

# The Party System <sup>\*t</sup>

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## PUZZLE OF PARTY SYSTEM AGMENTATION

**R**his chapter aims at providing a long-range overview of the process of fragmentation of the Indian party system at the national level over sixty-two years Independence in 1947: from the first general ons in 1952 to the fifteenth general elections 09, as also the evolution of coalitions and ble trends towards reconsolidation into a less lented system with fewer poles.<sup>1</sup> It describes analyses the process of fragmentation of the one -dominated national party system, dominated e encompassing centrist umbrella-type Indian )nal Congress (henceforth Congress) party. This 5ss has resulted in an evolving national party m, still in flux, in which no party has achieved

<sup>1</sup> I thank Adnan Farooqui for research assistance in preparing of the tables in this chapter.

The names of all political parties appear in their abbreviated iiere. For their full forms see the list of abbreviations in the linary pages of this volume.

a parliamentary majority in the last seven general elections (1939, 1991, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2004, and 2009), necessitating minority and/or coalition governments. The party system at the national, that is, in the Lok Sabha, level has become increasingly fragmented since 1989, even while party systems at the state level have become bipartisan or bipolar, hence *less* fragmented, in more and more states. An indicator of the fragmentation of the national party system is the Laakso-Taagepera index (N) (of the effective number of parties). The values of N by votes/seats (Table 8.1) were 4.80/4.35, 5.10/3.70, 7.11/5.83, 6.91/5.28, 6.74/5.87, 7.6/6.5, and 7.98/5.01 in 1989, 1991, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2004, and 2009 respectively, whereas in the eight general elections between 1952 and 1984 the effective number of parties by seats exceeded three only once (3.16 in 1967), and the effective number of parties by votes exceeded five only once (5.19 in 1967).<sup>2</sup>

This chapter is an overview of the party system and focuses on parties' electoral trajectory, and hence their position, in the evolution of the party system, rather than on their social bases or organizational dynamics.

Table 8.1: Effective Number of Parties in Lok Sabha Elections

S. NO.	YEAR	EFFECTIVE NUMBER OF	EFFECTIVE NUMBER OF
		PARTIES (VOTES)	VOTES (SEATS)
1	1952	4.53	1.8
2	1957	3.98	1.76
3	1962	4.4	1.85
4	1967	5.19	3.16
5	1971	4.63	2.12
6	1977	3.4	2.63
7	1980	4.25	2.28
8	1984	3.99	1.69
9	1989	4.8	4.35
10	1991	5.1	3.7
11	1996	7.11	5.83
12	1998	6.91	5.28
13	1999	6.74	5.87
14	2004	7.6	6.5
15	2009	7.98	5.01

Source: See *Journal of the Indian School of Political Economy*, XV/1-2 (Jan.-June 2003), Statistical Supplement, Tables 1.1-1.13, 293-307. For 2004, the index was calculated by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi, and for 2009 by the author.

The chapter describes the evolving fragmentation at the electoral and legislative levels in terms of the shifts in vote shares, seat shares, and the evolution of electoral alliances at both the national and state levels, since the national party system is an aggregate of state-level party systems. It also assesses competing explanations for these shifts to uncover their underlying logic.

There are, broadly speaking, two classes of explanations for the configuration of party systems in the comparative literature. One can be called the social cleavage theory of party systems, and the other the political-systemic theory of party systems, of which the most elaborate are the electoral rules theories of party systems, with theorizing based on the division of powers among various levels of government being an influential recent development. The social cleavage theory postulates that the party system will reflect the principal cleavages in society, as for example between capital and labour in ethno-culturally homogeneous industrialized societies

that have parties positioned along a Left-Right spectrum. The political-systemic theory, particularly the electoral rules theory, postulates that the larger political system's and, more specifically, electoral system's rules, principally, the district magnitude (number of representatives elected from each electoral district or constituency), the structure of the ballot (choosing a party list, an individual candidate, or a mix of the two), and the decision rule or electoral formula (proportional representation, simple plurality, or first-past-the-post (FPTP), variants of each) create varying disproportionalities between votes and seats, and hence incentives for the coalescing or splitting of political forces, which will be reflected in the number, relative weight, and ideological positioning of political parties.<sup>4</sup> For example, a very proportional system consisting of large, multi-member constituencies conduces to a low effective threshold of representation, and hence to even small parties getting elected and playing a role in government formation in multi-party coalitions.<sup>5</sup> In such a system, small parties would not have much incentive to merge with larger parties at the cost of ideological compromise, whereas the opposite would hold true in a FPTP system. For explanations emphasizing the division of powers between levels of government, national, state/provincial, and local, the argument goes as follows. Other things being equal, the greater the political and economic powers of state/provincial governments in federal systems over decisions that most affect the lives of citizens, the greater a political prize the capture of power at the state/provincial level represents, and hence, the greater incentive there is for political entrepreneurs to form state-level political parties, and for voters to vote for such parties. Conversely, the more centralized the powers over decisions that most affect citizens, the more incentive there is for political entrepreneurs to coordinate to form nation-wide political parties, and for voters to vote for such parties and ignore state-level parties. Hence, a more multi-party system can be expected under the former circumstances and a less multi-party system under the latter circumstances.

I will discuss competing explanations of the evolution of the Indian party system in the later part of the chapter, some of which will fall into one or

ier broad category of explanations outlined, 'er, before this it is logically necessary to lay ! historical background to the adoption of the system and the patterns of fragmentation in the dable minimum detail.

### ERN OF FRAGMENTATION OF PARTY EM: 1952-89

ndependence, India opted for the Anglo-Saxon ingle-member constituency, simple plurality ral system, or FPTP system.<sup>6</sup> The latter system lopted in the Constituent Assembly and early nentary debates, not so much from a focused : on the merits of alternative electoral systems irds their effects on the representation of parties >cial groups, but from a default assumption of rstem being somehow natural, carried forward r unconsciously from British and colonial ce since 1935. There was an awareness that this n would tend to under-represent territorially \*sed groups like the Scheduled Castes and ms, but that was sought to be remedied by :vice of reservation for Scheduled Castes, nteeing representation, and promises to be i minorities rather than by electoral-systemic eering. The two-member and three-member ituenicies that existed in the first two elections ncompassed one-third of the seats in the first 'arliaments, were, in embryonic form, distributive systems, but were abolished in 1961. It was felt i proportional representation (PR) system, where [location of seats to individual legislators is more ult to understand, would not be workable in a [y illiterate country, and also that the country red stable, single-party majority governments, ri would be the likely result of the FPTP system eas PR systems would produce unstable, multi-r coalition governments.

#### *Congress Hegemony, 1952-67*

first four general elections to the Lok Sabha, ', 1957, 1962, and 1967, coincided with elections 1 the state assemblies. In the first three of these, Zongress party won an over two-thirds majority :ats in the Lok Sabha on the basis of only a

plurality of votes of 44.8 per cent (Table 8.2). It also won a majority of the seats in nearly all state assembly elections from 1952-62, again on the basis of mostly a plurality of votes against a fragmented opposition.

