identical. For, *vikas* – utilitarian development defined in terms of the lowest common denominator signifying fulfillment of material necessities and never-ending wants, involving appeasement and glorification of the basest values in society – can never make India a *Vishwaguru*. Such a plank of development is the very antithesis of spiritual self-discovery.

The ruling political class rightly invokes ancient Indian culture and traditions but does not realize that it is not merely the symbolic body, but the true spirit of this culture that needs to be revived. This is the ancient Aryan spirit that Sri Aurobindo had spoken about. Writing about it, Sri Aurobindo had said, “***It is only the Indian who can believe everything, dare everything, sacrifice everything. First, therefore, become Indians. Recover the patrimony of your forefathers. Recover the Aryan thought, the Aryan discipline, the Aryan character, the Aryan life. Recover the Vedanta, the Gita, the Yoga. Recover them not only in intellect or sentiment but in your lives. Live them and you will be great and strong, mighty, invincible and fearless. Neither life nor death will have any terror for you. Difficulty and impossibility will vanish from your vocabularies***” (CWSA 8, PP. 27-28).

This is the real meaning behind India being the Vishwaguru. The idea that India can lead the world by excelling in the imitation of Western model of development has been one of

the most powerfully self-destructive ideas that the present ruling political class of the country, despite all its good intentions, finds difficult to shed. The present election results should, therefore, be seen not as a rejection of the core nationalist-cultural ideology of the BJP – as many commentators have hastened to project – but as a Divine rejection and course correction of the unnatural attempts to marry Hindu spiritual revival to the contrary idea of material selfishness.

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# HIGHLIGHTS

## DEVELOPMENTS IN RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

### ***Ukraine Peace Summit:***

The two-day peace summit, titled the 'Path To Peace', held in Switzerland was an attempt to reinvigorate global public opinion on mobilizing support for Ukraine in the Russia-Ukraine war at a time when the war appears to be deadlocked and there is fizzling international interest in seeking peace. The agenda of the summit was to look at ways to end the war. Ahead of the summit, Ukraine had made multiple attempts to enlist support of various countries in the Global South to attend the summit.

While India's representation was there at the summit at a bureaucratic level, China refused to participate. Turkey, another country which had attended the summit and had offered to mediate between Russia and Ukraine, had criticized the summit for not inviting Russia, arguing that any resolution of war between the two parties necessarily needs to have involvement of both parties. Without such direct involvement, these summits would be meaningless. The same position was taken by China in its refusal to attend the summit, and by Pakistan as well which simply followed China's cue. While India did participate and urged an end to hostility, the country did not sign the joint communique at the end of the summit, citing similar reasons. Interestingly, from the West, the US's attendance was marked by the absence of President Joe Biden, with the Vice President, Kamala Harris being sent instead. Other countries – mainly from the Global South – who attended the summit at

bureaucratic level, but did not sign the final communique included Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates.

The joint communique reflected the summit's focus on three key areas viz. nuclear safety, global food security and humanitarian issues. It was signed by eighty countries and four organizations. The communique stressed that the ongoing war was imperiling the world in all these areas. It also urged for the release of all prisoners of war. Ukraine hailed the summit as a success.

### ***Russia-North Korea Treaty:***

As the Russia-Ukraine war lumbers on with neither side gaining a decisive upper hand, a significant development that threatens to alter the existing status-quo is the formalization of a mutual defence assistance treaty between Russia and North Korea. The pact was signed, recently, on Putin's first visit to North Korea in 24 years. It was a culmination of a series of developments signaling closer cooperation between Moscow and Pyongyang over the past year in view of Russia's international isolation after it launched the attack on Ukraine in 2022, with North Korea supplying additional ammunition to Russia in exchange for technology transfers. Resembling a Cold War-era pact that the former Soviet Union had signed with North Korea in 1961, the significant feature of the present treaty is that it binds both the countries to come to each other's defence, mobilizing their full military resources and 'by all of one's means available', if either country is under attack.

