

NEPAL ELECTION

General Elections in Nepal have thrown up interesting results. The outcome reflects the aspiration and yearning of the youth for drastic change. The Rashtriya Swatantrata Party (RSP) led by popular singer Balendra Shah 'Balen' is headed to a two-thirds victory by winning 120 of the 156 seats, at the end of the counting for the day. He defeated three former prime ministers, who are veterans of Nepal's politics. The only leader who survived the RSP tsunami is Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda', who, the former Maoist guerrilla commander, who had risen as a next generation leader. Balen, who is new to politics and election, defeated K P Oli, chair of CPN-UML and four-time prime minister, with a dramatically huge margin. This defeat was all the more humiliating for the veteran leader as it happened in his party's stronghold of Jhapa-5 constituency. This election is significant for this was inspired by the Gen Z revolution against a heavily corrupt and pro-China Oli. Nepal has undergone several changes in recent decades. From Monarchy to the Communist rule and now the Gen Z inspired changes. These processes reflect the mood of the people who want their country to grow and prosper. Nepal is endowed with Himalayas, Nature's bounties but is a poor country. Vast areas where people live are still inaccessible and remote. The industrialization is yet to touch the country. This all makes the youth restless and impatient for the change. Add the corruption and a flawed pro-China policy of the Oli government and political manipulations to further this agenda. No wonder the Gen Z leaders who held negotiations with the Army leadership to end the violent protests had put forth conditions of fresh elections. Following the talks, the agitating leaders agreed for a woman academic to be the interim Prime Minister. The youth were so enraged with the legacy leaders that they put their faith into Balen, whose only qualification was his music. The election campaign was run for a government free of corruption, will give good governance, end nepotism.

Acharya Prashant

There is a question that goes unasked every time the world erupts in war, and its absence is more revealing than anything the analysts say. The question is not about which side is right, or which grievance is legitimate, or which alliance has been betrayed. Those questions get asked at great length, with great sophistication, by very worldly, credentialed people. The question that does not get asked is simpler and more dangerous: who is the one fighting? Not which nation, not which ideology, not which scripture, but who, actually, is doing this, what does this person want, and why does the wanting never stop?

In recent weeks, US and Israeli strikes on Iran have killed several top military and political figures; Iran retaliated against Israeli positions and American bases in the Gulf; Pakistan launched strikes into Afghanistan; and all this while the devastating war in Gaza is still quite fresh in the collective memory. Across every editorial room and foreign ministry, the same machinery cranks into motion: geopolitical analysis, balance-of-power calculations, resource competition, historical grievance mapping. These explanations are not wrong, exactly. They describe the furniture of the room quite well. But what they do not explain is who is sitting in it, or why that person keeps setting the room on fire and then expressing surprise at the flames.

Consider what a single historical fact does to the entire geopolitical narrative of the current US-Iran crisis. Until 1979, Iran and Israel were functional allies. Two countries that today describe each other in the language of surgical removal and satanic identity, "the cancerous tumour must be excised," "the Little Satan must perish," were, within living memory, strategic partners. What changed was a revolution that placed religious identity at the absolute centre of the Iranian state. The Islamic Republic made opposition to Israel a central ideological position of the new state, not

Why do nations go to war?

because Israel had done anything new, but because a state founded entirely on theological identity requires its identity to be defined against something. A Jewish state served that purpose with theological precision.

This is not geopolitics wearing a religious costume. This is religion being worn by the ego as its most respectable armour, and it tells us everything we need to know about the nature of the conflict. Religion exists to civilise the animal. Every great tradition, at its irreducible core, was attempting to do one thing: take the creature that emerges from the womb driven entirely by the biological logic of survival: consume, expand, eliminate the threat, secure the territory, and elevate it into something capable of clarity, compassion, and self-knowledge. That is the whole project. The animal, however, is remarkably resourceful. It can colonise the very force meant to tame it; it can drape itself in scripture, recite the holy verses with genuine feeling, and emerge looking not like a beast at all, but like a soldier of God. When that happens, religion does not merely fail at its purpose; it becomes the most potent accelerant the ego has ever discovered, because now the hunger for dominance carries the blessing of the divine, the violence is sanctified, and the enemy is not merely an adversary to be defeated but a heretic whose destruction is itself an act of devotion.

Not Resources, But Identity Strip away the theological dressing and the geopolitical framework, and what remains is something both simpler and more intractable: the ego's bottomless hunger to feel complete, a hunger no diplomatic architecture has ever been built to address, because the architects themselves are running the same engine.

The resource explanation for the US-Iran confrontation is the most persistent alibi and the most easily dismantled. The United States is among the world's largest energy producers; it has no material need for Iranian oil that could justify the risks

of direct military confrontation with a nation of ninety million people in one of the world's most volatile regions. What it fits is the logic of an ego that requires dominance not as a strategy but as a psychological condition; an ego that cannot tolerate the existence of an entity that refuses to subordinate itself to the hierarchy. You cannot give it enough. Feed it every oil field in the Gulf, and it will discover it needs recognition; give it recognition, and it will discover it needs submission; give it submission, and it will discover it needs the annihilation of any future possibility of challenge. The hunger has no floor because the hollowiness it is trying to fill has no floor either. Everything else: the sanctions, the strikes, the frameworks, the summits, is rearranging weapons into configurations that feel temporarily safer and calling the rearrangement peace.

