



THE SMOKE SCREEN RESEARCH REPORT

The Managed Illusion of Indian Democracy,
Electronic Voting Machines,
and Institutional Capture

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Table of Contents The Smokescreen Political Research Report on India		
No.	Topic	Page
1.	Executive Summary	3
2.	Key Highlights of the Smokescreen Report	8
3.	About the Author	9
4.	Conceptual Framework — The Managed Illusion of Democracy	11
5.	Electronic Voting Machines — The Mechanics of Control	16
6.	Institutional Capture — Electoral Control	21
7.	The High-Stakes Leader: Narendra Modi and Politics of Impunity	25
8.	Managed Opposition and the Politics of Electoral Surrender	30
9.	Media, Bollywood, and the Manufacturing of Consent	34
10.	Gen Z, Youth Control, and the Fear of Uncontrollable Dissent	38
11.	International Warnings and the Global EVM Debate	42
12.	Manufactured Crises, National Security, and Electoral Distraction	46
13.	The Managed Opposition — Rhetoric Without Resistance	50
14.	Reform-Oriented Recommendations	55
15.	Use of Artificial Intelligence in This Report	56
16.	Disclaimer	57
17.	Circulation and Intended Audience	58
18.	Appeal for International Oversight of Indian Elections	59

The Smokescreen

The Managed Illusion of Indian Democracy, Electronic Voting Machines, and Institutional Capture

1. Executive Summary

The Smokescreen: The Managed Illusion of Indian Democracy, Electronic Voting Machines, and Institutional Capture is an expanded political research report that builds upon the earlier September 2025 [study](#) *Unveiling the Smokescreen of Indian Democracy: Fabricated Factors Masking Electoral Manipulation*. This second edition consolidates new political developments, election outcomes, public statements, media patterns, and international interventions to argue that India's electoral democracy has been systematically hollowed out and replaced with a managed illusion of democratic continuity.

At the core of this report is the assertion that India's elections are no longer free, transparent, or verifiable in any meaningful sense. While elections continue to be held regularly and opposition parties formally participate, the process itself is alleged to be structurally compromised. The report contends that the repeated electoral victories of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) since 2014 cannot be credibly explained by governance outcomes, welfare delivery, ideology, nationalism, or leadership appeal alone. Instead, it argues that large-scale manipulation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), combined with deep institutional capture, constitutes the primary engine of electoral outcomes in India.

The “smokescreen” referenced in the title describes a layered strategy of narrative management designed to distract citizens, media, and international observers from the mechanics of election theft. This strategy includes welfare announcements timed before elections, hyper-nationalist rhetoric, communal polarization, military escalations with Pakistan, selective allowance of opposition victories in politically non-critical states, and relentless propaganda amplified through traditional media, social media platforms, and popular culture—particularly Bollywood cinema. Together, these elements sustain the appearance of democratic competition while concealing the alleged manipulation of the electoral process itself.

This report argues that EVMs are the indispensable tool that enables election theft at scale. While voter roll manipulation, welfare inducements, media bias, and intimidation may influence margins at the periphery, they cannot account for decisive victories across national and strategically important state elections involving hundreds of millions of voters.

Erosion of Indian Democracy



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Only centralized, programmable vote-count manipulation—allegedly enabled through EVM control units operating outside public scrutiny—can plausibly explain consistent and targeted electoral outcomes. The report rejects the claim that EVMs are secure merely because they are not connected to the internet, noting that standalone systems are equally vulnerable to pre-programmed code, malicious firmware, and covert alterations during storage, transport, or configuration.

Despite the introduction of Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs), the report maintains that elections in India remain fundamentally unverifiable. Voters cannot confirm whether their vote has been correctly recorded or counted, and independent audits are systematically denied. The Election Commission of India (ECI), rather than functioning as a neutral constitutional body, is alleged to have become an extension of the ruling regime. Changes in the law governing the appointment of Election Commissioners,

removal of judicial oversight, and the granting of functional immunity to election officials are cited as evidence of deliberate institutional subordination.

The judiciary, once regarded as a potential corrective force, is assessed in this report as largely incapacitated. Drawing on [findings](#) from the India Judicial Research Report 2025 (IJRR 2025), the study argues that selective case listing, delayed hearings, opaque judgments, and post-retirement inducements have neutralized judicial scrutiny of election-related grievances. Multiple petitions challenging EVM credibility, electoral discrepancies, and election commission conduct have been dismissed or indefinitely stalled, reinforcing the perception that no effective domestic legal remedy remains available.

Opposition politics, particularly the role of the Indian National Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi, is examined critically. While Gandhi and other opposition leaders have periodically alleged election theft and EVM manipulation, their response is characterized as episodic, rhetorical, and strategically ineffective. Parliamentary speeches, press conferences, foreign lectures, and social media campaigns are presented as substitutes for sustained mass mobilization.

The report argues that without indefinite, nationwide street protests or a boycott of EVM-based elections, opposition participation merely legitimizes a predetermined process. Rahul Gandhi's continued political relevance is attributed less to organizational strength or mass leadership than to dynastic inheritance, while his reluctance to confront the EVM issue decisively is linked to both political timidity and legal vulnerability arising from corruption and money-laundering cases, including the National Herald matter.

The report further situates electoral manipulation within a broader ecosystem of narrative control. Bollywood's increasing reliance on nationalist, militaristic, and Pakistan-centric storylines is presented as a key propaganda vector. Films such as *Ikkis*, *Border 2*, *Dhurandhar*, *Battle of Galwan*, and similar projects are examined as cultural instruments that amplify fear, hostility, and manufactured external threats. Sudden disclaimers, forced narrative revisions, and exaggerated depictions of Pakistan are interpreted as regime-aligned interventions intended to reinforce communal polarization and divert attention from domestic democratic decay.

International perspectives form a crucial part of the analysis. Public warnings by figures such as Elon Musk and U.S. President Donald Trump against electronic voting systems

are cited to challenge India's claim that EVM skepticism is fringe or anti-national. Empirical examples, including Argentina's rapid hand-counting of millions of paper ballots, are used to rebut the argument that paper-based elections are impractical in large democracies. The report notes that while India rejects international oversight as an affront to sovereignty, it increasingly resembles regimes that use elections as performative rituals rather than instruments of accountability.

The study also links alleged election manipulation to the exploitation of national security crises. Terror attacks such as Pulwama (2019) and Pahalgam (2025), along with subsequent military operations like "Operation Sindoor," are examined as politically timed events that consolidate power, suppress dissent, and shift public discourse away from electoral integrity. The refusal to permit independent investigations into these incidents, coupled with the vilification of dissenting voices, is presented as consistent with a broader strategy of managed fear.

Ultimately, The Smokescreen concludes that India is transitioning from a flawed democracy to a parliamentary dictatorship in which elections persist but outcomes are selectively engineered. Democratic rituals continue, but democratic choice has been structurally neutralized. In the absence of credible domestic remedies, the report calls for urgent international attention and argues that future Indian elections should be conducted exclusively on paper ballots under independent, internationally supervised mechanisms, including oversight by the United Nations. Without such intervention, the report warns, electoral outcomes in India will remain unverifiable, political alternation will remain illusory, and the suffering of nearly 1.4 billion citizens will continue behind the carefully maintained façade of the world's "largest democracy."



Smokescreen as Narrative Architecture

How Electoral Manipulation Is Hidden in Plain Sight

The Smokescreen is not a single lie or event. It is a carefully layered narrative architecture designed to divert public attention away from the most critical vulnerability in India's democracy: the opacity of electronic voting machines (EVMs) and the absence of verifiable electoral accountability.

At its core, the Smokescreen operates by overwhelming citizens with alternative political signals—emotional, symbolic, and repetitive—that displace scrutiny from electoral mechanics. Welfare announcements timed just before elections create the illusion of benevolent governance, redirecting voters toward gratitude rather than verification. Exaggerated claims of economic growth substitute lived economic hardship with headline optimism, muting questions about legitimacy.

Nationalist rhetoric and manufactured security threats—especially those centered on Pakistan—serve a more aggressive function. They convert elections into loyalty tests, framing dissent as anti-national behavior. In this environment, questioning EVM integrity becomes politically dangerous rather than democratically necessary. Communal polarization further fractures public discourse, ensuring that electoral outcomes are interpreted through identity conflict instead of institutional credibility.

Simultaneously, procedural distractions such as voter roll revisions, symbolic court interventions, and performative opposition campaigns create the impression of democratic activity while leaving the counting mechanism untouched. Media amplification and Bollywood's nationalist storytelling reinforce these narratives emotionally, normalizing the idea that strong leadership matters more than transparent elections.

Together, these components form a closed-loop system: elections continue to be held, institutions continue to function symbolically, and opposition voices continue to speak—yet the central mechanism that converts votes into power remains insulated from public audit.

This is the essence of Smokescreen democracy: visibility without accountability, participation without verification, and choice without control. Until the narrative layers are peeled away and electoral technology subjected to independent scrutiny, democracy survives only as performance—its outcomes pre-decided behind a veil of noise.

2. Key Highlights of the Smokescreen Report

1. India's electoral democracy is increasingly governed by a managed illusion, where elections occur but outcomes are structurally pre-determined.
2. Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) operate within an opaque architecture that resists independent verification and public scrutiny.
3. Institutional capture of the Election Commission and judiciary has created a system of electoral impunity.
4. Selective opposition victories are used to maintain the façade of democratic competition.
5. Bollywood, mainstream media, and nationalist narratives function as manufacturers of consent, diverting attention from electoral integrity.
6. Manufactured national security crises and communal polarisation serve as electoral distractions.
7. Gen Z represents the only demographic that meaningfully unsettles the ruling regime's long-term control strategy.
8. International figures, including Elon Musk and Donald Trump, have publicly warned against electronic voting risks.
9. The opposition remains rhetorically active but structurally ineffective, avoiding sustained resistance.
10. When leadership carries unresolved allegations of mass violence and criminality, electoral manipulation becomes a survival imperative rather than a political tactic.



3. About the Author



Rakesh Raman is a national award–winning journalist and the founder of the humanitarian organization RMN Foundation. He has held senior editorial positions with leading media organizations in India and has contributed an exclusive editorial column to The Financial Express, the flagship business daily of The Indian Express Group.

For more than fifteen years, Rakesh has independently operated global, multi-platform news services, publishing investigative journalism, long-form research reports, audio analyses, and digital magazines. His work focuses on issues of democratic governance, judicial accountability, human rights, environmental protection, education awareness, institutional corruption, and systemic abuse of power.

In October 2025, he authored and [released](#) *India Judicial Research Report 2025: Decline of the Indian Judiciary*, a comprehensive analytical study documenting structural corruption, institutional capture, inefficiency, and judicial opacity within India’s legal system. The report combines empirical data analysis, case studies, and twenty actionable reform recommendations.

In November 2025, he [published](#) *India Corruption Research Report 2025: An Analysis of Systemic Decay and Democratic Backsliding*, examining entrenched corruption across political, administrative, and regulatory institutions and its impact on democratic erosion.

Both research reports are archived on Zenodo, developed under the European OpenAIRE program and operated by CERN, ensuring permanent DOI-based academic citation. They are also available on Academia.edu to facilitate wider scholarly engagement and collaboration.

Rakesh is the publisher of *The Unrest*, a fortnightly open-access [publication](#) archived on Zenodo. *The Unrest* curates independent investigative reporting and research-driven perspectives on global governance, democracy, technology, media, and geopolitical transformations.

He serves as a Country Expert for India with the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project, managed by the V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. In this capacity, he provides expert research inputs on democratic institutions, elections,

political parties, media freedom, judicial independence, executive power, and digital governance.

Earlier in his career, Rakesh collaborated with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) as a digital media expert, assisting enterprises in leveraging digital technologies for strategic communication, brand development, and market expansion.

