

Indian Electoral Democracy@75 Looking Back, Thinking Ahead

PANELISTS



Dr. Seema Malik
Nationalist Congress Party



Shazia Ilmi
Bharatiya Janata Party



Juhie Singh
Samajwadi Party



Supriya Shrinete
Indian National Congress

The panel discussion will be followed by
release of the book
"Elections in India : An Overview"



Monday
22 August 2022

18:30 hrs
IST

**Royal Ballroom, The Imperial
Janpath, Connaught Place, New Delhi**

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PANELISTS



Dr. Mario Voigt
Christian Democratic Union, (Germany)



Andreas Bühl
Christian Democratic Union, (Germany)



Manoj Kumar Jha
Rashtriya Janata Dal



Saurabh Bhardwaj
Aam Aadmi Party



Panel Discussion

Indian Electoral Democracy@75

Looking Back, Thinking Ahead

August 22, 2022

1830 – 2030 (IST)



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Program Overview

Lokniti-Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and the India Office of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), organized a Panel Discussion, on ‘Indian Electoral Democracy@75: Looking Back, Thinking Ahead’ on Monday 22nd of August 2022, at New Delhi, between 1830 – 2030 (IST).

The event panel had as panelists Shazia Ilmi, National Spokesperson, Bharatiya Janata Party; Juhie Singh, Spokesperson, Samajwadi Party; Supriya Shrinete, National Spokesperson, Indian National Congress; Dr. Seema Malik, National Spokesperson, Nationalist Congress Party; Saurabh Bharadwaj, Spokesperson, Aam Aadmi Party; Dr. Mario Voigt, German Politician, Christian Democratic Union (CDU); Andreas Bühl, German Politician, Christian Democratic Union (CDU) were the Panelists from Germany for the Panel Discussion. It witnessed the moderation from Professor Hilal Ahmed, Deputy Director, Center for the Study of Developing Societies and Mr. Pankaj Madan, Deputy Head, India Office, KAS.

The event that took place on the 22nd of August 2022, aimed at discussing India’s Electoral Democracy in regards to politics and elections in India, both as voters and as elected representatives. The panel discussion was divided into three segments. The first segment sought introductory remarks from each of the panelists on the broad topic of discussion. The second part highlighted the story of a participatory upsurge in Indian elections with a special focus on rising voter turnout in national and state elections. The third and final part focused on the role played by development and welfare schemes in Indian elections and in the last event was concluded by the book release.

Glimpses



Key Takeaways

- The panel discussion was divided into three segments and each segment focused on a pertinent question related to Indian Electoral Democracy.
- The first part of the panel discussion highlighted the contribution to increased electoral participation of Indian voters.
- It flashed the light on how the Indian electoral politics is worth appreciating for the fact that unlike its neighbors, it has survived and thrived for past over seven decades.
- The discussion started with Andreas Buhl's remarks and opinions on democracy. He pointed out that any electoral democracy is in the state of a continuous flux.
- The second part of the discussion focused on how the political parties and specially the politician read the turnout factor.
- The panelists discussed the rising participation and voter turnout in Indian Elections.
- All the panelists, applauded the fact that the Indian Elections are becoming more and more vibrant.
- The third part of the discussion emphasized on development and role of welfare schemes in Indian electoral politics.

Media Coverage

India a welfare state, time not ripe to stop welfare measures: political leaders
The Indian Express



India a welfare state, time not ripe to cease welfare measures: political leaders
Janata Khabar



India a welfare state, time not ripe to cease welfare measures: political leaders
Post of Asia



India a welfare state, time not ripe to stop welfare measures: political leaders
London Socialist Historians



Event Report

Opening Remarks

Professor Hilal Ahmed, Director CSDS

Prof. Hilal Ahmed on behalf of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung welcomed everyone to the evening's program. He remarked that we had gathered to for a very exciting panel discussion on the theme "Indian Electoral Democracy@75: Looking Back, Thinking Ahead" and to celebrate the publication of a book by colleague Professor Sanjay Kumar titled 'Elections in India: An overview'. Our eminent panelists as mentioned included Dr. Seema Malik, Ms. Shazia Ilmi, Ms. Juhie Singh, Ms. Supriya Shrinete, Mr. Saurabh Bhardwaj, Mr. Andreas Bühl and Dr. Mario Voigt. He remarked that his final task was to say a big thank you to the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, who have been partners of Lokniti and CSDS for a very long time and have supported several studies carried out by Lokniti and he thanked them for the support over the years. He mentioned that he was looking forward to many more studies. He then thanked everyone and invited Mr. Pankaj Madan on the dais.