There is a temptation, particularly for citizens of the nations doing the striking, to watch all of this from a position of apparent safety: to feel either pride at a display of power or simple relief that the devastation is happening at a geographical distance comfortable enough to be consumed as news. This is the ego's most seductive illusion: that the fire it lights in the world stays in the world, that you can sanction the destruction of other people's cities and return to your own life carrying none of that destruction inside you.

The inner condition that produces beligerent foreign policy is the same inner condition that produces the epidemic of depression, anxiety, addiction, and inner purposelessness that has become the defining psychological signature of the most militarily powerful societies on earth. You cannot burn your neighbour's house and rest in peace, not because of some mystical law, but because the act of burning changes the one who burns, and that changed person then returns to the home he imagined was safe and wonders why he cannot sleep. The senses are made to face outward, and therefore, the ego, using only the senses, sees only what is outside, never

what is within. This is the structural predicament of the geopolitically entranced ego: it looks outward at the adversary, at the threat, at the historical injustice, and it never pauses to notice that what it keeps finding out there, the hunger, the fear, the need for enemies, the certainty of its own righteousness, is a precise mirror of what has never been examined within.

Ask yourself what genuinely disturbs you when you read the news from that region. If you find that a missile strike produces something that feels uncomfortably close to satisfaction, a sense that the right people are being punished, that your side is winning, that the world is being corrected, sit with that feeling for a moment before moving to the next headline. Ask what it is fed by. Ask what it would mean for your sense of identity if the world stopped arranging itself into enemies you could feel righteous about.

The ego that requires enemies to sustain its own sense of coherence does not disappear when the missiles stop. It waits until it finds the next available occasion. And the wheel turns again. The wheel will not be stopped from the outside.

There is no treaty elegant enough, no balance of power stable enough, no diplomatic architecture sophisticated enough to address what keeps turning it. The wheel is turned from within, by the unexamined centre that has been given every instrument of analysis and statecraft except the one that could actually change something: the willingness to look at itself with the same ruthlessness it has always reserved for its enemies. That is the only disarmament that lasts.

Not a new agreement, not a new government, not a new ideology dressed in the vocabulary of the old one, but just a human being, finally willing to ask: what in me is producing this world, and what would remain of my sense of who I am if I could no longer find an enemy to confirm it? That question, honestly pursued, is the beginning of the only peace that has ever been real.

THE NEW AGE OF RESOURCE GEOPOLITICS

BK SINGH

In a sweeping overhaul of America's global footprint, last month, Trump authorized US to withdraw from 66 international organisations. Among the pull-outs are the major climate-linked global bodies including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the global counterterrorism forum, intergovernmental panel on Climate Change, the peacekeeping fund, UN democracy fund, UN energy etc. US officials say that these organisations promote hostile and inefficient policies that no longer serve the country's interests. The officials have also criticized climate related bodies for imposing undue burden on US businesses and industries without reciprocal commitments from major emitters like China and India. These observations of the US are laughable. China and India are not comparable in annual emissions. While China emits 14 Giga tons CO₂ annually, India's emission is 3 Giga tons. Per capita emission of China, too, is high.

After withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement and not sending a US delegation to the latest climate CoP30 held at Belem, Brazil, his pullout from global climate-related groupings has been devastating. Historically, US is responsible for warming the planet and the climate disruptions we are

facing; how can Trump not take these facts into account?

As 2026 unfolds Trump's second term is marked by muscular interventions in Venezuela, and now Iran and also there are open threats against Nigeria, Somalia and Cuba and quite remarkably and inexplicably, menacing Denmark, Canada and Mexico.

Trump consistently accused Venezuelan President Maduro for running a drug cartel and sending drugs to America, and in an operation 'Absolute Resolve' on 3rd January President and his wife were extracted from the Caracas military base and taken to the US for trial. His focus is on Venezuelan oil. Six days after the operation, major oil giants like ExxonMobil, Chevron and ConocoPhillips were invited to Whitehouse where Trump seek an investment of \$100 billion in the next ten years to expand production, an agreement for immediate oil deliveries to the US to the tune of 50 million barrels per day. Citing past asset seizures and current instability in the country, the Exxon CEO called it "un-investable". Oil giants needed significant policy changes and guarantees before committing large sums.

The peak level of oil production in Venezuela was 4 million barrels per day in the 1990s. The country faced US sanction since 2019 and since then the production has tapered to 1 million barrels per day.

Though the country is estimated to have 300 billion barrels, surpassing Saudi Arabia and Iran, but the reserves are in Orinoco belt (eastern Venezuela) which are heavy crude oil and difficult to extract. The extraction and refining costs would be exorbitant, and it has considerable environmental costs. Western Venezuelan oil were comparatively light and less polluting and has been exhausted by now. What remains is the heavy crude oil in the east.