He is currently engaged in the development of Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI) applications and in the exploration of emerging Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) frameworks, with a focus on deploying AI to enhance decision-making, operational efficiency, and governance outcomes.

His AI-related policy research includes *A Strategic Framework for Implementing Artificial Intelligence in Public Governance: A 10-Step Roadmap for Developing Nations*, which proposes a structured model for integrating AI into public administration systems across emerging economies.

Rakesh is also leading the Aether 360 Project — “*Aether 360 to Unmask the Hidden Health Crisis: AI to Quantify Air Pollution’s Link to Acute Hospital Admissions in New Delhi.*” The initiative aims to develop the world’s first AI-based model capable of calculating the Attribution Rate (A-Rate), quantifying the probability that acute respiratory or cardiac hospital admissions are directly caused by recent air-pollution spikes.

In addition, he heads the RMN Consumer Rights Network ([CRN](#)), a free public-interest initiative that empowers citizens to challenge corporate fraud, misleading advertising, unsafe products, and government negligence.

Due to his investigative reporting and anti-corruption work, Rakesh has faced sustained intimidation, including death threats. The Paris-based international press freedom organization Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has publicly [urged](#) the Government of India to ensure his safety.

[Web Profile](#) | [LinkedIn](#)



4. Conceptual Framework — The Managed Illusion of Democracy

The central conceptual premise of *The Smokescreen* is that contemporary India no longer functions as a substantive democracy but as a managed illusion of democracy. In this framework, democratic institutions, rituals, and vocabulary continue to exist, but their core function—enabling citizens to meaningfully choose and change their rulers—has been systematically neutralized. Elections are held regularly, opposition parties are allowed to operate, courts continue to function, and media outlets broadcast political debates. Yet these visible features serve primarily as legitimizing theatre, masking a deeper structural reality in which political outcomes are pre-engineered.

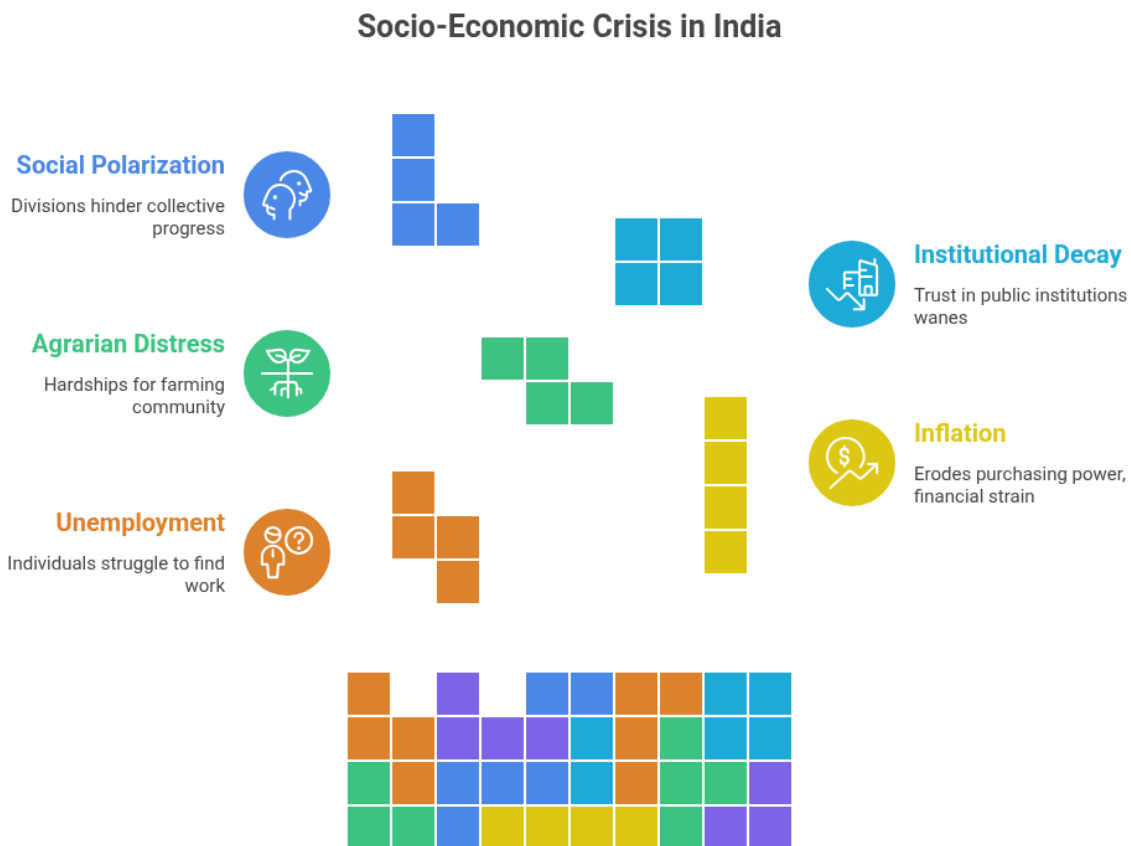
This report defines a managed illusion of democracy as a political system in which electoral processes are retained not to facilitate accountability, but to manufacture consent. Power is not seized through overt authoritarian rupture—such as coups or suspension of constitutions—but consolidated gradually through institutional capture, procedural manipulation, and narrative control. The appearance of democracy becomes more important than democracy itself, especially for international legitimacy.

In such systems, elections are not abolished because their symbolic value is too great. Instead, elections are transformed into controlled exercises where the range of permissible outcomes is tightly constrained. Citizens are encouraged to vote, political parties campaign, and results are declared with ritualistic regularity. However, the actual mechanism that translates votes into power is shielded from scrutiny, insulated from oversight, and controlled by actors aligned with the ruling regime. In India, this report argues, Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) constitute the technical core of this managed system.

Democracy as Procedure Versus Democracy as Outcome

A key distinction in this conceptual framework is between procedural democracy and substantive democracy. Procedural democracy emphasizes the existence of formal processes—elections, institutions, courts, legislatures—without interrogating whether these processes genuinely reflect popular will. Substantive democracy, by contrast, requires that outcomes be uncertain, contestable, and reversible through transparent mechanisms. India today, according to this framework, exemplifies procedural democracy without substantive accountability. Elections are conducted on schedule, voter turnout is

celebrated, and the mechanics of polling are widely televised. Yet the outcomes—particularly in national elections and strategically critical states—display a striking predictability that contradicts underlying social and economic realities, including widespread unemployment, inflation, agrarian distress, institutional decay, and social polarization.



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The managed illusion thrives precisely because it does not abolish democratic procedure; it weaponizes it. Citizens are told that because they voted, democracy has prevailed—even when they cannot verify whether their vote was counted accurately or whether alternative outcomes were ever possible.

The Role of Technology in Managed Democracies

Modern managed democracies rely heavily on technological systems that are opaque to the public but authoritative in their outputs. Unlike paper ballots, which are tangible,

recountable, and auditable by ordinary citizens, electronic systems concentrate trust in machines, technicians, and institutions rather than in observable processes.

This report situates India's EVM-centric election system within a global pattern in which technology is used not to enhance transparency, but to suppress it under the guise of efficiency. The claim that EVMs eliminate booth capturing, speed up counting, and reduce human error is presented as part of the smokescreen narrative. What is obscured is that EVMs transfer electoral sovereignty from voters to a closed technical architecture controlled by a small, unaccountable elite.

In the conceptual framework of this report, opacity is not a flaw but a feature. The inability of citizens to independently audit elections ensures that challenges to results can be dismissed as speculative or anti-national. The burden of proof is shifted unfairly onto skeptics, while the system itself remains immune from rigorous scrutiny.

Institutional Capture as a System, Not an Accident

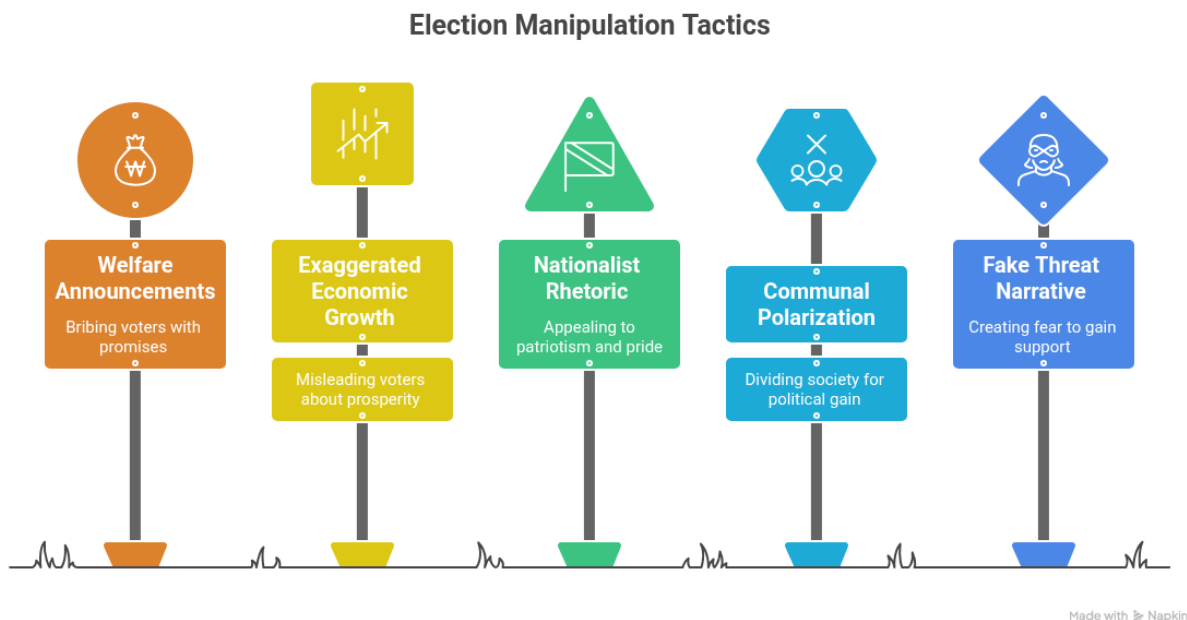
The managed illusion of democracy cannot function without comprehensive institutional capture. This report conceptualizes institutional capture not as isolated corruption or individual misconduct, but as a coordinated restructuring of constitutional bodies to ensure regime continuity. In India, this includes the Election Commission of India, the judiciary, investigative agencies, Parliament, regulatory bodies, and significant segments of the media ecosystem. Legal changes that alter appointment mechanisms, grant immunity, weaken judicial oversight, or concentrate discretionary power are not viewed here as administrative reforms, but as structural safeguards for electoral manipulation.

Crucially, institutional capture allows the regime to claim legality while undermining legitimacy. Decisions are made "according to law," even when the law itself has been tailored to protect power rather than accountability. Courts may hear cases, but not decide them meaningfully. Investigations may be launched, but selectively. Oversight bodies may exist, but function as extensions of executive authority.

The Smokescreen as Narrative Architecture

The term smokescreen in this report refers to a deliberate architecture of distraction. It is not a single lie or propaganda campaign, but a multi-layered narrative system designed to occupy public attention while the mechanics of power remain untouched. This architecture includes welfare announcements before elections, exaggerated claims of

economic growth, nationalist rhetoric, communal polarization, and recurring external threats—particularly involving Pakistan. Military operations, terror incidents, and hyper-nationalist media cycles are used to generate emotional intensity that overwhelms rational scrutiny of governance and elections.



Cultural production plays a central role in sustaining this smokescreen. Bollywood films, television serials, and digital content increasingly align with state narratives, glorifying militarism, demonizing minorities, and reinforcing the idea of a besieged nation in need of a strong, permanent leader. These narratives normalize authoritarian tendencies by framing dissent as dangerous and accountability as destabilizing.

