

YES, NO, IT'S COMPLICATED

# Is the Modi charisma fading?

YES



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Leaders like Narendra Modi run the danger of becoming their own nemesis

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's charisma has been visibly declining since mid-2017. The point that is open for debate is whether or not he can reverse the slide by playing the several cards he is adept at playing. Paradoxically, the onset of the fade-out of Mr. Modi's charisma coincided with the beginning of the makeover of Rahul Gandhi. The scion is no longer a presumptive leader; he has emerged as Mr. Modi's prime challenger.

Regardless of how the political narrative concludes this year, Mr. Modi will surely rue his role in the emergence of the Congress presi-

dent as a credible politician. Mr. Gandhi need not be formally named as the prime ministerial face of the Opposition because in his hurry to convert the electoral battle into a Modi versus Gandhi contest, the BJP willy-nilly elevated Mr. Gandhi's political stock by unceasingly ridiculing him. Mr. Modi repeated the Congress leadership's error of ceaselessly targeting him when he was Gujarat Chief Minister and elevating him from a regional leader to a national one.

Leaders like Mr. Modi run the danger of becoming their own nemesis. To assess his current stand-

ing, we need to weigh him against his own past. In 2013-14, there was certainty about the BJP's victory; only the final tally was the subject of speculation. Back then, Mr. Modi was the alternative. In contrast, only a dramatic alteration in the current political narrative can ensure that the BJP gets anywhere close to its 2014 tally of 282 seats in the Lok Sabha. The party's hopes of preventing a major decline in its tally is now significantly dependent on the TINA (There Is No Alternative) factor.

**Evidence of decline**  
The decline in Mr. Modi's charisma is evident through both anecdotal



and empirical evidence. The first signs of decline were seen in Gujarat in 2017 when people began walking out of his election meetings. From the scenario in 2014, when venues of his meetings reverberated with chants of "Modi, Modi", visuals of people tossing Modi masks while leaving were ominous. Yet, the escape by the skin of his teeth was proof that much of the sheen had worn off. Throughout 2018, empirical proof was added to what was already discernible. The BJP lost many by-elections, and the final confirmation came with the Assembly elections at the end of the year. For a party that won every election in the name

of Mr. Modi, even when it nominated chief ministerial candidates, the Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan defeats demonstrated that much of the hype around Brand Modi has eroded in the Hindi heartland. This was where the BJP won almost 200 Lok Sabha seats in 2014.

A deduction can be made of the erosion of Mr. Modi's charisma by deconstructing the magnetism which drew people towards him in 2014. First, it was grounded in massive anti-incumbency against the Manmohan Singh government. Over this edifice, myths surrounding Mr. Modi were woven. This included the publicised concept of the Gujarat model, euphemism for single-window administration, which

caught the imagination of the people because Mr. Singh spoke of the compulsions of coalition politics. The situation was tailor-made for the emergence of a powerful orator with the image of a decisive leader to raise hopes, and Mr. Modi possessed these skills amply.

**An uphill task**

The advantage of being an outsider is no longer there. The incumbent cannot blame anyone else any more. Young voters are dependent on hearsay, for they have little direct memory of the perils of coalitions. The resurrection of Mr. Modi's charisma is therefore an uphill task and explains the decision to bank on Hindutva, ultranationalism and doles.

NO



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Mr. Modi seems to emerge stronger from bold gambles such as demonetisation and GST

Sceptics may draw momentary solace from an imaginary fading of Narendra Modi's charisma in the wake of the recent Assembly election results. Every time such scepticism is built on some unfounded grounds, the consequences prove disastrous for those raising doubts. In Uttar Pradesh, those who felt that the BJP had reached its peak in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and assumed that it would not be able to repeat such a feat were proved wrong when the Assembly election

results came out. Mr. Modi has proven his critics wrong time and again since the days he was Chief Minister of Gujarat. His charisma has never waned; in fact, it has been growing overwhelmingly with every passing day. Mr. Modi's charisma is built on hard work, consistency, commitment and perseverance. He has a strong political will and vision.

