

# Transformation of Indian Party System: 1996 to 2009

Sukanta Ghosh

Assistant Professor of Political Science  
Cooch Behar College, West Bengal, India

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**ABSTRACT:** The elections to the Lok Sabha 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> in 1999, 2004, and 2009 opened a completely different stage of their democratic path. Party politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has undergone significant changes. Naturally, it brought with it a comprehensive reform of the party, including its leadership, ideology, base of support, programmatic content, its diffusion and influence throughout the country, especially its members and the structure of the country's party system. Since independence, the party system has gone through different stages or stages. It is a single-party system or congressional system, called a two-party system, followed by a multi-party system and then transformed into bi-polarity or "multiple bi-polarity" or multipolarity. The emergence of a large number of political parties on the Indian political canvas includes the possibility of the emergence of "alliance politics" and "Coalition politics", which became a political reality after the 1996 parliamentary elections. In the 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election in 2009, the party system still shifted towards coalition politics and the formation or groups of coalitions, led by national political parties, such as the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) led by Congress, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by BJP, the Communist Party of India (M) led the Third Front and the Lalu-Paswan-Mulayan Group, known as the Fourth Front. Hence, India's political party system changes from time to time and has gone through different stages.

**Keywords:** Changes, Comprehensive reform, Multi-party, Bi-polarity, Multiple bi-polarity, Coalition Politics, Group of Coalitions

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian party system is unique and underwent transformation; since independence, as well as the second half of the 1980s, turned to a multi-party system, in which all parties, either national or regional, compete for power at the Centre. The major structural changes in a party system occurred, with the breakdown in the 'Congress system' or one-party dominant system. The multiplicity of political parties emerged on the political horizon of the country; each one is still representing limited, social, economic, religious, and cultural interests.

Three general elections were held within a span of three years, 1996 to 1998, reflecting the fragility of coalition governments in India and showing continuous shifting of political loyalties of parties. The Indian party system became highly competitive as parties depending on their social base, internal organization and now, ideologies developed complex modes of interaction or co-existence. Therefore, crucial changes are still taking place in parties and the party system. The parties, in executive or legislative coalitions, are pulling in different directions and holding back the leading pivotal party. The Prime Minister contends within the constraints of coalition or minority governments. Thus, the coalition governments provide an unprecedented opening to federal forces and minor parties sharing power in Union Cabinet.

## II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study is aimed at analyzing the transformation of Indian party system from the year 1996 to 2009. We may formulate the main objectives of the study as under:

- 1) To study the changing Shape of Indian Party System.
- 2) To study the bi-polarity in Indian party System.
- 3) To study various phases the Indian party system has passed through from one party dominant system to bi-party situation and then multi-party system to bi-polar alliance system led by BJP and Congress Party.
- 4) The study is an attempt to answer, is it bi-polar national alliance system, or which represented by two major national parties namely Congress Party or Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).
- 5.) To Study the emerging trends in Indian party system, which have been left answered or partially answered.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on secondary resources. The work makes use of publications and authentic sources released by political parties, Government of India and Election Commission of India. For deep understanding of the problem, books, journals, newspapers, periodicals and internet service are the source of material for the study of the topic.

#### **Evolution of Coalition/ Alliance Politics and Multi-Party System (1996-2004)**

The Eleventh Lok Sabha Election held on April 1, 1996, resulted in the dissolution of the single-party system and a gradual transition to a new "regional multi-party system", with all major national parties such as the BJP, Congress, and the Janata Dal (JD) in the Center. They were competing for power. Neither of these parties had a broad base of support in majority constituencies, as the Congress party rejoiced in the Nehruvian era. The 1996 parliamentary elections were different from the previous ones. There was no national wave for or against any political structure, nor were there national problems that dominated the elections. There were "mini waves", at the local level, influenced by local problems, as in Tamil Nadu, Bihar, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh. The absence of major issues in the 1996 elections led to a pro-caste and community campaign.

