



# ‘Foreign media, political players in Bharat’s Elections’

*Published May 15, 2024*

*Publication No. P0510-150524*

***Brief: 'Foreign media, political players in Bharat's Elections'***

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## **Executive Summary**

**Dance of Democracy:** Bharat, with a population of 1.4 billion and 968.8 million registered voters, is holding a seven-phase election that will conclude on June 4, 2024.

**Prime Minister's Concerns:** During an election rally in Bellari, Karnataka, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the threats of foreign propaganda and interference aimed at destabilizing India's democratic electoral system.

**Historical Context:** Since its independence in 1947, Bharat has transformed from a fragile democracy to a geopolitical powerhouse, limiting the efficacy of traditional influence strategies.

**Modern Influence Strategies:** Foreign renowned entities use sophisticated means including media manipulation, cyber operations, and economic pressures to alter Bharat's electoral outcomes.

**Media Manipulation:** International media outlets such as The Guardian, Al Jazeera, BBC and the Financial Times frequently spread biased and inaccurate narratives regarding the Indian elections.

**Project Syndicate:** The majority of the media outlets that are spreading misinformation are part of the project syndicate led by George Soros and Bill Gates Foundation.

**Bharat's Defense Mechanisms:** To fight foreign influence and defend its electoral integrity, the country has created strong cybersecurity measures, media scrutiny, and regulatory frameworks.

**International Misunderstanding:** Misinformation and inaccurate narratives continue to flourish, reflecting deeper prejudices and misunderstandings about Bharat's democracy in the Western world.

**Call for Balanced Reporting:** Foreign media must transition to more nuanced, fact-based reporting in order to build a balanced global conversation that respects the sovereignty of Bharat.

## **Background & Context**

Bharat, a country with 1.4 billion population and over 968.8 million registered voters, is in the midst of largest democratic exercise of franchise in seven phases over two months ending on June 4.

In the midst of election fury, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Bellari, the mining town in the country's southern state of Karnataka a few days back. Prime Modi made a significant statement relating to foreign propaganda in the elections to Bharat's Parliament with upper and lower houses.

A few were surprised when Modi said, "when the country is progressing rapidly, some countries and some institutions do not like it. There are many people who do not want a strong Bharat. They want the country and its government to be weak so that they can easily make profits. Since 2014, a campaign for cleanliness has been going on in the country's power corridors. Bharat will progress as a developed nation."

Progressing to become a developed nation is logical extension of high growth trajectory in which Bharat is currently cruising. But, what stands out is Indian Prime Minister's assertion about the country's foes that may like to disrupt this organic progression by influencing the electoral process. In a nuanced speech, Prime Minister Modi talked about foreign powers' false propaganda, interference and attempts at intervention in Bharat's elections to see a weak and pliable government at helm in New Delhi.

Bharat will elect a new government when it completes the polling and counting process by June 4 this year. A new government is scheduled to be in office by June 10, 2024 that will essentially oversee initial transition of Bharat in its path to becoming a developed nation.

In this context, Narendra Modi's remark in the midst of a spirited electoral contest, that several countries and institutions are attempting to influence Bharat's elections may be very significant.

Several foreign and domestic businesses apart from military powers has a big stake in Bharat given its rapidly growing, market and expanding consumers amongst the 1.4 billion populaces.

Given that Bharat is an important source of skilled workforce, ideas, products and services, the stakes go up a notch higher. Strategically, Bharat is a growing power not only in South Asia but across the globe especially in the internationally important institutions for governance and finance.

While Bharat is preparing to tell her own story in her own words, a few old habits of Western powers and new power mongers on the block die easily. As a result, international powers have become all the more intrusive about influencing Bharat's elections.

## **Intricacies of influence**

International powers exert their influence in Bharat, a nation renowned for its robust democratic framework, through a complex interplay of historical context and contemporary geopolitical maneuvers. This phenomenon, as articulated by Chicago-based Dr. Bharat Barai, a prominent Indian American, reflects not only a lingering colonial mentality but a profound misunderstanding of the complexities and realities of modern India.

After Bharat attained independence from British colonial powers in 1947, India was viewed as a nascent democracy vulnerable to external influences. But, over decades Bharat has evolved into a geopolitical heavyweight with significant global influence, rendering older tactics of influence less effective.

Despite this evolution, attempts to influence Bharat's general elections have persisted, albeit with sophisticated modern strategies. The methods of influence have diversified, involving not just overt political maneuvering but subtler forms such as informational influence and economic pressures. Media entities are one of the primary tools for influencing general elections. Campaigns to sway public opinion or discredit certain political figures have sometimes implicated foreign entities through both traditional media outlets and newer digital platforms. This manipulation is often subtle, aiming to shift electoral preferences under the guise of unbiased news reporting.

Cyber operations are the second way to target electoral infrastructure, party databases and even individual politicians' communications. Cyber tactics extend beyond hacking, encompassing dissemination of disinformation and misinformation to instigate political turmoil or manipulate the electoral results.

Thirdly, foreign powers have employed economic leverage strategies to exert influence. Foreign powers continue to try and create a climate of political instability by influencing Bharat's economic conditions which can have implications on electoral outcomes. Foreign powers may strategically manipulate trade agreements and investment flows tying them to political expectations or outcomes.