Selective Democracy and Controlled Losses

An essential component of the managed illusion is the allowance of selective opposition victories. This report conceptualizes this as controlled pluralism. In states where the ruling party's national power is not threatened, opposition parties may be permitted to win elections, thereby reinforcing the claim that democracy is alive and competitive.

These controlled losses serve as evidence points whenever allegations of election fraud arise. The regime can point to opposition victories as proof that manipulation does not exist, while quietly ensuring dominance in electorally decisive states and national

contests. This selective application of control strengthens the illusion precisely because it appears inconsistent.

Opposition as a Functional Component of the Illusion

Within this framework, opposition parties are not merely victims of the system but, often unintentionally, participants in sustaining it. By contesting EVM-based elections without securing transparency, by limiting resistance to rhetoric rather than mass mobilization, and by repeatedly legitimizing outcomes they privately question, opposition parties help maintain the façade of choice.

The report treats the behavior of opposition leadership—particularly the Congress party and Rahul Gandhi—not as an individual failure alone, but as a structural feature of the managed system. Legal vulnerability, institutional intimidation, dynastic inertia, and risk aversion combine to produce an opposition that speaks loudly but acts cautiously, reinforcing the illusion of resistance without threatening the underlying mechanism of control.

From Democracy to Electoral Authoritarianism

Conceptually, this report places India within the category of electoral authoritarianism—a system where elections exist but do not serve their democratic function. Unlike classical dictatorships, such systems rely on procedural legitimacy rather than coercion alone. Citizens are governed not through constant repression, but through managed participation, controlled information, and institutionalized ambiguity.

The managed illusion of democracy is therefore not a transitional phase but a stable political model—one that can persist indefinitely unless disrupted by mass civil resistance, technological rollback to verifiable voting systems, or international intervention.

This conceptual framework underpins all subsequent chapters of *The Smokescreen*. It provides the analytical lens through which Electronic Voting Machines, institutional capture, opposition behavior, media complicity, cultural propaganda, and international responses are examined—not as isolated phenomena, but as interlocking components of a single, coherent system designed to preserve power while simulating democracy.



5. Electronic Voting Machines — Architecture, Opacity, and the Mechanics of Control

At the core of India's managed illusion of democracy lies a single technological instrument: the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM). While welfare schemes, nationalist rhetoric, cultural propaganda, and opposition theatrics constitute the visible layers of the smokescreen, EVMs form its structural spine. Without control over the vote-counting mechanism, none of the regime's political dominance would be sustainable.

This chapter examines [EVMs](#) not merely as voting devices but as instruments of political power—designed, defended, and deployed within an ecosystem of opacity that precludes meaningful public verification.

From Ballot Sovereignty to Machine Sovereignty

Democratic elections historically rested on a simple principle: citizens must be able to see, verify, and recount votes. Paper ballots—despite logistical challenges—allowed this verification. Disputes could be resolved through recounts, audits, and judicial scrutiny.

India's shift from paper ballots to Electronic Voting Machines fundamentally altered this relationship. Sovereignty over elections moved away from citizens and into the hands of a closed technical system controlled by election authorities, manufacturers, and security agencies—none of whom are accountable to voters in real time.

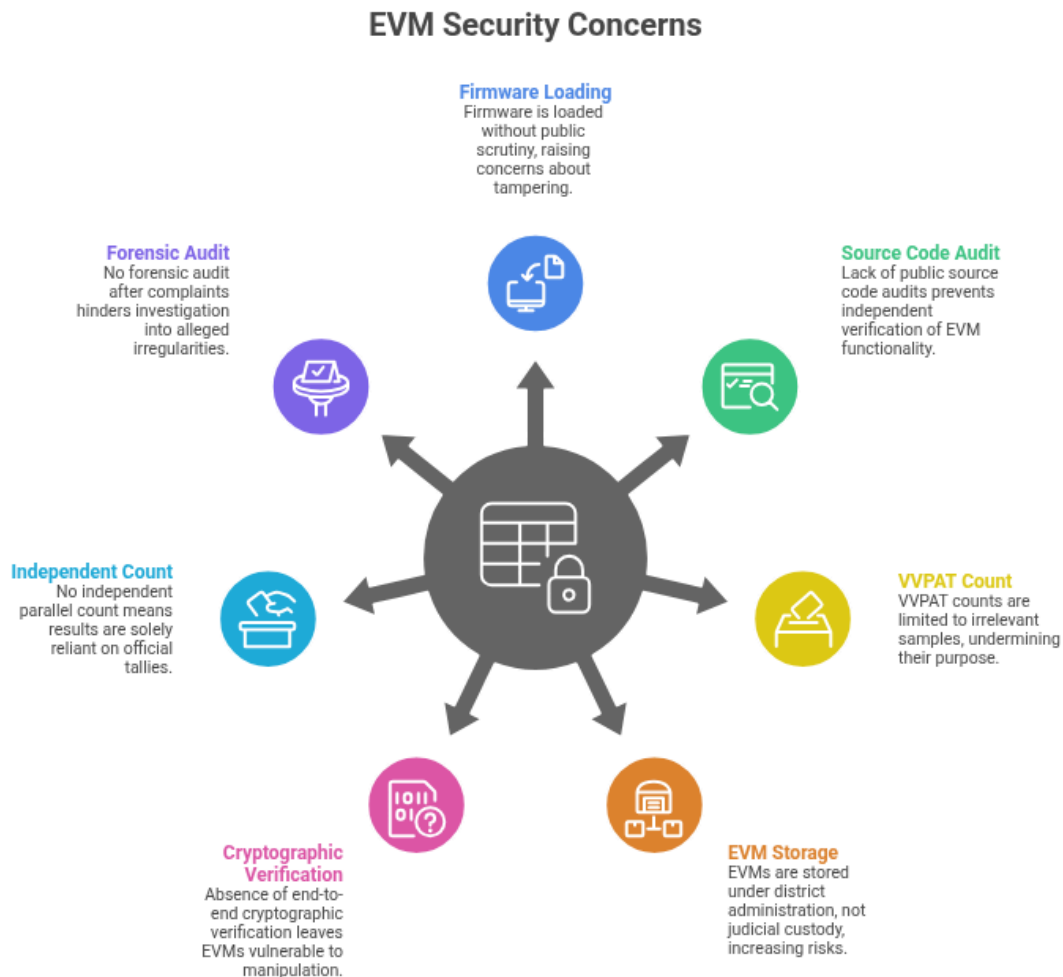
The Election Commission of India (ECI) claims that EVMs are “standalone,” “tamper-proof,” and “not connected to any network.” However, critics argue that connectivity is not required for manipulation. What matters is control over software, firmware, and hardware access—all of which remain opaque to the public.

This opacity is not incidental. It is the foundation upon which electoral certainty is constructed.

Architecture Without Transparency

At the heart of India's EVM system lies the Control Unit, the Balloting Unit, and the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT). While the introduction of VVPATs was presented as a reform to enhance transparency, it has failed to restore public confidence. Only a tiny fraction of VVPAT slips are counted—typically five machines per constituency—rendering

the verification statistically meaningless. Voters cannot confirm whether their individual vote was recorded correctly or counted accurately. Once the vote is cast, it disappears into a black box.



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Rahul Gandhi captured this reality bluntly during the 2024–25 election cycle when he said:

“The soul of the King is in the EVM.”

Though rhetorically dramatic, the [statement](#) reflected a growing recognition—even within mainstream opposition—that political power in India is no longer contested primarily

through campaigns, policies, or public support, but through control of the electoral machinery.

Global Warnings Ignored at Home

India's insistence on EVMs places it at odds with a growing international consensus favoring paper ballots.

In July 2024, Elon Musk—owner of X (formerly Twitter), Tesla, and SpaceX—issued a public warning:

“Electronic voting machines and anything mailed in is too risky. We should mandate paper ballots and in-person voting only.”

Musk cited multiple studies [showing](#) that EVMs can be reprogrammed invisibly and that malicious code can spread from one machine to another like a virus. He dismantled the efficiency argument by pointing to Argentina, which hand-counted nearly 27 million paper ballots in under six hours.

Similarly, in 2025, United States President Donald Trump publicly [advocated](#) paper ballots during a joint press interaction with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, citing the risks of electronic interference.

These statements were widely reported internationally—but largely ignored or downplayed within India. The same Indian establishment that celebrates global validation of Modi's leadership remains silent when global leaders question India's election technology.

Political Voices Within India: Fear, Hesitation, and Half-Measures

Indian opposition leaders have raised concerns about EVMs—but sporadically, cautiously, and often without follow-through.

Akhilesh Yadav, President of the Samajwadi Party and former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, made one of the strongest statements in Parliament in 2024:

“I did not trust EVMs yesterday, I do not trust them today, and I will not trust them even if I win all 80 seats.”

Yet no sustained national movement followed.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra publicly challenged the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in December 2025 to contest elections on ballot papers if it truly believed in its popularity. Rahul Gandhi and the Congress launched the “Vote Chor Gaddi Chhod” [campaign](#), accusing Modi of election theft.

However, these statements remained rhetorical. No indefinite protests followed. No election boycotts were attempted. Parliament and social media replaced mass resistance—precisely the behavior that allows the system to persist.

Bihar Election 2025: Predictability as Evidence

The Bihar Assembly [election](#) of November 2025 provides a case study in managed outcomes. BJP-led parties won over 200 seats out of 243—a result widely predicted weeks before polling day by opinion and exit polls closely aligned with the ruling establishment.

Opposition parties later alleged irregularities, including suspiciously similar vote counts across constituencies and unexplained discrepancies between votes polled and votes counted. Yet the Election Commission dismissed these concerns, and the Supreme Court declined substantive intervention.

The predictability itself becomes evidence. In a society facing extreme unemployment, inflation, and rural distress, electoral outcomes repeatedly favoring the ruling party defy political logic—unless the outcome is pre-determined.

EVMs as the Only Scalable Method of Election Theft

This report emphasizes a critical analytical distinction: traditional election malpractices cannot explain BJP’s sustained dominance.

Manipulating voter rolls, bribing voters, or influencing local officials may swing a few thousand votes—not crores. Large-scale electoral control across states and national elections requires a centralized, scalable mechanism. EVMs provide exactly that.

By controlling the Control Unit, outcomes can allegedly be calibrated at the constituency level, allowing selective wins and losses that preserve democratic appearance while securing strategic dominance. This also explains why the regime fiercely resists any return to paper ballots. If elections were held transparently, with publicly recountable ballots, the smokescreen would collapse. In Markadwadi village, Maharashtra (2024),

residents attempting a symbolic paper-ballot re-vote to highlight EVM discrepancies were stopped by police under threat of force, [underscoring](#) how EVM scrutiny itself is suppressed. In states where electoral outcomes are allegedly pre-decided, Modi intensifies campaigning to create the appearance that victories result from charisma and outreach, while EVMs quietly deliver the outcome.

Exit-poll agencies are then primed to project precise BJP seat counts, echoed by compliant media to normalize the results and pre-empt EVM questioning. Simultaneously, communal polarization is amplified to [suggest](#) ideological mobilization as the cause of victory. Yet in multiple states marked by visible anti-incumbency, corruption, and governance failure, BJP wins defy ground realities—pointing to EVMs as the only scalable mechanism capable of producing such uniform, outcome-controlled electoral reversals.

Judicial and Institutional Protection of the Black Box

Petitions challenging EVM integrity have repeatedly reached the Supreme Court of India. Most have been dismissed with vague observations affirming trust in institutions rather than addressing technical concerns.

This judicial posture—documented extensively in the India Judicial Research Report 2025—functions as an institutional firewall protecting the electoral system from scrutiny. The Election Commission enjoys functional immunity, while petitioners are subtly portrayed as destabilizers of democracy.

