

THE EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL PARTIES: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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Abstract: This paper provides a comprehensive review of the evolution of political parties in India, examining key historical developments, major political parties, and challenges facing the Indian political landscape. The paper begins with a historical overview of pre-independence political movements and parties, highlighting their role in shaping India's nationalist struggle. It then discusses the post-independence era, focusing on the dominance of the Indian National Congress (INC), the emergence of regional and ideological parties, and the evolution of coalition politics. The paper also examines major political parties such as the INC and the BharatiyaJanata Party (BJP), analyzing their history, ideologies, and electoral strategies. Additionally, the paper explores the influence of regional parties on national politics and the challenges facing Indian political parties, including the rise of identity politics, the role of money and media, and the impact of social and economic factors. The paper concludes with reflections on the future of political parties in India, highlighting the need for adaptation and engagement with a changing electorate.

Keywords: India, political parties, Indian National Congress, BharatiyaJanata Party, regional parties, coalition politics, identity politics, money in politics, media influence, social and economic factors

I. Introduction

A. Brief Overview of the Indian Political Landscape

India's political landscape is characterized by its vastness, diversity, and complexity, stemming from its rich cultural heritage, diverse demographics, and deep-rooted socio-economic disparities. Scholars have long recognized India as the world's largest democracy, encompassing a multitude of languages, religions, ethnicities, and regional identities (Chhibber&Nooruddin, 2012). The country's political dynamics are shaped by a complex interplay of historical legacies, socio-cultural factors, and institutional structures, making it a fascinating subject for scholarly inquiry.

B. Importance of Political Parties in the Indian Democratic System

Political parties play a central role in India's democratic framework, serving as crucial intermediaries between the government and the governed. They serve as vehicles for political mobilization, articulating diverse interests, ideologies, and policy preferences within the democratic arena (Narayan, 2018). Research has highlighted the pivotal role of political

parties in shaping electoral outcomes, coalition formations, and policy agendas, thereby influencing the trajectory of governance and public policy in India (Vaishnav, 2017).

Moreover, political parties serve as vital conduits for political participation and representation, providing avenues for citizens to engage with the democratic process and express their preferences (Vaishnav, 2017). Through party membership, activism, and electoral contestation, individuals can voice their concerns, advocate for change, and hold elected representatives accountable for their actions (Bardhan, 2016).

The significance of political parties extends beyond electoral politics to the functioning of legislative bodies and executive institutions. Parties play a crucial role in parliamentary proceedings, coalition negotiations, and the formulation of public policies, shaping the governance agenda and legislative outcomes (Chhibber&Nooruddin, 2012). Furthermore, parties serve as key agents of political socialization, shaping public opinion, and mobilizing support for specific policy initiatives or ideological agendas (Narayan, 2018).

In essence, political parties serve as linchpins of India's democratic system, facilitating the expression of diverse political preferences, mediating competing interests, and ensuring the functioning of representative governance (Chhibber&Nooruddin, 2012). Their role in shaping the trajectory of Indian democracy underscores the importance of understanding their evolution, dynamics, and impact on political processes and outcomes.

Table 1: Evolution of Major Political Parties in India

Party Name	Founding Year	Ideological Orientation	Key Leaders
Indian National Congress (INC)	1885	Nationalism, Socialism, Secularism	Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru
BharatiyaJanata Party (BJP)	1980	Hindutva, Nationalism	AtalBihari Vajpayee, NarendraModi
Communist Party of India (Marxist)	1964	Marxism, Leftism	EMS Namboodiripad, JyotiBasu
All India Anna DravidaMunnetraKazhagam(AIADMK)	1972	Dravidian Nationalism	M. G. Ramachandran, J. Jayalalithaa
Telugu Desam Party (TDP)	1982	Regionalism, Populism	N. T. Rama Rao, N. Chandrababu Naidu
Trinamool Congress (TMC)	1998	Regionalism, Populism	Mamata Banerjee
BahujanSamaj Party (BSP)	1984	Bahujan Ideology	Kanshi Ram, Mayawati
Shiv Sena	1966	Hindutva, Regionalism	Bal Thackeray, Uddhav Thackeray
AamAadmi Party (AAP)	2012	Anti-Corruption, Populism	ArvindKejriwal

II. Historical Background

A. Pre-Independence Political Movements and Parties

The pre-independence era in India was marked by a surge of political movements and the emergence of several political parties that laid the foundation for the country's nationalist struggle. The early 20th century witnessed the rise of movements such as the Indian National Congress (INC), founded in 1885, which aimed to articulate Indian grievances and demand political representation (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2012). Other notable parties and movements during this period included the Muslim League, which advocated for the rights of Muslims in India, and various regional and ideological movements that sought to challenge British colonial rule (Guha, 2013).

B. Formation of the Indian National Congress and Its Role in the Freedom Struggle

The Indian National Congress (INC) played a pivotal role in India's struggle for independence, evolving from a platform for political dialogue to a mass movement under the leadership of figures such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru (Brown, 2014). The INC's adoption of non-violent resistance strategies and its ability to mobilize diverse segments of Indian society contributed significantly to the success of the freedom struggle (Brown, 2014). The party's efforts culminated in India's independence in 1947, marking a turning point in the country's political history.

