



## EDITORIAL: INDIAN EXPRESS

**GENERAL STUDIES 2: GOVERNANCE**

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### The High Tide of Democracy in 2024

- The year 2024 marked a pivotal moment for global democracy, characterized by widespread electoral participation and systemic challenges. Nearly half of the world's population had the opportunity to vote in critical elections across nations like India, the United States, and South Korea. However, these elections revealed both the resilience and fragility of democratic systems, occurring alongside an intensifying climate crisis that complicated governance and decision-making.

### Anti-Incumbency and Shifting Electoral Trends

- **Widespread Rejection of Incumbents:** Over 80% of incumbent parties experienced losses, marking the highest anti-incumbency sentiment since the advent of universal suffrage in 1894.
- **Diverse Political Landscapes:** Shifts spanned ideological divides, with a rightward turn in the US, a leftward swing in the UK, and the ousting of dominant parties in nations like Botswana.
- **Voter Discontent:** The trend underscores growing dissatisfaction with governance, though it remains uncertain whether these shifts signal a lasting pattern or episodic discontent.

### Disenchantment with Democracy

- **Global Disillusionment:** Surveys by PEW and IDEA in 2024 revealed significant dissatisfaction with democratic systems, as citizens felt disconnected from political institutions and leadership.
- **Erosion of Democratic Standards:** Declining electoral credibility, weakened parliamentary effectiveness, and constraints on freedom of expression fueled public discontent.
- **Sustainability Concerns:** The findings raise questions about the adaptability of democratic systems to evolving societal needs.

### Governance Deficits and Public Trust

- **Unmet Aspirations:** Economic challenges, corruption, and inefficiency have eroded public trust in democratic regimes.
- **Short-Term Populism:** Political parties often prioritize short-term populist measures over long-term developmental strategies, deepening voter disillusionment.



- **Faith at Risk:** Without governance that aligns with citizens' aspirations, democracy risks losing its appeal to authoritarian alternatives.

## Decline in Political Discourse

- **Toxic Campaign Rhetoric:** The 2024 elections were marred by divisive rhetoric, hate speech, and personal attacks.
- **Global Examples:** From communal slurs in India to derogatory remarks in the US, campaigns eroded the decency and respect foundational to representative governance.
- **Impact on Democracy:** This decline tarnishes the democratic process and undermines public trust in political institutions.

## Electoral Credibility and Hopes for Reform

- **Challenges to Electoral Integrity:** Instances of declining election quality and disputes over outcomes increased globally.
- **Voter Optimism:** The rejection of incumbents reflected voters' willingness to seek alternatives, signaling hope for renewal and systemic reform.
- **The Need for Effective Governance:** Democracy's success depends on leaders' ability to govern inclusively and address systemic issues.

## The Path Forward for Democracy

- **Restoring Trust:** Leaders must prioritize transparency, accountability, and inclusive development to rebuild public trust.
- **Promoting Respectful Discourse:** Fostering a culture of decency in political narratives is crucial to preserving democratic values.
- **Adapting to Contemporary Challenges:** Democratic institutions must evolve to address 21st-century challenges or risk losing relevance.
- **Lessons from 2024:** The elections highlight both the resilience and vulnerability of democracy, emphasizing the need for sustained efforts to uphold its ideals.

## Insights from the Global State of Democracy Report

- The **Global State of Democracy Report**, published annually by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), offers an in-depth analysis of democracy's strengths, challenges, and decline. It evaluates key indicators such as electoral processes, political participation, fundamental rights, rule of law, and governance effectiveness, providing valuable insights into global and regional democratic trends.



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