

## **Has the Congress Thrown its Hands up?**

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Voting for the first three rounds of the elections covering the 303 Parliamentary seats is over. Besides Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir and some seats of Uttar Pradesh, the first three rounds were restricted to Eastern and Southern parts of India. The electoral battle now enters the Hindi heartland. In other parts of India, such as, North-East, Bengal and Odisha, the contest was between the regional parties and the BJP. The BJP appears to be making significant gains in the East. In the Southern States, Karnataka appears to be going the BJP way. With the regional parties dominating Andhra and Telangana, the Congress in both the States, and the TDP are staring at a washout. Most of the States where elections are to be held in future rounds, it is a direct contest between the Congress and the BJP. The Congress obviously is in no position to effectively take on the regional parties or the BJP. Therefore, the only issue in the future rounds is the width of the margin of victory of the BJP. Will it be a repeat of 2014 in terms of votes or will it be more? The euphoric reaction at the ground suggests a mandate larger than 2014. A 65% to 70% approval rating for an incumbent Prime Minister is unprecedented in India. It is reflecting in the groundswell.

### **The Congress in 2019**

If we look at the run up to the poll and analyse some of the recent developments, an interesting situation develops. Some feature which stare us are enumerated below:

- The Congress claims that it is now contesting in over 424 seats. This figure is likely to increase. Obviously, the Mahagathbandhan at a national level died before it was born.
- Rahul Gandhi, in the last one year, built up a fake narrative on Rafale and loan waiver to business houses, which was contrary to the truth. The fake issues evaporated and now strike no chord in the electorate.
- Having to apologise to the Supreme Court for false public narrative, significantly diminishes the credibility of a political leader. Rahul became a victim of his own falsehood.
- The desperation reached a peak when he, without realising that Arvind Kejriwal was playing games with him, offered him four seats contrary to the advice of the State unit. He displayed the desperation of a loser.
- Instead of sharing the nationalist mood in the country post Balakot, Rahul positioned his party against both the national interest and the national mood. He considered Balakot not a blow to Pakistan sponsored terrorism but to the Congress Party.
- When the Kashmir parties take a position of soft separatism, the Congress has been unable to reveal either its stand or any opposition to it.
- The desperation was at a climax when the Congress and the NCP had to outsource the job of attacking Prime Minister Modi to Raj Thackeray without realising the fallout of such a move in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other North Indian States.
- The Congress Party's Manifesto on national security was completely against the nationalistic mood in the country.
- When Rahul had to seek cover at Wayanad and Priyanka had to skip Varanasi and feel satisfied not to contest because there was no Wayanad available to her.

### **The fatal blow**

The 'New India' is a positive India. It does not accept the negativism of Rahul, Arvind Kejriwal, Mamata Banerjee and TDP. The 'New India' wants to look up rather than be cynical and critical about their own country.

The Congress Party and Rahul Gandhi are 48 years behind the times. 2019 and 1971 are 48 years apart. India's social combination and economic profile has completely changed. The Congress is contesting the 2019 election on the 1971 agenda. It is not in tune with the times. The writing on the wall is loud and clear. Those who lived a life of entitlement all through, give up when office seems to be a distant dream.