This is the first time that the Congress Party has participated in an election without the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. The Indian National Congress (Congress) was fraught with divisions and vast differences on the eve of the elections. Disagreements continue within the Congress Party. In contrast, the discontent of the BJP is almost negligible and it appears to be a more organized and disciplined party at the time of the elections. In 1995, the BJP determined five themes for the 1996 People's Chamber elections. Such as the construction of the Ram Temple (construction of Lord Ram Temple in Ayodhya), the abolition of 300 sections, the infiltration of foreigners (Bangladesh), the civil code, and indigenous peoples. The Popular Party is expected to be in 1996. Its dual strategy will bring concrete results in the by-elections. On the one hand, the themes of the Ayodhya and Mathura temples based on cultural nationalism may attract upper-middle-class Hindus in the northern states. On the other hand, they are based on the economic rejection of the Enron Plan Power of Maharashtra. The Nationalism that attracted. Regardless of ideology, he believes in "national self-esteem." Therefore, the electoral activities of the BJP are mainly focused on "voting for change". The National Front (NF) led by Janata Dal has proposed alternatives to secular democracy based on secularism, federalism, and socio economic justice. In any case, National Front partners often raise local issues in areas that impact their personal agendas. To some extent, Indian voters have more or less experienced the 1996 national elections and there has been no tension in the community. In general, the problems are secular, the impact of economic reforms, stability in the face of change and good governance in the face of scandals and corruption. As a result, the party system entered the era of coalition politics and once again appeared in the form of "buildings on stilts." The BJP and its allies topped the list with 1,955 seats and 25.7% of the vote. The National Front / United Front obtained 111 seats with 30.10% of the votes, making it the second most successful formation. Congress fell to third place with 133 seats with 2.744% of the vote. The trends showed that people cast their votes either based on region, community or caste or against the establishment in 1996 polls. The BJP emerged as the or single largest party in Lok Sabha, but it could taste power under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's, for a brief interlude of thirteen days only, it was unable to muster the required support in the popular House, Vajpayee resigned from the post of Prime Minister after thirteen days.

Since then HD Deve Gowda became the head of the United Front government in June 1996. After Vice President Singh rejected the proposal of the Prime Minister's Office, West Bengal Chief- Minister Jyoti Basu was restrained by his political party, the Communist Party of India. (Malaysia). The United Front (UF) government consists of 13 political parties, 9 partners participating in the government, and 4 political parties that have officially joined the UF alliance but do not accept any ministries. The INC provided external support to the UF because the main objective of the Congress Party was to prevent the BJP from coming to power. Subsequently, the National Congress Party withdrew its support for the Deve Gowda Ministry in April 1997, arguing that the coalition cabinet failed to contain community power and tried to marginalize the INC. At the same time, AICC President Sita Ram Kesri continues to support the central government when the United Front Labor Department changes. Inder Kumar Gujral became the new prime minister of UFIDA under pressure from an external partner of the central government (National Congress Party). In the end, the Congress Party again withdrew its support for the UF after a brief period in November 1997, which led to new elections next year.

The NDA and UPA governments have also adopted the CMP model. The results of the 1996 parliamentary elections showed that the transition to the new party system was obvious, and three major changes have taken place since the mid-1980s. On the one hand, due to the mobile and fragmented political structure and unstable coalition government, on the other hand, the multi-party system at the national level is moving towards federalization. Another. The results of the 12th Lok Sabha in 1998 confirmed the general trend of "political regionalization in India." The delay in the construction of the Vajpayee 13-party coalition government in late March 1998 indicated that the Indian Prime Minister would be appointed and disbanded in 1998. State capital.

Not in Delhi. Most political parties recognize the importance of a pragmatic electoral coalition, except of INC, which later strengthened the scope of regional political organizations.

The 1996 parliamentary election produced a picture that was as fragmented and polarized as previous elections in the party system. The complex pattern of inter-party alliances continues to be like patchwork at the central and national levels. In the 1998 national election, three major competitors including the Congress, the People's Party, and the United Labor Union participated in the election. The United Labor Union lacked cohesive leadership, such as Jyoti Basu, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Dev The people like Goda and GK Mupanal are busy strengthening their own regional support bases instead of working for the unity and integrity of the united front. In the 1998 midterm elections, none of them stood up to save the shipwreck of the United Front. The BJP vigorously sought new friends because its party tried to avoid the earlier humiliation. After all 1996 no one supported the Vajpayee government, except for partners before the election.

The BJP forged a number of pre-poll arrangements with various regional parties, such as Samata Party, Lok Shakti Party, AIADMK, Trinamool Congress, Biju Janata Dal, etc. and also matured post-poll alignments with TDP. Three regional parties and few independents, added twenty-two seats in the NDA kitty, which led to the slender parliamentary majority to BJP. The BJP moderated its own ideology and tried to accommodate the demands of its allies during and after the elections. Bharatiya Janata Party shelved the core idea of *Hindutva* and turned to a "new softer BJP." That is, the party was moving towards '*Ram Mandir*' (Lord Rama Temple) to '*Rashtra Mandir*' (national temple), meaning thereby, creating a prosperous and secure country for all citizens. In contrast, Congress failed to learn the importance of alliance politics early in the electoral campaign. The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), Kerala Congress (Mani), and few smaller groups allied with INC, as they had in 1996 polls, Paul Wallace summarized the alliance system as a 'bi-model party system,' by which, two major or national parties were maneuvering within a larger vortex of smaller regional parties. According to the scholar, the bi-model term was accurate, because both the BJP and the Congress were capable of forging a majority coalition or were in a position to bring down the government, given favourable circumstances. Sudha Pai also reiterated the same idea as a 'two-polar situation.' The BJP went to the voters with slogans of '*majboot*', '*swachcha*' and '*sthir sarkar*' (strong, clean, and stable government), that is, stable regime and good governance.