**The Modi phenomenon**

Mr. Modi has emerged as a phenomenon in Indian politics. When

scams dominated the headlines, when terms like 'policy paralysis' came into vogue, and when everything seemed to be plunged in negativity, Mr. Modi emerged as a ray of hope. Few had predicted such a massive mandate for the BJP in 2014. It was the Modi phenomenon that unfolded in electoral performances and redrew the political landscape of the majority of the States. Mr. Modi not only seems to come out unscathed from bold gambles like demonetisation and imposition of the Goods and Servic-



es Tax, but seems to become stronger after them. He is a man of vision who turns adversities into opportunities. He is the daring leader who can match China in Doklam and who has the grit to carry out surgical strikes against Pakistan.

**Bringing about change**

Living up to his promise of providing a corruption-free government, Mr. Modi has made corruption in high places a thing of the past. His government puts emphasis on changing the lives of the poorest of the poor. A large number of innova-

tive schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Direct Benefit Transfer, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Jan Dhan scheme, and Mudra have brought massive change across India. The rural sector has received more budgetary support and attention. The government's target is to double farmers' income by 2022. Health and wellness programmes like Ayushman Bharat, Mission Indradhanush and Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana are addressing the basic health needs of the people.

Even Mr. Modi's detractors acknowledge his charisma and mag-

netic appeal among the masses. He has raised the bar for himself. He charms the masses by raising their aspirations and by meeting his targets before deadlines.

As Chief Minister, he led the rise of Gujarat and it slowly became the shining example for other States to emulate. As Prime Minister, he is leaving his mark everywhere, from policymaking to governance, with a result-oriented approach.

As he dominates the political horizon of the country, Mr. Modi's charisma continues to leave his opponents flummoxed. The more he is doubted, the more Mr. Modi grows.

IT'S COMPLICATED



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There is a decline in Mr. Modi's popularity, but it is not even across States

Let us make no mistake: there is certainly a decline in the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but this is not widespread. The degree of his popularity changes from place to place, from State to State. Several surveys conducted in May 2018, including those conducted by us, indicate that Mr. Modi's popularity not only declined over the last one year, but hit an all-time low of 33%, which is three percentage points lower than his popularity in 2014 when he became Prime Minister. The defeat of the BJP in three

States - Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan - in the recent Assembly polls only suggests that there is a further decline in his popularity.

Those who voted for Mr. Modi expected him to bring about positive change and take the country on the path of development. People expected more jobs to be created, resulting in a faster economic growth for India. In the two years following the BJP's victory, Mr. Modi's popularity increased. This was a clear indication of people's growing faith in

him. But things seem to have changed in the last one year. Let's examine this across regions and States.

**Popularity is high**

The northeastern States have not witnessed a significant decline in Mr. Modi's popularity - partly because the Congress ruled many of these States for decades and there is a desire for change and partly because Mr. Modi is relatively new in these areas. In Assam, Mr. Modi witnessed a peak in popularity in the beginning of 2018; this has dipped now. In Odisha, his popularity has increased rapidly since



2014. In West Bengal, Mr. Modi's popularity has not only increased, he has emerged as the main challenger to the Trinamool Congress led by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The Congress there has been relegated to a distant third position. In Bihar, Mr. Modi's popularity is on the rise, from 46% in 2014 to 56% in May 2018, when the surveys were conducted.

**Popularity has been constant**

In Rajasthan (where the BJP lost in the recent Assembly election), Delhi, Haryana, and Gujarat, Mr. Mo-

di's popularity has not only remained reasonably high, it has also been constant in the last four and a half years. In Haryana, the State government is perhaps not as popular as other BJP State governments, and the Opposition is weak. But Modi's national leadership is not in doubt.