Introductory Remarks

Mr. Pankaj Madan, Deputy Head, India Office, KAS

Mr. Pankaj Madan wished everyone a good evening. He remarked that it was nice to be present for this very important event. He thanked the partners, the CSDS, Professor Hilal Ahmed, and his team for cohosting the panel discussion along with the India Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. He remarked that pivotal events like the present one are what continually breathe new life and energy into our long-standing partnership. He started by introducing the panelist with a short bio and asked them to join him on the dais. After a quick introduction, he thanked the audience and panelists for making this a remarkable event. He then asked Prof. Hilal Ahmed to start the discussion on 'Indian Electoral Democracy@75: Looking Back, Thing Ahead'.

Panel Discussion

Hilal Ahmed

Prof. Hilal Ahmed welcomed the distinguished panelists and remarked that it was a great pleasure to be a part of this evening and started off with the question that 'Is there any correlation between electoral democracy and the idea of election'. Addressing the same, he pointed out that if we unfold this whole issue, we find that there are two very popular sorts of interpretation. One interpretation is that elections are the most reliable expression of the success of democracy in India. The different interpretation is that there is a culture of democracy that actually provides a very conducive environment for the success of electoral reforms. Professor Ahmed reiterated the fact that the British reluctance to give independence to India was primarily based on two arguments. One, that we are not educated enough to take care of democracy, and second that we do not have any culture of democracy and we have proved them wrong. He mentioned the increasing turnouts in Indian elections. Prof. Ahmed mentioned that since, our first election in 1952, there is a tremendous increase in turnout, especially since 2014.

Saurabh Bhardwaj

Saurabh Bhardwaj said that now when we are celebrating 75 years of our independence then there is one achievement for which we should appreciate ourselves, our leaders, and the country at large. The achievement is that we have managed to inculcate the roots of democracy into our culture. There were a lot of countries that got independence more or less around India and they have not been able to preserve our democracy.

Shazia Ilmi

Shazia Ilmi pointed out that India as democracy has come a long way. After the independence, there was a single-party dominance, followed by a coalition and now again there is a single-party dominance. She opined that as Indians, we are more demanding of democracy and aren't okay with what we get and, we want more active participation. The protests that we see are a representation of this active participation. She also said that the digital world has brought engagement to electoral politics. Further in her address, Shazia Ilmi mentioned that to ensure a true democracy, the people should come out of their set identities. She opined that these set boundaries are now breaking and the old order is changing. People are getting out of the clutches and are seeing who is giving them a better deal. The nature of the voter is changing. There is some unlearning and re-learning there.

Andreas Bühl

Andreas Bühl pointed out towards several facets of democracy. He pointed out that every election revolves around the question- change or the same? He also stated that in his opinion democracy is not guaranteed, we have to fight for it again and again.

Dr. Seema Malik

Dr. Seema Malik pointed out a fact that we should feel proud of our transformation from a poverty-stricken nation to making our place on the global table. She said that it is not possible to have an electoral democracy without electoral literacy. She mentioned that with the advent of media and information technology, electoral literacy has improved. The campaigns, access to mobile and the internet have greatly improved political literacy and are responsible for the rising participation in the elections.

Supriya Shrinete

Supriya Shrinete started with her opinion that democracy is what has kept us together and alive. This democracy and democratic spirit should be protected and the temptation to undermine people who don't agree with you has to be watched out for. She highlighted that we are where we are because we are democratic and therefore any attempt to undermine the evolution of democracy should be prevented.

On the question of women's participation in politics, she called for affirmative action to bring women to legislation. She opined that this is what will strengthen our democracy.

In the final part of the discussion about the ongoing debate on freebies, she raised the question 'why the benefits to the poor are called freebies and for the super-rich, it is called incentives'. She further added that in a country like India, how is the corporate tax much less than the income tax? She added that this debate about welfarism and freebies can only begin when the divide between rich and poor is removed.