### ***Interpretation***

Despite the signing of this treaty, it is unlikely that North

Korea will intervene directly in the Russia-Ukraine war, as Russia refuses to recognize it as a war and terms it a special military operation. Further, the specific conditions under which this treaty can be invoked have also been left deliberately vague in terms of interpretation – much like how the 1961 treaty was never invoked despite multiple theatres of conflict during the Cold War.

### *Implications*

There are two immediate key implications of this treaty visible:

First, it is a signal to the West, especially to the United States that any aggression against Russia by any allies of the United States will have wider consequences. The treaty is a reminder of many such pacts that were signed prior to the Second World War, hardening geopolitical fault lines and alliances and resulting in a world war. The situation today is beginning to resemble the past, as there is increasingly sharp polarization in US-China and US-Russia relationships, with the former being beyond salvation even through economic means.

Second, the treaty creates discomfort for China which has always treated North Korea precariously and has had a largely transactional relationship with Russia. China already has a similar mutual defense assistance treaty with North Korea signed during the Cold War, also signed in 1961. This means that if North Korea comes to Russia's aid and is attacked by Moscow's enemies, China will have to come to North Korea's aid, thereby leading to a wider war.

It is to be seen how the impact of the latest treaty unfolds, but one thing that is clear is that the world is precariously

close to conflict-like conditions, with no mitigating factors in sight.

## **ISRAEL-HAMAS: FAILURE OF THE PEACE PLAN**

After investing much effort and strategy, the United States had finally come up with a three-phase peace plan, which received some legitimacy after it was stamped with approval from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) which asked, both, Israel and Hamas to accept the peace plan. On its part, the United States maintained that the plan was already agreed to by Israel and that the main obstacle in its implementation was Hamas's refusal to accept the plan. According to the plan, there would be a six-week ceasefire in the first phase. In this phase, Israel would withdraw from densely populated areas of Gaza and allow the release of Hamas prisoners in exchange for 33 Israeli hostages held by Hamas. In the second phase, Israel would be expected to completely withdraw from Gaza, while Hamas would release the remaining Israeli hostages. In the third and the final phase, there would be the reconstruction of Gaza.

On its part, Hamas has not fully accepted the peace plan. Hamas's conditions for a ceasefire include complete Israeli withdrawal from Rafah, total freedom in determining who are the Palestinian prisoners that will be released, and guarantees involving China, Russia and Turkey in any final settlement with Israel. On the Israel's part, expectedly, despite the US's fabrications that Israel has approved the plan, the latter has not publicly backed it. This is not surprising given the superficial and weak nature of the so-called peace plan, which betrays intentions to avoid the root causes of the conflict in the form

of Palestinian terrorism and does not contain any provisions to penalize Hamas for the October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, terrorist attack on Israel. To the contrary, the peace plans appear to bestow unnecessary legitimacy on a terrorist outfit like Hamas, by compelling Israel to negotiate with it. This is reflected in the fact that the plan makes very little strategic concessions or gains for Israel except the release of hostages. Importantly, the Israeli objective of complete annihilation of Hamas cannot be secured through this plan. Further, the plan contains no security guarantees for Israel and does not present any substantive solution to the ongoing conflict.

## **RISE OF RIGHT WING IN EUROPE**

The rise of the right-wing parties in the recently held European Parliamentary elections signals the changing political landscape across Europe. It also reflects the discontent of European people towards the policies of allowing unmitigated migration and minority appeasement that is being practiced under the guise of liberal and moderate ideologies, and whose outcome has already damaged the socio-cultural fabric of Europe irreparably. Mounting attacks by illegal immigrants on native Europeans, the rising instances of migrants rioting on the streets of Europe and the rise in crimes and terrorist attacks have become increasingly visible in Europe, especially in advanced economies like France and Germany. Others like Spain and Sweden have also witnessed rise in disturbances. The fact that the existing justice system allows these crimes by migrant populations – majority of whom are from Middle eastern Muslim countries – to go lightly punished has further aggravated matters. Further, the strain on social security resources precipitated by the rise in immigration and the rise

in unemployment and general economic discontent has further disillusioned the people. Another significant concern centered around nearly 4000 different protests held by farmers' groups across the EU

