

Impact of Campaign Slogans and Political Rhetoric on Muslim Voting Behavior in Western Uttar Pradesh: Evidence from the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections

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ABSTRACT

Western Uttar Pradesh, a region with a significant Muslim population and a history of identity-driven politics, makes a special case for studying how political campaigns shape the electoral choices of Muslims. In the 2024 parliamentary election, the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) came up with strategic campaign slogans and political rhetoric particularly targeting Muslim voters. This paper is an attempt to examine the impact of campaign strategies and political discourses of the BJP and opposition parties (SP & Congress) on the voting behaviour of the Muslims in the selected constituencies of the Western Uttar Pradesh. Through the constituency-level data and content analysis of the campaign and speeches of the leaders of the BJP and INDIA (SP & Congress) alliance, this study explores how the narratives related to communal identity and development intersect with each other and determine the political preferences. The paper argues that in the 2024 Parliamentary election, development and the rhetoric of inclusion of Muslims in mainstream politics, which was propagated by the BJP, had a limited impact on the Muslims' voting choices; rather, communal identity and security, which were emphasised by the Congress and the Samajwadi Party in their campaign, are more deeply rooted in the Muslim community of Western Uttar Pradesh

Keywords: Muslim, Voting behaviour, Identity, Campaign

INTRODUCTION

Muslims constitute around 20 per cent of the total population of Uttar Pradesh, making them a numerically significant community with considerable political influence. A substantial portion of this population is concentrated in Western Uttar Pradesh. In several parliamentary constituencies of Western UP, the Muslim population is higher and it is more than 50 per cent of the total population, giving the community a substantial impact on electoral outcomes and making the region a key focus for political parties seeking to mobilise support or consolidate vote banks. The constituencies such as Meerut, Saharanpur, Kairana, Rampur, Amroha, Muzaffarnagar, Moradabad, Sambhal and Nagina, have a higher concentration of Muslim voters in comparison

to the other constituencies of Western UP. The populations of Muslims in these constituencies are 30–50 per cent or more of the total population, which gives them considerable influence to determine electoral outcomes. For the political parties, the demographic size of Muslims in these constituencies provides an opportunity to carve out broader electoral strategies and community specific outreach programmes.

In a democratic system, the political campaign is one of the most important instruments to reach out to the people. It is used by the political parties and candidates to mobilise their voters, influence electoral choices, and shape their public opinion. Through a combination of political rallies, political party leader's speeches, political and media outreach programmes to certain voters, digital/ social media communication, and with the grassroots

engagement, the political parties used it to communicate their party's agendas and highlight their previous achievements to persuade voters to get their support in their party's favour. The political parties also meticulously plan an effective political campaigning to reach out to the maximum voters. It also helps to the parties to play an important role in framing the political narratives, addressing local and national issues, and consolidating party's support among different groups of the society. The election campaigns are not that simple as it appears; it is an outcome of the large-scale preparations, meticulous planning, resources and a thorough understanding of their targeted voters. With the changing time and advancements of the new technologies have emerged, the nature and sources of election campaigns have also changed and evolved.

The 2024 parliamentary election was significant in many ways, particularly for Uttar Pradesh, due to the political nature of this state. The most important aspect to be noted that, this was the first Lok Sabha election held after the inauguration of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya. This was not just an event but an emotional and religious dream of BJP that came true which also carried a deep political significance to the party. Consequently, BJP was expecting a strong support from the all sections of Hindus, especially in Uttar Pradesh, where the Ram Janambhoomi temple issue had historically influenced the political decisions of the state. The party's campaign brought this achievement to consolidate not only to its traditional upper caste Hindu voters but also other backward caste and schedule castes Hindus. At the same time, on the name of development and welfare programmes/schemes, BJP simultaneously tried to expand itself to the Pasmanda Muslims of Uttar Pradesh. Though this outreach programme did not have much impact on the voting behaviour of the Muslims but nevertheless, it is important to see the evolving nature of BJP's political strategy.

