



PROCESS OF REGIONALIZATION OF POLITICS IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

India is unique in the diversities that it represents. It has been characterized as one of the greatest geographical museums in the world, where cultural pluralities are manifested in all dimensions, where political behavior is strongly colored by consideration of communal identification, and where there is a lack of integration among the masses all over the country which create regionalization in India. Regionalization is the process of dividing a country in to smaller jurisdictions and transforming power from central government to the region. On the other hand Regionalism is a doctrine, a theoretical concept, or a system that refers to the customs traditions, history and even behavior peculiar to a specific area. Regionalism as a concept cannot be separated from regionalization. It is a potent weapon which fosters regionalization. Regionalism is at present a fairly widespread phenomenon in Indian political system. As the various developmental programs are carried out, regional disparities are already becoming more marked and widespread engendering a sense of cumulative deprivations in the people of certain regions. However, an attempt has been made in this paper to focus on the theoretical perspectives of regionalism and to find out how far and to what extent regionalism and regionalization of politics poses a challenge to the national politics in India asserting autonomy and self-determination. The paper concludes with some recent issues of regionalism and process of regionalization of politics in country.

KEY WORD: Regionalism, Regionalization, autonomy, identity, Political Parties, Election, Coalition .

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Regionalization of politics in India is a long and continuous process. There are two mainly factors of the process of regionalization of politics in India, first is economic backwardness and second is political dominance of developed regions over underdeveloped regions. Till 1967, when the congress party was ruling both at Centre and the states level, the relations between them were smooth except Kerala. This picture changed completely in 1967, when in the some states, the non-congress governments came to power. On the one hand some powerful regional parties such as DMK, Akali Dal, Vishal Haryana Party, came to power in Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Haryana respectively, On the other hand CPI (M) further strengthened its hold in West Bengal. After that emergence of a number of regional political parties like AIDMK, National conference, Telugu Desham and Asam Gan Parishad etc. came to power in various states. Even national parties acquired regional character in some of the states by raising regional issues and providing regional leadership. So with the ending of "Congress-system" and the subsequent rise of so many regional parties in states gave way to a new phase of political instability, coalition politics uncertain political alignments and set new trends towards regionalization of Indian politics.



The demands for the reorganization of the states emerged immediately after independence because of multiple regional variations. Andhra Pradesh was the first state that was created on the basis of the

linguistic criterion in 1953. A few states were reorganized (like Maharashtra and Gujarat in 1960, Punjab and Haryana in 1966) for improving administration. Some new states were created to accommodate some regional aspirations and local autonomy, like Nagaland (1963), Himachal Pradesh (1971), Manipur (1972), Meghalaya (1972), Tripura (1972), Arunachal Pradesh (1987) and Mizoram (1987). Some states were added to Indian Union like Pondicherry, Goa and Sikkim (1975). During the BJP rule in 2000, three new states were created - Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal. In UPA government Teleangana was formed on 2nd June 2014. Formation of so many new territories has set the stage for more such demands for separate statehood like that of Gorkhaland, Bodoland, Vidarbha, Saurashtra, Purvanchal, HaritPradesh, AvadhPradesh, Bundelkhand, Bhojpur, Mithilanchal etc. These demands are being made by a number of associated leaders. These regions, having different regional identity on line of region, language, caste, culture and class, now pose a grave challenge to Indian federalism.

Regionalization politics and Coalition politics is a vice-versa concept. Some regional agitations, riots, Maoist movements, insurgencies, Naxilist movements and Tribal movements aroused during these periods. These issues created riots and agitations and they affected politics and the life of a common man as well. Therefore regionalization has become a big threat to nationalization. In India, it is becoming a continuum, not a finished product. With some major qualitative change in the national parameters, the process of regionalization may be conditioned by some new variables. The various issues i.e. demand for state autonomy and statehood, social identity, role of regional parties, party politics during the elections, formation of coalition government, causes of regionalization, its effect on Indian politics and policy making are highlighted in this research paper.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study will be a modest attempt to add to the existing scarce literature available on this theme. Also, as is evident from the review of literature that almost all present studies reflect only structure of regionalism, and a few issues related with regionalism and coalition politics, but this study seeks to analyze how regionalism and regional issues fostered regionalization of politics which affect policy making of the government, allocation of funds and 'Vote Bank' politics. The significance of the present study rests on the effort of the researcher to make an exhausting, analytical, objective and methodological survey to arrive at positive usage of regionalism that shall help the nation in its growth in place of fragmentation and secessionism via regionalization of politics. This study will be an aid for upcoming research in this particular area.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the support bases of regionalization of politics in India.
- To examine the extent of regionalization of politics.
- To discuss the major issues stimulated during coalition phases.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How far coalition governments have been outcome of regionalization of politics?
- In what ways regional parties played an important role to promote regionalism?
- What are the pros and cons of regionalization of politics?