#### *The Bipolarization of State Party Systems, 1967-89*

The 1967 election marks a break, with the Congress winning only 283 seats on the basis of its lowest ever vote share until then (40.8 per cent), and losing power in eight out of 16 states. The 1971 elections saw a restoration of a two-thirds Congress majority in the Lok Sabha with 43.7 per cent votes and 352 seats. However, from the vantage point of 2009, the post-1967 period represents a secular decline in Congress strength nationally, and in state after state. In the 'exceptional' post-Emergency elections of 1977, the Congress faced a temporarily united opposition consisting of the JP, formed just before the elections, and having a seat adjustment with Jagjivan Ram's Congress for Democracy, and the CPI(M), thus consisting of virtually the entire opposition except for the CPI and the DMK. The Congress was trounced, plunging to its lowest-till-then vote and seat figures of 34.5 per cent and 154 seats respectively. The JP won a majority (295 seats) on the basis of 41.3 per cent of the vote. This was a Congress-like victory in reverse, that is, a catchall umbrella party winning a seat majority on the basis of a vote plurality, but not, however, against a fragmented opposition.

In 1980, another Congress restoration took place following the disintegration of the JP, again a near two-thirds majority of 353 seats (out of 542) on the basis of a plurality of 42.7 per cent. The 1984 elections, another 'exceptional' election following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, saw the highest-ever Congress vote share (48.1 per cent) and 415 seats, or a three-quarters majority. The 1989 elections marked another turning point, with the Congress crashing to 39.5 per cent and 197 seats against an opposition electoral alliance consisting of seat adjustments, of the National Front coalition (of the JD and regional and minor parties) supported by the BJP and the Left parties, which

Table 8.2: Party Seats, Seat Shares, and Vote Shares 1952-2009

	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998	1999	2004	2009
Total Seats	489	494	494	520	518	542	529	542	529	521	543	543	543	543	543
Indian National Congress (INC), (INCI) in 1980	364 (479)	371 (490)	361 (488)	283 (516)	352 (441)	154 (492)	353 (492)	415 (517)	197 (510)	232 (492)	140 (529)	141 (474)	114 (453)	145 (414)	206 (440)
	74.4%	75%	73%	54.4%	68%	28.4%	66.7%	76.6%	37.2%	45%	25.8%	26%	21%	26.7%	37.9%
BJP,	3(94)	4 (130)	14 (106)	35 (251)	22 (160)	295 (405)	-	2 (229)	86 (226)	120 (468)	161 (471)	179 (384)	192 (330)	120 (264)	116 (433)
BLD in 1977,	0.6%	0.8%	2.8%	6.7%	4.2%	54.4%		4%	16.5%	23%	29.6%	33%	34%	25.4%	21.4%
BJS till 1971	3.1%	5.9%	6.4%	9.4%	7.4%	41.3%		7.4%	11.5%	20.1%	20.3%	25.5%	23.8%	22.2%	18.8%
JD(U) in 1999,		-	18 (173)	44 (178)			-	-				6			20 (55)
JD 1989-98,			3.6%	8.5%	8 (56)				147 (243)	59 (307)	46 (196)	1 (190)	21 (60)	8 (33)	
SWA till 1971			7.9%	8.7%	1.5%			6 (66)	27%	11.3%	8.5%	1.1%	3.8%	1.5%	3.7%
CP!	16 (49)	27 (110)	29 (137)	22 (106)	23 (87)	7 (91)	11 (48)		12 (50)	14 (42)	12 (43)	0 (58)	1 (54)	1 (33)	4 (56)
	3.3%	5.5%	5.9%	4.4%	4.4%	1.3%	1.8%	1.1%	2.3%	2.7%	2.2%	1.6%	0.7%	1.6%	0.7%
	3.3%	8.9%	9.9%	5.0%	4.7%	2.8%	2.6%	2.7%	2.6%	2.5%	2.0%	1.8%	1.5%	1.3%	01.4%
CPI(M)	-	-	-	19 (62)	25 (85)	22 (53)	36 (63)	22 (64)	33 (64)				33 (72)	43 (69)	16 (82)
				3.7%	4.8%	4.1%	7%	4.1%	6.2%	35 (60)	37 (75)	6%	5.9%	7.9%	3.0%
				4.4%	5.1%	4.3%	6.1%	5.7%	6.5%	6.2%	6.1%	5.2%	5.4%	5.7%	5.3%
LKD,	-	-	~	-	16 (238)	3 (19)	41 (294)	3 (174)	0 (117)	(K78)	-	-	-	-	
JPS in 1980,					3.1%	0.6%	7.7%	0.6%	-	-					
INCO till 1977					10.4%	1.7%			0.2%	0.1%	17 (111)	20 (164)	26 (151)	36 (237)	
SP in 1991,				-	-										23 (193)
JP till 1989							31 (437)	10 (210)	156)	145)	3.1%	3.7%	4.8%	6.6%	4.3%
							5.9%	1.8%	-	1%					
							19.0%	6.7%	10%	3.4%	3.3%	5.0%	3.8%	4.3%	3.4%
BSP			-												21 (500)
											11 (117)	5 (240)	7 (25)	1 (25)	3.9%
											2%	0.9%	2.6%	3.5%	
											3.6%	4.7%	4.2%	5.3%	6.2%
PSP, KMPP	9 (145)	19 (189)	12 (168)	13 (109)	2 (63)										
in 1952	1.8%	3.8%	2.4%	2.5%	0.4%										
	5.8%	10.4%	6.8%	3.1%	1.0%										
SSP, SOC	12 (054)		6 (107)	23 (122)	3 (93)										
till 1962	2.5%		1.2%	4.4%	0.6%										
	10.6%		2.7%	4.9%	2.4%										

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resulted in a large number of one-on-one contests with the Congress.

The post-1967 period also saw a very important de-linking of parliamentary and state assembly elections after 1971, and a suspension of organizational elections within the Congress from 1972 to 1992, hand-in-hand with the centralization of power at the top of the party apparatus. It also saw the emergence of anti-Congress alliances, then of a principal opposition party to the Congress in state after state, in most states representing a consolidation of the non-Congress space at the state level. The Index of Opposition Unity (IOU) showed an upward trend in state after state over 1967-89.<sup>7</sup> This is particularly so if one considers opposition coalitions—and first party plus its pre-electoral allies—as a single party for the purposes of the IOU. In other words, a consolidation of the non-Congress opposition, state by state, broadly in tandem with such consolidation in state assembly elections, took place over the period, and even led to the displacement of the Congress as one of the two leading parties or coalitions. *This bipolar consolidation was the key feature and driving force of the fragmentation of the national party system.*

The following pattern of bipolarization is discernible state-wise over 1967-89 for Lok Sabha and assembly elections. In Madhya Pradesh (MP), Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh (HP), and the Union Territory of Delhi, the movement towards a two-party system began as early as 1967 with the consolidation of the non-Congress vote behind the BJS, the ancestor of the BJP. This system has remained stable to date.