Thus, the EVM is not merely a machine; it is a protected institution, insulated by law, courts, and nationalist sentiment.

Why the Smokescreen Must Focus on EVMs

Welfare schemes, Bollywood nationalism, Pakistan-centric films, terror narratives, and opposition failures are all important—but they are secondary. They distract, polarize, and emotionally occupy citizens. EVMs decide power.

As long as elections remain unverifiable, every other democratic exercise becomes performative. Citizens can protest, campaign, vote, and debate—but they cannot change outcomes. This is why Modi's regime defends EVMs more aggressively than any policy. And this is why the opposition's refusal to confront the issue head-on ensures its own irrelevance.

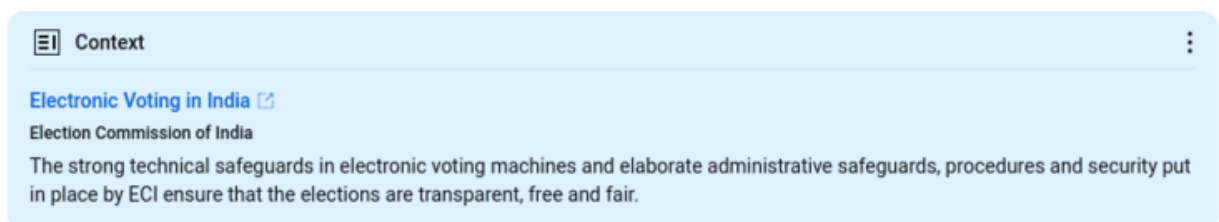
6. Institutional Capture — How Constitutional Bodies Enable Electoral Control

Institutional capture in India is no longer a speculative concept. It is observable, documented, and repeatedly enacted in public view. The Election Commission of India (ECI), sections of the judiciary, and allied oversight institutions now function less as constitutional safeguards and more as stabilizers of executive power. This chapter demonstrates how electoral opacity is actively defended—not accidentally tolerated—and how dissent is delegitimized rather than examined.

Electronic Voting Machines do not operate in a vacuum. Their political utility depends entirely on institutional behaviour. What makes EVM manipulation plausible is not merely technological opacity, but the systematic refusal of institutions to permit verification, investigation, or accountability.

The Election Commission as an Information Control Authority

The Election Commission of India has moved beyond administering elections. It now actively manages public perception of electoral integrity.



ECI's Misleading Message Under YouTube Videos

One of the clearest illustrations of this shift is the ECI's unprecedented intervention in digital discourse. Under YouTube videos that raise questions about EVM integrity, the Commission now inserts an official disclaimer, asserting—without evidence—that EVMs are safe and elections are transparent. These notices provide no technical substantiation, no audit data, no third-party verification, and no legal justification.

This behaviour is extraordinary for a constitutional body. Rather than answering questions through open audits or press scrutiny, the ECI deploys platform-level messaging to preempt debate. The disclaimer is not informational; it is declarative. It asks citizens to accept authority in place of proof.

This tactic marks a critical shift: the Election Commission no longer behaves like a referee, but like a narrative enforcer.

Persistence with EVMs Despite Credibility Collapse

Despite mounting domestic and international skepticism around electronic voting systems, the ECI insisted on continuing with EVMs in the 2024 [Lok Sabha election](#). This decision was taken without expanding VVPAT verification, without opening machines to independent audits, and without addressing long-standing concerns raised by opposition parties, technologists, and civil society groups.

The Commission framed all criticism as politically motivated, avoiding engagement with the substance of the claims. This institutional posture effectively converts electoral technology into a non-negotiable dogma. The ECI's insistence on EVMs is particularly striking given that several advanced democracies—including Germany and the Netherlands—have either restricted or abandoned electronic voting due to transparency concerns. India, by contrast, has doubled down on opacity.

The March 2024 Press Conference: From Accountability to Mockery

The erosion of institutional seriousness was on full display in March 2024, when then Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar was [asked](#) to address concerns regarding EVM manipulation. Instead of offering data, audits, or procedural explanations, Kumar recited a vulgar poem aimed at ridiculing complainants.

This moment was not trivial. It signaled that questioning the electoral process would be met not with reasoned rebuttal, but with contempt. The use of mockery by the head of a constitutional body represents a psychological strategy: delegitimize critics, trivialize scrutiny, and normalize institutional arrogance. Such behaviour would have been inconceivable in earlier decades of Indian democracy. Its acceptance today indicates how far standards have fallen.

Haryana 2024: Allegations Without Remedies

The 90-seat Haryana Assembly [election](#), results declared on October 8, 2024, provides a concrete case study of institutional impunity. The BJP secured victory, while the Congress suffered a decisive defeat. On October 9, the Congress party publicly alleged

large-scale EVM hacking and vote-counting irregularities. A formal delegation met Election Commission officials and submitted documented complaints. The party stated explicitly that it had lost the election due to electronic manipulation.

Yet the outcome was predictable. The ECI offered no meaningful response, no investigation, no recount, and no audit. The BJP government in Haryana continued uninterrupted.

This pattern—complaint, silence, continuity—is now standard operating procedure.

The [significance](#) of Haryana lies not merely in the allegation, but in the certainty of inaction. When outcomes are immune to challenge, elections become administrative rituals rather than democratic contests.

Lok Sabha 2024: Data Anomalies and Institutional Evasion

Following the 2024 general election, investigative reporting further exposed electoral anomalies. On June 10, *The Wire* [reported](#) that in over 140 Lok Sabha constituencies, the number of votes counted exceeded the number of votes polled on EVMs.

These discrepancies were not marginal. They were numerical impossibilities.

Instead of triggering automatic audits, the revelations were dismissed. The Election Commission offered procedural explanations without releasing machine-level data. No independent verification was permitted. No officials were held accountable. This response reinforced a disturbing norm: data anomalies no longer trigger institutional alarm.

Public Trust Collapse and Survey Evidence

A recent RMN Foundation survey underscores the societal consequences of institutional capture. According to the survey, 89% of [respondents](#) favoured a return to paper ballots, citing loss of faith in EVMs. A significant portion supported continuous demonstrations or even abstention from EVM-based elections.

Such figures indicate a legitimacy crisis. Democracies do not survive when electoral systems command compliance but not belief. Yet institutions responded not by rebuilding trust, but by dismissing public sentiment as misinformed.

Karnataka Breaks Ranks: A Crack in the System

In September 2025, a rare institutional deviation occurred. The Congress-led Karnataka Cabinet formally [recommended](#) a return to paper ballots for all local body elections, citing the “eroded credibility” of EVMs. Law Minister H.K. Patil announced the decision, authorizing the State Election Commission to revise electoral rolls and ensure transparency. This move directly contradicted the ECI’s national position.

The Karnataka decision is significant for two reasons. First, it acknowledges what central institutions deny: that credibility matters as much as efficiency. Second, it demonstrates that resistance is still possible—when institutions are not fully captured.

Rahul Gandhi’s [accusation](#) of “massive theft of votes” in Bengaluru’s Mahadevapura segment during the 2024 Lok Sabha election further contextualizes this decision. Karnataka’s move reflects not paranoia, but accumulated evidence.

Judiciary as a Passive Enabler

The Supreme Court’s role in this ecosystem has been defined by restraint bordering on abdication. Challenges to EVMs, VVPAT verification, and ECI independence have been repeatedly narrowed, delayed, or dismissed. By rejecting comprehensive verification while urging citizens to “trust institutions,” the [judiciary](#) has inadvertently shielded opacity. Courts have treated electoral integrity as a matter of faith rather than evidence. This judicial posture completes the circuit of impunity: complaints are filed, institutions close ranks, and no corrective mechanism activates.

Institutional Capture as the Core Enabler of Smokescreen Democracy

What emerges is not a conspiracy, but a system. The Election Commission controls information. The judiciary limits scrutiny. Media amplifies official assurances. Political outcomes become irreversible. This is the essence of the Smokescreen: elections continue, institutions function, dissent is permitted—but nothing can alter power. The question, therefore, is no longer whether EVMs can be manipulated. The more dangerous reality is that even if manipulation occurs, the system is designed to ensure it will never be proven. That is the true architecture of impunity.



7. The High-Stakes Leader: Narendra Modi and the Politics of Impunity

At the center of the Smokescreen thesis lies an unavoidable reality: the systematic hollowing out of Indian democracy cannot be understood without examining the political survival imperatives of Narendra Modi himself. The architecture of institutional capture, electoral manipulation, and manufactured consent does not emerge in a vacuum. It is shaped by the unusually high personal, political, and legal stakes associated with Modi's continued hold on power.

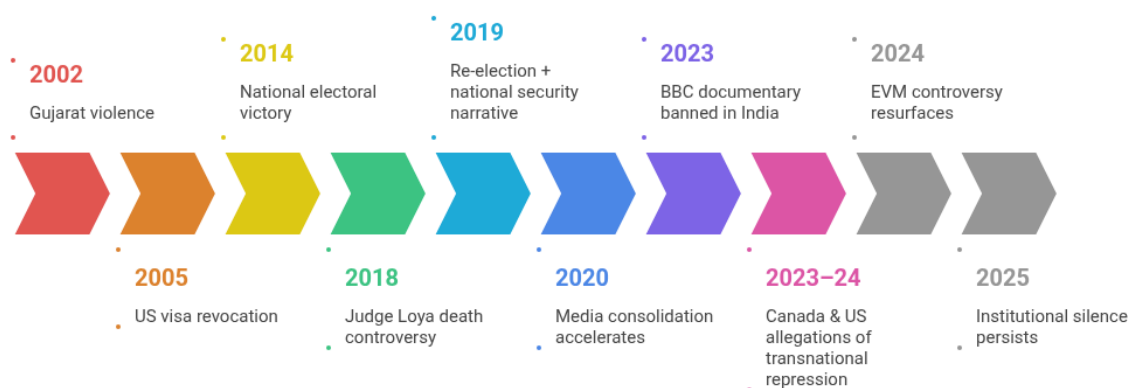
Modi's rise to national prominence is inseparable from the events surrounding the 2002 Godhra train burning and the subsequent Gujarat pogrom. While the precise circumstances of the Godhra incident remain contested, what followed is extensively documented: large-scale, targeted violence against Muslims in Gujarat, resulting in over a thousand deaths, mass displacement, and enduring trauma. Numerous investigative reports, survivor testimonies, and journalistic accounts have alleged administrative complicity, deliberate inaction, or tacit encouragement by the state machinery under Modi's chief ministership. These allegations were serious enough to place Modi under sustained international scrutiny for years.

The gravity of these allegations was reflected in the [revocation](#) of Modi's U.S. visa, an extraordinary step taken on human rights grounds that effectively barred him from entering the United States and several other Western democracies for a prolonged period. This diplomatic isolation marked Modi as a global outlier long before his reinvention as a development-oriented leader and later as India's prime minister. Although the visa ban was eventually lifted after Modi assumed national office, the underlying allegations were never judicially resolved through a transparent, independent process.

The persistence of unresolved questions surrounding 2002 has been compounded by a series of other deeply troubling episodes linked, directly or indirectly, to Modi's political trajectory in Gujarat. These include the murder of former Gujarat Home Minister Haren Pandya, a key insider who had reportedly fallen out with Modi and was believed to possess sensitive information about the post-Godhra period. The case remains officially unsolved, surrounded by allegations of witness intimidation and investigative suppression.

Similarly, the mysterious death of Judge B.H. Loya, who was presiding over the politically sensitive Sohrabuddin Sheikh encounter case involving senior BJP leaders, further intensified concerns about judicial independence under conditions of concentrated power. While official [narratives](#) have dismissed suspicions, independent journalistic investigations and public interest petitions raised substantial questions about the circumstances of his death, reinforcing perceptions of systemic intimidation within the judiciary.

