



Regionalism: The History of Regional Party

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Abstract:

India has a multi-party system with predominance of small regional parties. Political parties that wish to contest local, state or national elections are required to be registered by the Election Commission of India (EC). In order to gain recognition in a state, the party must have had political activity for at least five continuous years, and send at least 4% of the state's quota to the Lok Saba (India's Lower house), or 3.33% of members to that state's assembly. These conditions are deemed to have failed if a member of the Lok Sabha or the Legislative Assembly of the State becomes a member of that political party after his election. If a party is recognized in four or more states, it is declared as a "National party" by the EC. Otherwise, it is known as a State Party. All parties contesting elections have to choose a symbol from a list of available symbols offered by the Election Commission. All 28 states along with the union territory of Pondicherry and the National Capital Territory of Delhi usually have an elected government unless President's rule is imposed under certain conditions. A party is easily identified as a regional party if it propagates the ideology of regionalism or thrives on invocation of regional pride. Regional parties are parties whose main holds are in one certain state and mostly they participate in the elections only within that state. Most of these regional parties have agenda fitting certain culture dominant within that state. Some of these regional parties also participate in neighboring states, which have constituencies with culture similar to the first state. Different state parties were established at different periods because of different reasons. Some even have origins prior to India's independence.

Keywords: Commission, Dominant, Lok Sabha, Legislative Assembly, Party.

Introduction:

While all of India's union states adhere to the same international norms and share a common administrative framework, constitutional framework, and legal system, the internal political tendencies of these states differ greatly. This is evident when one looks at state politics in India. It is true that state systems are significantly impacted by the shape and actions of national policies and parties. Equally true, though, is that this effect manifests itself in various ways in different states, adding to the peculiarities and diversity in the structure and character of state politics (Fadia 1984, pp. 4-5). Citizens' engagement with government can only be meaningful at the state level. The Indian Union's individual states are, in reality, the country's most important social and economic development levers. Concurrent with this shift, state politics—which has never been completely irrelevant to federal politics—is becoming more influential. Since the "Congress system" came to an end, there has been a clear tendency towards regionalization in Indian politics, with states becoming as powerful and influential units (Ibid., pp. 2-3). National politicians hone their skills in the

states. For instance, before joining the national cabinet, individuals such as Lai Bahadur Shahri, Morarji Desai, Charan Singh, Y.B. Chavan, G.B. Pant, Jail Singh, HN. Bahuguna, K. Kamraj, etc. served as ministers or chief ministers in state administrations (Ibid., pp. 1-2).

If voters in the 1970s and 1980s were selecting a prime minister in the Assembly-Elections, they are now selecting a chief minister in the Parliamentary Elections, and the states have become the real battleground for political choice. They believe that voters should make their selection at the state level because the country is too large for an individual seat. Today, political choices differ in character from one state to the next. From the old national Congress vs. opposition model, the system has come a long way. The development of a multi-party system is not limited to just one state. It is possible that the Lok Sabha will give the impression of a very disorganised multi-party system. There are a variety of contests that take place at the state level, including bipolar, triangular, four cornered, and even more fragmented ones (Yadav&Palshiker 2009, pp. 46-47).

State Level Politics:

State-level politics is not bound by the rules of national politics and can frequently impose its will on national politics. The most obvious example of this is when national political agendas are set by state-wide parties or enjostormed the Congress stronghold in Andhra Pradesh. The AssomGanaParishad was formed in the fall of 1985 and was swept to power by the year end. Laldenga renounced insurrection and led his Mizo Front to power in Aizawal in 1986 after signing an accord with the Union Government (Bombwall 1988," p. 10). Regional parties in India have recently emerged as a major political force, according to research on groups like the DMK/AIDMK, Akali Dal, National Conference, AssomGanaParishad, Telugu Desam, and Shiv Sena (Ibid., p. 1). There is an alliance between the Congress and the National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir at the moment, the BPJ and the Akali Dal in Punjab, the BJP and the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, the Congress and the DMK in Tamil Nadu, the BJP and the AIA DMK in Orissa, and many more in other states (2010).

Regional parties in India have clearly established themselves and are determined to be a significant and long-lasting component of the country's political scene (Ibid., p. 1).

These steps naturally led to the following tenet of the Dravidian movement. A key component of the movement was the emphasis on language. Some have even gone so far as to call Tamil the most "evolved" and oldest "living" language on the planet. The northern invaders, meanwhile, cast Sanskrit and Hindi as foreign languages. Actually, this was what gave the Dravidian movement a leg up in electoral politics. As an all-India party, the Congress would never have tolerated such a rigid language position. Being the ruling party in India, it was also dedicated to the effort to establish Hindi as a national connecting language. In Tamil Nadu, the Congress party's downfall and the Dravidian parties' rise were both triggered by the language issue. However, that could not occur until EVR himself was no longer the movement's leader. C.N. Armadurai and Mathuvel Kararunanidhi, two of the young DK leaders who later became chief ministers of the state, were among those who defected from the party due to differences in opinion with EVR. One of the two major Dravidian parties in Tamil Nadu, the DravidaMunntetraKazhagam (DMK) was created by them in 1949 (Ibid., pp. 312-313).