Dr. Mario Voigt

In his presentation, Mario Voigt talked about the various factors influencing democracy and where does democracy stand in today's world. Talking about the fake news and propaganda, he said that if you can convince people that real news is fake, it becomes easier to make them believe that your fake news is real.

Juhie Singh

Juhie Singh applauded the Indian democracy and the evolution of our electoral democracy over the years. She also pointed out some factors that are hampering democracy. The journey of Indian electoral democracy from its very first elections in 1952 to the present times is phenomenal. She mentioned that extremism in any form is not healthy for democratic evolution. She added that democracy for everyone in the room is that a government is elected to provide services that only the government can provide. She pointed out the gap between the people and the decision-makers. She said that “if the Government is making policies for the people, they have to consult the people.” Other than this, she also addressed the issue of women’s participation in politics. According to her, ensuring women’s participation in politics is crucial to our democracy.

Vote of Thanks

Vibha Attri, CSDS

Vibha Attri thanked the panelists for an insightful discussion. She further read out a message on behalf of Prof. Sanjay Kumar, who could not attend the event. In the message, Prof. Kumar thanked the panelists and participants for their valuable time. He lost his mother on Aug 19 due to which he would not be a part of the event. He also expressed his gratitude to the India Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for their partnership. Following this, he again thanked everyone who made this event a success despite his absence.

Program Schedule

18:30 hrs	Arrivals and registration
18:45 hrs	Welcome Remarks by Prof. Hilal Ahmed, Deputy Director, CSDS
18:50 hrs	Introductory Remarks by Pankaj Madan, Deputy Head- India Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
19.00 hrs	<p>Panel Discussion on “Indian Electoral Democracy@75: Looking Back, Thinking Ahead”</p> <p>Sharing some evidences: Dr. Mario Voigt, German politician of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU)</p> <p><u>Moderator:</u> Prof. Hilal Ahmed, Deputy Director, CSDS</p> <p><u>Panelists:</u> Dr. Seema Malik, Nationalist Congress Party Shazia Ilmi, Bharatiya Janata Party Juhie Singh, Samajwadi Party Supriya Shrinete, Indian National Congress Dr. Mario Voigt, Christian Democratic Union Andreas Buhl, Christian Democratic Union Saurabh Bhardwaj, Aam Aadmi party</p>
20.15 hrs	Book release: “Elections in India: An overview”
20:15 hrs	Vote of Thanks by Vibha Attri, Researcher, Lokniti-CSDS
Followed by	Dinner reception

Speaker Profiles

Ms. Supriya Shrinate, Spokesperson, Indian National Congress



Supriya Shrinate currently serves as a National Spokesperson for the Indian National Congress and the chairperson of social media and digital platforms in its communications department.

She holds a Master's degree in History from the University of Delhi. Prior to joining politics, she has worked for 18 years as a journalist in the print and electronic media.

Ms. Juhie Singh, Spokesperson, Samajwadi Party



Juhie Singh is the spokesperson of Samajwadi Party. She is the former Chairperson of U.P. State Commission for Protection of Child Rights and has also served as the Chairperson of Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India. She was awarded the News Association of India's Best Politician Award in 2014.

She holds a Master's degree in public policy and management from the University of London and a bachelor's degree from Allahabad University.

Ms. Shazia Ilmi, Spokesperson, Bharatiya Janata Party



Shazia Ilmi is the National Spokesperson of Bharatiya Janata Party. She is a social activist who was formerly a television journalist and spent around 15 years in television news and documentary production and also led a media campaign for an anti-corruption Bill.

She has done a course in mass communication from the Jamie Millie Islamic University and a diploma in journalism and broadcasting from the University of Wales in Cardiff. She is also a diploma holder in 16 mm Film Production from the New York Film Academy.

Ms. Seema Malik, Spokesperson, Nationalist Congress Party



Dr. Seema Malik is the National Spokesperson of Nationalist Congress Party and the National General Secretary of its women wing. She is also the founder of *Mirchi Jhonk*, an NGO dedicated to encouraging the safety of women.

She holds an MBBS and MD degree in Pathology and has done a Course in Aesthetic Medicine from Italy.

Saurabh Bharadwaj, Spokesperson, Aam Aadmi Party



Saurabh Bharadwaj is an Indian politician from the Aam Aadmi Party, representing Greater Kailash constituency in the Delhi Legislative Assembly. He is currently the Vice Chairman of the Delhi Jal Board.