METHODOLOGY

The Present study shall be based on historical, comparative and analytical methods. Primary sources like the reports of different commissions, government documents, party manifestoes, parliamentary debates, speeches of prominent leaders, discussion and debates by scholars etc. will be consulted in order to get in depth understanding of this issue. Secondary data will be collected from libraries, books, unpublished works, articles, newspapers, and magazines. Authentic e-sources will also be used in this research. Thus an

effort will be made to analyze this issue in a comprehensive manner by evaluating different dimension of regionalization of politics in India.

This research work is divided in four phases. These phases show unstable state level coalitions i.e. 1977-79, 1989-91, 1996-98 and 1998-99.

REGIONALIZATION OF POLITICS AND UNSTABLE STATE LEVEL COALITIONS 1977-1979

The agitations led by Jayaprakash Narayan, the imposition of Emergency, and finally the formation of the Janata Party in 1977 brought far-reaching changes in the structure of party competition. The Janata Party itself came through the merger of different parties – Socialist Party, Bharatiya Lok Dal, Bharatiya Jan Sangh and the Congress (O) – with long-standing mutual opposition, but now united in their will to defeat the Congress. The Congress for democracy under the leadership of Jagjivan Ram joined the party after the election.

For the first time, a Non- Congress government came to power at the Centre. The inevitable and constitutional amendments enacted during emergency were repealed and political prisoners were released by Janata Party government. A chain of commissions were appointed to investigate the allegations of illegalities against Congress's ministers and government officials. Shah Commission was produced particularly against Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay. The Janata Party professed different strategies in rural areas giving incentives to farmers and manufacturers. But in all other respects, the Janata Party government made no significant policy departures, lest the government fell into crises because of internal dissensions. All the parties which got together under the Janata Party represented a section of upper class, industrial and agricultural bourgeois as well as the petty bourgeois and middle class. It's Political and economic philosophy was basically anti-Marxist the anti- working class, anti-landless labour and anti-peasantry. At the plane of culture and heritage, the Janata Party was conditioned by Jan Sangh's communal, anti-secular, anti-minority approach within the framework of their concept of a Hindu Rashtra. Jan Sangh's philosophy of intolerance for religion and community other than Hindu became the official practice of Janata Party. The party, with its Jan Sangh faction, sharpened communal feelings and added to the hatred based on caste. This factor had never in recent Indian politics been as important as it did during the two years rule of the Janata Party.

In UP, the Janta Party Chief Minister Ram Naresh Yadav formerly of BLD dropped Jana Sangh with two ministers from his cabinet. The rift between Jana Sangh and BLD widened and affected the Janata government in north Indian states. Chief Minister Karpoori Thakur of Bhartiye Lok Dal was also defeated in Bihar. Devilal, the Chief Minister of Haryana and also formerly of the Bhartye Lok Dal, was forced to resign and Bhajan Lal was elected in his place. In the Janata Party leadership, Deputy Prime Minister Charan Singh seemed to have been cornered with the set of allegations of corruption to blame against Kanti Desai, the son of Prime Minister Morarji Desai with It became an issue in rapidly developing conflicts with in Janata Party government itself.

In July 1979, No-confidence motion was introduced against the government by Y.V Chavan of Congress. There began a stream of resignation from the ministry and defections from the ruling party. Morarji Desai resigned and Charan Singh along with the group of defectors from Janata Party made coalition with Congress and formed the new government but after three weeks, the Congress withdrew support and announced fresh elections.

So in this phase, regional political parties played an important role in Centre politics, but by the lack of co-ordination Janata government dissolved only in two years. "It became increasingly convinced that it had only one political option a stable authoritarian and centralized regime, which only Indira Gandhi could provide". In this phase, economic and religious factors played an important role in regionalization of politics.

