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The Dynamics of Party System in India: A Comparative Study of National and Regional Parties

Abstract: The purpose of the study is the structure of political parties and comparative analysis of the party system in the Republic of India. The objective of the research is to investigate the functioning of the parties, power structure, dynamics and their role in forming the government at the centre and state levels in the country. In addition, the study analyses the approaches of the parties as an actor to make a coalition government in various provincial governments. The research used comparative method analysis to achieve the purpose of this study and describe the source methods for testing the research objectives. The study finds the comprehensive relevance of parties' role in the Indian political system. Finally, the result of the article finds as a conclusion that the multi-party system provides multiple opportunities for people to participate in the democratic process in India.

Key words: Party System, National and Regional Parties, Democracy, India, Government

Introduction

The political process is a key element of the exercise of democratisation in the country. The role of parties in the democratic process is increasingly important. And political parties are indispensable to any democratic system and play the most crucial role in the electoral process by establishing candidates and conducting election campaigns. Political parties and the party system in India have been greatly influenced by cultural diversity, social, ethnic, caste, community and religious pluralism, traditions of the nationalist movement, contrasting styles of party leadership and ideological perspectives faced. The two main categories of political parties in India are National and State, and the Electoral Commission of India recognizes them as such based on certain specific criteria. Regional parties are stronger in many states compared to national parties. The qualitative research of national and regional parties and their role to form national government and sub-government in different states in the country. Furthermore, there are thirty sub-government in Indian states. Despite the domination of national parties in India to the formation of state government the regional parties alone make states government in many North and South Indian states. The number of parties that form the government, whether single or multi-party, can influence the party system by shaping the advantages associated with belonging to small and large parties (Ziegfeld, 2012, p. 69).

According to Indian constitutional provision and legally position of political parties vary from country to country. In most democratic countries, however, there is no direct

constitutional provision regulating the operation of political parties, nor any legal sanction establishing political parties as a necessary governmental institution, although there are some governmental systems that attempt to prescribe certain conditions for the functioning of a party system. Political parties are not mentioned directly in the Constitution of India. However, a provision of the Constitution directly concerns the functioning of political parties, the tenth schedule. The Tenth Schedule to the Constitution was added by the Constitution (52nd Amendment) Act 1985. It deals with the disqualification of members on account of the Anti-Defection Act from being a member of either House of Parliament (Art. 102(2)) or the Legislative Assembly, Legislative Council of the State (Art.191 (2)) (Kesalu, 2013, p. 57).

Political parties have played a crucial role in social and political transformation, but party dominance has also undergone enormous changes. A multitude of new parties emerged and many of them became ruling parties at the national, state or both levels. In many states, national parties have been marginalized or have become auxiliaries to their state rivals. This flux of party dominance and the proliferation of parties gave rise to coalition governments, which have become a regular feature of Indian politics since the 1990s. A large number of parties have shared power in these coalitions over the years. For example, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government, led by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, ruled the centre from 1999 to 2004 with around 30 different partners. The two governments formed by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) also enjoyed the support of more than ten alliance partners in 2004 and 2009 respectively. The regional and small parties determined the fate of national parties in general elections over the past two decades. In general elections, 2014 and 2019 BJP had got an absolute majority in Lok Sabha (Lower House) but it was given the space for poll coalition regional parties in government. For example, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), Republican Party of India (RPI), Shivsena, Janta Dal-United (JDU), Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RLSP) and newly formed Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party. In the Indian political system, the role of the regional party is very relevant since 1989 to till date. These parties are sharing power in the central government and got cabinet ministry in Narendra Modi's government (Suri, Elliott, Hundt, 2016, p. 2).

Since coalition governments have become a common feature of Indian politics since the late 1980s, India offers a plethora of illustrative cases to understand the role of coalition politics and specifically the influence of regional parties of these coalitions on foreign policy processes and decisions. India's diverse coalition governance experiences can thus help us assess some of the existing scientific explanations as well as draw new theoretical and empirical conclusions (Blarel, Willigen, 2021, p. 479). Finally, the article concludes with a discussion of the results and future directions of this study. Furthermore, the study relates the national and regional party's coordination to share the powers. It suggests a new argument that the combination of regional party preferences and multilevel coalition agreements lead regional parties to influence national and international decisions. The analysis goes several steps forward by analyzing when and how these regional parties became involved in negotiating with the main national parties. Although, the article aims to theorise about the participation of regional parties by hypothesising the main possible outcomes that reflect different combinations of regional party preferences and coalition configuration across the country. Therefore, the article aims to offer

a theory that can be applied beyond the Indian context, that is, in other democracies with federal systems and coalition governments.