Bharat has increasingly exposed and countered these destabilizing toolkits. Establishing robust cyber security measures, stringent media scrutiny and regulatory frameworks are part of Bharat's strategy. Indian agencies are continuously working to uncover and mitigate these foreign influences, ensuring sanctity of its electoral process.

While foreign powers continue their attempts to influence general elections in Bharat, the country's response has matured. Resilience against external influences not only protects integrity of Bharat's elections but reinforces its standing as a major democratic leader in the international community.

## **Foreign Media Role**

Foreign media houses attempting to mislead people of Bharat with their fabricated narratives are something that needs to be noted. These stories are not only fabricated but ill-intentioned also. When the world's largest democracy is in the midst of dance of democracy, malicious propaganda of some well-known media houses and news agencies seem to be driven by agendas and biases.

For instance, The Guardian, London's report given in the snapshot is just one of such massive propaganda. The Guardian's editorial position is that Indian elections have been fixed, dissent outlawed and democracy damaged. Is that the case?



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The Guardian view on India's election:  
fixing a win by outlawing dissent damages  
democracy  
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**Colm Tóibín:  
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What's Al Jazeera's interest in whipping a discord between Hindus and Muslims by writing such reports is a big question as well.

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**OPINION**  
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**Modi wants to turn India's election into a Hindu-Muslim war**

*And the Election Commission of India is allowing it.*

 **Apoorvanand**  
Apoorvanand teaches Hindi at the University of Delhi. He writes literary and cultural criticism.

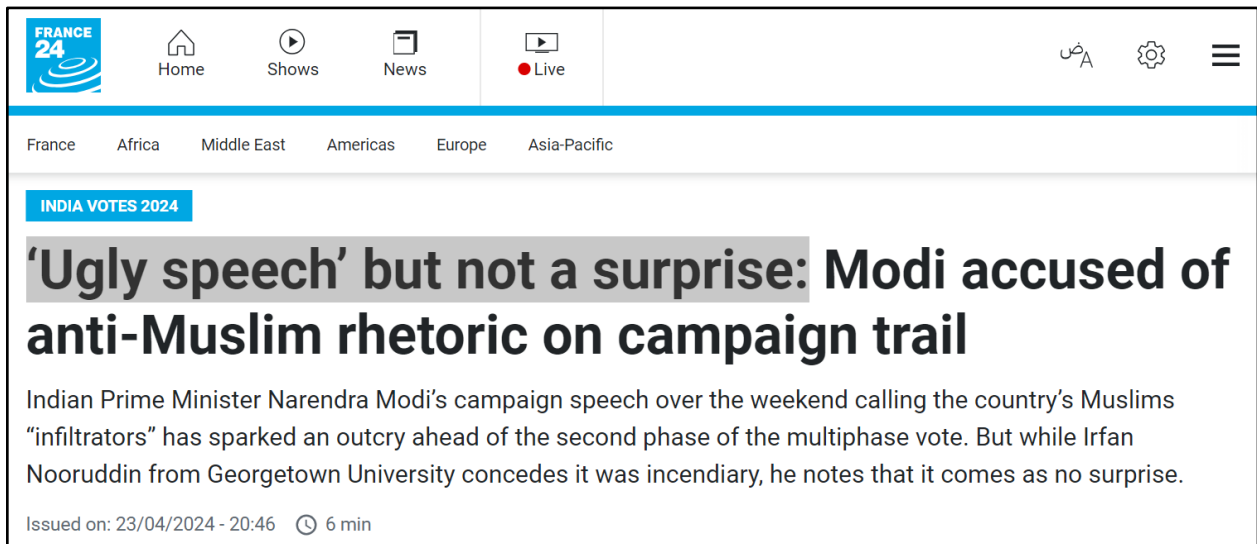
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24 Apr 2024

Financial Times, London may be completely off the mark by stating that Modi's speech was 'anti-muslim' unless it had an agenda to peddle.



Does France 24 even make out what Bharat's election is all about? Or, does it have a hidden agenda?



Has Narendra Modi gone after foreign media as The Economist alleges? Is asking BBC to comply with laws of the land going after foreign media? Or, The Economist having its own stake in Bharat's elections?

Asia | Banyan

# After silencing critics at home, Narendra Modi goes after foreign media

Western countries' failure to come to the BBC's defence is pathetic

Just sample this report of The New York Times. Is the media house out to tear apart Bharat – US strategic relations and work towards getting Modi defeated in Indian elections?

OPINION  
GUEST ESSAY

# Narendra Modi Is Not Who America Thinks He Is

June 22, 2023

Does Time magazine have a problem with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and it's not able to hide it? Or, does it want a government without Modi who's seen as an assertive leader leading from the front for Bharat?

IDEAS • WORLD AFFAIRS

## The Modi-fication of India Is Almost Complete

5 MINUTE READ

Bloomberg’s columnist Andy Mukherjee’s piece virtually pushing for Bharat’s North, South divide citing socio-economic contrast is something that smacks of an agenda. Andy calling Modi a majoritarian leader is not serious commentator’s view. It’s to wedge larger divide between Hindus and other large minority groups.