In three other states, Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura, a bipolar, Congress versus Left, two-alliance system emerged. Here the Congress (West Bengal) or a Congress-led alliance of state-based minor parties (Kerala, Tripura) contested against a Left Front coalition of the CPI (M), CPI (since the late 1970s in Kerala), and smaller Left parties, the two coalitions alternating in power.

In five other states, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and Goa, a Congress-regional party two-party system came into

being over 1967-89, changing in the 1990s with the rise of the BJP in all of these states, often in alliance with the regional party.

In one major state, Tamil Nadu, the process began in 1967, and led to the elimination of the Congress from the top two positions. It became an essentially bipolar contest between the two leading parties, the DMK and the AIADMK, with one of the two being allied to the Congress for parliamentary and state assembly elections. In this arrangement, which was stable from 1977 to 1996, the Congress was given the lion's share of seats in parliamentary elections in exchange for the regional ally receiving the lion's share of state assembly seats. Since 1996, the regional parties have been contesting the majority of Lok Sabha seats too, giving a few to their Congress or BJP allies.

In the Northeastern Rim states of Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Manipur, and in Sikkim, an unstable two-party or two-alliance contest prevailed between the Congress and a variety of regional parties.

Finally, the Congress retained preponderance until 1989 in seven major states, Uttar Pradesh (UP), Bihar, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Orissa, where no alternative party or alliance consolidated itself as a successful challenger for parliamentary elections, although a broad-front anti-Congress alliance, if put together, could have challenged the Congress, as happened in 1967 and 1977.

However, just after the 1989 elections and the state assembly elections in early 1990, the Congress remained the leading party in more states (12) in terms of Lok Sabha seats and in terms of vote share (17) than any other, and remained one of the two leading parties in more states (20) in terms of Lok Sabha seats (20) and vote share (24) than any other. In the state assemblies, it remained the leading party in more states (9) and in terms of vote share (11) than any other, and one of the two leading parties in terms of vote share in more states (24, or all, except Tamil Nadu) than any other. However, many of the very small states, the Congress having lost UP, Bihar, Orissa, and Haryana to the JD, MP, and HP to the BJP, and Rajasthan and Gujarat to a JD-BJP

in both Lok Sabha and state assembly ;  
(except Haryana, which did not have ■/  
**elections in 1989-90).**

#### **RN OF FRAGMENTATION OF PARTY M: 1989-2009**

9 election results were not just another f a  
broad-front anti-Congressism of the JP t  
signified a more far-reaching and seismic :he  
party system, rooted in the shifts in party itional  
strength and support bases at the state an  
increasing number of states, and in India's  
economy and changing patterns of social ation.  
The shifts in major party vote shares and er  
1989 to 2009 in the Lok Sabha are shown » 8.2.  
The major trends of 1989-2004 are the decline  
of the Congress, and the rise of the 1 regional or  
single state-based parties.<sup>8</sup> While lgress retained  
a vote plurality in all seven is over 1989-2009, it  
failed to convert that into lurality in 1996, 1998,  
and 1999. or to 1989, the BJP and its  
predecessor the e political arm of the RSS, had  
never exceeded cent of the vote or 35 seats  
nationally, except <sup>1</sup> when, as a component of the  
JP, it won 99 of > seats won by the JP (more  
than the 86 seats in 1989). Its rise since then has  
been steady is of both vote and seat shares. It  
experienced oric rise in seats from a derisory  
two in despite 7.4 per cent votes) to 86 (out of  
226 ted, mostly in de facto alliance with the JD)  
in iwing to the combination of three effects—  
seat nents with the JD, resulting in one-to-one ts  
against the Congress in most of the seats it ted in  
UP, Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat, HP, and l  
increase in contested seats and a sizeable and  
ally concentrated swing in its favour.  
1989-91, the BJP contested alone with a unally  
polarizing platform against the backdrop Babri  
Masjid agitation of the late 1980s, the -caste  
backlash against the National Front iment's  
decision to implement the Mandal nission  
recommendations for reservation of

government jobs for backward classes defined in caste  
terms, and the Rath Yatra launched by L.K. Advani to  
'liberate' the claimed 'Ram Janmabhoomi' inside the Babri  
Masjid and the communal violence that followed in its  
wake. Its vote share zoomed to 20.1 per cent, and it won  
120 seats (of an unprecedented 468 contested), becoming  
the second largest party in terms of seats and votes. It  
swept UP and Gujarat, and turned in strong performances  
in its traditional strongholds of MP, HP, and Rajasthan,  
winning over 40 per cent votes in each. More  
significantly, and portending developments to come, it  
significantly increased its vote share in several states of  
the peninsula and the east.

The BJP came to form state governments on its own  
for the first time ever in 1990. It formed the government  
on its own in MP and HP, and formed coalition  
governments with the JD in Rajasthan and Gujarat. The  
only time that it had dominated state governments earlier  
was when it was part of the JP in 1977-9, during which  
period the Jana Sangh component of the JP had  
dominated the government and occupied the Chief  
Minister's post in MP, HP, and Rajasthan. Thus, the BJP  
had arrived as a *state-level* political force, whereas earlier  
it had essentially been a sub-state force, thereby  
contributing to national party system fragmentation.

In 1991, with the external support of the eleven-  
member AIADMK and some smaller allies, the  
Congress was able to form a minority government  
dependent on abstention in confidence votes by a section  
of the opposition. It began adding to its numbers by  
splitting small parties such as the TDP and Ajit Singh's  
faction of the Lok Dal in fractions of one-third or more  
(legal under the Anti-Defection law), and attained a  
majority on its own exactly halfway through its term  
(end 1993).

In 1996, its vote share declined still further to a  
then-historic low of 28.7 per cent, having been hit badly  
by the breaking away of the bulk of its Tamil Nadu  
unit—which formed the TMC and won 20 seats—and  
marginally by the breaking away of factions called the  
Congress (Tiwarei) and the Madhya Pradesh Vikas  
Congress. For the first time, the

Congress was overtaken as the single largest party by the BJP, winning only 141 seats compared to the BJP's 161, although it remained the single largest party by vote share with 28.8 per cent compared to the BJP's 20.3 per cent.

In 1996, the BJP experienced the limits of contesting alone with a communally polarizing agenda. Despite being catapulted to its higher-ever seat tally of 161 seats due to its more regionally concentrated vote, making it the largest party in the Lok Sabha and capable of forming the government for twelve days, its vote share remained stagnant at 20.3 per cent, and it failed to win parliamentary support from enough other parties to form a minority or coalition government. Six states—UP, MP, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Maharashtra—accounted for 143 of its 161 seats, with UP and MP alone accounting for almost half.