BJP's outreach Programme to Pasamanda Muslims:

In the 2024 parliamentary elections, the way major political parties such as Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), Samajwadi Party (SP) and Congress launched their political campaigns played a significant role in deciding and shaping the political choices of Muslim voters, particularly in Western Uttar Pradesh. Recognising the importance of the Muslim community in the key

constituencies of Western UP, the BJP initiated its campaign with a focused outreach programme targeting Pasmanda Muslims which are the socio-economically marginalised segment within the Muslim population. In this initiative, party workers of BJP were given the responsibility to highlight the various welfare schemes implemented by the BJP government, such as the PM-Kisan, Ujjwala Yojana, Jan Dhan Yojana, and other development initiatives to the Pasmanda Muslims, with the goal of getting their support who have historically been under-represented in mainstream political narratives. This approach reflected a strategic attempt by the party to expand the BJP's electoral base among backward (Pasmanda) Muslims while consolidating broader support among Hindu voters. This was a deliberate move by BJP to illustrate the interplay between welfare politics and identity-based mobilisation in the western region. The outreach campaign of the BJP began with the organising of programmes for the Pasmanda Muslims with *sneh* (affection) and *samman* (respect) by the BJP cadres (Mansoor, 2022). In Western Uttar Pradesh, a Muslim labharthi (beneficiary) meeting was also organised in this series. BJP's campaign targeting Pasmanda Muslims began with the message given by the prime minister, Narendra Modi, in the BJP's national executive meeting held in Hyderabad, where he said our focus should be on *tushtikaran nhi triptikaran* (fulfilment, not appeasement) (Pandey, 2022). The BJP launched a series of campaign programs in western Uttar Pradesh to woo Muslim voters. In this series, a programme called *Ek Desh Ek DNA Sammelan* (One Country, One DNA) was launched from the Muzaffarnagar constituency, which is a communally sensitive region. Besides this, BJP also launched *quami chaupals* in the villages of Western UP (Srivastava, 2024).

According to the report submitted to the Election Commission of India, Rs. 1,737.68 crore was spent by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 2024 parliamentary election, of which Rs. 884.45 crore was allocated to the general propaganda of the party (Report, 2025). A significant feature of BJP's campaign was its unparalleled use of social media platform to reach out to the voters. In constituencies like Meerut, party workers were actively involved in targeting thousands of people daily through social media resources such as WhatsApp and Facebook. This micro-targeting strategy made the BJP's campaign decentralised, where they could highlight welfare schemes and programmes of the party and

directly reach out to voters with their future plans through mobile phones, which was more effective and meaningful than traditional print and electronic media (Yogita Limaye, 2024). Such intensive digital campaigning of the BJP played a crucial role in mobilising their supporters, shaping perceptions of the people, and influencing voters' behaviour, particularly among urban and digitally connected voters (Yogita Limaye, 2024).

During the 2024 parliamentary election campaign, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) faced allegations of giving hate speech and rhetoric targeting Muslims and other minority communities in several of its political campaigns by Human Rights Watch. Even Prime Minister Narendra Modi was accused of using language which was considered discriminatory and creating hostility towards the Muslim community. In addition, the actions taken by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath (UP), such as the demolition of allegedly illegal homes belonging to Muslim residents, were referred to by BJP officials as "bulldozer justice", justifying the act as a measure of governance and law enforcement (HRW, 2024). However, these actions and statements were widely taken up by opposition parties, particularly by Congress and the Samajwadi Party, who blamed the BJP for communal polarisation and inviting tensions between the Hindus and Muslims during the electoral process. The BJP's way of campaigning became a central point of debate in the 2024 elections, particularly in Western Uttar Pradesh, where the Muslim population is significant and politically influential. In the Barabanki campaign, Prime Minister Narendra Modi slammed the INDIA alliance by saying that if these parties came into power, they would harm the Ram temple. This was one of the most controversial statements by Narendra Modi during the 2024 election. He further said, 'When the Congress and Samajwadi were in power, they kept "Ram Lalla" again in the tent, and if they come to power, Ram Lalla will be back in the tent.' He targeted the Samajwadi Party and said, 'Now one of the senior leaders is saying "bekaar" to the Ram Temple on the occasion of Ram Navami.' In the same rally, Modi said, 'Congress and the Samajwadi Party have always advocated for the construction of a school and hospital instead of the Ram Temple on the Janam Bhoomi site' (Bhartiya Janta Party, 2024). A similar kind of remark was made against Congress by Narendra Modi during a campaign rally held in Rajasthan, where he said that if the Congress party would to come into power, it would redistribute the country's resources to