**Popularity is low**

The picture is less rosy in other States. In Uttar Pradesh, surveys have indicated a steep decline in his popularity: from 56% in April 2017 to 35%. It is important to note that this is lower than his popularity rating in April-May 2014 before the Lok Sabha elections. There is a si-

milar decline in his popularity in Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and Punjab. The most alarming decline is in Andhra Pradesh, where Mr. Modi was considered the most suitable prime ministerial candidate by 56% voters in 2014; now this has come down to 20%. Telangana has also witnessed a significant decline in his popularity: from 33% in 2014 to 17% in May 2018. In Tamil Nadu, the picture is no different. Karnataka is the only exception in the south where Mr. Modi's popularity remains intact.

The Prime Minister's popularity has gone down but it is not even across States. The story is not as simple as we think.

SINGLE FILE

## Voting for change

Post-poll surveys suggest that Muslims in Madhya Pradesh preferred Shivraj Singh Chouhan but not the BJP

MOHAMMAD OSAMA



"The country's system can run with disbelief (*kufir*) but not with oppression (*zulm*)," said Mufti Mohammad Aminuddin Qasmi, the Imam of a small mosque located on Chiklod road in Bhopal. "God will never allow this; he has always punished oppression."

At this juncture, when the Ram Mandir issue is very much alive and Muslims are subjected to everyday violence, these words reflect the mood of the Muslim voters of Madhya Pradesh. In the State that went to polls last month, Muslims voted mostly for the Congress, as was revealed in surveys by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies-Lokniti (CSDS-Lokniti), and in my own fieldwork.

The Congress has formed the government in Madhya Pradesh with the help of the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party. In the new Assembly, there are only two Muslim MLAs, both from the Congress. From 1952 to 2018, on average, only 1% and 2.3% of Muslims were elected and nominated in the Assembly, respectively. In a State where Muslims are 6.6% of the population, this is a dismal number.

According to Madhya Pradesh's post-poll survey data on Muslim voters' opinions (Lokniti-CSDS 2018), around 51% of Muslims voted for the Congress, and 15% for the BJP. Even though the BJP lost the election, 32% of Muslims said they preferred Shivraj Singh Chouhan as Chief Minister, while 36% said they preferred Jyotiraditya Scindia and 19% said they preferred Kamal Nath. The preference of Muslims for Mr. Chouhan was always higher than for his party, current and past surveys of CSDS-Lokniti suggest.

It is noticeable that 35% Muslims "fully dislike" Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Around 54% of Muslim voters said that the "Ayodhya temple/mosque dispute" is a "very important" electoral issue, and around 51% of Muslims based their opinions on the Supreme Court's views on the case.

My fieldwork on the Muslims of Bhopal, who represent an important segment of the State's overall voting Muslim population, suggests that Muslims this time wanted change and hence voted for the Congress. Most Muslims I met were in favour of the Congress, and while they liked Mr. Chouhan, they disliked the idea of another BJP government. In the CSDS-Lokniti survey too, 31% and 35% of Muslims were found to be "fully dissatisfied" with the BJP government in Madhya Pradesh and the Centre, respectively. Almost every Muslim criticised the 2016 demonetisation policy; in the post-poll survey too, around 51% of the Muslims said demonetisation was a "wrong decision".

The greater the extent to which voters express similar voting preferences in Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, the more likely it is that the post-poll survey finding of CSDS-Lokniti, that around 64% of Muslims of Madhya Pradesh will vote again for the Congress in this year's Lok Sabha elections, is an accurate prediction of the outcome.

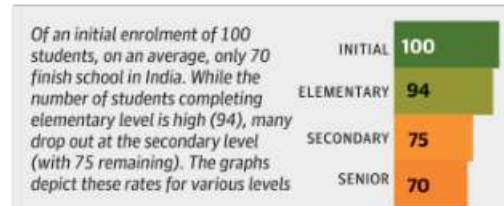
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DATA POINT

### Dropping out

With its high tribal population, Jharkhand has the highest dropout rate for schoolchildren in India (only 30 out of 100 finish school). Dropout rates among Adivasis are the highest among all communities. Vignesh Radhakrishnan analyses the data