He is a Computer Science graduate and also holds a bachelor's degree in law from Osmania University.

Dr. Mario Voigt, Head of Delegation



Mario Voigt is a German politician of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) who has been serving as a leader of the CDU in the state parliament (Landtag) of Thuringia since 2020. He has been a member of the Landtag since 2009. He previously served as co-deputy leader of the Thuringian CDU from 2014 to 2020, and general-secretary of the party from 2010 to 2014.

Dr. Voigt studied political science, public law and modern history at the universities of Jena, Bonn, and Charlottesville in the United States from 1997 to 2003. He received his PhD in political science at the Chemnitz University of Technology in 2008 and has received a scholarship from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

Andreas Bühl



Andreas Bühl is a German politician (CDU) and has been a member of the Thuringian state parliament since 2014. In 2009, Bühl was elected to the city council of Ilmenau, where he was active as deputy parliamentary group leader for the CDU. He is a member of the city's building and procurement committee.

Bühl is also a member of the state board of the Junge Union Thuringia and a co-opted member of the district board of the JU in the Ilm district. From 2007 to 2009 he was Deputy State Chair of the Ring of Christian Democratic Students (RCDS).

In addition to his political volunteer work, Bühl is active as chairman of the German-American Friends of Ilmenau e.V. He is also chairman of the Wanderjugend Thüringen e.V and the Association for Sport and Experience-oriented Integrative Social Work VSS-Ilmenau e.V.

About the Partners

Mr. Pankaj Madan, Deputy Head to India, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)



Mr. Pankaj Madan is the Deputy Head of the New Delhi Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. He has been with the Foundation for over 30 years in various capacities and is responsible for the conceptualization of development and dialogue programs, research and editing, budgetary evaluations, and monitoring and liaising with Ministries at the state and center levels both, Members of Parliament and State Legislatures, Government Departments, Political Parties, Media and Apex bodies. Before that, he was with the Indo-German Export Promotion (IGEP) project of the GIZ.

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as “Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education”, in 1964 the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

With 16 regional offices in Germany and over 120 offices abroad, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is committed to achieving and maintaining peace, freedom, and justice through political education. We promote and preserve free democracy, a social market economy, and the development and consolidation of the value consensus. We focus on consolidating democracy, the unification of Europe, and the strengthening of transatlantic relations, as well as on development cooperation.

The leitmotif of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation "Germany. The next chapter" is supported by a thematic focus. With the three main topics Innovation, Security and Representation, and Participation, it is quite clear which topics the Konrad Adenauer Foundation will focus on in the coming years.

We cooperate with governmental institutions, political parties, and civil society organizations, building strong partnerships along the way. In particular, we seek to intensify political cooperation in the area of development cooperation on the foundations of our objectives and values. Together with our partners, we make a significant contribution to the creation of a global order that empowers every country to determine its own developmental priorities and destiny in an internationally responsible manner.

The India Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has organized its program priorities into five working areas:

1. Foreign and Security Policy
2. Economic, Climate, and Energy Policy
3. Rule of Law
4. Political Dialogue focused on Social and Political Change
5. Media and Youth

The India Office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation takes great pride in its cooperation with Indian partner institutions that implement jointly curated projects and programs.

Professor Sanjay Kumar, Co-Director Lokniti-CSDS



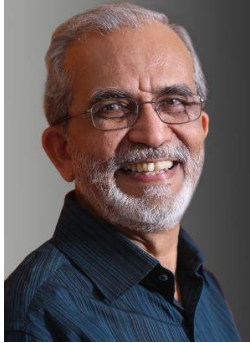
Sanjay Kumar is currently a Professor at CSDS and the Co-Director of the Lokniti Programme. He served as the Director of CSDS from January 2014 till January 2020. His main area of research has been Indian Elections, and voting behavior, but using quantitative methods, he has been engaged in conducting research on other themes namely Indian Youth and State of Democracy in South Asia.

He has published several books and edited volumes on Indian elections. Some of his well know books are “Post Mandal Politics in Bihar: Changing Electoral Patterns”, “Changing Electoral Politics in Delhi: From Caste to Class” and “Measuring Voting Behavior in India”. Besides these, he has several other publications to his credit.