the Muslims, and even the 'party won't leave the *mangalsutras* of the women' (Shah, 2024). This statement made a huge controversy and went against BJP.

There is no doubt that BJP got more electoral advantage for its distinctive campaigning style in earlier elections too, which was adopted with a different approach for rural and urban areas within the state. Modi's persona was glorified through various communication channels, which included contemporary campaigning methods in urban regions and traditional approaches in rural regions. The Information and communication technology, particularly 3-D technology and social media, played a significant role in the contemporary campaigning techniques. It was used more in large urban constituencies such as Meerut, Allahabad, Lucknow, Bareilly, and Bijnor. Traditional campaigning methods included posters, banners, and the distribution of gifts featuring the images of Narendra Modi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L.K. Advani. This type of campaigning was organised in both rural and urban constituencies of Uttar Pradesh. As there are disparities in the socio-economic and demographic profiles of urban and rural populations, the party decided to take different targeted measures in each area to mobilise supporters (Mukerjee, 2015). A similar kind of campaign strategy was adopted in the 2024 Lok Sabha election too, where the campaign was done strategically by targeting the socio-economic profile of the voters in Uttar Pradesh.

Congress and Samajwadi Party campaign strategy:

In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the Congress and Samajwadi Party (SP) decided to form an alliance against the BJP. The strategy behind this move was to consolidate the opposition votes against the BJP. As part of this alliance, the Congress and SP made a seat-sharing arrangement in Uttar Pradesh. They distributed constituencies of UP according to their winning probability to maximise their electoral performance and to avoid splitting of votes of their supporters particularly Muslim's vote. The main objective of this collaboration was to bring an alternative and present a united front against the BJP in politically sensitive and Muslim-populated constituencies of Western Uttar Pradesh, where the Muslim has been always a decisive factor in determining electoral outcomes. The alliance also sought to mobilise backward communities, Dalits, Muslims and other anti-BJP voters by highlighting communal issues, welfare

concerns, and governance failures of the government both in state and center level. The Congress campaign in Uttar Pradesh was regressive and commendable in 2024, where the focus of the party was on its organisational building in around 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh. The major focus of the Congress was to increase its presence at the grassroots level (PTI, 2025).

Historically, the Muslim population of Uttar Pradesh has shown strong support for the Congress party, particularly till the decade of 1980. Over the time, the loyalty and support of the Muslims gradually shifted towards the regional parties of Uttar Pradesh, such as the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP), which promised greater attention to the Muslims concerns and socio-economic issues. The 2024 alliance between the Congress and the SP presented a unique development in this historical evolution, as it brought together two major parties (Congress and SP) that had competed for Muslim votes in the previous elections. For Muslim voters in Uttar Pradesh, this alliance was unprecedented, which offered a united opposition to the BJP and creating the potential for a more consolidated electoral influence in several key constituencies where Muslim voters are in a dominating position. The election campaign of the INDIA (Congress and SP in UP) alliance kept this fact in mind. During the 2024 Lok Sabha election campaign, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi consistently criticised the governance style of the BJP. His major attack on the BJP's government was that the party's policies and administrative approach posed a threat to the Constitution of India. He also emphasized the issues such as the erosion of democratic institutions such as the Election Commission, the Income Tax Department, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the bureaucracy, the Enforcement Directorate (ED), and the media in the BJP's regime. At the same time, Rahul Gandhi and the Congress also alleged the BJP for curtailing minority rights and the centralisation of power, which undermines the constitutional principles of equality, secularism, and constitutional governance. Rahul Gandhi's campaign sought to mobilise opposition voters, particularly Muslims and other marginalised communities, by framing the election as a choice between upholding constitutional values or endorsing Hindutva politics (Congress, 2024). His campaign slogan 'save the constitution' became the center of the Congress's campaign as Rahul Gandhi carried the copy of the constitution and waving it throughout his campaign across the country.

The Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also hinted at religion-based reservation during his campaign speech. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his speech at Hyderabad, clearly mentioned that he would not allow Congress to give the quota reserve for Dalits, Tribals and OBCs to the Muslim community. He targeted Rahul Gandhi and said Congress has always followed the policy of appeasement, but "As long as Modi is alive, I will not let reservations of Dalits, Adivasis, OBC be given to Muslims on the basis of religion" (Report, 2024).

The Bhartiya Janta Party campaign was more on the side of Hindutva, construction of Ram Mandir, and anti-Muslim issues; on the other hand, the Samajwadi Party and Congress alliance raised the real issue of the state – youth unemployment. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav blamed the BJP by saying that '80 per cent of the youth are unemployed in Uttar Pradesh. The youth must think seriously about their future, as one-third of their life has been passed in search of the job'. (Manish, 2024). The Samajwadi Party and Congress did not hype their campaign low like BJP. They did not organise too many rallies or roadshows in the Muslim-populated areas to avoid polarisation of votes. In the first phase of the voting, which happened in the Western UP, the SP and Congress did not conduct a single joint rally. It was all the part of their campaign strategy, as they did not want to take any chance to give the opportunity to the BJP to polarise the votes of Hindus in this region (Srivastava, 2024).

Electoral Outcomes and Voting Behaviour:

The 2024 Lok Sabha election outcome came as a psephological shock to many election analysts, despite pre-election exit polls by all the sources predicting a huge mandate for the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP)-led NDA government. The results were particularly surprising for the BJP, given the recent construction and inauguration of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya, an event that held immense emotional significance for the Hindu electorate and was widely expected to boost the party's support. Contrary to expectations, the BJP lost the Ayodhya parliamentary seat to the Samajwadi Party which was a huge loss to the party. It brought out a complex nature of voters' behaviour which highlighted that emotional and religious factors alone do not guarantee electoral wins. This unexpected outcome raised important questions about the effectiveness of identity-based appeals to the Hindu voters, the impact of welfare and

development narratives, and the influence of opposition alliances on voter's consolidation in politically sensitive regions like Uttar Pradesh (Rai, 2025).

If we see the election outcome, the Western Uttar Pradesh constituencies reflects that the BJP did not perform well in the Muslim-majority areas during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The Western UP constituencies where the Muslim population is more than 30 per cent are Meerut, Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Bijnor, Nagina, Amroha, Moradabad, Kairana, Rampur and Sambhal. In the above constituencies, because Muslims constituted a substantial proportion of the electorate, the BJP struggled to get the Muslims' support despite of their outreach programme to the Pasmanda Muslims. The election result of the selected constituencies of the Western UP clearly showed that Muslim voters consolidated around the INDIA alliance (Samajwadi Party and Congress). This trend reflects the continuing influence of Muslim community identity and historical voting patterns in determining electoral outcomes in this region. The election result also highlights that despite extensive welfare outreach strategy and campaign efforts, the BJP's appeal among Muslim voters in Western UP remained unfruitful and limited. In 2019 Lok Sabha too, out of the 10 above selected constituencies, BJP won only three seats.