Key Events in Impunity and Power Consolidation (2002–2025)



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These concerns gained renewed international visibility with the release of the BBC documentary [India: The Modi Question](#) in 2023, which examined Modi's role in the 2002 violence and the subsequent institutional responses. The Modi regime's decision to ban the documentary in India, invoke emergency powers, and suppress public discussion only amplified global attention and reinforced perceptions of authoritarian insecurity rather than democratic confidence.

In recent years, the scope of allegations has expanded beyond India's borders. Canada and the United States have publicly accused Indian state-linked actors of involvement in transnational repression, including [targeted killings](#) and intimidation of dissidents abroad. Such accusations are unprecedented for a country that claims leadership of the democratic world order and further elevate the stakes of political accountability for the current leadership. While investigations remain ongoing, the mere fact that close allies have levelled such charges underscores the extent to which Modi's governance is now viewed through a lens of coercive power rather than democratic legitimacy.

This accumulation of unresolved allegations—mass violence, judicial interference, witness intimidation, suppression of dissent, and now transnational criminality—creates a political condition in which the loss of power becomes existentially dangerous. For a leader facing such a historical and legal overhang, electoral defeat is not merely a routine democratic outcome; it represents exposure to accountability mechanisms that have thus far been neutralized or deferred.

Concerns about Narendra Modi's leadership capacity extend beyond allegations of electoral manipulation and into questions of competence, transparency, and credibility. In February 2024, the Delhi High Court [ruled](#) that Delhi University was not obligated to disclose details related to Modi's claimed 1978 graduation degree, overturning a 2016 order of the Central Information Commission (CIC) that had directed such disclosure in the public interest. The ruling effectively shielded a basic biographical claim of the sitting Prime Minister from independent verification, reinforcing perceptions of institutional reluctance to subject Modi to routine scrutiny.

Questions surrounding Modi's educational background have persisted for years. In 2019, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi publicly [remarked](#) that it remained unclear whether Modi had ever attended a university at all. These doubts, while seemingly peripheral, take on significance in light of broader criticisms regarding Modi's intellectual preparedness for governance in a complex, modern state.

Critics have long argued that Modi demonstrates limited engagement with contemporary policy discourse and relies heavily on scripted monologues rather than substantive debate. His public addresses—often delivered with the aid of [teleprompters](#)—are characterised by repetitive slogans, emotive appeals, and simplified binaries, rather than detailed policy explanations. Observers have noted his difficulty in articulating unscripted responses, including in international settings, where speeches are tightly controlled and interactions carefully choreographed.

This raises a fundamental political question: how does a leader with such widely questioned intellectual and communicative limitations continue to secure repeated electoral victories in a country as large, diverse, and economically distressed as India? The argument advanced in this report is that such outcomes cannot be plausibly

explained through voter enthusiasm, policy performance, or rhetorical sophistication alone.

Instead, Modi's political messaging is narrowly calibrated to resonate with a large population experiencing chronic deprivation. For a significant portion of India's electorate—many of whom [struggle](#) to secure basic nutrition and depend on subsidised food grains—the content of political discourse is reduced to emotive symbolism, welfare announcements, and identity-based mobilisation. In this context, the report contends that electoral success is structurally insulated from leadership competence and increasingly mediated through opaque electoral technologies.

Absent the manipulation of electronic voting systems and the broader architecture of institutional capture described in this report, it is argued that a leader with such contested credentials would face substantial difficulty prevailing in genuinely transparent, paper-ballot elections.

It is within this context that the systematic manipulation of electoral processes must be understood. The capture of institutions such as the Election Commission, the judiciary, investigative agencies, and large sections of the media is not incidental. It functions as a protective shield against accountability. The opacity of electronic voting machines, the dismissal of statistical anomalies, the ridicule of complainants, and the refusal to permit independent audits collectively ensure that electoral outcomes remain predictable where they matter most.

Equally important is the climate of fear generated across the political and institutional spectrum. Opposition leaders, including those with their own unresolved legal vulnerabilities, display rhetorical defiance while avoiding sustained confrontation. Judges, bureaucrats, police officials, and election authorities operate within a system where challenging the executive carries career-ending—or worse—consequences. Even within the ruling party, loyalty is enforced not merely through ideology but through awareness of the costs of dissent.

In this sense, electoral manipulation under the Modi regime is not simply a strategy for winning elections; it is a mechanism for maintaining impunity. Elections are allowed to occur, opposition is permitted to speak, and democratic rituals are carefully preserved—but only within boundaries that ensure continuity of power. The appearance

of democracy is maintained precisely because its substance has been rendered non-threatening.

Understanding Narendra Modi as a high-stakes leader—one whose personal history, unresolved allegations, and international [scrutiny](#) make relinquishing power intolerable—clarifies why India’s democratic decline is not episodic or accidental. It is structural, deliberate, and sustained. From this point onward in the Smokescreen analysis, electoral management must be seen not as a political choice but as a survival imperative—one that drives the manufacture of crises, the control of narratives, the neutralization of youth dissent, and the orchestration of a permanently managed opposition.

When leadership carries unresolved allegations of mass violence, judicial interference, and now transnational criminality, the democratic uncertainty of elections becomes an unacceptable risk. From this point onward, electoral management ceases to be a political tactic and becomes a survival imperative.

What follows is not a series of independent dysfunctions, but a coherent system shaped by the political necessity of permanent power retention.



8. Managed Opposition, Performative Dissent, and the Politics of Electoral Surrender

One of the most critical yet least examined components of India's contemporary democratic collapse is the role played not only by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), but by the managed weakness of the opposition itself. The persistence of alleged large-scale electoral manipulation through Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) would not be possible without a corresponding failure—or unwillingness—of opposition parties to mount sustained, system-disrupting resistance. This chapter argues that India's opposition, particularly the Indian National Congress under Rahul Gandhi, has been reduced to a form of performative dissent that legitimizes a controlled electoral system while posing no real threat to its outcomes.

From Resistance to Ritual: The Hollowing Out of Opposition Politics

Since 2014, opposition responses to repeated electoral defeats have followed a predictable and ritualistic pattern. After each election loss, senior opposition leaders issue statements alleging EVM manipulation, voter roll irregularities, Election Commission bias, and media complicity. These allegations briefly dominate headlines and social media, only to dissipate without translating into sustained mass mobilization, institutional confrontation, or electoral boycotts. Elections resume as scheduled, the opposition participates, and the BJP wins again—often with larger margins.

This cyclical behavior raises a fundamental question: If opposition leaders genuinely believe elections are being stolen, why do they continue to legitimize the same electoral machinery by participating in it without resistance? In functioning democracies, credible allegations of systemic [election theft](#) trigger nationwide protests, strikes, international appeals, and demands for neutral oversight. In India, by contrast, allegations of election fraud have become an accepted post-defeat narrative rather than a catalyst for action.

Rahul Gandhi: Rhetoric Without Rupture

Rahul Gandhi's public statements exemplify this contradiction. On multiple occasions, he has acknowledged the centrality of EVMs to electoral manipulation. His remark that “the soul of the King is in the EVM”—a direct reference to Prime Minister Narendra Modi—was one of the clearest admissions by a senior opposition leader that elections are structurally compromised. Congress leaders, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, have

challenged the BJP to contest elections on ballot papers instead of EVMs. Akhilesh Yadav has [raised](#) similar concerns inside Parliament.

The Cookie-Cutter Cycle of Defeat: Rahul Gandhi's Predictable Political Strategy		
Phase	Action by Rahul Gandhi of Congress	Impact on Smokescreen
Pre-Election	Holds futile Yatras and multiple election rallies attended by hired supporters.	Creates an illusion of popular movement while funds are expended on non-voters.
Campaign	Curses Modi and talks about caste reservation and vote theft, which are non-issues for 80%+ illiterate voters.	The rhetoric is tasteless and fails to connect, exhausting political energy on distractions.
During Campaign	Sycophant colleagues call him "Jan Neta" and spokespersons falsely assert Congress will win.	Diverts attention from the main factor (EVMs) that helps the ruling party win.
Result Day	Modi, BJP, and their allies win; Congress is defeated.	Confirms the dominance of the EVM factor over political campaigning.
Post-Result (Immediate)	Gandhi goes into hibernation; spokespersons disappear. Congress accepts the "people's mandate."	Avoids accountability and tacitly legitimizes the allegedly manipulated result.
Post-Result (Delayed)	They reappear, say they will analyze the defeat, and wait for the next election.	The cycle of ineffectiveness is reset and repeated, sustaining the status quo.
This cycle has been repeating for over a decade. Thus, Rahul Gandhi and Congress are a blot on Indian democracy.		

Yet these statements remain isolated verbal interventions rather than the foundation of a coordinated resistance strategy. Rahul Gandhi alternates between domestic accusations and international lectures—such as his [address](#) at the Hertie School in Berlin—where he speaks eloquently about democratic decay, institutional capture, and authoritarianism. These foreign engagements, however, reach audiences with no influence over Indian electoral mechanics. They also provide the BJP with an opportunity to dismiss him as “defaming India abroad,” allowing the regime to close the conversation without consequence.

The outcome is predictable. After each foreign speech, the BJP issues a rebuttal. Rahul Gandhi returns home. No mass protests follow. No election is boycotted. No parallel vote-counting system is established. The next election is contested under the same conditions—and lost.

This pattern has led to the perception, even among opposition supporters, that Rahul Gandhi functions less as a challenger to power and more as a permitted critic within a closed system, one whose role is to absorb public frustration without threatening the structure that produces BJP victories.

Structural Vulnerabilities of the Opposition

The weakness of India's opposition cannot be explained solely by incompetence or indecision. Structural vulnerabilities play a decisive role. A significant number of senior opposition leaders—including Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi—face ongoing criminal or corruption-related [cases](#), such as the National Herald money-laundering case. While many of these leaders are out on bail, enjoying what critics describe as “virtual acquittal,” the legal pressure creates an environment of caution and compromise.

This legal vulnerability discourages escalation. Leaders facing potential arrest, asset seizure, or prolonged litigation are unlikely to initiate sustained street protests, civil disobedience, or election disruption that could provoke state retaliation. The result is a tacit equilibrium: the opposition criticizes the system rhetorically but avoids actions that would force a decisive confrontation.

The ‘Vote Chor’ Campaign: Symbolism Without Strategy

The Congress party's “Vote Chor” (vote thief) campaign, launched in 2025, illustrates the limitations of symbolic opposition. Slogans such as “[Vote Chor Gaddi Chhod](#)” (Vote thief, vacate the chair) resonated with public anger and briefly reframed the political narrative. Rahul Gandhi accused the Election Commission of India (ECI) of colluding with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to steal elections.

However, the campaign lacked operational depth. There was no roadmap for dismantling EVM-based elections, no call for nationwide election boycotts, no insistence on international election observers, and no timeline for escalation. In effect, the campaign

acknowledged electoral theft while simultaneously accepting its continuation. This contradiction neutralized its impact.

Selective Victories and the Illusion of Competition

The persistence of opposition participation also enables what this report describes as selective wins—a system in which the ruling party allows opposition victories in states or regions that pose no threat to central power, thereby preserving the illusion of competitive democracy. States such as [Punjab](#) or West Bengal, where the BJP has limited influence, are permitted opposition control. In contrast, electorally decisive states—Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi—and national Lok Sabha elections consistently produce outcomes favorable to the BJP.

This pattern reinforces the belief that elections are fair while ensuring that real power remains unchanged.

Opposition as a Component of the Smokescreen

Within the broader Smokescreen framework, the opposition functions as a stabilizing element rather than a disruptive one. Its participation validates elections conducted through opaque EVM systems. Its post-election accusations create the appearance of dissent without imposing costs on the ruling regime. Its legal vulnerabilities ensure restraint. And its leadership deficits prevent sustained mobilization.