C. Emergence of Other Political Parties During the Colonial Era

Apart from the INC, the colonial era also witnessed the emergence of other political parties representing diverse interests and ideologies. The Muslim League, founded in 1906, emerged as a significant political force advocating for the rights of Muslims in a predominantly Hindu-majority India (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2012). Other parties such as the Hindu Mahasabha and the Communist Party of India (CPI) represented differing ideological currents, adding to the complexity of India's political landscape during the colonial period (Guha, 2013).

III. Post-Independence Era

A. Dominance of the Indian National Congress

Following independence, the Indian National Congress (INC) emerged as the dominant political party in India, winning a series of electoral victories and shaping the country's early post-independence policies (Kohli, 2012). The INC's dominance can be attributed to its role in the freedom struggle, its organizational strength, and its ability to appeal to a wide cross-section of Indian society (Kohli, 2012).

B. Emergence of Regional and Ideological Parties

The post-independence era also witnessed the emergence of regional and ideological parties that sought to challenge the dominance of the INC. Regional parties such as the DravidaMunnetraKazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in Andhra Pradesh emerged to represent regional aspirations and linguistic identities (Kumar, 2018). Ideological parties such as the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) also gained prominence, particularly in states like West Bengal and Kerala, advocating for leftist ideologies (Kumar, 2018).

C. Evolution of Coalition Politics

The evolution of coalition politics in India became prominent in the late 20th century, with the fragmentation of the political landscape leading to the formation of coalition governments at the central and state levels (Kumar, 2018). The era of coalition politics marked a departure from single-party dominance, necessitating greater political bargaining and consensus-building among diverse political actors (Kohli, 2012).

IV. Major Political Parties

A. Indian National Congress

History and Evolution

- The Indian National Congress (INC) was founded in 1885 and played a central role in the Indian independence movement (Gupta, 2017).
- The party evolved from a nationalist movement to a mainstream political party post-independence, with a focus on democratic governance and secularism (Kothari, 2018).
- Ideological Shifts and Leadership Changes
- The INC has undergone several ideological shifts, from socialist policies in the early years to economic liberalization in the 1990s (Gupta, 2017).
- Leadership changes, such as the transition from Jawaharlal Nehru to Indira Gandhi, have shaped the party's direction and policies (Kothari, 2018).

B. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

Origins and Growth

- The BJP was founded in 1980, emerging from the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, and grew to become a major political force in India (Gupta, 2017).
- The party's growth was fueled by its Hindutva ideology, which emphasizes Hindu nationalism (Kothari, 2018).

Ideological Framework and Electoral Strategies

- The BJP's ideological framework includes a focus on cultural nationalism, economic development, and strong leadership (Gupta, 2017).
- The party has employed effective electoral strategies, such as social media outreach and campaign messaging, to appeal to voters (Kothari, 2018).

C. Regional Parties

Examples of Prominent Regional Parties

- Examples include the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in Andhra Pradesh, and the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra (Kumar, 2018).
- These parties represent regional interests and have significant influence in their respective states (Kumar, 2018).

Influence on National Politics

- Regional parties play a crucial role in coalition politics at the national level, often forming alliances with larger parties to gain influence (Kumar, 2018).
- Their influence on national policies and governance highlights the decentralized nature of Indian politics (Kothari, 2018).

V. Challenges and Transformations

A. Rise of Identity Politics

- Identity politics, based on caste, religion, and regional affiliations, has become increasingly prominent in Indian politics (Jaffrelot, 2017).
- Political parties often use identity-based appeals to mobilize voters, leading to fragmented political landscapes (Jaffrelot, 2017).

B. Role of Money and Media in Shaping Political Narratives

- Money and media have played a significant role in shaping political narratives and influencing voter perceptions (Kothari, 2018).
- The influence of money and media raises concerns about the integrity of the electoral process and the fairness of political competition (Gupta, 2017).

C. Impact of Social and Economic Factors on Party Politics

- Social and economic factors, such as poverty, inequality, and urbanization, influence voter behavior and political outcomes (Kumar, 2018).
- Parties must address these issues to remain relevant and responsive to the needs of the electorate (Kothari, 2018).

VI. Conclusion

A. Summary of Key Points Discussed

1. The paper explored the historical background of political parties in India, tracing their evolution from the pre-independence era to the present day.
2. Major political parties such as the Indian National Congress (INC), BharatiyaJanata Party (BJP), and regional parties were discussed, highlighting their history, ideologies, and influence on Indian politics.
3. Challenges facing political parties, including the rise of identity politics, the role of money and media, and the impact of social and economic factors, were analyzed.

B. Reflection on the Future of Political Parties in India

- The future of political parties in India is likely to be shaped by a range of factors, including changing demographics, evolving social norms, and economic development.
- The rise of new technologies and social media platforms is likely to impact how political parties engage with voters and shape political narratives.
- The need for political parties to adapt to changing circumstances, address pressing social and economic issues, and engage with a diverse electorate will be crucial for their relevance and success in the future.

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