REGIONALIZATION OF POLITICS AND UNSTABLE STATE LEVEL COALITIONS 1989-1991

Non-Congressism brought many regional parties together in the National Front (NF) formed in 1988. These included TDP, DMK, AGP and Congress (Socialist) apart from the newly formed Janata Dal. But in the

elections in 1989, these regional allies of NF had only two seats won by TDP. In spite of their disastrous performance, these regional parties became partners in the NF led government of 1989.

Both in 1989 and 1991, regional parties played a crucial role at the national level, in making or unmaking the central government. Thus, the 1977 elections not only speeded up the demise of the Congress system but also inaugurated a new era of partnership between all-India parties and regional parties; something which never happened in the pre-1977 period, though the ties did not meet with immense success. In the ninth Lok Sabha (1989), 48 members belonged to regional parties, which also inaugurated a new era of partnership between all-India parties and regional parties, something which never happened in the pre-1977 period.

The National front government lasted only a year. It was dependent on outside support provided by BJP. It was established in the interest of defeating the Congress (I). The communal situation had become especially charged, with the Hindutva forces, now organized in the so-called Sangh Parivar consisting of the BJP, the RSS and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, carrying out a huge campaign to build a temple at the site of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya in the state election in March 1990, the BJP won majorities in Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh where, for the first time, forming their own governments. In Rajasthan, the BJP formed coalition government with Janata Dal.

The BJP was a partner in the coalition but decided to support the government without participating in it; seemingly, its ambition was to buy time to consolidate its gains. The opportunity as well as the stimulus came, when the V.P Singh government decided in 1990 to implement the decade old Mandal Commission Report to provide reservation in jobs to the Backward class (OBCs). Since the plan had the potential of dividing the Hindu community vertically between the upper and lower castes which was going to destroy the BJP's hard earned Hindu Vote bank. The party saw an inherent danger in the Mandalisation of Indian politics. To counter the political threat, in August 1990, L.K Advani decided to launch his so called "Rathayatra" from Somnath in Gujrat to Ayodhya in UP. He was arrested by Janata Dal government. In Bihar which contributed to the withdrawal of outside support to Prime Minister VP Singh in 1990.

Chandra Shekhar became the Prime Minister of a minority government with congress (I) support. In Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh too, the former J.D Ministers Chiman Bhai Patel and Mulayam Singh Yadav continued in power with Congress (I)'s support. The government was entirely at the mercy of Congress (I) and did not even make a pretense of formulating a coherent policy. In March 1991, Chander Shekher resigned. The Ninth Loksabha was dissolved in less than a year and a half after its formation.

While BJP was consolidating its Hindu vote bank, the Congress was in search of its base which was constantly in the process of eroding. The Bofores Scandal which had contributed in a big way to debate the party in the 1989 elections still cast its shadow on its fortunes. On the Mandal issue too on which every party was taking a clear position there by consolidating its support base, the Congress appeared to be ambivalent. So much was the disarray that had it not been the assassination of its popular leader Rajiv Gandhi during the course of the 1991 elections, it would have forced very badly. As almost half the number of constituencies went to the polls after the tragedy, the sympathy wave made some significant difference in favor of the party. Still in terms of overall results, it lost further ground. In 1989, it had polled 39.5 percent votes but in 1991, it polled 36.6 percent. But in a multiparty democracy, it raised its tally. Sharp difference of language and culture, beginning in the colonial period crystallized after Independence, but it was only 1967, 1977 and to greater extent in 1989, that the monopoly by Congress was broken at the state and central levels, respectively and a region based multiparty system could be seen beginning to emerge.

In 1989 to 1991, regional parties also played a crucial role at the national level in making or unmaking the central government. Analyzing the phase above it is noted that these usurpations affected the political scenario of the nation. It was the time when a maximum of upheavals augmented the political and religious sector, marking political uncertainty and instability.