The BJP nominated Atal Bihari Vajpayee as its prime ministerial candidate, presumably to seize the perspective of liberalism and the image of the country. Under the leadership of AICC President Sita Ram Kesri, the Congress Party appears weak. In the national elections of 1998, Sonia Gandhi agreed to participate in the elections, which raised the morale of the party cadres and restored the morale of the party to face the elections. Sonia Gandhi's appearance at the election rally drew crowds but did not translate into votes. However, her successful campaign prevented further erosion of INC's base of support, impeded BJP's momentum, and led to UF's collapse.

The results of the twelfth general election showed that the Bharatiya Janata Party and its allies took 255 seats in the House of People, reflecting their expansion beyond the bull belt (Hindu belt) and turning the party into a center of power. Congress and its partners only received 170 seats. The United Front (UF) was completely swept away in the elections, leaving only 83 seats. The main component of Janata Dal / UF is separate because Lalu Prasad Yadav established Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) in Bihar, Naveen Patnik left the mother party and established BJD in Odisha, encouraging HD Deve Gowda Ramakrishna Hedge to form the Lok Shakti Party. The TDP refused to link any adjustments to the National Front in Andhra Pradesh, but later extended a friendly hand to the BJP. Atal Bihari Vajpayee (Atal Bihari Vajpayee) became the leader of the largest party / alliance in the popular House of Representatives, and Indian President K.R. Narayana will form a government in the House of Representatives and win a "vote of confidence." "When the TDP accepted the positions of Spokesperson for Lok Sabha and G.M.C., the Vajpayee government did so. Balayogi was elected to the same, on March 24, 1998. The BJP worked hard and managed to form an eighteen-party coalition known as the NDA ever since. "Experiment", which brought unity to the complex alliance and allowed the Popular Party to avoid substantive debates on economics and economic issues within the government. Political issues were more divisive and potentially dangerous to the survival of the NDA. Right from the beginning, the NDA ministry was weak and it faced various constraints. The 'trident demands' of NDA allies such as Trinamool Congress, the Samata Party, and AIADMK wanting to the dismissal of West Bengal, Bihar, and Tamil Nadu state governments, respectively. The SAD (B) and INLD demanded to roll back in oil prices and certain essential commodities, respectively increased the vulnerability of the central government. Under the pressure of its allies, the BJP tried to impose 'President's rule' in Bihar and partially rolled back the prices of petroleum products to appease the Samata party, INLD, and SAD (B), to ensure continued government support.

The AIADMK leader Jayalalitha wanted the dismissal of the DMK ministry in Tamil Nadu and also the dropping of corruption cases against her. When her demands were not accommodated by NDA, she withdrew its support from the ruling coalition.

The 12th Lok Sabha had special features to its credit. (I) BJP tried to transform itself into a 'responsible national party,' that is, seen as less anti-secular. (II) There was the emergence of bi-polar tendency which

created a fragile and transitory coalitional government. (III) The changes occurred in state level party system, the regional parties, allied either with the BJP or the INC tried improving their political position, in their respective states and increased their bargaining power with Centre. However, present alliances were neither ideological nor did they have a common objective to cement them together. These were merely short-term tactical arrangements developed by ambitious politicians that were rooted in the exchange of mutual benefits and the compulsions of power. Therefore, the regionalization of politics at state-level was an important and continuing factor in shaping the present national party system. (IV) It is the first time; a government was based on pre-poll adjustments and headed by a larger political party like BJP. (V) Almost all partners shared power with the BJP, unlike previous governments, except, Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress.

The Indian polity jumped into the 'post-Congress era.' It did not mean that Congress ceased to be a major player; indeed, it continued to be a major player in all but in few states

The 1999 mid-term elections marked the continuity of 'federal-coalition governance' within the framework of a multi-party system. It was held in the backdrop of ambiguous tendencies and perceptions in the trail of Pokharan-II, Bus Diplomacy to Lahore and Kargil war. A new structural development took place in the Indian party system when a combination of more than twenty parties decided to jointly contest the elections under the platform of the NDA, which was based on the formula of seat-sharing arrangements to avoid confrontation and had Common Minimum Programme (CMP). Above all, the partners agreed to project Vajpayee as the prime ministerial candidate during election campaigns in 1999. Paul Wallace pointed out that NDA headed by Vajpayee was a broad "catch-all-spectrum of parties." It included major regional parties based on different spectrums, such as TDP in Andhra Pradesh (based on language), SAD in Punjab (non-Hindu), National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir (Muslim), Trinamool Congress from West Bengal (fiery secular), and INLD (non-ideological), etc. Of course, the NDA government's demise by one vote in April 1999, resulted in BJP's strategy to design to provide a higher degree of political stability for the price entailed by broad accommodation of various parties.