This article develops a categorisation that distinguishes the small parties, active in national and state elections, from the larger regional parties and the hundreds of smaller parties registered with the Electoral Commission. The broader importance of small parties is assessed in relation to party system change and everyday political behaviour. To what extent do national parties compete with regional parties in the electoral process at the state level? The emergence of regional parties is created a bigger challenge to national parties in various states across the country.

Literature Review

India is the largest democracy and the mass population have been participating in the general election and provincials' elections. The political parties are one of the most important aspects in the study of the formation of government and political process, as Arian and Barnes (1974, p. 592) point out the party is an important link between the political elites and the masses and an important instrument of government in most electoral political systems in India. Thus, political parties are a way of bringing together a representation of interests and voices. Its goal is to win votes and support for governance for the welfare of the state. The understanding is that there are different types of political party systems, depending to a certain extent on internal conditions: one, two, and multi-party systems. The three types are generally divided based on the number of key parts and their functions in the system. The Indian political system is important to the country's political parties.

There are many studies (Arian, Barnes, 1974; Duverger, 1959; Reddy, 2005; Southall, 2005) that have outlined the theories of a dominant party and its key characteristics. This provision has established that a dominant party system revolves around the dominance of one party in a given political system. The dominant party has three main elements: successive victories in elections, effective internal management, and the ability to set the agenda. To begin with, lasting electoral victories, the first prerequisite of a dominant party is seen in its ability to win elections and form a government within a competitive political system. According to Indian Constitutions, which party or coalition has a full majority in the lower house of parliament can claim to form the government (Soikham, 2019, p. 24).

Southall (2005, p. 63) proposed the dominant national parties dominated the electoral process in India during the electoral period. The national parties have been in power in the country since 1952. The legitimacy of the national parties in the country remains relevant and the regional parties have less importance when the national party obtains a clear majority in the general elections. In the last two general elections, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) as the leading national party, has obtained an adequate majority in the general elections respectively in 2014 and 2019. That is why the regional parties do not have a strong position in the central government of India since 2014. The Indian National Congress (INC) is the second-largest party in India as of 2014. Before 2014, INC was in the central government with the support of regional parties

from different provinces (Reddy, 2005). Using indicators such as the number and size of the relevant parties across the country, the ideological difference of the political organisation, and the intensity of the given ideological framework, Sartori classifies party systems into seven types: one-party system, hegemonic party system, predominant party system, two-party system, moderate system pluralism, polarised pluralism, and atomised party system. Sartori's study focuses on the explanation of the typology of party systems and a detailed analysis of the characteristics of each party system. (Sartori, 1976, pp. 281 and 283).

There are lots of literature available to test this study through the literature on party system formation rests on the theoretical foundations established by Downs (1957) and Lipset and Rokkan (1967). Although their approaches to understanding politics are very different, both works assume that political interests and voter beliefs shape party systems. This common-sense notion continues to inform research on party systems decades later. The emergence of regional parties in India since the failure of national parties and ignorance of the proper development of concerned states. Today many sub-governments in states are formed by the regional parties. Even some regional parties rule the state as a coalition government with the support of national parties (Stoll, 2004). As long as it is true that voter preferences represent an integral part of party system formation, the existing literature provides valuable information on the formation and origins of party systems. However, as soon as this assumption is broken, political science is left with very few theoretical tools to understand what factors shape party systems and party formation.

Downs (1957) is perhaps the most important research in the study of parties and elections. His spatial model of voting underlies decades of research on electoral politics. Downs' model organizes voters in a political space according to their political preferences or strengths. Voters then vote for the party whose political positions are closest to theirs in the political space. For Downs, a given preference distribution can only support a certain number of matches. The ideological content of parties in the party system also depends on the distribution of voters as well as politics, since parties are located in places where they can attract voters. Unsurprisingly, Downs concludes that the fundamental determinant of the course of a nation's political life is the distribution of voters along the political ladder (Downs, 1957, p. 139).