REGIONALIZATION OF POLITICS AND UNSTABLE STATE LEVEL COALITIONS 1996-1998

In the Eleventh General Election 1996, BJP won 20.29% of the popular votes and managed to garner 161 seats in Parliament, emerging as the party with the largest number of seats in the Lok Sabha. The Congress (I) got only 140 seats. The various regional parties, including Janata Dal, the Telgu Desam Party, the DMK, the AGP, and the Left Parties came together to form National Front and Left Front Bloc (NF-LF Bloc), later called the United Front. President Shankar Dyal Sharma decided to invite Atal Bihari Vajpayee of BJP, as leader of the single largest party to form the government, even though the NF-LF Bloc with Congress (I) support was claiming to have a majority. The Vajpayee ministry lasted over a week, by which time it became clear that BJP would not be able to get support of majority in the Lok Sabha.

Vajpayee resigned and HD Deve Gowda of Janata Dal, The-then Chief Minister of Karnataka, was asked to form the government. The United Front Government passed its first Vote of Confidence in June 1996 with the support of Congress (I) and Left Parties. It was also the first occasion when Left Party-the CPI joined government at the Centre. The experiment of the United Front Government first underscored the centrality of regional parties to national politics. In the 1996 Lok Sabha, 137 Members of Parliament belonged to various regional parties. At that time, it appeared that most regional parties were gravitating against (BJP). Thus 95 of the 137 MP's belonging to the regional parties were a part of UF coalition. This gave rise to the impression that regional parties were occupying 'third' space, outside the Congress and the BJP.

Soon, this picture disappeared which was described as rainbow coalition as rainbow are ephemeral. They made a good view but did not last long. The United Front-proved to be similarly short lived although its supporters drew satisfaction from the face- that a large number of parties agreed to block a communal party from coming to power.

Apart from the emergence of regional parties as combined force bidding for power at the Centre, the most recent period of Indian politics was marked by the rise of a new political assertion of the lower cast groups in northern India. In terms of their organization, they were variously identified with the Janata Dal, Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party or the Samata Party, and even these identities and the pattern of their political alliance were extremely fluid. Nevertheless, along with the rise of communalized political identities, the emergence of the new Dalit Bahujan formation was an important aspect of the changing political structure in India fifty years after independence. Congress revoked its support to a new government under I K Gujral, who was the Prime Minister from April 1997-March 1998. The second United Front Government was again a coalition government and depended upon the Congress support. It could work smoothly only six months and after the withdrawal of support by the Congress in November 1998, it became a caretaker government. During 1996 to March 1998 coalition politics remained operational.

As constituents of the united front, regional parties like TDP, DMK, and AGP became very active and played a key role, both in decision making as well as in the selection of a leader of the coalition. However, lack of co-ordination among the coalition partners and pressure tactics adopted by the Congress kept the activities and functions of the two coalition governments circumscribed.

There is some **regional, border, and coalition issues** that effected H D Devegowda and I K Gujral government. In this period, there are two examples of demand for separate state; In November 1996, Coodva National Council, a political party of Karnataka sponsored the 'Medikeri Declaration' through KRMM Movement (Kodagu Rajya Mukti Morcha). KRMM proposed Coorg as a separate Ethnic State from Karnataka. In 1996, Raj Kumar Singh also demanded Purvanchal as a separate state with twenty districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh. Local dialect of Purvanchal's people was s Bhojpuri. The people of this area were not benefitted with the central government's 'Green Revolution' plan of agriculture in comparison with the people of western UP. According to the agitators, Uttar Pradesh government was responsible for the backwardness of the area; this led them to demand a separate state.

When, I K Gujral the Union Minister of External Affairs in United Front government advanced the 'Gujral Doctrine'. It was a five-point roadmap which looked out to remove immediate quid pro quos between India and her neighbors countries of solution to bilateral issues through bilateral talks and to build strong bond between them. For friendly and warm relations with India's neighbors 'Doctrine' focused on

independent housing. The 'Gujral Doctrine' has always got criticized to take apart India's military of launching covert strike against group like 'Lashkar-e Taiba. It had infirm impact on R&AW's ability to conduct intelligence operations in Pakistan. Specialists of strategic affairs pointed that out that desk of R&AW (Research and Analysis Wing) was shut down by Mr. Gujral's directions.