**Worst off** | 61 of 100 ST students finish senior secondary school, the lowest among all communities

	Initial	Elementary	Secondary	Senior
General	100	96	81	74
SC	100	92	71	65
ST	100	91	67	61
OBC	100	94	75	73

**Equality** | There is no gender disparity in dropouts. Boys and girls quit school in equal measure

	Initial	Elementary	Secondary	Senior
Boys	100	94	75	70
Girls	100	94	75	70

\*Dropout rate is calculated by subtracting the sum of promotion and repetition rate from 100 in a year. Data for A.P. and Karnataka are not available. Elementary: Grades 1 to 8; Secondary: Grades 9, 10; Senior: Grades 11, 12. Data sourced from udise.in

State of affairs | Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra have the lowest dropout rates

State	Initial	Elementary	Secondary	Senior
Jharkhand	100	83	53	30
Arunachal	100	80	56	38
Nagaland	100	80	55	44
Bihar	100	89	54	46
Meghalaya	100	82	59	48
Mizoram	100	86	60	54.8
Telangana	100	93	72	54.8
West Bengal	100	92	67	55.1
Sikkim	100	94	71	56
J&K	100	87	66	56.6
Manipur	100	84	67	57.2
Tripura	100	95	67	58
Assam	100	95	69	60
Odisha	100	95	68	67.9
Gujarat	100	97	74	68.3
Chhattisgarh	100	96	72.5	71
M.P.	100	94	71.9	72
U.P.	100	91	79	74.2
Goa	100	99	83	74.3
Delhi	100	100	89	79
Rajasthan	100	94	80	80
Punjab	100	97	89	84
Haryana	100	100	88	85.2
Uttarakhand	100	95	87	85.3
Kerala	100	100	87	85.6
Maharashtra	100	99	88	85.6
H.P.	100	99	92	85.8
Tamil Nadu	100	99	89	86.2

FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 4, 1969

### Kerala decides to form Malappuram district

The Kerala Government has decided to constitute two new districts and to integrate the taluks and the community development blocks as units of administration, said the Governor, Mr. V. Viswanathan in his address to the Assembly to-day [January 3, Trivandrum]. The decisions were aimed at improving administrative efficiency and giving attention to backward areas. (The two new districts contemplated are Malappuram which will have a Muslim majority and Malnad comprising taluks in the high ranges). It was a matter of regret that the States' plea for a revision of the existing financial set-up had been rejected by the Finance Commission. "This has its implications on the finances of our State also," he said. Referring to the law and order position in the State, the Governor said: "A careful comparison of the relevant statistics and figures would show that the over-all situation in this State is no worse than in the rest of the country."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 4, 1919.

### Australian Wheat to India.

The Food Stuff Commissioner for India has issued the following note [in Calcutta]: The Government of India have been in communication with His Majesty's Government with a view to arranging for the sale to India of Australian wheat, considerable quantities of which are expected to be shortly on passage to Europe. The Royal Commission of wheat supplies have not expressed their willingness to sell at cost price any of these cargoes of Australian wheat and the shipping controller is willing to supply tonnage at freight rates based on actual cost. His Majesty's Treasury have agreed to this specially low rate of freight in view of the assistance which India has rendered in the past regarding wheat exports and on the understanding that wheat will not be sold at a profit. The Government of India proposed to utilise these cargoes of wheat firstly for supplying as far as possible military requirements of wheat products and secondly for sale to mills in Calcutta and Bombay which agree to sell their products at suitable rates.

CONCEPTUAL

### Object relations theory

PSYCHOLOGY

This refers to a branch of psychoanalysis which describes the process by which children develop an internal image of various people around them during their initial years of growth. It is believed that the psyche that children develop during their early years through constant exposure to various objects around them determines their behaviour as adults to a significant extent. The first image of an object that a child usually forms in life is that of her mother, so object relations theorists generally emphasise the importance of the relationship between a mother and her child. Object relations theory has been employed in the treatment of various mental illnesses.

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<http://bit.ly/60yearsOfBarbie>