# Why India’s South Rejects Modi — And Why It Matters

The more progressive and successful part of the country is drifting away from the poverty-ridden north and its majoritarian leader.

April 8, 2024 at 1:30 AM GMT+5:30



By **Andy Mukherjee**

Andy Mukherjee is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering industrial companies and financial services in Asia. Previously, he worked for Reuters, the Straits Times and Bloomberg News.

🔖 Save

A child born in Kerala in India’s south has a better chance of surviving to age five than in the US. In Uttar Pradesh in the north, the odds are worse than in Afghanistan.

Would Financial Times, London speak of United Kingdom being not in good shape? Why’s it playing truant? Is Le Mode going the Financial Times way? And, is being ‘anti-Modi’, ‘anti-Bharat’ or ‘anti-Hindu’ a fashion statement of sorts for these media outlets?

The screenshot shows the top portion of a web browser. At the top is the Financial Times logo and navigation menu. Below that is a large banner image with the headline "The 'mother of democracy' is not in good shape". Underneath is the header for "LE MONDE *diplomatique*" with a search bar. A secondary navigation bar includes "HOME", "CURRENT ISSUE", "PAST ISSUES", "ARCHIVE", "MAPS", "BLOG", "PODCAST", "FOLLOW US", and "ABOUT". Below this is a date selector for "April 2024". The main article snippet is titled "India: democracy in name only?" by Christophe Jaffrelot. The text of the snippet reads: "THE HINDU NATIONALISTS' CREATION OF A DEEPER STATE. The India that goes to the polls this month is a markedly less democratic one: Narendra Modi has hollowed out institutions and targeted opponents, all the while sowing inter-ethnic tensions."

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The 'mother of democracy' is not in good shape

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> April 2024

THE HINDU NATIONALISTS' CREATION OF A DEEPER STATE

## India: democracy in name only?

The India that goes to the polls this month is a markedly less democratic one: Narendra Modi has hollowed out institutions and targeted opponents, all the while sowing inter-ethnic tensions.

BY CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT

This narrative demonstrates a trend and fits into an agenda that may not truly represent what's happening in Bharat. Some well-known media outlets, think tanks, academia and global rankings agencies often present a skewed picture that does not always align with reality.

The majority of media outlets publishing false and fake articles are members of Project Syndicate, a consortium of 506 media groups from 156 countries. Founded in 1995, Project Syndicate claims to promote media independence and global thought variety. However, it has become an instrument for the propaganda of wealthy individuals such as George Soros and the Bill Gates Foundation. Soros

and his associates' genuine intentions are well known: they seek nothing less than regime change in Bharat.

Bharat's nuclear tests conducted under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's administration and the global media's response way back in 1998 is an example none would forget easily. Following these tests, Western media outlets jumped into the fray and were quick to cast Bharat as a disruptor of global peace. They criticized the country for allocating resources to nuclear capabilities at the expense of poverty alleviation, neglecting the context of strategic security needs and regional geopolitical challenges.

## **Concluding Observation**

This pattern in coverage highlights a broader trend where international media often forms assorted opinions and present facts accordingly. Cherry-picking facts to support predetermined narratives are what's being done by the foreign media rather than doing an impartial analysis. This approach not only misrepresents the situation but also undermines complexity of policy decisions made by sovereign nations.

Bharat's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar once pointed out that foreign media attacks Bharat "not because they lack information, but because they feel that they are also political players in our elections." There may be truth in this observation of Jaishankar.

India's democratic path powered tremendous economic progress and open diplomatic relations demonstrates a resilient and forward-thinking country. Western world must overcome colonial mindset and acknowledge diverse nature of Indian democracy.

For a more balanced global discourse, it is imperative that foreign media revisit their approach in covering diverse and complex countries like Bharat. A shift towards more nuanced, fact-based reporting would contribute to a more informed and less polarized understanding of global events.

Such a change is crucial not only for fostering international relations but for ensuring integrity of the media's role in global governance. Additionally, there are several state-backed institutions actively spreading misleading and inaccurate information to influence the general elections in Bharat.

The interest is manifested in sophisticated strategies employed by foreign powers and media entities aiming to influence public opinion and electoral outcomes through misinformation, economic pressures, and cyber interference. These challenges notwithstanding, Bharat's robust democratic framework and evolving geopolitical stature have enabled it to increasingly thwart these attempts, enhancing its internal mechanisms and asserting its strategic autonomy.

As Bharat continues to navigate these complex dynamics, the integrity of its electoral process and its emerging global role demand a recalibrated approach from foreign media and institutions. A shift toward more nuanced and factual reporting is the need to ensure a balanced global discourse that respects Bharat's sovereignty and reflects true spirit of its democratic ethos.

Spread of misinformation and continuance of misleading narratives about Indian democracy in the West are signs of deeper prejudices and misunderstandings. It is critical for international community to interact with India on equal footing, admiring its accomplishments while respecting its sovereignty.

Understanding and celebrating true character of Indian democracy requires enlightened discourse and genuine engagement.

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