In this sense, India's opposition is not merely failing democracy—it is inadvertently sustaining the managed illusion of democracy.

Unless opposition parties decisively break this pattern—by refusing to contest EVM-based elections, demanding United Nations-supervised paper ballot voting, mobilizing continuous street resistance, and accepting personal legal risk—the current cycle will continue. Elections will be held. The BJP will win where it chooses to win. And opposition leaders will once again blame the system they helped legitimize.



9. Media, Bollywood, and the Manufacturing of Consent

No system of managed democracy can function through electoral manipulation alone. For the Smokescreen to remain effective, it must be continuously reinforced in the public mind through narrative control. In India, this role is performed by a tightly aligned ecosystem consisting of large sections of traditional media, digital propaganda networks, and the Hindi film industry—popularly known as Bollywood. Together, these institutions manufacture consent by shaping perception, diverting attention, and normalizing political outcomes that would otherwise be rejected in a genuinely informed society.

From Watchdog to Megaphone: The Collapse of Indian Media

The decline of Indian media from an adversarial institution to a regime-aligned amplifier has been gradual but systematic. Major television networks, large newspapers, and digital platforms increasingly avoid investigative reporting on election integrity, Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), institutional capture, or judicial decline. Instead, they prioritize personality-driven politics, hyper-nationalist spectacles, and culture-war narratives that emotionally engage audiences while keeping structural questions off the agenda.

When opposition leaders raise concerns about EVM manipulation, voter roll discrepancies, or Election Commission bias, these claims are either ignored, trivialized, or framed as excuses for electoral defeat. Detailed data—such as reports of more votes counted than polled in dozens of constituencies—rarely receive sustained prime-time scrutiny. When they do, the discussion is quickly deflected into debates about “national interest,” “anti-India narratives,” or the personal credibility of the accuser.

This selective silence is not accidental. Media houses operate under intense economic and regulatory pressure, including dependence on government advertising, vulnerability to tax raids, and the threat of license cancellations. The result is widespread self-censorship, where editors anticipate state preferences without requiring explicit directives. The public, meanwhile, is left with the impression that allegations of election fraud are fringe claims rather than central democratic concerns.

Bollywood as Political Infrastructure

Beyond news media, Bollywood plays a subtler but arguably more powerful role in shaping public consciousness. Hindi cinema reaches hundreds of millions of viewers

across linguistic, regional, and educational divides. In recent years, a noticeable shift has occurred in mainstream filmmaking: a move away from social complexity toward formulaic nationalist narratives centered on military valor, external enemies, and civilizational pride.

Films such as *Ikkis*, [Border 2](#), *Dhurandhar*, *Dhurandhar 2*, and [Battle of Galwan](#) exemplify this trend. These productions frequently revolve around conflicts with Pakistan or China, heroic soldiers, and simplified moral universes where the Indian state is virtuous and its adversaries are inherently treacherous. The repetition of these themes is not coincidental; it aligns closely with the political messaging of the Modi regime, particularly during pre-election periods.

The ‘Ikkis’ Disclaimer and the Politics of Fear

The sudden insertion of a [disclaimer](#) in the film *Ikkis*—clarifying that a compassionate Pakistani character is an exception and that Pakistan is broadly untrustworthy—illustrates the extent of narrative policing. The disclaimer, added after the film’s release, effectively rewrites the moral interpretation of the story, warning audiences not to humanize the “enemy.”

This intervention reflects a deeper anxiety within the regime: uncontrolled empathy undermines manufactured hostility. By explicitly instructing viewers on how to interpret a character, the disclaimer [transforms cinema](#) from storytelling into political messaging. It also reinforces a climate of fear and suspicion that serves electoral objectives by redirecting public anger away from domestic governance failures and toward external adversaries.

Nationalism as Distraction, Not Identity

The nationalism promoted through media and cinema under the Smokescreen framework is not rooted in civic responsibility, constitutional values, or democratic participation. Instead, it is a performative [nationalism](#) built on symbolic gestures, militarized pride, and perpetual grievance. This form of nationalism thrives on conflict narratives—real or manufactured—that demand emotional loyalty while discouraging scrutiny.

Military operations, cross-border tensions, and terror incidents are framed as tests of patriotism rather than matters requiring accountability. Questioning official narratives

becomes synonymous with disloyalty. In this environment, demands for election transparency or judicial independence appear trivial, even unpatriotic, compared to the spectacle of national defense.

Bollywood as a Smokescreen Amplifier



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Terror Narratives and Electoral Timing

The convergence of terror incidents, military actions, and election cycles has become a recurring feature of Indian politics. Events such as the Pulwama attack in 2019 and the Pahalgam attack in 2025 were swiftly followed by aggressive rhetoric, military responses,

and nationalist media campaigns. In both cases, the emphasis was placed on external enemies rather than on independent investigations or institutional accountability.

Critics argue that such episodes function as narrative accelerants within the Smokescreen—compressing public attention into emotionally charged binaries of loyalty versus betrayal. During these moments, complex discussions about unemployment, poverty, governance failures, or electoral manipulation are pushed out of public discourse. Elections held in this climate occur under psychological conditions favorable to the ruling party.

The Erasure of Electoral Discourse

Perhaps the most consequential effect of media and cinematic capture is the near-total absence of sustained discussion about electoral systems themselves. In countries facing democratic crises, debates about voting technology, ballot integrity, and election oversight dominate public forums. In India, by contrast, EVMs are treated as settled, sacred objects—beyond questioning.

When international figures such as Elon Musk or U.S. President Donald Trump express skepticism about electronic voting machines, their statements receive fleeting coverage, if any. The implication is clear: questioning EVMs is acceptable abroad but taboo at home.

Manufactured Consent as Democratic Substitution

The combined effect of media silence, cinematic nationalism, and fear-based narratives is the manufacture of consent—not through persuasion, but through saturation and distraction. Citizens are not convinced that elections are fair; they are conditioned not to think about fairness at all. Instead, they are encouraged to identify emotionally with the state, the leader, and the spectacle of power.

Within the Smokescreen framework, this manufactured consent is as essential as EVM opacity or institutional capture. Without it, electoral manipulation would provoke widespread unrest. With it, even implausible outcomes are absorbed as destiny. In the chapters that follow, the report will examine how youth politics, international warnings, and comparative electoral systems expose the fragility of this manufactured consensus—and why the Smokescreen, despite its sophistication, remains vulnerable to disruption.

10. Gen Z, Youth Control, and the Fear of Uncontrollable Dissent

Among all demographic groups in India, Gen Z—broadly defined as those born between the late 1990s and early 2010s—represents the greatest long-term threat to the sustainability of the Smokescreen. Unlike older generations shaped by post-independence idealism or liberalization-era aspirations, Gen Z has grown up amid chronic unemployment, rising inequality, digital surveillance, and the visible hollowing out of democratic institutions. This cohort has little emotional investment in legacy narratives of national greatness and is increasingly resistant to symbolic politics unaccompanied by material improvement.

It is within this context that the Modi regime's sudden and conspicuous [outreach](#) to Gen Z must be understood—not as generational empowerment, but as preemptive containment.

Why Gen Z Matters to the Regime

India is one of the youngest countries in the world, with over half its population under the age of 30. This demographic reality carries immense political risk. A large, disillusioned youth population with access to digital communication, transnational information flows, and comparative political examples is inherently destabilizing for regimes that rely on managed perception rather than performance.

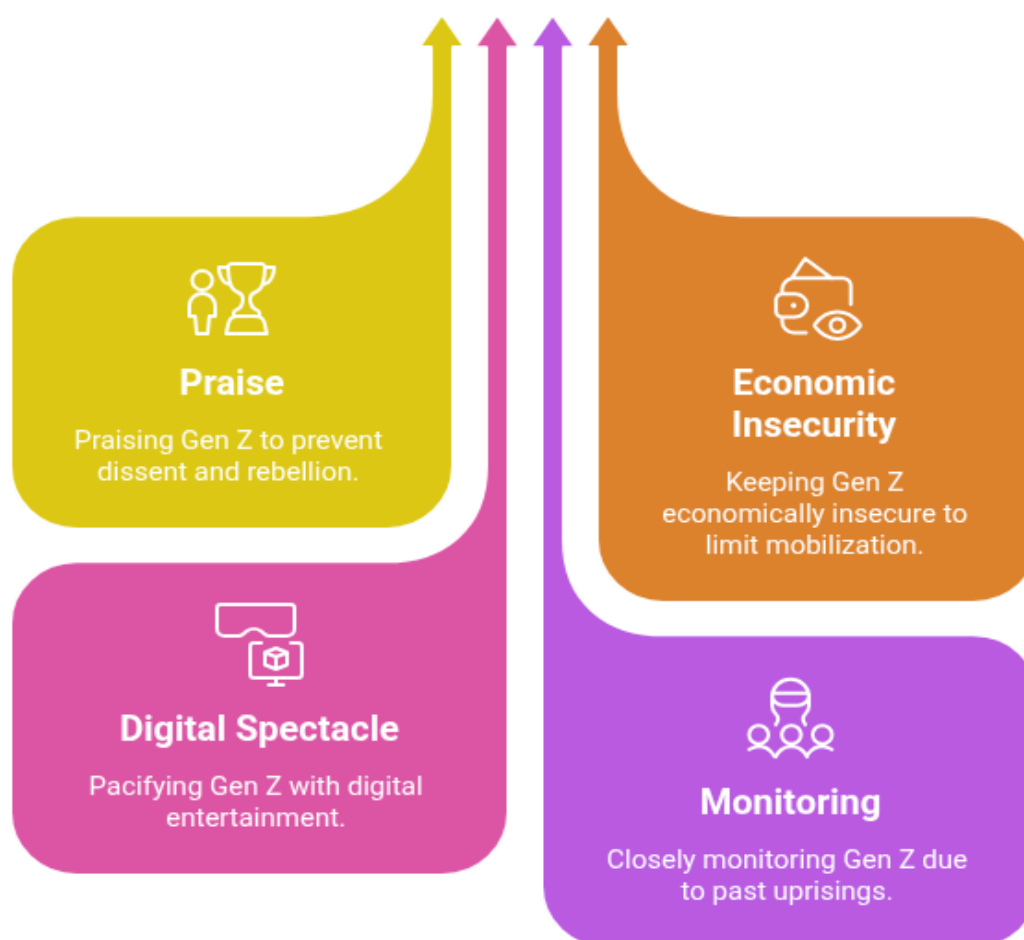
The core anxiety is not electoral defeat in the conventional sense—since elections themselves are allegedly managed—but mass delegitimization. Youth-led movements, unlike traditional opposition parties, are difficult to co-opt, intimidate, or neutralize through institutional mechanisms. They operate outside parliamentary structures and often reject elite mediation altogether.

Regional Precedents and Regime Anxiety

Recent youth-led uprisings in South Asia have intensified these fears. In Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, Gen Z and young millennials played decisive roles in destabilizing entrenched political orders through sustained protests, economic grievances, and digital mobilization. These [movements](#) were not led by opposition parties or traditional civil society organizations; they emerged organically from frustration with corruption, unemployment, and state arrogance.

For the Modi regime, these examples function as cautionary tales. India shares similar socioeconomic pressures but differs in one crucial aspect: the ruling party's control over electoral outcomes. However, electoral manipulation offers no protection against street-level legitimacy crises.

Strategies for Gen Z Management



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The Strategy of Symbolic Flattery

Modi's public statements portraying Gen Z as the drivers of a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India) mark a tactical shift in rhetoric. Rather than addressing structural youth

grievances—joblessness, declining education quality, shrinking civil liberties—the regime has opted for symbolic inclusion. Gen Z is praised, celebrated, and assigned abstract leadership roles in the future, while being excluded from present decision-making.