He has also worked extensively on issues related to Indian Youth, and co-authored and edited volumes on Indian Youth: (With Peter De Souza and Sandeep Shastri) [“Indian Youth in a Transforming World: Attitudes and Perceptions”, “Indian Youth and Electoral Politics: An Emerging Engagement”. The edited volume “Youth in India: Aspiration, Attitudes, Anxieties” published by Routledge, is his most recent publication on Indian Youth.

He writes regularly for both English and Hindi newspapers like Asian Age, Deccan Chronicles, The Mint, The Hindu, Indian Express, Dainik Bhaskar, and Rajasthan Patrika. He is also a familiar face on Indian Television as a well know Psephologist and election analyst.

Professor Suhas Palshikar, Co-Director Lokniti, Chief Editor, Studies in Indian Politics



Suhas Palshikar, based in Pune, India, taught political science from 1978 to 2016. He is the Co-Director of Lokniti and the Chief Editor of the biannual journal brought out by Sage, Studies in Indian Politics. He was also the Editor of Samaaj Prabodhan Patrika during 1990-2004.

He has been associated with the National Election Studies since the 1996 elections. Professor Palshikar was one of the principal investigators of the international project on Democracy in South Asia (Round One and Round Two).

Professor Palshikar writes in English and Marathi on contemporary politics and has also written extensively in academic publications on the theme of democratic politics in India. He has been a frequent contributor to The Indian Express and journals like Seminar and The Economic and Political Weekly. His Marathi books include 'Rajyashastra Kosh' (Dastane Ramachandra, Pune, 1987) 'Maharashtratil Sattasangharsh' (Samkaleen Prakashan, Pune, 2007), 'Rajakarnacha Taleband' (Sadhana, Pune, 2013) and 'DeshPradesh' (Unique Foundation, Pune, 2014).

Professor Palshikar's latest English books include, 'The Last Fortress of Congress Dominance: Maharashtra since the 1990s' (co-authored with Rajeshwari Deshpande) (2021, Sage) and 'Politics and Society Between Elections', (with Siddharth Swaminathan, 2021, Routledge). He is also the Co-Editor of the Sage Series on Politics in the Indian States. Some of his other works include Indian Democracy (OUP, 2017) and co-edited volumes Electoral Politics in India: Resurgence of Bharatiya Janata Party' (Routledge, 2017) and 'Party Competition in Indian States' (OUP,2014).

Professor Sandeep Shastri, Vice-Chancellor, Jagran Lakecity University



Sandeep Shastri is a Political Scientist who is currently the Vice-Chancellor of Jagran Lakecity University and the National Coordinator of the Lokniti Network. He has written extensively on the leadership factor in Indian elections and political parties (Lal Bahadur Shastri: Politics and Beyond. New Delhi: Rupa and Co. 2019; “The Modi Factor in the 2019 Lok Sabha Election: How Critical Was It to the BJP Victory?” Studies in Indian Politics, Volume 7, Issue 2, 206-18, 2019; ‘The Modi Factor in 2014’ in Palshikar, Kumar, and Lodha, Electoral Politics in India: Resurgence of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Routledge, 2017).

Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

Since its inception in 1963, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies has been recognized as one of the leading intellectual institutions of the global south. CSDS has been supported by the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi under the Ministry of Education, Government of India since 1969.

At the Centre, we believe that ideas grow out of everyday social and political practices. We, therefore, consider it an important function of intellectuals to stay close to, articulate, and critically comment upon such practices. By remaining alert to the ways in which ordinary people negotiate and reinvent their worlds, and generate alternative systems and imaginations, CSDS has challenged the routes of social and political change that are accepted as 'normal'. This frequently leads to a productive tension between rigorous scholarly work and living social movements, between academic engagement and political commitment.

The Centre has accomplished a generational transition by reinventing itself in the 21st century, with a fresh commitment to forging links between the social sciences and the humanities, and to discovering non-European lineages of political and ethical thought in Indian languages.

Lokniti is a research programme of the CSDS established in 1997. It houses a cluster of research initiatives that seek to engage with national and global debates on democratic politics by initiating empirically grounded yet theoretically oriented studies. By bringing various projects of the CSDS on elections, democratic politics, and party politics together under a single programme, Lokniti seeks to engage with global debates on democracy.