The election results of 2024 reflect a significant shift in voters' support. The INDIA alliance (Congress and SP) successfully consolidated the support of the Muslims, Yadavs and some Dalits in Uttar Pradesh, while the BJP-led NDA could manage the traditional voters' support of the upper caste and non-Yadav OBCs. The NDA loss was both in terms of seats as well as vote share compared to the 2019 Lok Sabha election. A notable feature of the

2024 Lok Sabha elections was that in several constituencies where the BJP won the seat, the party actually secured a lower vote share margin compared to the INDIA alliance. In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, the BJP-led NDA alliance won 64 seats; out of that, in 43 seats, the victory margin was more than 1 lakh of votes. In the 2024 election, on the same 43 seats, NDA lost 11 seats to the INDIA alliance, and NDA won very few seats with the margin of 1 lakh of votes (Ronojoy Sen, 2024).

As shown in Table 1, among the ten constituencies listed above of Western Uttar Pradesh, the BJP-led NDA won three seats, namely Meerut, Amroha and Bijnor (RLD), reflecting its electoral performance in the region. As shown in the election data, the margin of votes between the Meerut and Amroha constituencies was extremely narrow, amounting to less than 1% of the total votes, indicating a highly competitive electoral contest in these areas. Among the remaining seven constituencies, Nagina was won by the Azad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram). The rest were won by the INDIA alliance with a good margin of votes: Muzaffarnagar, Rampur, Moradabad, Sambhal, and Kairana went to the Samajwadi Party, whereas Saharanpur was won by Congress, reflecting a consolidation vote of Yadavs and Muslims in this region.

Similarly, Table 2 presents the 2019 election data for the same ten constituencies. It can be observed that the BJP won three seats—Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, and Kairana—but the margin of victory was less than 1% in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar, with the only exception of Kairana, which had a comparatively higher margin of votes, around 8%. Therefore, the BJP did not perform well in these constituencies in 2019, similar to 2024. A

Table 1 : Performance of the Political Parties in Western Uttar Pradesh in 2024 Parliamentary Election

Constituency	Muslim Population %	candidate won	Party name	Vote share %	Runner-up	Party	Vote share %	Vote margin %
Meerut	35	Arun Govil	BJP	46.2	Sunita Verma	SP	45.3	0.9
Muzaffarnagar	40	Harendra Singh Malik	SP	43.6	Sanjeev Kumar Balyan	BJP	41.4	2.3
Saharanpur	42	Imran Masood	Cong	44.6	Raghva Lakhnepal	BJP	39.3	5.2
Rampur	51	Mohibbullah	SP	49.7	Ghanshyam Singh Lodhi	BJP	40.7	9.0
Amroha	39	Kanwar Singh Tanwar	BJP	42.9	Kunwar Danish Ali	SP	40.3	0.3
Moradabad	46	Ruchi Vira	SP	49.7	Kunwar Sarvesh Kumar	BJP	41.4	8.2
Kairana	42	Iqra Choudhary	SP	48.9	Pradeep Kumar	BJP	42.5	6.4
Bijnor	41	Chandan Chauhan	RLD	39.5	Deepak	BJP	35.8	3.7
Nagina	43	Chandrashekhar	ASP	51.2	Om Kumar	BJP	36.1	15.1
Sambhal	50	Zia Ur Rehman	SP	47.8	Parmeshwar Lal Saini	BJP	37.6	10.2

Source: Self-compilation. Data has been obtained from the official website of the Election Commission of India (Election Commission of India, n.d.).

Table 2 : Performance of the Political Parties in Western Uttar Pradesh in 2019 Parliamentary Election

Constituency	The candidate won	Party name	Vote share %	Runner-up	Party	Vote share %	Vote margin %
Meerut	Rajendra Aggrawal	BJP	48.2	Haji Mohammad Yaqoob	BSP	47.8	0.4
Muzaffarnagar	Sanjeev Kumar Balyan	BJP	49.5	Ajit Singh	RLD	48.9	0.3
Saharanpur	Haji Fazlur Rehman	BSP	41.7	Raghav Lakhanpal	BJP	39.9	1.3
Rampur	Md Azam Khan	SP	52.7	Jayaprada Nahata	BJP	42.3	10.4
Amroha	Kunwar Danish Ali	BSP	51.4	Kanwar Singh Tanwar	BJP	46.0	5.4
Moradabad	Dr S.T. Hasan	SP	50.6	Kunwar Sarvesh Kumar	BJP	43	7.6
Kairana	Pradeep Kumar	BJP	50.4	Tabassum Begum	SP	42.2	8.2
Bijnor	Malook Nagar	BSP	51.0	Raja Bharatendra Singh	BJP	44.6	6.4
Nagina	Girish Chandra	BSP	56.3	Dr Yashwant Singh	BJP	39.8	16.5
Sambhal	Dr Shafiqur Rehman Barq	SP	55.6	Parameshvar Lal Saini	BJP	40.8	14.8