It is under such a disturbing and polarizing backdrop that the victory of the right-wing parties in the recently held European Parliamentary elections does not seem surprising, particularly in France and Germany. In France, President Macron's centrist faction was humbled by Marine Le Pen's National Rally party, and in Germany, German Chancellor Olaf Scholtz's socialists were humbled by the far-right Alternative for Democracy (AfD). The highest gains came from Italy, where Prime Minister Georgia Meloni's party, Brothers for Italy, won 28% of the national vote for the EU assembly. Despite the gains made by the far-right parties in key countries, the center-right European People's Party remained the biggest bloc in the EU assembly, retaining around 191 out of 720 seats. This was followed by the center-left bloc retaining around 135 seats. Many far-right parties are not part of any consolidated group, but if their votes were counted together, they would make up for around 131 seats. The biggest losses were suffered by the Greens whose seats came down to just 53. In the wake of the results, the French President dissolved the Parliament and called for snap elections. The results will significantly alter the direction of the EU policy on key issues like immigration, climate change, and trade.

## **THE US PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE**

The recently held United States Presidential debate between the Democrat President Biden and the Republican nominee, former President, Trump, has now conclusively tilted the scales



in favour of the Republican Presidential candidate. While Biden tripped on his words, lost his focus, was unable to finish his sentences and repeatedly forgot details of his train of thought, Trump was sharp in his responses as well as attacks. The moderators asked both the Presidential nominees questions on key foreign policy issues like Russia-Ukraine war, China, Iran, Israel-Hamas war, and domestic issues like cross border illegal immigration, abortion, rising childcare expenses, healthcare, climate change, social security service net, policy on tax cuts or increases etc. The responses by the two candidates were, predictably, in line with their recent campaigns in the past few months, but Trump was able to present his arguments and attacks better. He was robustly able to attack Biden on issues such as open borders policy and how it is disadvantageous for Blacks, Hispanics and majority of Americans. He was also effectively able to corner Biden on Israel-Hamas war accusing him of not letting Israel finish the war. He further cornered Biden for his unsuccessful approach to Russia-Ukraine war. A notable issue was the age of both the candidates, especially President Biden, which Biden was not able to allay.

After the debate, there was widespread panic within the Democratic Party, as Mr. Biden's performance was being touted as the worst by any candidate in the history of the American Presidential debate. By the end of the debate, viewers ratings had given a 67% performance score to Trump and a merely 33% performance score to Biden. This was despite the stunning fact that Biden had sequestered himself with his closest aides for a full week in the Camp David Presidential retreat to prepare for the Presidential debate and had a fair idea about the nature of questions that would be fielded. Further, it was Biden's office which had asked for such an early Presidential debate in

June. After Biden's performance, various Democratic Party donors came out in the open to express reservations about Biden's performance.

Reports also indicate that the Democratic Party is seriously debating whether Biden should be replaced by another Presidential nominee through an open convention, if not an endorsement by Biden of his successor. But with barely four months left to go for the Presidential election, the last-minute choice becomes particularly difficult. Furthermore, the Vice-President, Ms. Kamala Harris, is perceived as being highly unpopular with her competence often mocked. In the event of any change of candidate, Biden will have to endorse the person who is next in line, that is, Ms. Harris, who also carries the identity of being a person of colour, an Asian and a woman. Any attempts to skip over her in favour of a white, male candidate (such as, Gavin Newsom) will not go down well with the Democratic vote-bank. Apart from these considerations, Biden himself has refused to back out of the race.

These dilemmas have increased the likelihood of a Republican victory in the November elections. Opinion polls have indicated the tight nature of the Presidential race, with falling approval ratings of Biden and rising approval ratings of Trump, with Trump retaining a thin lead in some important swing states. Trump and Biden are both polling just above 40 percent, with Trump currently holding a slender edge, while the independent candidate Robert F Kennedy Jr. has been polling at about 10 percent.

## **SPIRITUALITY IS INDIA'S ONLY POLITICS**

**“Spirituality is India’s only politics, the fulfilment of the Sanatan Dharma its only Swaraj. I have no doubt we shall have to go through our Parliamentary period in order to get rid of the notion of Western democracy by seeing in practice how helpless it is to make nations blessed.”**

**– Sri Aurobindo  
(CWSA 36: 170)**