Political fissures alive, no consensus in sight

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India’s political space continues to be marked by polarized viewpoints on various matters of national debate, with little consensus in sight. Partisan views of the Lucas Nair-Vote-Chip CPM Millennial Survey have given insight into this polarized scene, and the latest one. The 38th round of the urban India survey, held in June, didn’t find any notable increase in the divisiveness in the previous roundings, but it showed that the supporters of the ruling party and the newly formed Opposition alliance have vastly different views on India’s progress relative to China’s, New Delhi’s G20 presidency, and population control.

1. Partisan Fissures

AROUND 42% of the respondents showed a stagnant attachment towards their favoured political party, while a quarter emerges as “moderate”. These two views have not moved much since the previous round but the share of weak-partisans has declined sharply from 13 in mid-2021 to 3% in June, showing that urban Indians have become more vocal in their politics. “Weak-partisans” are those whose views are weakly attached to the party they claim to identify with, but they do not identify with any party at all. “Strong-partisans” tend to take an extreme or polarized view of their favoured party, and they generally stick to the party as their “party”. The survey had 40.97 respondents from the urban and 200.94 respondents from the rural areas. Around 62% of the respondents were born after 1990 and 48% were born between 1980 and 1996. Most conducted the survey in association with a survey partner, YouGov India and CDF.

2. Government vs Opposition

THE ALLEGED misuse of investigating agencies by the ruling party’s political opponents has repeatedly featured in the public discourse. The popular view on this issue divided. Over half of the respondents (57%) believed that agencies were unfairly doing their job and the allegations of corruption against the targeted politicians were totally unwarranted. The rest took the position that the agencies were being moulded to intimidate the Opposition. Predictably, the respondents differed on political lines. Sixty-six percent of Janata Party supporters were the largest group (53%), their views shaped the overall sentiment (see “FactCheck”, 33 August 2023). The share of those aligning with the agencies raised up to 65% among supporters of parties in the Bipartisan National Democratic Alliance (BNDA). But even supporters of the Opposition in the Indian National Developmental Alliance (INDA) shared the same views, but the figures were far lower than the BNDA.

3. Global Stature

INDIA was on the annual mood of G20 leaders next month. The survey asked people who think India’s current president of the BRICS bloc, the context of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s foreign policy. Although G20 presidency is determined on a rotational basis, as many as 65% respondents attributed it to Modi’s efforts to elevate India’s stature. This indicates the ruling party’s perception of the issue. The share of those who thought the GRP president should have been someone else, was 4%. The rest did not know or did not care. G20 presidency, which did not bear the mark of Modi’s foreign policy efforts, as 61% of the respondents, the share of those who support the NDA’s performance, was more likely to believe the G20 presidency was a result of Modi’s foreign policy efforts, with 43% holding the view. Among those who support Opposition parties, only one in three held similar views.

4. Population Check

INDIA has surpassed China to become the most populous nation. In this context, the survey asked respondents in both the parties how they would recommend India to control its population. Among the 40.97 respondents, 46% respondents felt that the population control measures in India were necessary, while 47% respondents felt that India was not in need of any population control measures. Among the 200.94 respondents, 45% respondents felt that India was not in need of any population control measures, while 44% respondents felt that India was in need of population control measures.

5. India vs China

THE SURVEY also asked respondents to compare India’s progress in comparison to China’s on economic growth, housing, state of primary education, and the adoption of technology. NDA supporters were more likely to assess China’s progress in a more positive light. More than half of them assessed India’s progress to be better than that of China in all these aspects. The share was roughly equal among both the respondents.

6. Urban Indians have a partisan lens in their assessment of India’s state of affairs

“People in the news, how do they get along with India on the worst of all the news?” asked. A majority of those who supported the NDA agreed, while 65% of those who supported the INDIA coalition disagreed. The survey was conducted from 15 to 20 August 2023.