Source: Self-compilation. Data has been taken from the Election Commission of India (Election Commission of India, n.d.)

key difference between the 2024 and 2019 elections was that the Samajwadi Party also did not perform well in these constituencies and secured only three seats out of the ten in 2019, also finishing in third place in most of the remaining constituencies. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) won four seats—Nagina, Bijnor, Amroha, and Saharanpur—with two of these candidates being Muslim in the 2019 election. This result led to the observation that Muslim voters had supported the BSP in the 2019 election. However, in the 2024 election, the BSP was unable to retain any of these seats, with most of them being won by the Samajwadi Party.

In the case of representation of Muslims In Uttar Pradesh, the INDIA alliance which included Congress, and Samajwadi Party, gave very few seats to Muslims candidates to contest the election. Even in the Muslim majority constituencies, this was avoided with a strategy to not give tickets to the Muslim candidates. From the Moradabad seat, where Muslims are in a sizeable number, the sitting Member of Parliament S.T. Hasan's ticket was cancelled at the last moment and was given to a non-Muslim candidate, Ruchi Veera of the Samajwadi Party. It did not impact the Muslim voter's choice, as Ruchi Veera received the support of Muslims and won the election with a good margin. The point is that for Muslim voters, the party mattered more than the candidate, whether it was a Muslim or non-Muslim candidate. The Bahujan Samaj Party gave tickets to the majority of Muslim candidates, but the Muslim voters chose the Samajwadi Party and the Congress alliance over the BSP Muslim candidates.

The decline of the BSP was not a sudden phenomenon but a gradual process that has been unfolding since 2009. This raises an important question:

what factors led the core voters (Dalits) of Mayawati to shift their support from the BSP to other parties in UP? Through a deep analysis of the Dalit voters, one significant factor is the changing socio-economic status of the Dalits in Uttar Pradesh. Unlike the period when Kanshi Ram founded the BSP, now many Dalits have become upwardly mobile mainly on economic ground and have become increasingly aspirational in recent years. This changing nature of Dalit voters tends to feel much closer with Narendra Modi's style of politics, which emphasises on development and growth, while simultaneously they (Dalits) also embrace their caste identity as a source of pride in this regime (Verma, 2024). A second factor contributing to the BSP's decline is the image of Mayawati regarding administration and governance. Allegations of corruption and a perceived centralisation of power during her tenure have undermined voters' trust, which have prompted many traditional BSP supporters to explore alternatives in subsequent elections (Verma, 2024).

Bahujan Samaj Party's election engineering worked best once during the peak years of Mayawati's leadership. Through a careful strategy, Mayawati successfully brought together Dalits, most backward communities, and even some upper castes during the 2004 and 2007 elections in Uttar Pradesh. This coalition enabled the BSP to expand its social base beyond its traditional Dalit community, which broadened its social alliance into significant electoral benefits and consolidated its position in both state and national politics. However, this experiment gradually declined over time. In the 2014 election, the BSP vote share dipped below 20 per cent, as it was said that the BSP's vote bank had shifted to the BJP. Even in the assembly election it could only get 22.2 per cent of votes, which kept it on a margin line. In the

2019 Lok Sabha election, SP and BSP made an alliance against BJP but could not benefit BSP. Along with Muslims and Jatavs, BSP also got support from Nishads, Rajbhars, Kurmis and Koiris in the previous elections in Uttar Pradesh but lost all the supporters with time. In the 2024 Lok Sabha election, BSP chief Mayawati could not give any credible message to her supporters in her campaign. Mayawati and her nephew (successor of BSP) were not in the mainstream campaign and remained sidelined (Verma, 2024). Even Mayawati did not try to be part of the INDIA bloc and remained silent most of the time. It did not give any strong message to the Muslim community; therefore, Muslims kept aside from the BSP and consolidated behind the Samajwadi Party. The way Mayawati and her party campaigned in Western Uttar Pradesh did not give any hope in the near future for the success of this party.