The composition of the NDA was far more diverse in regional and cultural terms than Janata Party, which was essentially a north-Indian phenomenon. Now, the NDA became an all-India affair. Secondly, the differences between winning and losing were hinged to understand the greater acceptability of Vajpayee as well as the rejection of Sonia Gandhi. Paul Wallace explains that the leadership rather than the institutionalization of parties appears to be important; the alliance cohesion depends on the ability of leadership to reach out in a non-ideological manner to its members as well as to maintain its core party support. Jayalalitha, Mamata Banerjee, and Chandrababu Naidu were still wild cards in an alliance and needed skillful special handling and countervailing political pressure.

### **The Emergence of Bi-Polar led National Alliance System and Revival of Congress Party (2004-2009)**

For the first time, in the 14th Lok Sabha elections in 2004, Indian politics witnessed a contest at the national level between two serious coalitions, namely the NDA and the UPA. The number of political parties in the fray was around 600 in the 2004 general elections. But, the horns were locked between NDA and Congress and its allies. In other words, the first elections of the 21st century turned out to be a 'battle of alliances,' between the BJP led NDA and Congress - led alliance. This is reflected in the qualitative shift from command to the competitive liberal market economy, from one-party dominance to alliance/coalition politics, from nation-building to the representation of polarized socio-cultural reality into politics.

The elections' results manifested the division of the polity into two massives, though not united, power blocs (alliance). It was not seen simply like one party replacing another, rather as signaling a fight between two incompatible ideological formations, which concentrated largely in two opposing somewhat equal, 'political phalanxes'. Besides, one can talk in terms of two poles in politics, the pole of 'sectarian politics' and the pole of 'inclusive politics.' The BJP, the caste-based parties, and regional parties, survived based on sectarian appeal. The INC and Lefts sought to make a genuinely pan-Indian appeal to voters. Moreover, the alliance/coalition politics could create compulsions for a larger party to woo the smaller ones and not the other way round. Paul Wallace, in this regard, used the term 'tail wagging the elephant,' which refers to the emerging importance of regional parties at national and state levels. The importance of such an electoral alliance became increasingly clear over the past fifteen years, a period during which the increase of other regional and caste parties meant that no Indian party was ready to win a majority in Parliament. The parties searched for win or majority, by getting into alliance arrangements because, that they had strong incentives to aggregate votes through political formation/alliance, by sharing the entire number of contested seats, to not split but to pool votes.

### **Emergence of Bi-Polarity and 2009 National Elections**

The general elections to elect 15th Lok Sabha in 2009, held under the shadow of worldwide recession affecting jobs within the country and a series of terrorist attacks, particularly 26/11 Mumbai attacks being the worst one. Under these circumstances, the Election Commission of India announced poll schedule for Lower

House to be conducted in five phases from 16 April to 13 May 2009 and simultaneously elections for state assemblies of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Sikkim.

Almost, all parties hedged their bet, leaving room for post- electoral negotiations. In 2009, unlike previous national elections 2004, both coalition makers as the BJP and the INC shed 'baggage primarily' to the Third Front. Similarly, the CPI (M) looked forward to the post-election scenario throughout its campaign. The Congress Party decided to contest polls alone in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, but did not strategically field candidates in some seats, clearly leaving the door ajar for communication with the Fourth Front (RJD, SP, and LJP)

#### IV. CONCLUSION:

In general, regional and sub-regional political parties are deeply entrenched in the party system, making the country's major political parties structurally dependent on their support. This phenomenon has not stabilized the alliance system. These regional teams only function as alliances of specific ethnic and ethnic- religious groups rather than political institutions, expressing the collective interests and aspirations of the entire region.

Another interesting fact is that smaller parties and minority parties have lost more seats than national parties. NDA's gains are at the expense of Bihar's Fourth Front or Jharkhand's UPA. Similarly, UPA has won seats in many states at the expense of NDA or the third front. The Third Front won only one seat in Odisha, while the Fourth Front lost seats in all states. Compared with other political parties, the Congress Party won the most in the 2009 opinion polls. In almost every state, the Congress Party ultimately took the lead. The Congress and the BJP emerged as a reluctant coalition. They prefer a one-party government, but this is impossible under the current circumstances. E. Sridharan has a "multiple bipolar" state. Nepotism and facilitation within the party have become increasingly obvious. Every political party, whether regional or national, still lags behind in terms of daughters, sons, and wives.

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