Fodder Scam took place in 1996 in Bihar. It was also known as 'Chara Ghotala'. The fodder scam involved the embezzlement of more than Rs. 900 crore in government funds during Lalu Prasad Yadav's term as the Chief Minister of Bihar in 1997. Lalu Prasad yadav gave the credit to himself for H D Deve Gowda Primeministership. He was confident about this would not been capable to run government. Later on in 1997, I K Gujral was also depended on Lalu Prasad yadav for support in parliament. CBI Director, Joginder Singh also claimed that Gujral had tried to block the investigation on scam from proceeding.

However since the 1989 national elections, with the failure of national politics to win a majority of seats in the Parliament, regional parties representing various ethnic, religious, linguistic and caste group became prominent and started flexing their muscles at national level. In many ways, this trend marked the ushering in of 'Genuine Federalism' in India; at the same time, as witnessed during government formations at the Centre since the 1996 elections, there was a grave danger of 'Federal Blackmail' as small regional parties played "King Maker" in the absence of a clear numerical majority of any single national party.

Regionalization of Politics and Unstable State Level Coalitions 1998-1999 (19 March 1998-12 October 1999)

In the 1998 elections, BJP secured 25.59 percent of the votes and captured 182 seats in Lok Sabha. INC got 141 seats in Lok Sabha. To form a government, it still had to woo thirteen political parties. On March 28, 1998, it won a Vote of Confidence on the floor of Parliament. This was an election in which the Congress Party did not substantially lose its share of seats instead, BJP simply won more seats. The BJP demonstrated a superior ability to make alliance with regional parties like AIADMK in Tamilnadu, the TDP in Andhra Pradesh, the Samata Party in north India, Lok Shakti in Karnatka and Trinmul Congress in West Bengal. These elections signaled the genesis of a bi-polar structure in Indian politics in which the Congress Party and the BJP would constitute the two poles around which coalitions would be organized.

India's 1998 parliamentary election confirmed a new era in its political party structure. Technically, the national party could now be described as a bimodal, multiparty system. In practical language, India now had two major or national political parties maneuvering within a large vortex of small regional parties. Neither of the two major parties- the BJP and the Congress - emerged from the March - April 1998 election won a majority in the Lok Sabha nor was the majority of seats a realistic goal for the foreseeable future, barring some unforeseen dramatic even which propelled one of India's famous electoral waves as during Indira Gandhi period that seemed unlikely.

In May 1998, Atal Bihari Vajpayee formed coalition government under NDA. AB Vajpayee took initiative of 'Operation Shakti' of nuclear tests. Two additional fission bombs were exploded on 13th may 1998 in Pokhran. Pokhran symbolized India's high level achievement and still greater potential. Another initiative of establishment of Delhi-Lahore bus service in 1999 started a diplomatic peace process over territorial, nuclear and strategic conflicts with Pakistan. The tension was erased not only between two nations but also in South Asia and the rest of the world. Two crises were faced by Vajpayee's government and then in 1999, AIADMK continuously threatened to withdraw support from the NDA. Finally, AIADMK withdraw his support from NDA and the Vajpayee government diminished to a keeper and rest of the elections got scheduled for October, 1999.

India founded unexpectedly Pakistani army as terrorists through the Line of Control (LoC) in Kargil (Jammu and Kashmir). This happened in 1999 after the bilateral summit in Lahore. Operation Vijay was launched by Indian Army. Territories on Line of Control (LoC) side were retrieved by Indian forces in 1999. The Vajpayee government also established the Defense Intelligence Agency to provide better military intelligence and monitor India's border with Pakistan.

Anti-Christian violence was communal problem emerged in 1999 in some district of Gujarat. This act was carried out by Hindu nationalists. In September 1999, Human Rights Watch Report published that the number of incidents of anti-Christian violence acts was physical violent activities, burning of holy books, raping of nuns, murders of Christian priests, destruction of Christian schools, colleges, and cemeteries by Hindu Nationalists. These acts rose after the victory of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party in March 1998 in Gujarat legislative Assembly Elections.

In the late 1998, the government collapsed again when AIDMK, with its 18 seats, withdrew their support. This led to a vote of Confidence motion in the Parliament, where the govt. lost by 272-273 (1 vote) thus leading to new general elections in 1999. An analysis of the 1998 election results points to the two pattern significant for obtaining an understanding of the ongoing transformation of the Indian party system. These were the emergence of a bi-polar tendency, which created a fragile and transitory coalition government and ‘deepening’ of the process of regionalization which was producing fluid and fragmentary political alignment in the states.