These results can be seen as a delayed reflection of the realignment of political forces represented by the results of the elections to the assemblies of 15 states between November 1993 and March 1995, which by and large represented major gains for the BJP, some regional parties like the TDP and Shiv Sena, and state-based parties such as the SP, the SMT, and the BSP, while at best a holding operation for the Congress in some stronghold states such as HP and MP (Yadav 1996).

A United Front (UF) government consisting of 11 parties participating in government, including two parties represented only by Rajya Sabha members and three parties as formally part of the UF coalition but not participating in government, and supported from outside by the Congress, was formed in June 1996. The Congress withdrew support to Prime Minister Deve Gowda in April 1997, but continued to support the UF government after his replacement as Prime Minister by I.K. Gujral, eventually withdrawing support to the UF in November 1997, precipitating fresh elections in February–March 1998.

In 1998, the BJP shelved its overt Hindutva agenda to strike explicit or tacit alliances with a range of state-based parties, both regional and others, many of which had earlier been with the UF, a strategy that it consolidated after its victory.<sup>9</sup> The BJP strategy was certainly helped by the fact that the Congress had toppled the UF government, and

was the principal opponent of the constituents of the UF in several major states. Thus, in 1998, the BJP contested the elections with as many as 16 pre-election allies, including three independents, with significant seat-sharing arrangements spread over eight states. The BJP won 25.6 per cent votes and its pre- and post-election allies 15.5 per cent, totalling 37.3 per cent for pre-election allies and 41.07 per cent, including post-election allies, and won a total of 282 seats (excluding two nominated Anglo-Indian seats). The BJP got 182 seats and its pre-election allies 72 seats with post-election allies getting another 28, bringing the allied total to 100 seats. This catapulted the BJP to power as it emerged once again as the single largest party (the Congress got only 141 seats) and led the single largest pre-election alliance.<sup>10</sup> A BJP-led 12-member minority coalition government consisting of 11 pre-election (including two independents and one from a one-Rajya Sabha MP party) and one post-election ally, and dependent on the support or abstention in confidence votes of eight post-election allies (including TDP, National Conference, and HLD [R]) and pre-election allies who opted out of the ministry, assumed power in March 1998 (Table 8.3).

State-wise, the BJP fared better in 1998 compared to 1996, crucially due to the support of its allies. Geographically and socially, the BJP spread its influence and consolidated itself in new areas and new social groups in the 1990s, in the south and the east, among lower castes and classes (Heath 1999). Viewed over 1989–99, this expansion has been at the expense primarily of the JD, and secondarily of the Congress principally in UP and Bihar.

In 1999, essentially the same BJP-led pre-election coalition fought the Congress-led coalition, the latter being a more tentative coalition with state-by-state agreements but no common national platform. The UF disintegrated, being reduced to the Left Front and the rump JD(S) of Deve Gowda. The twenty-one-party BJP-led alliance was formally christened the NDA; this figure counts the SMT, Ramakrishna Hegde's Lok Shakti, and the Sharad Yadav faction of the JD as one party, the JD(U), into which they merged. The Congress alliance was much smaller, the main difference being that the BJP was now allied



Table 8.3: BJP-led Coalition in 1998

| PARTY                          | SEATS | VOTE          |
|--------------------------------|-------|---------------|
|                                | WON   | (IN PER CENT) |
| BJP                            | 182.7 | 25.59         |
| AITC                           |       | 2.42          |
| HS                             | 6     | 1.77          |
| MP                             | 11    | 0.12          |
| IV?                            |       | 0.24          |
| AD(B)                          | 8     | 0.81          |
| AIADMK                         | 18.4  | 1.83          |
| MX                             |       | 0.42          |
| ADMK                           | 3     | 0.44          |
| KS                             | 3     | 0.69          |
| IJD                            | 90    | 1.0           |
| RC                             |       | NA            |
| DMT                            | 12    | 1.77          |
| Independent (Maneka Gandhi)    | 1     | 0.10          |
| Independent (Satnam S. Kainth) | 1     | 0.09          |
| Independent (Buta Singh)       | 1     | 0.09          |
| Other Allies                   |       |               |
| "DP                            | 12    | 2.77          |
| KNC                            | 3     | 0.21          |
| HLD(R)                         | 4     | 0.53          |
| LC                             | 2     | 0.05          |
| WSCP                           | 11    | 0.05          |
| Anglo Indians*                 | 21    | 0.03          |
|                                |       | NA            |
| 3SMC                           |       |               |
| Citizen Common Front           | 1     | 0.02          |
| RJP( Anand Mohan)*             | 1     | 0.07          |
| Total                          | 284   | 41.07         |

[http://www.eci.gov.in/SR\\_KeyHighlights/LS\\_1998/Vol\\_1\\_of\\_1998.pdf](http://www.eci.gov.in/SR_KeyHighlights/LS_1998/Vol_1_of_1998.pdf) accessed on 3 May 2008; Arora, 'Negotiating Differences: Coalitions and National Cohesion', Table 5, p. 190. Elected members Mohan defected from RJP to support the NDA.

AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, while the Congress was the largest party.

The NDA won a more decisive victory, getting 299 seats, while the BJP alone getting 182 as in 1998. With

Table 8.4: NDA Coalition in the 1999 Election

| S.NO. | PARTY                           | SEATS | VOTE          |
|-------|---------------------------------|-------|---------------|
|       |                                 | WON   | (IN PER CENT) |
| 1     | BJP                             | 182   | 23.75         |
| 2     | TDP                             | 29    | 3.65          |
| 3     | JD(U) <sup>a</sup>              | 21    | 3.10          |
| 4     | BJD                             | 10    | 1.20          |
| 5     | DMK                             | 12    | 1.73          |
| 6     | SHS                             | 15    | 1.77          |
| 7     | AITC                            | 8     | 2.42          |
| 8     | INLD                            | 5     | 0.55          |
| 9     | SAD-B                           | 2     | 0.69          |
| 10    | MDMK                            | 1     | 0.44          |
| 11    | PMK                             | 5     | 0.65          |
| 12    | HVC                             | 1     | 0.07          |
| 13    | MADMK                           | 1     | 0.11          |
| 14    | ABLT                            | 2     | 0.22          |
| 15    | MSCP                            | 1     | 0.06          |
| 16    | SDF                             | 1     | 0.03          |
| 17    | Independent (Maneka Gandhi)     | 1     | 0.54          |
| 18    | Janatantrik BSP                 | 0     | NA            |
| 19    | AC                              | 0     | 0.02          |
| 20    | Democratic Bahujan Samaj Morcha | 0     | 0.07          |
| 21    | TRC Post Election Allies        |       |               |
| 22    | JKNC                            | 4     | 0.12          |
| 23    | RLD                             | 2     | 0.37          |
| 303   | 41.65                           |       |               |

Source: [http://www.eci.gov.in/StatisticalReports/LS\\_1999/Vol\\_1\\_LS\\_99.pdf](http://www.eci.gov.in/StatisticalReports/LS_1999/Vol_1_LS_99.pdf), accessed on 2 May 2008.