The research explains how formal institutions influence the expression of preferences. India is an extremely diverse country, from north to south and from east to west. It is difficult to understand that people manipulate their votes in favour of a particular party. Although voters from different societies may have similar preferences, different institutional frameworks may lead them to express their preferences in different ways. In India, there are six national parties and hundreds of regional parties across the country. Voters took different approaches in each election. Electoral rules have traditionally been at the centre of this literature. Research along these lines shows how voters vote strategically, taking into account how electoral systems convert votes into seats (Cox, 1997).

The argument in this paper shares Chhibber and Kollman's general theoretical view of decentralisation, but it differs from their argument in several respects. It differs in its emphasis on regional parties rather than the distribution of all-party votes across coun-

tries. It also differs in terms of its emphasis on political rather than fiscal decentralisation, as well as its emphasis on the institutional structure of decentralisation rather than the distribution of power between levels of government. According to Chhibar and Kollman, the argument of this research is the assertion that fiscal and political decentralisation is a distinct phenomenon (Brancati, 2008). The regional parties are being gain bargaining power with the big allied national parties leading the country. Many scholars cited that small parties affected the decision-making process of the government. The national and international policies don't get shape without the support of regional and small parties wherever it shares power in states government either the eternal support or external support (Beasley, Kaarbo, 2014; Coticchia, Davidson, 2016; Greene, 2019; Verbeek, Zarlove, 2015). There has been discussion that present-day Indian electoral politics is generally a state-specific affair and that the politics of the various states vary enough from another way in the country. Many national parties that govern Indian states are being replaced by regional parties since 1990 (Yadav, 1996).

The elections results in Bihar, Odisha, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, North-Eastern States, Haryana, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, and Uttar Pradesh indicate that the type of competition at the state level has an effect on voting decisions at the local and district level. The state-based parties had emerged at a large scale and govern the power in many states. And national parties are opponent parties in states assembly (Chhibber, 2006, p. 20).

Methodological and Theoretical Approaches

The comparative method is used to articulate party politics and their profound role in spreading democracy on the ground. The party system is a soul element that relates to the democratic rights of people in any democratic country in the world. Today's political system depends on elections because a large number of political leaders participated in elections. A country like India where the mass population exercises the right to vote in elections and elects the leader of their constituency. The elected leader is responsible for understanding the people who voted when they won the electoral process. However, the comparative analysis of political party leaders determines whether the elected leader is better than the previous leader or unable to reach the people. There is a high level of competition between national and regional parties in India. Comparative methods analysing the comparison of party systems in India (Vallier, Apter, 1971, p. 145).

Laakso and Taagepara (1979) describe competition within the party system to measure the variations between parties. Although, the lots of seats won by the regional parties across the country create competition for the national parties in the polls. Because of geographical and regional differences from the national party's ideology that regional parties are major counterparts of national parties. Therefore, the number of dependent variables rely on the regional parties' ideologies in many Indian states i.e., Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, north-eastern states, Odisha, and other regions as well. The regional parties form the state government and their policies work according to local aspects. The regional parties which are more effective get the number of votes in elections rather than regional parties. There-

fore, the regional parties have been established in Indian politics by the failure of national parties' agenda at the local level of development and lack of interest. Because local identity and development agenda has been created by the regional parties for people's development strongly rather than national parties (Laakso, Taagepara, 1979).

In the multi-party system, parties have a chance to win the elections because they need to get a lower percentage to achieve majority seats in the assemblies. Various poll results are showing the party gets around twenty-five per cent of vote share and reached the majority number to govern the government. Although the pre-poll alliance of parties also got a huge success in the election, it is a soft strategy to win the elections in India. This is happening nowadays in India to win the election through the pre-poll coalition politics to beat any other alliance. Since 1989, the election strategy has been changed into a soft policy to win the election at any cost. There are two major alliances at the national level in India 1) National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and 2) United Progressive Alliance (UPA), from the last two Lok Sabha elections in 2014 and 2019 respectively, BJP led NDA had got majority seats and formed a coalition government with other regional parties (Chhibber, Nooruddin, 2004, p. 162). To use the data to study this research the dynamics of the national and regional level of parties from government websites, election commission regular reports, research institutes essays, think tank editorials and media clips as primary data and as secondary data assess the various books as literature and research articles.

