



US & CANADA

Newsletter

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US POLITICS

Memos, Debates, Polls, and Pop Stars: The Wild Ride of the 2024 Presidential Campaign

The highlight of the month was the presidential debate between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump held on 10 September 2024 in Philadelphia. This was the first and probably the only time the candidates will get to meet head-to-head in a debate before the elections. The consensus was that Trump had performed badly going off track from his script and repeating falsehoods that have become a trademark of his stump speeches. One of these, the allegation that Haitian illegal have been eating the pets of residents of Springfield, Ohio became a [meme](#) after the debates. The candidates clashed fiercely on abortion, immigration and foreign policy during the 90 minute [debate](#). Harris endeavoured to discombobulate Trump by mentioning his criminal conviction, legal issues, and suggesting his rallies were boring. Trump said after the debate that it was rigged and called for ABC network's broadcasting licence to be [cancelled](#).

There was a flurry of polls after the debate, most of which indicated that Harris had performed better with her favourability ratings also improving from -11 percentage points before the debate to +1 point after. Her favourable demographics included Biden 2020 voters, liberals, women, 18- to 34-year-olds, and [millennials](#). Trump held a [lead](#) among White voters (56% to 42%), while Harris maintained large advantages with Black voters (84% to 13%) and Asian voters (61% to 37%).

However, a significant [majority](#) of voters said the debate did not change their voting decision, indicating that while Harris may

have won the debate, its impact on the overall race might be limited. This was also reflected in later polls showing the two candidates neck and neck.

The key endorsement for Harris following the debate was by pop singer Taylor Swift who wrote out a long message to her 283 million followers on [Instagram](#) on why she would be voting for Kamala Harris. This led to a swift response from Trump, who posted the words *I hate Taylor Swift* on his Truth Social account. Swift being the cultural phenomenon that she is, with her fan following of Swifties in the 18-34 years demographic has proved instrumental to the success of *get out the vote* drives, with her latest message sending over 400,000 visitors to the vote.gov registration site in the 24 hours after her Instagram [story](#) went live.

With all the excitement around the presidential elections, it is often overlooked that this is also a general election of sorts; on 5 November, voters in the United States will also be electing candidates from all 435 congressional districts to the US House of Representatives, as well as one third of the Senators. The current House has 220 Republicans and 212 Democrats, with 218 required for a majority. The Senate is also almost evenly split with the Democrats being in majority only by virtue of the tie-breaking vote of the Vice-President. Pollsters have been running [thousands](#) of [simulations](#) to determine which party could win the House, and even at this late stage, the models are showing that the elections could go either way. In the Senate too, control could ultimately be decided by the [results](#) of the presidential elections, and which party gets the Vice-presidency.

Another factor that plays a part in Congressional elections when they take place during a Presidential election year, is that of the “presidential [coattails](#).” Simultaneous presidential and congressional elections have traditionally had two effects on the latter; there is higher voter turn-out than is usual for stand-alone Congressional polls, and the winning Presidents’ party also tends to make gains in the Congressional elections, a phenomenon referred to as the ‘coattail’ effect.

Of the 26 out of 33 senators seeking re-election, 15 are Democrats, 9 are Republicans, with 2 independents. Statistics have shown that a majority of incumbents tend to get re-elected. There are a number of reasons for this. In the first instance, a six-year tenure makes for good voter recall. Secondly, incumbents have much bigger war chests to finance their campaign than challengers, again a result of name recognition and the positions they have taken on various issues during their tenure.

2 special elections are also taking place in the Senate: one to fill the final two months of California Senator Dianne Feinstein's term following her death in September 2023, and to fill the remaining 2 years of Nebraska Senator Ben Sasse's term following his resignation in January 2023.

INDIA-US RELATIONS

- The U.S. Department of State [announced](#) that it is partnering with the India Semiconductor Mission to enhance the global semiconductor ecosystem under the CHIPS Act of 2022. The collaboration aims to strengthen the semiconductor supply chain, crucial for manufacturing products like vehicles and medical devices.

In the initial phase, this will include assessing each other’s semiconductor ecosystem, regulatory framework, workforce, and infrastructure needs. This initiative is an outcome of the International Technology Security and Innovation Fund (ITSI) [Fund](#), which provides the U.S. Department of State with \$500 million (\$100 million per year over five years, starting in Fiscal Year 2023), to promote the development and adoption of secure and trusted telecommunications technologies, secure semiconductor supply chains, and other programs and initiatives with our allies and partners.

- U.S. and Indian officials met in New Delhi for the eighth U.S.-India 2+2 Intersessional [Dialogue](#) on 16 September 2024. Joint Secretary (Americas) Mr. Nagaraj Naidu, Ministry of External Affairs and Joint Secretary (International Cooperation) Mr. Vishwesh Negi, Ministry of Defence, co-chaired the intersessional with US Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Mr. Donald Lu and US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Mr. Jedidiah P. Royal. They reviewed progress on strategic cooperation, defence, technology collaboration, space cooperation, resilient supply chains, clean energy, maritime domain awareness, development cooperation, and people-to-people ties. According to the US Embassy press [release](#), the dialogue included discussions on support for peace in Ukraine and humanitarian assistance in Gaza.