Note: <sup>a</sup>Samata Party, Lok Shakti, and JD (Sharad Yadav group) agreed to formally merge to form the JD(U).

post-election adherents like the National Conference and Aijit Singh's RLD, the number went up to 303 seats (see Table 8.4). The Congress got a lowest-ever 111 seats, and only 13.4 per cent with allies. However, in terms of vote share, the BJP alone declined to 23.8 per cent, while the Congress rose to 28.4 per cent, remaining the single largest party. The NDA formed the government with the twenty-nine member TDP and five other smaller pre-election allies opting to support it from outside.

In 2004, the incumbent BJP-led NDA coalition contested against the newly formed Congress-led coalition, called the UPA after the election, and lost (see Table 8.5 for detailed results, alliance-wise, and Table 8.6 for shifts in alliances). The major change was that the Congress party became 'coalitionable' in a significant way for the first time, following a conscious decision to adopt a coalition strategy. The NDA consisted of 13 parties, having lost the DMK, MDMK, and PMK in Tamil Nadu, the INLD in Haryana, and Ram Vilas Paswan's newly formed LJNP in Bihar, and having added the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, the SDF in Sikkim, the MNF in Mizoram, IFDP, and the NPF. It won 189 seats and 35.88 per cent votes, with its lead party, the BJP, winning 138 seats (down by 44) and 22.2 per cent votes (down by 1.6 per cent). The Congress-led alliance consisted of 19 parties. This meant the addition of eight new allies—including the DMK-led alliance in Tamil Nadu—since the 1999 elections, and the dropping of two old allies, the AIADMK and Ajit Singh's RLD. The Congress-led alliance won 222 seats and 36.53 per cent votes (only a whisker ahead of the NDA in vote share, but 33 seats ahead). With the external support of the Left parties (61 seats) it gained a majority in the Lok Sabha and formed a government. The UPA also enjoyed the unilateral external support

Congress

26.44

1

0.60

1

0.16

2

2.39

1

0.66

1

1.78

16

0.41

4

0.07

6

0.19

2

1

543

364

33

33

1

1

22

12

10

33

31

Table 8.5: Coalitions in the 2004 Election

| SEATS<br>CONTESTED | SEATSWON       | VOTE (IN<br>PER<br>CENT) | CHANCE<br>FROM<br>1999 |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 535                | 222            |                          |                        |
|                    | CHANGE<br>FROM |                          |                        |
| 414 6              | 145 5          | 36.53                    | -0.39                  |
|                    | 1 24           |                          | -1.85                  |
| 6 28               | 4 9 4          |                          | 0.60                   |
| 1122               | 1 1            |                          |                        |
| 7 3                |                | 0.16                     | -                      |
| 2                  |                | 0.38                     |                        |
|                    |                | 0.66                     | -                      |
|                    |                | 0.36                     |                        |
|                    |                | 0.20                     |                        |
|                    |                | 0.07                     |                        |
|                    | 1999           |                          |                        |
|                    |                | -0.03                    |                        |
| Congress allies    | 315            | (contd...)               |                        |

TRS

IND (Congress)

RJD

LJNP

NCP

JMM

PDP

MUL

1 17

4 2 4

1 -1

(Table 8.5 contd...)

KCM

JDS

RPI

RPI(A)

PRBP

**DMK**

MDMK

PMK

PDS

AC

NDA

BJP

TDP

JD(U)

IND(BJP)

IFDP

SHS

BJD

SAD

AIADMK

AITC

MNF

SDF

NPF

Left

CPI

CPI(M)

JDS(Left)

KEC

IND(Left)

RSP

FBL

BSP

SP +

SP

RLD

Others

Table 8.6: Net Effect of Changes in Alliances in 2004

| CONGRESS    |          | NATIONAL   |          |
|-------------|----------|------------|----------|
| ALLIANCE    |          | DEMOCRATIC |          |
| (UPA)       |          | ALLIANCE   |          |
| SEATS       | VOTE (%) | SEATS      | VOTE (%) |
|             | 2.80     |            | 3.96     |
|             | 3.52     |            |          |
|             |          | -27        | -1.43    |
| +46         |          |            |          |
| SEATS added | 49       | 6.32       | 4        |
| of 1999     |          |            | 2.53     |
| Loss        |          |            |          |

CSDS Data Tables.

New allies of the Congress are: NCP, TRS, DMK, MDMK, JNP, PDP, and JMM.

Old Congress allies now dropped include: RLD and AIADMK.

Allies of the NDA are: AIADMK, SDF, MNF, IFDP, 'F. Old NDA allies now dropped include: DMK, MDMK, NLD, RLD, LCP, AC, NC, TRC, Democratic Bahujan Samaj i, Janatantrik BSP, HVC, and LJNP. ! LJNP was formed after the 1999 Lok Sabha Elections, 1999 it was a part of the JD(U). jnachal Congress merged with the INC. Bahujan Samaj a merged with the BSP in 2004 before the general ns. C merged with the Congress in 2002. 'C merged with the Congress in 2004 before the general ns.

o other significant parties (with whose support lid potentially retain a majority even if the withdrew), that is, the SP (36 seats) and the BSP eats). the major difference between 2004 and :r elections was the success of the Congress' tionability, which was critical to its universally pected victory.<sup>11</sup> The state-wise pattern was Hows. Coalitions (or merger, with the HVC in were critical to the Congress victory in Tamil a, AP, Bihar, Jharkhand, J&K, and HP. They were :al for the reduction in the Congress margin of at/improvement of position compared to 1999 [aharashtra and Goa. The lack of a coalition (due le BJP's decision to contest alone) was critical he margin of Congress victory and BJP defeat ssam, Haryana, and Jharkhand (where an NDA ition of not only the BJP and JD (U), but also the A, was a possibility).

In 2009, the UPA coalition defeated the depleted A by a much greater margin with the Congress ning 206 seats on its own and 263 with its

pe-electoral allies, of which, compared to 2004, it had lost the Left as a partial seat adjustment partner in Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, as well as the JD, LJP, TRS, PMK, MDMK, and PDP, but added the AITC and the NC (Table 8.7). The NDA suffered major-ally depletion with the loss of the TDP, BJD and the split in the Shiv Sena but added the AGP, RS, and RLD. The Congress-led UPA formed a six-party government of the Congress, AITC, DMI, NCP, NC, and Muslim League but excluded some pre-electoral (JMM, Bodoland People's Front, KCM) and all post-electoral supporters who consisted of 9 parties and 3 independents totalling 59 MPs. This coalition resembled the NDA in that the legislative coalition including post-electoral allies constituted a considerable surplus majority and hence provided insurance against