Party System:

India has a multi-party system. There are both national and regional parties. The Election Commission recognizes a party as a national 'party, if it fulfills one of the two. \ Conditions: (!), it secures 3.33% of votes or seats in election is to the legislative assemblies, and (2) it secures 4% of votes or seats in Lok Sabha electionfour states. The national parties can also be called allIndia parties. There Programmepolicies, ideologies and strategies have a national focus. They have their presence in National and Regional Parties most of the parts of the country in terms of maintaining organization structures and contesting elections. A

regional party is limited to a geographical region which may cover a state or a couple of states. They come into being to defend and preserve religion-cultural identity of a region. They may also come into being on the issue of neglect of a region which causes its economic backwardness. Regional parties are often seen promoting regionalism -giving primacy to narrow local interest. Some people see them as a threat to the idea of a strong nation but at the same time there are people who do not have such a negative approach towards them. They believe the strong regional parties ensure that the region they represent gets a fair deal by the central government. The year 1989 ushered in the phase of multi- party system at the center. This has meant a definite role for regional parties in the national politics.

Role of Regional Political Parties in Indian National Politics:

India entered into the age of Coalition Politics in the 1990s. Post 1970s emergency period saw the emergence of Janata Party and the weakening of the Indian National Congress, which once was the undefeatable Political Party in India. Also the breaking up of the National Parties saw a resurgence of Regional Parties which started dominating the state-level politics. Their entry into national level politics is however a new phenomenon. In 1977, the Akali Dal and DMK were partners in the Janatagovernment although; the Janata Party had a clear majority (295 seats) on its own. This was the first time that regional parties shared power at the national level. There were 51 members belonging to various regional parties in 1977. In 1980, regional parties lost their newly found moment of glory when Congress returned to power. DMK managed to win 16 seats but Akalis were reduced to one seat and the total tally of regional parties including the smaller left parties of West Bengal remained only 35 in the seventh Lok Sabha. The elections to the eighth Lok Sabha were held in the backdrop of Indira Gandhi's assassination. But in 1984, regional parties increased their share in Lok Sabha. There were 76 members belonging to different regional parties in the eighth Lok Sabha. The rise of Telugu Desam in Andhra and Asom Gana Parishad in Assam were the main factors responsible for this performance of the regional parties. However, with Congress having 415 seats in Lok Sabha, the role of regional parties was bound to be insignificant in national politics.

Non-Congresses brought many regional parties together in the National Front (NF) formed in 1988, these included TDP, DMK, AGP and Congress (S) apart from the newly formed Janata Dal. But in the elections in 1989, these regional parties did not meet with success. In the ninth Lok Sabha, 48 members belonged to regional parties but the 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. In 1991, the strength of regional parties in the Lok Sabha was at 57 but this time around TDP had a fair share (13 seats). AIADMK, Janata Dal (G), Indian Union Muslim League (IUM), Sikkim Gana Parishad (SP) and Kerala Congress supported the Congress government of Narsimha Rao. However, these parties were not part of the government. In any case, both in 1989 and 1991, regional parties were playing a crucial role at the national level in making or unmaking the central government. Thus, the 1977 elections not only sped 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.

It was widely anticipated that following the 2004 general election, the National Democratic Alliance would maintain power. To take advantage of the economic boom, improved security, and cultural climate, the parliament was dissolved before its term was up. However, during the campaign, the coalition avoided ideologically charged questions in favour of practical economic concerns, which led to the loss of nearly half of its seats and the downfall of numerous prominent cabinet ministers.

Conclusion:

Till 1967, in India there was a single party rule. Even in States also there was a domination of Congress party. But, the scenario changed after 1967. Other parties started coming to power in the states. There will be different party in the center and in the states. Regional parties started entering Indian political system. From 1980's we can see the formation of coalition government in the center. The Congress lost its domination and

regional parties started participating in the national government. Therefore, coalition government started coming up in central, Many regional parties like TDP, DMK, Akali Dal, and AIADMK started playing their influential role. They started participating in government decision making. Earlier, developmental work will go to those states which are ruled by Congress only, because congress was dominating in the Centre. Now, the regional parties made developmental works come to their states, because, they are also participating in the government planning process. Whenever, central government is making policies it has to consider, the interest of the regional parties. Government planning and finance allocation is also influenced by regional parties and the presence of regional parties in national government sometimes creates instability. Sometimes legislature is dissolved and fresh elections are held before the five year terms. Coalition politics is here to stay, according to experts and political parties alike. According to Mr. Sharad Pawar, Union Agriculture Minister and President of the Nationalist Congress Party, coalition politics is inevitable in this era of rising regional political parties and the end of one-party rule.

Coalition politics, according to experts, emerged as a result of regional parties' growing influence on national issues. The success of regional parties in representing the interests of the vocal Dalits and other "untouchables" and other backward castes has contributed to their rising profile. Although these parties are still considered "regional" in terms of where they are physically located, they really represent national concerns and their position within the national coalition shows how divided and competitive the party system has become. The continuation of coalition governments, initially under the NDA and subsequently under the UPA, proves that smaller parties and regions are becoming more powerful, but it also highlights a problem with the dominant political culture that relies on a charismatic leader's party dominating a group of smaller ones. The concentration of parties with competing platforms has been a source of internal strife for both coalitions. The parties must prioritise their Common Minimum Programme over their personal ideology if Coalition Politics is to have a sustainable future. Regional parties are playing a major role in the Indian politics. Now, their influence is not only with respect to particular region but considered in national politics also. India now looks forward to a stable future of Coalition Governments as single-party majority seem to be a thing of the past now.

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