- The US State Department announced on September 23 that India was now formally a part of the Minerals Security Finance Network (MSFN), a new [initiative](#) stemming from the Minerals

Security Partnership (MSP), established by the US in 2022. India joined the MSP in June 2023 which aims to secure supply chains for critical minerals like cobalt, nickel, lithium, and rare earth elements. These 14 countries plus EU partnership, focuses on reducing dependence on countries like China for these essential resources. The MSFN brings together development finance institutions and export credit agencies to collaborate with the private sector, enhancing production capacity for critical minerals needed for the clean energy transition. India's inclusion is significant due to its ambitious plans for electric vehicles and electronics manufacturing, which require a stable supply of these minerals. The partnership is expected to foster investment in critical mineral supply chains and develop new projects, including battery materials and mineral processing facilities.

- The 20th edition of the India-USA Joint Military Exercise [YUDH ABHYAS-2024](#) was held at the Mahajan Field Firing Ranges in Rajasthan from September 9th to 22nd. The Indian Army, represented by 600 personnel from the RAJPUT Regiment and other units, and the US Army, represented by the 1-24 Battalion of the 11th Airborne Division, participated in the exercise. The exercise aims to enhance joint military capabilities for counter-terrorism operations under the UN Charter's Chapter VII, focusing on semi-desert environments. Tactical drills included joint responses to terrorist actions, joint planning, and combined field training exercises.

- The United States participated in the second phase of the *Tarang Shakti* multinational air [exercise](#) which was held from August 30 to September 14 in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. The 25th [Fighter](#)

Squadron which operates the A-10 Thunderbolt II and based out of Osan Air Base, South Korea participated in the exercise. Other countries participating in the multinational air exercise, the largest ever hosted by India, were Australia, Greece, Bangladesh, Singapore, and the UAE. The first phase was conducted in Suler, near Coimbatore, with France, Germany, Spain, and the UK participating.

- The third [edition](#) of the INDUS-X Summit, held on September 9-10, 2024, in California, marked significant progress in the joint defence innovation ecosystem between India and the USA. Organised by the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) and Stanford University, the summit featured the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between iDEX and the Defence Innovation Unit (DIU) to enhance cooperation in defence innovation. Key highlights included the announcement of a new challenge under [INDUS-X](#), the release of the INDUS-X Impact Report, and the launch of the official INDUS-X webpage. Additionally, the INDUSWERX testing consortium, led by private-sector organizations, was highlighted as a key platform for defense and dual-use companies to test and integrate their technologies at premier testing ranges across the United States and India. The summit provided a platform for showcasing next-generation technologies by startups and MSMEs, and facilitated critical dialogues on future technology trends, capacity building, funding opportunities, and strengthening defence supply chains

DIASPORA NEWS

- Two Hindu temples were vandalised in California and New York and defaced with anti-Hindu graffiti. The [first](#)

incident took place on September 16 in Melville, New York while the [second](#) instance was at Mather, California. Authorities also reported that water lines on the property were cut during the incident. The Consulate General of India in New York also [condemned](#) the vandalism at the Melville temple, describing the act as "unacceptable" and noting that the issue had been raised with US authorities.

CANADA POLITICS

Trudeau survives no-confidence motion but loses one more seat in bye-election

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [survived](#) a vote of confidence on September 25, with the House of Commons voting 211-120 against the motion proposed by the Conservative Party. This, despite Trudeau's declining popularity and the New Democratic Party led by Jagmeet Singh withdrawing support to the minority government.

Jagmeet Singh, leader of Canada's NDP, had [announced](#) the end of a two-and-a-half-year agreement with Justin Trudeau's Liberals, citing the Liberals' failure to fight for Canadians but the Liberal Party successfully navigated the confidence vote despite the New Democratic Party (NDP) withdrawing support, primarily through strategic alliances and the reluctance of opposition parties to [trigger](#) an immediate election. Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre criticized Singh's announcement as a "stunt," while Trudeau expressed confidence in making parliament work and delivering for Canadians. He criticised Trudeau for failing to address issues like high living costs, the housing crisis, and rising crime rates.

The Liberals are expected to face another confidence vote on a budget measure soon. Trudeau accused the Conservatives of playing politics instead of focusing on public needs, while the Conservatives called for early elections, citing increased federal spending and crime under Trudeau's leadership. Trudeau's Liberal party has been steadily losing seats considered to be liberal strongholds, showing his declining popularity. The latest seat to go out of the Liberal grasp is the [Montreal](#) parliamentary constituency of La Salle-Émard-Verdun for which a by-poll was held on September 16. This seat has been with the Liberal party for well over a century

DIASPORA NEWS

- Indian students in Canada are facing further obstacles following the introduction a new [rule](#) limiting international students to a maximum of 24 hours of off-campus work per week, aimed at ensuring students prioritize their studies. This change is a significant shift from the pandemic period when work-hour restrictions were lifted to address labour shortages. Indian students rely on off-campus jobs to cover essential expenses like groceries and accommodation. The new rule means students can only work up to three part-time shifts per week, making it challenging to manage living costs, especially in high-expense cities like Toronto. Students have started cutting down on expenses and moving in with friends to save on rent.