Table 8.7: Coalitions in the 2009 Election

| PARTY                   | SEATS     | SEATS | VOTE SHARE (IN PER CENT) |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------|--------------------------|
|                         | CONTESTED | WON   |                          |
| UPA                     |           | 263   | 36.87                    |
| Congress                | 440       | 206   | 28.56                    |
| AITC                    | 5         | 19    | .2                       |
| DMK                     | 22        | 18    | 1.83                     |
| NCP                     | 68        | 9     | 2.04                     |
| National Conference     | 3         | 3     | 0.12                     |
| JMM                     | 42        | 2     | 0.4                      |
| Muslim League           | 16        | 2     | 0.21                     |
| AIMIM                   | 2         | 1     | 0.07                     |
| Bodoland People's Front | 2         | 1     | 0.16                     |
| Kerala Congress (Mani)  | 1         | 1     | 0.1                      |
| VCK                     | 3         | 1     | 0.18                     |
| NDA                     |           | 159   | 24.33                    |
| BJP                     | 433       | 116   | 18.81                    |
| JD(U)                   | 55        | 20    | 1.52                     |
| Shiv Sena               | 47        | 11    | 1.55                     |
| RLD                     | 9         | 5     | 0.44                     |
| Shiromani Akali Dal     | 10        | 4     | 0.96                     |
| TRS                     | 9         | 2     | 0.62                     |
| AGP                     | 6         | 1     | 0.43                     |
| Third Front             |           | 80    | 20.92                    |

(Table 8.7 contd...)

| PARTY                   | SEATS     | SEATS      | VOTE SHARE  |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|-------------|
|                         | CONTESTED | WON<br>-24 | (INPERCENT) |
| (Left Front subtotal)   |           |            | -7.46       |
| BSP                     | 500       | 21         | 6.17        |
| BJD                     | 18        | 14         | 1.59        |
| AIADMK                  | 23        | 9          | 1.67        |
| MDMK                    | 4         | 1          | 0.27        |
| JD(S)                   | 33        | 3          | 0.82        |
| TDP                     | 31        | 6          | 2.51        |
| HJC                     | 10        | 1          | 0.2         |
| JVM(P)                  | 16        | 1          | 0.23        |
| CPI(M)                  | 82        | 16         | 5.33        |
| CPI                     |           | 4          | 1.43        |
| AIFB                    | 56        | 2          | 0.32        |
|                         | 21        |            |             |
| RSP                     | 16        | 2          | 0.38        |
| Fourth Front            |           | 27         | 4.7         |
| SP                      |           | 23         | 3.43        |
| RJD                     | 193       | 4          | 1.27        |
|                         | 44        |            |             |
| Others with seats       |           | 14         | 6.09        |
| AUDF                    | 25        |            | 0.52        |
| NPF                     | 1         |            | 0.2         |
| SDF                     | 1         |            | 0.04        |
| BVA                     | 1         |            | 0.05        |
| Swabhimani Paksha       | 1         |            | 0.12        |
| Independents            | 3,829     | 9          | 5.16        |
| Others without<br>seats |           | 0          | 7.09        |

Source: CSDS Data Tables.

Note: The cells for Seats Contested for the alliances are left blank because none of the alliances were perfect sharing of seats; the UPA was explicitly limited to state-level alliances only, with state-level partners contesting against the Congress in other states.

defection by any ally, rendering no ally pivotal, and also from the fact that the BJP numbers, down to 116, made it like the Congress during the NDA, in being too small to form a viable alternative coalition given that several parties like the Left, SP, RJD, TDP and BSP would not be prepared to ally with it due to differences on secularism and their need for religious minority votes.

Most states remained or became bipolar in the 1989-2006 period, except notably UP. However, in a number of apparently bipolar or two-party states, *if we look at vote shares we find the presence of a significant, often growing, third party* that has a vote share in double digits, but is not yet large enough to win a significant number of seats. *It is obviously cutting into the potential vote share of one or both the two main parties or alliances in a way that makes it a threat to either or both of the two main parties as well as makes it attractive as a potential ally of either one of them in order to defeat the other.*

This is the case in states like Assam, Orissa, Goa, West Bengal, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh.

This rising third party was the BJP in all of these states, and the BSP in Punjab, UP, and, in a small way, MP. By emerging as a significant third party in vote share at the state level and hence both threatening to cut into the votes and seat prospects of either or both the dominant parties, thereby *creating incentives for the weaker of the two leading parties, to ally with it, typically the regional party*, since both the BJP, nationally, and the regional party in the state face the Congress as their principal opponent. This was the pattern in Maharashtra, Punjab, Orissa, Goa, Bihar, and West Bengal (following the Congress split in which the AITC emerged as the major Congress faction), Haryana, Karnataka, and, since 1999, Andhra Pradesh. In some of these states, possibly Maharashtra and Orissa, the BJP can potentially go on to eat up the share of its regional alliance partner and transform the state into a Congress-BJP two-party state, as happened in Rajasthan and Gujarat over 1989-91.

Thus, a process of bipolar consolidation has been taking place in many states, but of *multiple bipolarities* (for example Congress-BJP, Congress-Left, Congress-regional party), contributing to fragmentation at the national level, and contributing directly or indirectly to the potential bipolar consolidation of a Congress-led alliance versus a BJP-led one, although both alliances are as yet unstable, marked by the exit and entry of smaller parties. Furthermore, both alliances are not perfect one-on-one seat adjustments but partial ones, in which the total seats contested by each alliance may exceed the total number of seats (Table 8.7). For example, in 2009, the Congress alliances with its partners were

tly limited to the partner's main seat only, so e latter were free to contest seats against the 5ss in other states and did so, contributing ger effective number of parties by votes in lespite the effective number of parties by seats ing. What this reflects is the drive by several r parties like SP and the NCP to expand their orizontally across states, which brings them inflict with the Congress which needs to have idly multi-state a base as possible to be able to I its status as the leading national party.

#### ACTION OF ELECTORAL ALLIANCES COMPETING EXPLANATIONS FRAGMENTATION (AND WSOLIDATION?) OF PARTY SYSTEM

are broadly seven explanations for the mtation of the Congress-dominated national lystem over the decades, none of which excludes lers. One of these can also potentially explain Dcess of reconsolidation of the party system into ith larger alliances and fewer poles. I shall outline mpeting explanations in roughly chronological of their relevance and applicability to standing the decline of the Congress-dominated system. I shall then outline the evolution of es, drawing on the patterns of fragmentation and le reconsolidation in the earlier sections, and make an argument for the best explanation for ocess that has been unfolding. le first (set of) explanation(s) is that centred ! growing politicization of social cleavages regional lines since the late 1960s, due to the sing centralization of the Congress party and ■ess governments, and the latter's insensitivity ional concerns about language, cultural identity, :al autonomy, and economic development. This erstood to have led to the rise and/or further lidation of regional parties such as the DMK and shoots, Akali Dal, NC, AGP, and small parties in ortheastern Rim states.<sup>12</sup> he second explanation highlights the electoral-nic feature of delinking between parliamentary ;ate assembly elections since 1971. This probably ated the pre-electoral alliances and post-electoral

coalitions of non-Congress forces for national elections such as in 1977 and 1989, and of non-BJP forces in 1996, since doing so became easier without compromising their fundamental interests at the state level where their basic social constituencies and power bases lay. Delinking also meant smaller agendas and less crowded bargaining tables, and hence less insurmountable collective action problems, or, to put it simply, one-at-a-time battles with the Congress.<sup>13</sup>