This form of engagement is deliberately non-substantive. By flattering youth aspirations without redistributing power or opportunity, the regime seeks to convert potential dissent into passive identification with the state's narrative. The promise of future leadership substitutes for present agency.

Unemployment as a Control Variable

Youth unemployment in India has reached historically high levels, yet it rarely receives sustained political attention. This is not oversight; it is strategy. Economically precarious youth are easier to control than economically empowered citizens. Informal employment, gig work, and contractual labor produce dependence, anxiety, and fragmentation—conditions hostile to organized resistance.

At the same time, unemployment is masked by nationalist discourse, startup mythology, and selective success stories amplified through social media. The structural nature of the crisis is thus individualized and depoliticized.

Surveillance, Policing, and Preemptive Discipline

Digital surveillance plays a critical role in youth control. Social media monitoring, campus policing, and legal instruments are used to deter [student activism](#) and dissent. Youth activists face disproportionate scrutiny, arrests, and legal harassment, often under broadly defined national security laws.

The objective is not merely punishment but deterrence—creating a chilling effect that discourages collective action before it begins. When youth [protests](#) do emerge, they are swiftly framed as foreign-funded, anti-national, or extremist, ensuring public isolation.

The Opposition's Failure and the Youth Vacuum

Compounding the problem is the political vacuum left by opposition parties. Leaders like Rahul Gandhi periodically [appeal](#) to youth audiences but fail to provide sustained organizational frameworks for youth mobilization. Occasional speeches, foreign lectures, or symbolic marches do not translate into durable resistance structures. This absence

leaves Gen Z politically orphaned—alienated from the ruling party yet unconvinced by the opposition. The Smokescreen persists partly because no credible political force channels youth anger into sustained democratic pressure.

Elections Without Youth Agency

In a system where election outcomes are allegedly pre-determined through EVM manipulation, youth participation becomes performative. Voting is encouraged as ritual, not as agency. This disconnect between participation and impact is particularly visible to Gen Z, which is accustomed to feedback loops and real-time accountability in digital environments.

The realization that electoral participation does not translate into political change breeds cynicism—but also potential radicalization. The regime’s challenge is to keep this realization fragmented and unorganized.

Fear of the Unscripted

What the Smokescreen cannot absorb is the unscripted—leaderless movements, spontaneous protests, or mass refusal to participate in managed rituals. Gen Z represents the possibility of such disruption. This is why the regime alternates between flattering youth, surveilling them, and suppressing them. The fear is not of Gen Z winning elections; it is of Gen Z delegitimizing elections altogether.

Conclusion: The Fragile Ceiling of Control

The Modi regime’s control mechanisms—EVM opacity, institutional capture, media alignment, and cultural nationalism—function effectively within structured political arenas. Gen Z operates outside these arenas. It consumes information globally, organizes horizontally, and values authenticity over authority.

This makes youth the most unpredictable variable in the Smokescreen equation. As long as youth discontent remains atomized, the system holds. If it converges into collective action, no amount of narrative control can substitute for legitimacy.

The next chapter examines how international voices, comparative electoral practices, and external scrutiny increasingly expose the fragility of India’s managed democracy—despite the regime’s insistence on sovereignty and exceptionalism.

11. International Warnings, Comparative Democracies, and the Global EVM Debate

One of the most striking features of India's contemporary electoral system is its isolation. While the Indian state insists that its electronic voting machines (EVMs) represent a global gold standard, most advanced democracies have moved decisively in the opposite direction—toward paper ballots, voter-verifiable processes, and transparent recount mechanisms. This divergence is not accidental. It reflects a deeper conflict between democratic legitimacy and administrative convenience, transparency and control.

The global debate on electronic voting has evolved substantially over the past two decades, shaped by empirical failures, security research, and political crises. India's refusal to engage honestly with this debate is central to the Smokescreen.

Global Retreat from Electronic Voting

Contrary to the narrative promoted by Indian election authorities, electronic voting machines are not widely trusted or adopted in mature democracies. Countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Norway have abandoned electronic voting systems after constitutional challenges, security audits, or public opposition. In each case, courts or legislatures concluded that elections must be verifiable by ordinary citizens without reliance on technical expertise.

Germany's Constitutional Court ruled that voting systems must allow "public scrutiny" of every essential step in the election process. Machines that require trust in proprietary software failed this test. The Netherlands withdrew EVMs after it was demonstrated that votes could be intercepted and altered using readily available equipment. Ireland scrapped its electronic voting initiative after spending millions, citing a complete lack of public confidence. These decisions were not ideological; they were pragmatic. Democracies recognized that even the perception of opacity undermines electoral legitimacy.

The Paper Ballot Consensus

Across Europe, North America, and much of Latin America, the prevailing consensus favors paper ballots with robust auditing mechanisms. Even where technology is

used—for voter registration or result transmission—the act of voting itself remains physical, observable, and recountable.

Paper ballots are slower to count, but speed has been repeatedly rejected as a justification for opacity. Argentina, for example, demonstrated that nearly 27 million paper ballots could be hand-counted with 99.9 percent accuracy in under six hours. This directly contradicts the Indian Election Commission's claim that paper ballots are impractical for a large electorate. The insistence that India's population size necessitates EVMs is therefore a political argument, not a logistical one.

Warnings from Global Figures

The risks of electronic voting are not confined to academic debate. Prominent global figures have publicly warned against their use. In July 2024, Elon Musk—chief executive officer of Tesla and SpaceX, and owner of the social media platform X—issued a blunt warning: electronic voting machines and mail-in voting systems are “too risky.” He argued that elections should mandate paper ballots and in-person voting, citing research showing that EVMs can be reprogrammed, infected with malicious code, and manipulated invisibly at scale.

Musk highlighted studies demonstrating that rogue software could spread from machine to machine like a computer virus, silently altering outcomes without detection. His remarks were not speculative; they echoed long-standing concerns raised by computer scientists and election security experts worldwide.

Similarly, in 2025, United States President Donald Trump publicly advocated for paper ballots during a joint press interaction with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. When questioned about election interference, Trump expressed a clear preference for ballot papers over electronic machines, implicitly questioning the integrity of machine-based voting systems. These statements are particularly significant because they came from figures with no stake in Indian domestic politics. Yet Indian authorities dismissed or ignored them entirely.

India's Exceptionalism Narrative

The Indian state responds to global criticism with a narrative of exceptionalism: that India's EVMs are unique, tamper-proof, standalone, and immune to hacking because they are not connected to the internet. This argument collapses under minimal scrutiny.

Security vulnerabilities do not require network connectivity. Physical access, insider manipulation, firmware replacement, and pre-programmed control units all present attack vectors. International research has consistently shown that “air-gapped” systems are not inherently secure.

The refusal of Indian authorities to allow independent audits, public scrutiny of EVM architecture, or access to source code further undermines their claims. Trust is demanded, not earned.

Isolation by Design

India’s Election Commission has systematically insulated itself from international observation. Unlike many democracies that invite neutral election monitors, India rejects external oversight as an infringement on sovereignty. This stance is paradoxical given the scale and geopolitical importance of Indian elections.

In the absence of a functioning domestic accountability mechanism—due to alleged judicial capture and institutional complicity—the rejection of international supervision serves one purpose: preventing independent verification. The demand for United Nations-supervised ballot paper elections arises precisely from this institutional vacuum. It is not an attack on sovereignty but a response to its alleged internal collapse.

Selective Global Engagement

Interestingly, the Modi regime selectively embraces global validation when it serves its interests. International praise on economic reforms, defense partnerships, or geopolitical alignment is amplified domestically. But [global criticism](#) of democratic practices is dismissed as interference or conspiracy.

This selective engagement reinforces the Smokescreen: external legitimacy is welcomed, external scrutiny is rejected.

The Cost of Ignoring Global Lessons

By ignoring international experience, India risks normalizing a model of elections that prioritize outcome certainty over democratic credibility. The longer this divergence persists, the harder it becomes to restore trust—even if reforms are eventually attempted.

Once citizens accept that elections are managed rituals rather than competitive contests, democracy becomes performative. Participation continues, but belief collapses.

Conclusion: Global Consensus vs. Indian Defiance

The global trajectory is clear: transparent, auditable, paper-based voting is the democratic standard. India's persistence with opaque electronic voting places it outside this consensus.

International warnings—from courts, scientists, political leaders, and comparative democracies—converge on a single principle: elections must not require blind trust. India's EVM regime demands exactly that.

This defiance is not technological stubbornness; it is political strategy.

The next chapter examines how crises—terror attacks, military escalations, and nationalist mobilization—are used to distract public attention from electoral integrity and reinforce the Smokescreen at critical moments.



12. Manufactured Crises, National Security Narratives, and Electoral Distraction

In managed democracies, elections are not only about votes; they are about timing, attention, and emotion. When electoral legitimacy is fragile and institutions lack public trust, political power increasingly relies on narrative control. In India's contemporary political landscape, national security crises, terror attacks, and militarized rhetoric have emerged as recurring tools to redirect public attention away from electoral integrity and toward manufactured urgency, fear, and nationalism.

This chapter examines how crises—real, exaggerated, or allegedly stage-managed—function within the broader Smokescreen architecture to suppress scrutiny of elections, electronic voting machines (EVMs), and institutional capture.

Crisis as a Political Instrument

National emergencies possess a unique capacity to suspend democratic questioning. Terror attacks, border conflicts, and internal violence instantly reorder political priorities. Demands for accountability are labeled “anti-national,” dissent is framed as betrayal, and citizens are emotionally mobilized around identity rather than governance.

In this environment, elections cease to be evaluations of economic performance, unemployment, [corruption](#), or institutional decay. Instead, they become referendums on loyalty, patriotism, and fear.

The repeated deployment of such crises around electoral cycles is therefore not incidental. It is structural.

The Pulwama Template

The February 2019 [Pulwama attack](#) established a political template. A terror incident with devastating human cost was swiftly converted into a nationalist mobilization campaign. Military action followed, media saturation ensued, and the ruling party positioned itself as the sole guardian of national security.

Crucially, calls for independent investigation into intelligence failures, security lapses, and the broader circumstances of the attack were dismissed. Electoral debate was overwhelmed by militaristic symbolism and emotional outrage. The ruling party

subsequently secured a decisive electoral victory. Whether or not Pulwama was orchestrated, its political utility was unmistakable—and reproducible.

Pahalgam 2025 and the Return of the Smokescreen

The April 2025 terror [attack in Pahalgam](#), Jammu and Kashmir, followed a disturbingly familiar pattern. Before the perpetrators were apprehended, the Modi government accused Pakistan, launched “Operation Sindoor,” and escalated nationalist rhetoric across media platforms.

Once again, no independent investigation was permitted. Opposition demands for transparency were framed as [attempts](#) to weaken national morale. International institutions reportedly declined to endorse India’s allegations, yet domestically the narrative was locked.

The timing—months before the crucial Bihar Assembly election of November 2025—raised serious questions. Critics argued that the attack and subsequent military escalation functioned less as security responses and more as electoral theater, designed to reassert emotional dominance and suppress debate on election integrity and EVM manipulation.

Media Amplification and Emotional Saturation

Manufactured crises depend on compliant amplification. Corporate television networks, digital platforms, and aligned commentators convert complex events into simplified binaries: nation versus enemy, patriot versus traitor. During such periods, discussion of electronic voting machines, voter roll discrepancies, institutional capture, or judicial silence virtually disappears from mainstream discourse.

When mentioned, it is portrayed as inappropriate, untimely, or malicious. The crisis narrative thus creates a temporal shield—an emotional blackout window during which elections can be conducted with minimal scrutiny.