The Congress-Samajwadi party alliance performed remarkably in the 2024 election by winning 43 seats out of 80 in Uttar Pradesh. A key factor behind the victory of the Samajwadi Party was its outreach programme to *Pichada (backward)*, *Dalit and Alpasankhyaks (minority)* (PDA), which helped to consolidate the votes of these groups. Its ticket distribution strategy also contributed to its success, which followed the social and religious dynamics of the state. The Samajwadi Party came out as the single largest party after the BJP in UP, conquering a total of 37 seats. The party performance was particularly strong in Western UP, where caste and minority were mobilised in favour of the alliance. Congress also performed significantly better in the 2024 election, winning six seats compared to the 2019 election, which reflects a noticeable improvement in its electoral performance in Uttar Pradesh (De, 2024).

Raising the issue of unemployment in the state went in benefit of the Congress-SP alliance, while the BJP's focus was more on the building of the Ram Mandir. The policies like Agniveer, where the youth were pushed to join the military for a certain time, have also contributed to make youth detached from the BJP in Uttar Pradesh. Both Congress and SP took advantage of it by raising a genuine issue related to the youths of the Uttar Pradesh (Srivastava, 2024). Even Rahul Gandhi's *Bharat Jodo Yatra* and Priyanka Gandhi's campaign style benefited the INDIA alliance in Uttar Pradesh. Rahul Gandhi's 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' was well coordinated campaign. He kept attacking BJP and prime minister Narendra Modi throughout his campaign. Priyanka Gandhi was

'campaigner-in-chief', she sharply reacted on the prime minister's 'magalsutra remark' by saying that her mother Sonia Gandhi had sacrificed her *mangalsutra* (her husband) for the nation. Further she said 'during the war time, her grandmother Mrs. Indira Gandhi (former PM) donated her gold for the cause of the nation.' This was an emotional appeal to the voters with a strategy which worked in favour of the INDIA alliance (Dey, 2024).

Conclusion:

The campaign strategies and tactics adopted by the Congress and Samajwadi Party played a decisive role in their success in Uttar Pradesh during the 2024 elections. However, it was not just the campaign; other factors also played a crucial role in its splendid performance in UP. The INDIA alliance received the overwhelming support of Muslims, Yadavas and Dalits, leaving no doubt about the way Congress and SP reach out to their core voters. Unlike the BJP, which relied on aggressive and communal polarising tactics, the Congress-Samajwadi Party alliance maintained a relatively low kind of campaign which focused on outreach to the PDA community (Pichada, Dalit and Alapsankhyak), inclusivity, employment and development. In a way, youth and Muslims were the target of the alliance. In contrast, the BJP's negative campaign against Muslims, particularly in the Muslim-majority constituencies of Western Uttar Pradesh, backfired. The party's attempts at outreach toward Pasmada Muslims failed, as communal comments, including remarks about 'mangalsutras of women', infiltrators, and population growth of Muslims, alienated not only Muslim voters but also created broader apprehensions among youth. As a result, the Muslim electorate largely consolidated behind the INDIA alliance, prioritising community identity, security, and political safety in shaping their votes. Despite the BSP fielding a significant number of Muslim candidates, the party was unable to secure substantial Muslim support, highlighting the decisive role of issue-based and identity-conscious voting in the region. Overall, the 2024 election in Uttar Pradesh underscores the importance of inclusive, respectful, and targeted campaign strategies in winning over diverse electorates, while illustrating the risks of aggressive polarising tactics.

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