The third explanation emphasizes the growth in political consciousness and assertion of newly prosperous or newly mobilized sections of the electorate, primarily intermediate and backward-caste peasants in the Green Revolution areas of north India, which acted both as a farmers' and intermediate castes' lobby from the late 1960s to the early 1990s.<sup>14</sup> These castes had not been part of the core base of the Congress in the northern belt, and had not been granted a position of commensurate influence in the party power structure. Fragmentation, whereby these castes or interest groups tended to vote or form new parties of the erstwhile socialist PSP/SSP/agrarian Lok Dal/JD kind, was rooted in the inability or unwillingness of the groups that controlled the Congress to accommodate them.

The fourth explanation, dovetailing with the first and the third, and complementary to them, is that of the growing centralization of, and suspension of, democracy within the Congress party since 1972, leading to the exit of both traditional voters and politicians whose voices were not being heard, particularly certain regional groups and intermediate and backward-caste farmers in the northern belt, to new or other parties. This is in line with the logic of 'disillusioned' voting, whereby voters of a party from whom they fail to get their desired policy dividends or have their voices heard turn away to rival or new parties. This explanation stresses the importance of the organization and functioning of parties as machines to retain and expand their voter base.<sup>15</sup>

The fifth explanation is that of the influence on incentives of a systemic feature of the polity, the division of powers in the Constitution between the Centre and the states. With the powers that are more relevant to the daily lives of people in a largely rural society, such as agriculture and land use, irrigation and

water supply, electricity, police, education, health, and other social expenditures being vested in the states, there are incentives to organize to capture power at the state level.<sup>16</sup>

The sixth explanation is the growing politicization of communal and caste cleavages in the 1990s, leading to the collapse of a catchall party like the Congress in states like UP and Bihar where such politicization led to a collapse of the middle ground, and the gravitation of huge chunks of the electorate—SCs, Muslims, OBCs, and upper castes—to communal and caste-based parties such as the BJP, BSP, SP, and (in Bihar) RJD.<sup>17</sup>

The seventh explanation, which I consider the most comprehensive and powerful, is one that attaches greatest significance not to social cleavages or the dominant Congress party's structure and functioning, but to the systemic properties of the FPTP electoral system working themselves out in a federal polity.<sup>18</sup> This is reinforced by the second (the delinking of national and state elections since 1971) and fifth explanations (the division of powers making state-level power politically attractive). This explanation is based on the proposition known as Duverger's Law, namely, that the FPTP system (single-member district, simple plurality system) inclines towards a two-party system because of the tendency over time for third and more parties to get eliminated due to the combination of two effects—a 'mechanical effect' of over-representation or under-representation of parties, depending on whether they get more or less than a certain (varying) threshold of votes; and a 'psychological effect', whereby voters tend to not 'waste' their votes on parties which have no realistic chance, but vote 'sophisticatedly' (or strategically/tactically) for the party that they feel has the best chance of defeating their least-liked party. These two effects taken in combination will tend to aggregate votes around the leading party and its principal rival. Duverger's Law argues that the FPTP system produces an imperative of consolidation of voters (and politicians) around a principal rival party so it could have a realistic chance of winning against a dominant party, thus leading to the elimination of third parties, or at least an alliance of other parties, against a leading party.

Duverger's Law applies essentially at the constituency level.<sup>19</sup> It need not translate to the national level and produce a national two-party system where strong local/state parties exist as in a federal polity, particularly one like India's, where the states are linguistic and cultural entities reflecting such social cleavages. In such a system, where parties compete to form the government at both national and state levels, Duverger's Law can apply at the stall level, leading to two-party or bipolar systems due to the consolidation of the state-level opposition to the principal party at the state level, whether a national or regional party, in a principal rival, while at the same time leading to a multi-party system nationally because the state-level two-party systems do not consist of the same two parties.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, they can consist of a variety of parties, some national, some purely state-level. The consolidation of two-party or two-alliance systems at the state level, which I have described in the foregoing sections, is the playing out of Duverger's Law in practice.

The first, third, and sixth explanations are all variants of the social cleavage theory of party systems, which postulates that parties will be formed around social cleavages and the party system will reflect this in its axes of polarization.

The second, fifth, and seventh relate to the behavioural incentives set up by the systemic features of the political system, the second and the seventh relating to the electoral system specifically, and the seventh specifying a mechanism whereby the behaviour of politicians, voters, and parties determines the change in the party system over time. The fifth explanation emphasizes the importance of the federal division of powers as an incentive structure for the formation of state parties, and for voters to vote for such parties.

The fourth explanation focuses on political parties as machines, and is intermediate between social cleavage theories and political-systemic theories.

Let us take an overview of the evolution of electoral and government coalitions and then return to the competing explanations. The evolution of alliances in the Indian party system can be summarized as follows. The first phase of broad-

anti-Congressism in the 1960s and early 1970s was characterized by *intrastate alliances* of nyukta Vidhayak Dal (SVD) type or the JP, within each state, the component parties alliance or the Janata Party, for example the Jharkhand, BJD/BLD, Socialists, Swatantra, and sss (O) had their state units, strongholds, and bases without any ideological glue. The second again of broad-front anti-Congressism, was the JP, which unified ideologically disparate congress parties in order to enable one-on-one bases aggregating votes at the constituency level.

One win, reflects the imperative of aggregation regardless of ideology. This also consisted of state alliances of disparate parties within the national umbrella of unification of those parties at the national level. Intra-state alliances cannot be stable there is both an ideological and programmatic incompatibility and an intra-state territorial incompatibility, in that some of the parties have pockets of strength within the state which are not contested by their allies in the state; this applies to both the case of Kerala (for both the Left and the Congress) and in West Bengal. This territorial alliance is so fundamentally different from that of the Congress and the AIADMK from 1977 to 1996, in that it was not based on a trade-off of state assembly for Lok Sabha seats between the national and local parties. The National Front coalition was a new departure in these senses. First, learning from the Janata experience, it did not try to unify very different parties, but put together a coalition of distinct parties based on a common manifesto. Second, it consisted of the explicitly regional parties like the Jharkhand, TDP, and AGP, and the Left parties, unlike VDD or Janata phase experiments. Third, it also ended the beginning of *inter-state alliances* of parties territorially compatible alliances, where parties do not compete on each other's turf. However, the territorially compatible loose alliance put together the National Front-BJP-Left in 1989-90 relied on the rock of ideological incompatibility, indicated once again the unsustainability of a anti-Congress coalition, unless its ideological

extremes moderated or set aside their positions (as the Jana Sangh did in post-1967 SVD coalitions and in the post-1977 Janata phase). Another clear case of a *territorial alliance* was the post-election coalition of the UF from 1996-8; however, it had a certain secular ideological mooring, ranged as it was against a hardline, perceivedly 'anti-system' BJP.

