**UP: The final showdown**

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As the Uttar Pradesh (UP) elections get close, there is a huge debate in India on how this critical state will shape the political landscape. Pre-election polls and psephologists suggest that the coming state elections in UP may be decisive in putting India on a new trajectory.

However; UP is too large and complicated than what meets the eye. Being the largest state, demographically, UP has many political groups and parties that are wrangling to grab power. For RSS and BJP, UP is crucial because of many reasons; one, it is simply prestigious due to its share in Lok Sabha and as the hub of the Cow Belt; two, Yogi Adityanath, the saffron-clad incumbent Chief Minister, is being projected as a possible heir to Narendra Modi, his return to power will actually decide the future leadership of BJP; three, UP has a very large Muslim vote, almost 20 percent; the current RSS doctrine of ostracising of Muslims in India will be put to the test here, if it succeeds, it will create the desired domino effect in the rest of India, especially the cow belt; four, the Dalit and lower caste vote is very prominent in UP, can the Bahujan and Yadav factor turn against the Modi wave and five, will the farmer factor affect change in the voting pattern of Jatt factor, something that BJP had relied in past elections.

[Veteran actor Rasheed Naz passes away](https://nation.com.pk/17-Jan-2022/veteran-actor-rasheed-naz-passes-away)

As this article was being written, there were reports of BJP ministers and MPs crossing the floor and joining opposition parties, especially Akhilesh Yadav’s Samajwadi Party.

As per Wikipedia, the Yadavs mostly live in Northern India, and particularly in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Traditionally, they were a non-elite pastoral caste. Their traditional occupations changed over time and for many years Yadavs have been primarily involved in cultivation. Other Backward Classes (OBCs) constitute 40 percent of Uttar Pradesh’s population. Yadavs form the single largest group amongst the OBCs, constituting around 40 percent, and forming 15 percent of the state’s population. There are 200-odd OBCs in UP.

Overall demographics of UP suggests four large groups which could influence the current elections, Muslims 20 percent, Dalits 21 percent, OBC (Other Backward Castes) 44 percent and Upper Caste 13 percent (Brahmins 8 percent and Thakurs 5 percent), this makes UP to be a political smorgasbord and a matrix.

[PM Khan to launch Pakistan's first-ever digital city in Haripur](https://nation.com.pk/17-Jan-2022/pm-khan-to-launch-pakistan-s-first-ever-digital-city-in-haripur)

Unfortunately, the Muslim vote has remained divided in Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party, Samajwadi Party and smaller dominions, they have not been able to exploit their demographic strength due to poor leadership. Muslims have also failed to form a strong alliance with Dalits and every time a non-right wing party emerges, they tend to gravitate towards it.

In the last UP as well as Lok Sabha elections, the BJP had worked tirelessly to attract leaders from Dalits and OBC through the Hindutva agenda with Modi’s slogan of Sab ka Saath, Sab ka Vikas (collective effort and inclusive growth), however this appears to be changing rapidly.

In the past week, scores of BJP ministers and MPs have left the Saffron party to join Akhilesh Yadav’s Samajwadi Party; some of the breakaway leaders have boasted that many more will jump the sinking ship of Yogi Adityanath. As reported by Zee News, Swami Prasad Maurya, the ex-BJP minister who quit the party and Yogi Adityanath-led state cabinet to join Akhilesh Yadav’s Samajwadi Party with his other colleagues has stated that he will make sure that the saffron party shrinks back to the 45-seat standing in Uttar Pradesh Assembly.

[Dense fog continues to engulf parts of Punjab](https://nation.com.pk/17-Jan-2022/dense-fog-continues-to-engulf-parts-of-punjab)

While talking to ANI, Maurya said that he introduced the other BJP MLAs, who left the saffron camp ahead of the assembly polls citing neglect towards backward classes as a reason to SP chief Akhilesh Yadav in a high-level meeting and claimed that he will make the BJP lose the mandate it won in the assembly elections the last term.

Swami Prasad Maurya’s resignation gave rise to a mass exodus of ministers and MLA’s in BJP ahead of the assembly polls. So far, 9 BJP leaders have quit the party to join Akhilesh Yadav’s SP. One of the big names quitting BJP is Dara Sigh Chauhan, ex minister of forestry in Yogi’s government. In a talk show with India Today, he described his reasons for leaving BJP. He stated that the OBC and oppressed communities in UP were not accommodated by BJP, farmers and the youth have become hopeless and empty slogans of BJP have not been able to address the issues confronting the masses.

Adding into the political battleground is the Bahujan Samaj Party(BSP) of Mayawati, which claims to represent downtrodden India (OBC, Scheduled castes and tribes). Mayawati has a lot of following among the oppressed communities across India, especially in Uttar Pradesh.

[Pakistan reports 4,340 new COVID-19 cases in 24 hours](https://nation.com.pk/17-Jan-2022/pakistan-reports-4-340-new-covid-19-cases-in-24-hours)

Congress is also trying to come back by launching Priyanka Gandhi and targeting the women vote, how far this gender strategy will succeed is anyone’s guess.

In a nutshell, the upcoming UP elections will be interesting as well as epoch-making. In case the downtrodden and socialist parties and groups like Samajwadi Party, Dalits and Muslims can form a joint front, there are chances of a revolt in Uttar Pradesh; this could not only check the tide of BJP in UP but also set a trend for next Lok Sabha elections in 2024. UP has become the ultimate battleground between the rising Hindutva and the liberal India; it could go either way; however the trends indicate that secular forces in Uttar Pradesh have decided to take on the saffron brigade and BJP may suffer a historic defeat in the largest state of India; let’s hope that people of Uttar Pradesh throw away the yoke of Hindutva and bring back the semblance of a secular polity in India, it’s a long way to go.