

## Multiparty System in India's Political Landscape

### Why in news?

The recently Jammu and Kashmir Assembly passed a resolution urging the Union government to initiate dialogue with its elected representatives for the restoration of special status.

### What is a political party?

- **Political party** - A political party is an organized group of individuals who come together to contest elections, secure political power, and implement policies aligned with their ideology or agenda.
- Political parties serve as intermediaries between citizens and the government, articulating public demands and shaping governance.
- **Recognition of political parties** - In India, the Election Commission of India (ECI) recognizes political parties based on their electoral performance.

Criteria for National party recognition	Criteria for State party recognition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 %of the votes cast in <i>four or more states</i> and 4 seats in Lok Sabha or state assemblies.</li> <li>• 2% of the Lok Sabha seats from 3 states.</li> <li>• Recognized as state party in 4 states.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>6% of the valid votes polled</b> in the assembly election and <b>2 seats</b> in the assembly of the state.</li> <li>• 6% of the valid votes polled in lok sabha election and win 1 seat.</li> <li>• 3% of seats or 3 seats in the assembly in the legislative assembly whichever is more.</li> <li>• Winning 1 seat for every 25 seats in the lok sabha from the state concerned.</li> <li>• 8% of the total valid votes polled in the state at lok sabha or state assembly general election. This condition was added in 2011.</li> </ul>

- **National parties in India** - As on 2024, **6 parties** are recognized as national parties.
  - Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)
  - Indian National Congress (INC)
  - Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M)
  - Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)
  - National People's Party (NPP)
  - Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)
- **State parties in India** - As on 2024 there are **58 parties** recognized as state parties.

# Evolution of multiparty system in India

1952-1964

- One-party system under Congress rule.
- The Congress Party was like a big umbrella that accommodated various ideologies and interests.
- Regional parties were weak and acted more like pressure groups.

1964-1977

- The death of Nehru and the 1967 elections challenged Congress dominance.
- Regional parties grew stronger, and Congress faced internal power struggles.
- Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency in 1975.

1977-1980

- A coalition government led by the Janata Party came to power, but internal ideological differences led to its fall.
- Congress regained power in 1980.

1980-1989

- Center-state tussle.
- Congress faced off against newly emerged regional parties at the state level.
- Regional parties became more assertive in national politics.

1989-2024

- Multi-party system and coalition politics.
- The rise of regional parties and decline of Congress led to an era of coalition governments.
- This period had both advantages and disadvantages.

## What are the factors contributed for rise of regional parties?

- **Linguistic reorganization of states** - The creation of states based on language in 1956 fueled regional identities, providing fertile ground for regional parties to thrive.
- **Growth of regional consciousness** - Regional identity has grown due to historical, cultural, and linguistic differences which fueled demands for autonomy, recognition, and greater resource allocation.
- **Uneven development** - Disparities in economic and social development among states have led to emergence of regional parties.
- **Caste-based political mobilization** - The mobilization of caste groups to cater the specific needs of the communities.
- **The "sons of the soil" movement** - It demanded local employment and resources for native people of the state, especially in states with significant migration.
- **Ethnic differences** - Ethnic diversity, particularly in the northeastern states, has led to the rise of regional parties addressing local ethnic and cultural aspirations.

*Political scientist Paul Brass argued that most of the national parties are*

*regional parties spread over a few states. Hence, he called the party system in India an 'unstable fragmented multiparty system'.*

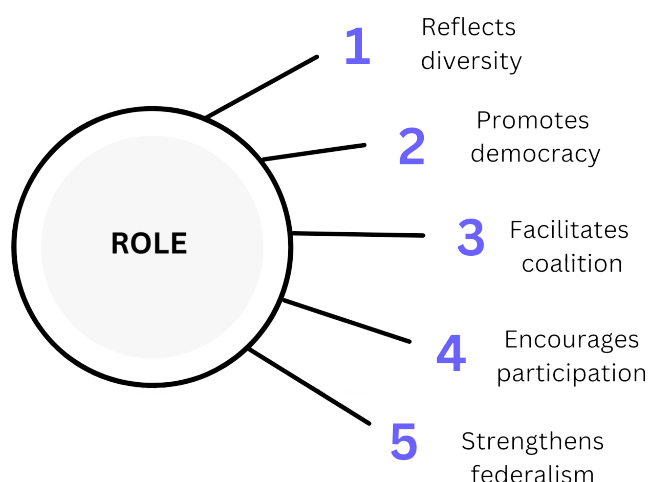
## **What is the role of regional parties in reshaping India's political landscape?**

- **Emergence of multiparty system** - Rise of regional parties in the states led to a multiparty system in India's political landscape.
- **Coalition politics** - Regional parties play a pivotal role in coalition governments, shaping national policies by negotiating their regional demands.

*In the 1980s, state assembly elections elevated the electoral presence and influence of regional parties.*

- The recent Lok Sabha election also proved that no single party can secure a majority without the support of regional parties.
- **Balance of power** - The rise of regional parties has loosened the strong centered nature of constitution by balancing the power between the center and states.
- **Decentralization** - Regional parties tend to work towards decentralization of power in national politics.
- **Strengthened federalism** - Regional parties have ensured that state-specific issues are prioritized, balancing central policies with local needs.
- **Cooperative federalism** - The multi-party system has strengthened cooperative federalism, as the center must negotiate with regional parties to pass legislation.
- Institutions like the NITI Aayog have become platforms for collaborative policy-making.
- **Political inclusiveness** - Coalition politics facilitated political inclusiveness, allowing regional parties to represent their constituencies effectively at the national level.
- **Policy innovation** - Successful welfare programs like Tamil Nadu's mid-day meal scheme and Odisha's KALIA scheme highlight the impact of regional parties on governance.
- **Strained central-state relations** - The rise of regional parties has decentralized power, enabling states to assert their autonomy.
- Conflicts over resource allocation, legislative matters, and the role of governors have strained centre-state relations.
- **Unequal economic growth** - The witnessed competition among states for attracting foreign direct investments, which widened the existing income and consumption gap between states.
- Competition among states for investments after the 1991 economic reform, has widened disparities, leading to grievances about uneven devolution.

## ROLE OF A MULTIPARTY SYSTEM IN A DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY



### Centre state relation commissions

- **Sarkaria Commission (1983)** - Chaired by Justice R S Sarkaria (B Sivaraman and S R Sen were other members).
- The commission submitted its report in 1988 and made 247 recommendations.
- **Reccomendation**
- Foster cooperative federalism
- Non-partisan governors.
- Establishment of a Inter-State Council under Article 263 of the Constitution to facilitate coordination of relations between the centre and states.
- **Punchhi Commission (2007)** - Chaired by Madan Mohan Punchhi, along with four other members.
- The submitted its report in 2010 and made 273 recommendations.
- **Recommendations**
- Creation of a national integration council
- Amendments to state emergency provisions (Articles 355 and 356)
- Non-partisan appointment of governors
- Consultation with states before legislating on matters in the Concurrent List

### What lies ahead?

- Balance between autonomy and unity by negotiation and cooperation.
- Transparent and equitable allocation of financial resources to maintain harmony between the center and states.
- Inclusion of Regional Aspirations to ensure that diverse communities are represented, fostering inclusive democracy.

### Reference

[The Indian Express | Multiparty System in India's Political Landscape](#)



**SHANKAR**  
**IAS PARLIAMENT**  
*Information is Empowering*