In the light of the party's system and variations of its function, the study assesses the national and local level issues in India. The national parties have ruled the country since 1952 when the first parliamentary elections were held in the country. India has been ruled by mostly either national parties or alliance groups. They are stronger alliance groups, people from remote areas didn't rely on the national party or national party-led coalition. Because the national party is far away from the proper development of remote areas of the country. The local issues have been raised by the regional parties, that is why regional parties are bigger competitors of national parties in regional areas of the country. The regional parties led government has claimed that national parties led central government doesn't support the start of development projects in the regional areas of the country where regional parties have been ruling the states. Financial support is necessary to start bigger projects i.e., medical colleges and hospitals, bridges, national highways, and new railway tracks in remote areas of the countryside (Lahiri, 2000, p. 1540).

In the comparative study of states level elections in southern states i.e. Tamilnadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh the regional parties always emerged as winners. Even at regional level elections or state assembly elections, there is the main fight in elections between the regional parties. The national parties got 3rd or 4th positions in southern or northern states as well. Since 2014 the BJP has been winning the regional elections across the countryside. The BJP has formed the governments alone or alliance partners in northeastern states and other parts of the country. The INC is getting a major loss in many states and regional elections. Moreover, many state-level INC led governments are being replaced by the BJP led coalition governments (Wyatt, 2009). The article critically and comparatively highlighted the emergence of regional parties and the continued loss of ground by the Indian National Congress and their allied parties across the country. It

has been occurring the emergence of the right-wing party in India since the 1914 parliamentary election in the country. The Emergence of BJP as an ultra-right-wing party at the national and local level. The INC and their similar ideological parties have been losing the poll. The people’s faith in the opposing parties decreased from the last decade in all aspects of the country. The right-wing party’s popularity continuously has been increasing in India. That is why regional parties’ vote share is decreasing in recent assembly elections in some regions, but in many areas of the country regional parties are still dominated (Diwakar, 2017, p. 327).

Results and Discussion

During the 2014 parliamentary election, India BJP had emerged as the main national leading party to get the absolute majority in Lok Sabha. The BJP had won 282 seats in the parliamentary election with an absolute majority (Election Commission of India, 2014). Since the 1984 Lok Sabha elections, for the first time, any national party got a majority in the lower house of the parliament. The Congress party and alliance partner lost the election in the 2019 Lok Sabha election as well (Election Commission of India, 2019). The regional parties are still stronger in specific parts of the country. Apart from the Congress-led UPA coalition, the emergence of the third front is negligible once again in the country.

Table 1

The Central government of India Since 1952 and dominating party in power

No of Elections	Election Years	Formation of Government	Party and Coalition
1 st Lok Sabha	1952	Congress Party	Congress domination
2 nd Lok Sabha	1957	Congress Party	Congress domination
3 rd Lok Sabha	1962	Congress Party	Congress domination
4 th Lok Sabha	1967	Congress Party	Congress domination
5 th Lok Sabha	1971	Congress Party	Congress domination
6 th Lok Sabha	1777	Janta Party	Opponents domination
7 th Lok Sabha	1980	Congress Party	Congress domination
8 th Lok Sabha	1984	Congress Party	Congress domination
9 th Lok Sabha	1989	National Front	State and regional parties’ domination
10 th Lok Sabha	1991	Congress (Coalition with regional parties)	Congress and regional party
11 th Lok Sabha	1996	United Front	State and regional parties’ domination
12 th Lok Sabha	1998	BJP (Coalition with regional parties)	BJP domination with regional parties
13 th Lok Sabha	1999	BJP-Led NDA alliance government	BJP domination with regional parties
14 th Lok Sabha	2004	Congress-led UPA government	Congress (INC), Communists, states, and regional party domination
15 th Lok Sabha	2009	Congress-led UPA government	Congress (INC), state party domination
16 th Lok Sabha	2014	BJP-Led NDA government	BJP Domination
17 th Lok Sabha	2019	BJP-Led NDA government	BJP Domination

Source: Election Commission of India (n.d).

Table 1 shows the government of India since 1952 when the country holds its first parliamentary election. Since the 1st parliamentary election, the Congress party’s stronghold was maintained in the early 1980s. In the late eighty’s the emergence of regional parties has grown day by day. During the 1989 and 1991 Lok Sabha elections, national parties had lost elections and regional parties got the maximum seats in the parliamentary elections. Because of the emergence voice of backwards communities in India, about the reservation in government services and educational institutes. The regional parties continue sharing power with the national party alliance since 1989. Although, various regional parties have been merged their party into the national party in the country.