The International Energy Agency also estimates that such crude is six times more flaring-intensive than the global average. Ramping up oil production could risk a 'methane bomb'. Methane is one of the potent greenhouse gases that would be emitted during venting, flaring during production and also during transport and storage. If the oil production is increased to 4 million barrels per day, it would add additional emission of 730 million tons (.73 Giga tons) of CO₂ annually. A higher production would proportionately increase the emissions.

The US National Security Strategy has laid out that the country will assert and enforce the Monroe Doctrine (western hemisphere hegemony) for its dominance in the region. Trump likes to call it the 'Donroe doctrine'. After gaining control over Venezuela, he doubled down to annex

Greenland. He announced that all options to gain semi-autonomous territory from Denmark, including use of military is on the table. He also wrote to the Norwegian PM that Norway did not consider him for the Nobel Peace Prize, and he does not feel obliged to think purely of peace.

The 1951 agreement between the US and Denmark allows the US to open bases on Greenland. The US can develop, maintain and operate any number of bases on the island. Today, several bases and installations are closed down, and only Pituffik Space Base is operational. The agreement does not prohibit US to expand military presence on the island to counter China and Russia. The security challenge is only an eyewash; Trump wants to control oil and critical minerals. Melting of ice in the Arctic region is opening new sea sailing routes, and also making oil and mineral deposits easily accessible. Greenland's formidable environment, underdeveloped infrastructure, and challenging geology have prevented mining of critical minerals, crucial for high-tech products. To counter China's near-monopoly on global rare-earth supply, US has already committed hundreds of millions of dollars and acquired stakes in several rare-earth companies. To find a solution to the strategic dilemma, Trump is wresting control of Greenland from Denmark.

How systems are beginning to work for women in Uttar Pradesh

Seema Kushwaha

For years, conversations around women's empowerment in India have often focused on what women lack. Safety. Opportunity. Institutional support. These concerns have shaped activism, public debate, and policymaking for decades.

But real change rarely begins with rhetoric. It begins when systems start responding to women's realities. Across Uttar Pradesh, the scale of such response has begun to expand in ways that are slowly reshaping how women experience everyday life. The impact of this shift is not best understood through policy language alone. It becomes visible in the lives of thousands of women who now have access to support that simply did not exist before.

For a woman facing violence or distress, seeking help has historically meant navigating multiple institutions, often while battling fear and social stigma. Today, across districts in the state, dedicated support centres provide medical care, legal as-

sistance, counselling, police coordination and temporary shelter in one place. Thousands of cases have already been addressed through these centres, offering women something that activists have long demanded: accessible, coordinated support. Equally transformative has been the growing use of helpline services. Lakhs of women have reached out for assistance through a single phone call, receiving guidance, intervention and counselling. For many women in smaller towns and rural communities, where formal support systems were once distant or intimidating, such access represents a powerful shift. It signals that help is available and that seeking it is possible.

Another visible change is unfolding in the area of economic participation. Across the state, millions of women have been supported through financial assistance, digital literacy initiatives and community-based programmes aimed at strengthening their economic independence. While the amounts in-



involved may vary, the larger impact lies in confidence.

When a woman begins earning or managing resources, even at a modest level, the balance within households often changes. Decisions about education, healthcare and family welfare begin to involve her voice. Over time, economic participation becomes a pathway to social recognition. Young girls are also growing up in a different environment. Awareness campaigns pro-

moting the importance of educating and supporting girls have reached lakhs of families across the state. These conversations, repeated across districts and communities, gradually influence how families think about daughters and their futures.

The impact may not always appear dramatic. It is often subtle and cumulative. A girl encouraged to continue school. A young woman able to travel to a nearby city for work. A

survivor of violence who receives counselling and legal support instead of silence and isolation. For those facing the harshest circumstances, rehabilitation facilities now provide shelter and support to women who are abandoned, displaced or survivors of abuse. For many of them, these centres represent not just safety but the chance to rebuild their lives with dignity.

Urban working women, too, are beginning to benefit from expanding infrastructure that offers safer accommodation options. For women who migrate from smaller towns in search of employment or education, secure housing often determines whether they can pursue opportunities at all. From an activist's perspective, the most encouraging aspect of these developments is the recognition that women's empowerment requires an ecosystem. Safety, economic opportunity, social awareness and institutional support must move together.

Uttar Pradesh's demographic scale makes this challenge particu-

larly complex. But when systems expand to reach millions of women, the long-term impact extends beyond individual programmes. It begins to reshape expectations.

Women who once hesitated to speak out now know there are channels through which their voices can be heard. Families that once prioritised sons are gradually recognising the potential of daughters. Communities that once viewed women's independence with suspicion are slowly adapting to new realities.

The journey toward gender equality is never simple. Social attitudes take time to evolve, and policy efforts must remain consistent to sustain momentum. Yet the growing reach of these systems suggests an important shift. Women across Uttar Pradesh are not only receiving support when they face adversity. Increasingly, they are gaining the confidence to shape their own futures. And when that confidence spreads across millions of lives, the change it creates can redefine the trajectory of an entire society.