Bollywood and the Militarization of Imagination

The crisis narrative does not end with news cycles. It extends into popular culture. Bollywood increasingly mirrors state rhetoric through formulaic films centered on military conflict, Pakistan as a perpetual enemy, and hyper-nationalist heroism.

Films such as *Ikkis*, *Border 2*, *Dhurandhar*, *Battle of Galwan*, and similar productions reinforce an atmosphere of permanent siege. Even when individual Pakistani characters are portrayed humanely, disclaimers are inserted to reaffirm hostility, suggesting regime-level sensitivity to narrative deviation.

These films function as cultural conditioning. They normalize aggression, simplify geopolitics, and emotionally align audiences with state narratives—often around election periods.

National Security vs. Democratic Security

A critical distinction is systematically erased: national security is treated as superior to democratic security. Questioning electoral processes is portrayed as less important than defending borders, even though electoral legitimacy is the foundation of democratic sovereignty.

This inversion benefits those who control elections. By monopolizing the definition of patriotism, the ruling regime converts procedural accountability into a moral offense.

The Silence of Institutions During Crises

During national security episodes, oversight institutions retreat further into silence. The Election Commission of India avoids addressing election-related controversies. Courts delay hearings or defer scrutiny.

Parliamentary debate is diluted by emotional posturing. Crises thus serve as institutional anesthetics, numbing accountability precisely when democratic vigilance should intensify.

Opposition Paralysis and Narrative Capture

The opposition, particularly the Congress party under Rahul Gandhi, has repeatedly failed to challenge this strategy. Rather than confronting the linkage between crises and electoral manipulation, opposition leaders often respond defensively—either endorsing the nationalist framing or retreating into ambiguity.

As a result, the ruling party retains narrative initiative while elections proceed under conditions of emotional distortion and institutional opacity.

Electoral Outcomes in the Shadow of Crisis

Elections conducted under crisis conditions rarely reflect rational voter judgment. Fear, anger, and identity overwhelm material realities such as unemployment, inflation, or governance failures.

When combined with alleged EVM manipulation, crisis narratives create a dual-control system: emotional priming of voters on the surface, mechanical control of outcomes underneath.

This is the core function of the Smokescreen.

Conclusion: Crisis as Cover

Manufactured or exploited crises do not merely distract from electoral scrutiny—they actively enable it to be bypassed. By flooding the public sphere with fear and nationalism, the ruling regime secures emotional compliance while elections unfold behind opaque technological and institutional barriers.

The persistence of this pattern suggests intent, not coincidence.

The next chapter examines how opposition failure—particularly the performative resistance of dynastic politics—completes the Smokescreen by offering the illusion of dissent without the substance of challenge.



13. The Managed Opposition — Rhetoric Without Resistance

13.1 The Illusion of Opposition in a Managed Democracy

In a functioning democracy, opposition parties serve as counterweights to executive power—mobilizing public dissent, demanding institutional accountability, and resisting systemic capture. In a managed democracy, however, opposition is allowed to exist primarily as spectacle: vocal, visible, and ultimately ineffective.

India's post-2014 political landscape reflects this transformation. While opposition parties—particularly the Indian National Congress—continue to issue statements, hold press conferences, and allege electoral manipulation, their actions rarely translate into sustained resistance capable of disrupting or delegitimizing the system itself. This phenomenon is not accidental. It is structural. A managed electoral regime does not require the elimination of opposition. It requires its containment.

13.2 Rhetoric Without Escalation

Since at least 2019—and more openly after the 2024 Lok Sabha election—Congress leaders including Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav, and other INDIA bloc figures have repeatedly alleged:

- EVM manipulation
- Vote theft (“Vote Chor”)
- Discrepancies in counting
- Institutional bias of the Election Commission

These statements often generate brief media attention and social media traction. Yet they are followed by a predictable pattern:

1. Allegation
2. Formal complaint to the Election Commission
3. Expression of “hope” that institutions will act
4. Silence after rejection or inaction
5. Return to parliamentary routines

What is conspicuously absent is escalation.

There are no nationwide election boycotts. No coordinated refusal to accept results. No sustained mass mobilization comparable to historic democratic movements. No institutional exit threats.

In effect, the opposition performs dissent while implicitly accepting the legitimacy of the very process it claims is compromised.

13.3 Electoral Defeats Without Consequences

The 2024 Lok Sabha election, followed by state-level contests such as Haryana, exposed this contradiction starkly.

After the Haryana Assembly election results on October 8, 2024—where Congress alleged large-scale EVM hacking and vote-counting irregularities—the party:

- Submitted complaints to the ECI
- Conducted a single media interaction
- Publicly stated it was “waiting for a response”

Despite claiming electoral theft serious enough to alter outcomes, Congress did not:

- Demand re-elections under paper ballots
- Call for nationwide protests
- Seek international election observers
- Challenge the legitimacy of the new government

As a result, the BJP retained power in Haryana seamlessly—demonstrating that allegations without disruption pose no real threat to a managed system.

13.4 The Fear of Street Politics

One explanation for this paralysis lies in the opposition’s fear of confrontation.

Mass protests invite:

- Police repression
- Legal retaliation

- Media vilification
- Financial investigations
- Leadership arrests

For a party already weakened by money-laundering cases, frozen accounts, and decades of organizational erosion, escalation carries existential risk. Yet history suggests that democracy is never defended without risk.

By avoiding confrontation, the opposition signals to the regime—and to voters—that it does not truly believe its own claims, or that it values survival within the system over the system’s integrity.

13.5 Parliamentary Participation as Legitimization

Perhaps the most consequential act of compliance is continued participation in parliamentary processes following disputed elections. By:

- Taking oath as MPs
- Engaging in debates
- Voting on legislation
- Accepting committee roles

Opposition parties confer legitimacy on institutions they publicly accuse of manipulation. This contradiction is central to the managed democracy model. The system benefits twice:

1. Domestically, by projecting normalcy and democratic continuity
2. Internationally, by showcasing a functioning opposition within a parliamentary framework

Thus, even critical voices are absorbed into the spectacle, neutralizing their disruptive potential.

13.6 Opposition as Safety Valve

In authoritarian systems, dissent is suppressed.
In managed democracies, dissent is curated.

Opposition parties perform a crucial role as safety valves—allowing citizens to vent anger through speeches, hashtags, and symbolic marches, while ensuring that anger never reaches a destabilizing threshold.

The absence of a decisive call for:

- Electoral abstention
- Civil disobedience
- Parallel civic audits
- Independent vote verification mechanisms

ensures that public outrage dissipates rather than consolidates.

13.7 Structural Incentives for Compliance

The opposition's inertia is reinforced by structural incentives:

- State funding tied to electoral participation
- Media relevance dependent on access
- Legal vulnerability under investigative agencies
- Career politicians invested in parliamentary continuity

In such an environment, the cost of real resistance outweighs the perceived benefit—especially when defeat can be blamed on abstract forces rather than organizational failure.

13.8 The Result: A Closed Loop of Power

The outcome is a closed political loop:

- The ruling party controls electoral machinery
- Institutions validate outcomes
- Media amplifies official narratives
- Opposition alleges fraud but accepts results
- Voters lose faith but lack alternatives

Within this loop, elections continue, governments change at the margins, and democracy survives in form, not in substance.

13.9 Conclusion: Opposition Without Consequence

A managed democracy does not require a strong ruling party alone. It requires a predictable opposition—one that speaks but does not act, accuses but does not disrupt, and participates but does not challenge.

Until opposition forces are willing to match the gravity of their allegations with proportionate resistance, electoral manipulation—real or perceived—will remain politically inconsequential.

In such a system, the opposition does not threaten power.
It stabilizes it.



14. Reform-Oriented Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented as minimum institutional conditions necessary to restore electoral credibility, democratic accountability, and public trust in India's political system. They are reform-oriented, evidence-linked, and grounded in international democratic norms.

1. Paper-Based Voting

Suspend exclusive reliance on Electronic Voting Machines and restore paper ballot voting, or voter-verifiable paper trails with full public audits, until electoral technologies are independently validated through transparent, adversarial testing.

2. International Election Oversight

Invite neutral international election observers under UN or comparable multilateral frameworks to monitor national and state elections in India as an extraordinary confidence-restoration measure.

3. Independent Electoral Audits

Mandate post-election forensic audits of voting systems, polling data, and turnout anomalies by independent technical and legal experts with unrestricted access to electoral records.

4. Accountability of Election Authorities

Remove statutory and de facto immunities shielding election officials from judicial scrutiny and establish enforceable accountability mechanisms for electoral misconduct or negligence.

5. Judicial Review Restoration

Reaffirm the role of constitutional courts in substantive review of election processes, including technology use, administrative decisions, and citizen-filed challenges.

6. Protection of Civic Dissent

Ensure legal and institutional safeguards for citizens, journalists, political parties, and civil society actors to question electoral processes without fear of intimidation, prosecution, or retaliation.

15. Use of Artificial Intelligence in This Report

This report incorporates Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools for text structuring, pattern recognition, data interpretation, and narrative consistency. These tools were used strictly as assistive instruments, not as decision-makers or autonomous analytical agents. All conclusions, interpretations, judgments, and editorial positions remain the sole responsibility of the author.

The use of AI in this report adheres to internationally recognised ethical and governance frameworks, including:

- UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2024), which emphasises human oversight, transparency, accountability, and the primacy of human rights;
- OECD Artificial Intelligence Principles (2024), focusing on fairness, robustness, reliability, and responsible data usage;
- European Union Artificial Intelligence Act (2024), advocating a human-centric, risk-based approach to AI deployment with enforceable safeguards.

These frameworks ensured that AI remained a supplementary analytical aid, while human judgment, investigative reasoning, and editorial independence governed all research outcomes. The responsible integration of AI was further informed by the author's professional background as a technology journalist and former digital media expert with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).



16. Disclaimer

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The purpose of this report is to advance public understanding of India's contemporary political and democratic environment. While every reasonable effort has been made to ensure accuracy, balance, and analytical integrity, political corruption and institutional manipulation are inherently opaque, contested, and rapidly evolving phenomena.

Accordingly, interpretations and conclusions presented in this report reflect the author's assessment based on publicly available evidence, documented records, expert analyses, and empirical observations available at the time of writing. Readers, policymakers, researchers, and institutions are encouraged to critically review the findings and contribute additional evidence, counter-analyses, or insights for future editions.

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This report has been compiled independently by Rakesh Raman, founder of RMN Foundation and editor of RMN News Service, without financial, political, or institutional sponsorship. To the best of the author's knowledge, this is among the first comprehensive analytical works on contemporary Indian politics that integrates investigative journalism, institutional analysis, international comparisons, and reform-oriented recommendations into a single coherent framework.

Readers are invited to share constructive criticism, peer review observations, and suggestions to strengthen subsequent editions.

— Rakesh Raman



18. Appeal for International Oversight of Indian Elections

In the absence of an effective domestic judicial remedy and amid sustained allegations of institutional capture, this report formally appeals for international oversight of Indian elections, particularly through ballot-paper–based electoral processes.

International election observation and supervision are not infringements on sovereignty; they are established democratic safeguards. United Nations–mandated or internationally supervised elections have been conducted in multiple democracies and transitional states when domestic institutions failed to command public trust.

This report proposes:

- Independent UN-mandated election observation missions for Indian national and state elections;
- Mandatory paper ballot voting with transparent, public, and verifiable counting;
- Open audit access for domestic and international election experts;
- Public disclosure of electoral technology architecture and procurement processes.

Given the documented erosion of judicial independence, the lack of accountability of the Election Commission of India, and repeated dismissal of constitutional challenges, international oversight is presented not as an extraordinary demand but as a last-resort democratic safeguard to restore electoral legitimacy and public confidence.



The Smokescreen Political Research Report on India

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