Figure 3.1 shows the comparative analysis of winner and runner-up vote share %. Winner highest vote share % is 48.12 in 1984-85 election and lowest vote share % is 20.29 in 1996 election. Runner –up highest vote share % is 34.5 in 1977 election and lowest vote share % is 3.29 in 1951 election. In 1998 election Winner and Runner –up vote share % is almost equal that is 25.29 and 25.82. In 1996, 1998, 1999 elections Winner vote share % is less than Runner vote share %. 1951-1977 periods is known as ‘Congress system’ and ‘One-party-dominance’. After 1977 regional parties took actively participated in state level and Centre level politics. 1996-1999 periods are golden period for regional politics at Centre level. In these periods regional parties joined hand with BJP (lower vote share % than Congress) and formed government. In 2014 election BJP formed government with full majority and won 282 seats and 31.34 % of vote share. It is the highest Winner vote % after 1991-92 election.

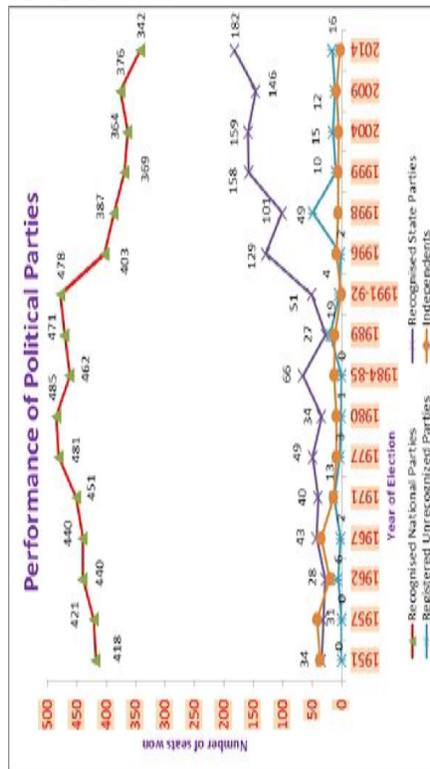


Figure -3.2
Comparative Performance of Political Parties
 Source: Election Commission of India 2017

Figure 3.2 shows that National Parties seats' % is continuously decreasing after 1991-92 election except 2009 election. Regional Parties seats'% is continuously increasing after 1991-92 election except 1998 and 2009 elections. Independent member's seats are below 40 in elections except 1998 election. Regional Parties participation is increasing in national level politics after 90s.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the above said periods on regionalization of politics unstable state level coalitions, it can be stated that our country saw the upheavals in politics from the ground level to a higher plan. Sharp difference of language and culture, began in the colonial period crystallized after Independence. It was only 1967, 1977 and to greater extent in 1989 the monopoly by Congress was broken at the state and central levels. Respectively a region based multiparty system was seen emerging. In many ways, this trend marked the ushering in 'Genuine Federalism' in India. But at the Centre since the 1996 elections, there was a grave danger of 'Federal Blackmail' as small regional parties played "King Maker" in the absence of a clear numerical majority of any single national party.

An analysis of the 1998 election results points to the two pattern significant for obtaining an understanding of the ongoing transformation of the Indian party system. These were the emergence of a bi-polar tendency, which created a fragile and transitory coalition government and 'deepening' of the process of regionalization which was producing fluid and fragmentary political alignment in the states.

A full-blown BJP-led alliance of 24 parties, constructed this time before the election, had been one highlight of the 1999 elections. The National Democratic Alliance, headed by Vajpayee, was a broad "catch all" spectrum of parties. It included major regional parties based on language such as the Telgu Desam, Siromani Akali Dal, National Conference, Trinamool Congress, Indian National Lok Dal.

The era of the 1990s was marked by a dominant bi-polar contest not only between the Congress and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), but largely between the two alliance, the united Progressive alliance (UPA) led by the Congress and the national democratic Alliance (NDA) led by the BJP. But the last one decade (1999-2009) has witnessed a much more polarized polity with multi-polar contest in many states essentially with the increasing political support of regional parties. One could say for sure that now states have become the main theatre of politics, irrespective of the nature of election, whether it is a state-level election or a national election.

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