Table 2

The vote shared by the national, opponent and regional parties from the 1989 Lok Sabha election to 2019

Year of Elections	The largest party in Lok Sabha			Runner-up party			State and Regional parties		
	No of seats	Seat Share %	Vote Share	Number of Seats	Seat Share %	Vote Share %	No of Seats	Seat share %	Vote share%
1989	197	37	40	143	27	18	189	36	42
1991	232	45	36	120	23	20	169	32	44
1996	161	30	20	140	26	29	242	41	51
1998	182	34	26	141	26	26	220	45	48
1999	182	34	24	114	21	28	247	48	48
2004	145	27	27	138	25	22	260	41	51
2009	206	38	29	116	21	19	221	40	52
2014	282	52	31	44	8	19	217	41	50
2019	303	56	37	52	9.57	19	183	38	48
Average	210	39.22	30	112	20.73	22.22	216.44	40.22	48.22

Source: Election Commission of India (n.d) and calculation of author.

Table 2nd shows the strength of the state and regional parties’ seat-sharing since 1989. By and large, the study finds out the result of regional parties in various elections performances. Moreover, the regional and state parties together have been winning more than 170 parliamentary seats and getting above 40 per cent vote shared in the Lok Sabha elections. Even runner-up party which is national parties of India that get average vote and seat share rather than states parties. The opponent national party have been getting less than 143 seats in the elections.

Conclusion

There are in many states level regional parties formed the state governments. Because of regionalist and linguistic character in the sense, these regional parties fully understand the regional aspirations of the people. That is why the national parties’ stances are weaker than regional parties’ basically in state assembly elections. Moreover, regional parties talk about local identities and speak out regional aspirations (Kailash, 2014, p. 66). The

success of the regional parties can be attributed to the structural change in Indian politics due to the democratization of Indian politics. The deepening of electoral democracy, in part due to the mobilization strategies adopted by regional parties, has brought the dominant and economically prosperous backward castes into the fold of the democratic process. The leadership, policies, and programs of the regional parties made them appear more accessible compared to national parties that seemed impermeable with their rigid structure and unchanging leadership styles.

After the grand victory of BJP in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha respectively, it emerged as the biggest party in the country. As a national party of India BJP created history in Indian Politics apart from the Congress Party in the country. It is the 2nd Indian national party to get a single-party majority in Lok Sabha after the Congress Party. Now in India there are only two national parties since India's independence who achieved the single-party majority in the lower house of the parliament. Despite the stronger BJP in the country, neither regional party lost popularity nor lost the elections across the country. Their relevance is still there where regional parties are contained strong stances about the regional level issues. The research suggests that the relevance of the regional parties will not lose ground. Thus, these party's programme, principal, agenda of work have been fully based on regional identity. That is why regional parties don't lose the tremendous vote share in the comparison of national parties. There is in India many parties' political career based on caste issues, religions, creed, race, linguistic and many other identities. Moreover, the regional parties have been raising the local issues that are attached to people's sentiments. The aforementioned issues are benefitted regional parties that is converted in to vote during the poll. The regional parties' leaders after winning the elections have been negotiated to a national party to share the power in the central government and forget the regional issues. It is the reality of the regional parties in India that forgot the local issues when became a minister in the central government.

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**Dynamika systemu partyjnego w Indiach:
Studium porównawcze partii narodowych i regionalnych**

Streszczenie

Celem opracowania jest struktura partii politycznych oraz analiza porównawcza systemu partyjnego w Republice Indii. Celem pracy jest zbadanie funkcjonowania partii, struktury władzy, dynamiki oraz ich roli w tworzeniu rządu na szczeblu centralnym i stanowym w kraju. Ponadto w opracowaniu przeanalizowano podejście partii jako podmiotu tworzącego rząd koalicyjny w różnych rządach prowincjonalnych. W badaniu zastosowano analizę metodą porównawczą, aby osiągnąć cel niniejszego opracowania, oraz opisano metody źródłowe służące sprawdzeniu celów badawczych. Badanie wykazało wszechstronne znaczenie roli partii w indyjskim systemie politycznym. Wreszcie, w wyniku artykułu stwierdzono, że system wielopartyjny zapewnia ludziom wiele możliwości uczestniczenia w procesie demokratycznym w Indiach.

Słowa kluczowe: system partyjny, partie narodowe i regionalne, demokracja, Indie, rząd