The period since 1991 has also seen the growth and sustenance of *intra-state alliances based on ideology* (like the BJP-Shiv Sena) and based on the territorial compatibility of two kinds, different from both the Left Front kind and the Congress-AIADMK tradeoff kind of 1977-96. This consists of intra-state alliances, which are the reverse of the historical Congress-AIADMK kind in which there is no tradeoff of Lok Sabha for state assembly seats between the regional and the national party. On the contrary, the regional party allies with the state unit of the national party, with the former getting the lion's share of both Lok Sabha and assembly seats. Examples are the BJP-AIADMK-smaller parties in 1998 and 2004, the BJP-DMK-smaller parties in 1999, Congress-DMK in 2004 and 2009, the BJP-TDP in 1999 and 2004, the BJP-AITC in 1999 and 2004, Congress-AITC in 2009, BJP-BJD in Orissa in 1998, 1999, and 2004, BJP-HVP in 1996 and 1998 and the BJP-INLD (Chautala) in 1999, RJD-Congress in 2004, and JD(U)-BJP in 2004 and 2009.

There is also the reverse of this pattern, viz., an alliance between a minor state party and a national party, in which the latter gets the lion's share of both Lok Sabha and assembly seats, the key being territorial compatibility, in which the national party does not contest in the smaller regional party's intra-state strongholds. Examples are the BJP-LKS in Karnataka in 1998 and 1999, the BJP-Samata in Bihar over 1996-9, the BJP-HVC in HP, and the Congress-JMM-smaller parties in 2004 and over a quarter-century of the Congress-led United Democratic Front in Kerala and the Congress-led alliances in Assam since 2001. It is anybody's guess how long these non-ideological alliances will last. In some of these cases, the base of the smaller party or even the regional party which is a senior partner may be eaten up by a larger, better-organized party like the BJP, as in fact



happened to the Janata Dal in Rajasthan and Gujarat from 1989 to 1991.

*The clear emphasis of alliances since the 1990s has been on territorial compatibility at the expense of ideological compatibility, particularly the BJP's alliances of 1998, 1999, 2004, and 2009, and the Congress alliances of 2004 and 2009, and even the UF coalitions of 1996 and 1998. This is an improvement on the SVD and JP alliances, which were neither programmatic nor territorially compatible. However, the most important point to be noted is that in the whole history of alliances since the 1960s, with the exception of the Left Front, limited to three states, alliances have been driven by the imperative to aggregate votes to win and not by ideology, programme, or social cleavages, except for overarching differences between the Congress and the BJP on secularism.*<sup>21</sup>

With this observation I return to the competing explanations for fragmentation of the party system. It is clear that the explanations deriving from the social cleavage theory of party systems, that is, the first, third, and sixth explanations, can explain fragmentation of certain kinds. The first can explain the shift away from the Congress to regional parties in certain states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Punjab, J&K, and the Northeastern Rim states, including the formation of such parties as in the case of Assam. These were not simply cases where regional parties were formed due to economic incentives deriving from state-level powers. The third can explain the shift of votes away from or consolidation behind the agrarian parties of the Janata family—the BKD, Socialists, BLD, Lok Dais, JD, and so forth, again including the formation of new parties. The sixth can account for the rise of communal and caste-based parties like the BJP, Shiv Sena, BSP, and SP, including the formation of new parties. The fourth can explain the exit of former Congress voters to rival or new parties. The fifth explanation reinforces all of these in that it explains the incentives for single state-based party formation. The second explanation further reinforces these by explaining how delinked state assembly elections facilitate collective action for alliances.

However, while these explanations can account for various types of fragmentation, they cannot

explain the periodic counter-tendencies towards alliances that tend to reconsolidate the party system. It is here that I find the seventh explanation, based on Duverger's analysis of the systemic properties and imperatives of the FPTP electoral system, useful. This explanation can account for both fragmentation at the national level and tendencies towards alliances. The key point here is to remember from the account of the first two sections *that fragmentation of the party system at the national level is a product of its opposite at the state level*, that is, the concentration of vote share between two parties or alliances, but *different* pairs of parties or alliances in most states, leading to a multitude of parties at the national level, each with a limited base in one or a few states. This latter phenomenon is explained by the systemic tendencies of the FPTP system captured by Duverger's Law, which have been working themselves out at the state level since 1967. The seventh explanation also fits well with the tendencies towards broad alliances driven, as we have seen, by the imperative to consolidate votes at the constituency and state levels, rather than by ideology, programme, or social cleavages, and to consolidate seats at the parliamentary level to form governments.

I conclude that the Indian party system is evolving over successive elections, and that the various trends and counter-trends will play themselves out over the coming years and decades. The basic driving force is the FPTP system's bipolarizing tendency, tempered by the large number of politically salient cleavages resulting from social heterogeneity. Since no switch to a proportional representation system or mixed member system is on the cards, the basic tendencies can be expected to continue. It is too early to say whether the FPTP system's inexorable imperative to aggregate votes regardless of ideology will push the national party system towards loose bipolarity at the national level between two broad alliances, each territorially compatible internally, one broadly left of centre and the other broadly right of centre, or whether India's multiple social cleavages intertwined with geographical diversity and incentives for regional parties to compete not only at the state level, but also to increase their parliamentary presence, will prevail to

so diversified an ideological space that bipolar lidation will be impossible at the national level.

. This chapter is an updated and more developed n of Sridharan (2002a), and also draws upon, in parts, iran (2004).

. For the Laakso-Taagepera indices of the effective er of parties, at both the national and state assembly *see Journal of the Indian School of Political Economy*, -2), 2003, Statistical Supplement, Tables 1.1-1.13, 3-307. For 2004, the index has been calculated by the e for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi; r's computation for 2009. . See Lipset and Rokkan (1967), for the classic lent on the social cleavage theory of party systems, artolini and Mair (1990), for a modified version which rally argues that social cleavages do not translate latically into party systems but offer easy mobilization untities. Much the same is argued by Kothari (1997: men he says:

liose who complain of 'casteism in politics' are really joking for a sort of politics which has no basis in ociety....Politics is a competitive enterprise....and its irocess is one of identifying and manipulating existing nd emerging allegiances in order to mobilise and onsolidate positions...

ie thus makes the social cleavage theory of party ns appear somehow natural. For recent works within ectoral rules theory of party systems, see Lijphart 1), Taagepera and Shugart (1989), Grofman and art (1986); and older classics, Duverger (1963), Rae 7). For recent emphasis on the division of powers :en various levels of government in federal systems as planatory variable, see Chhibber and Kollman (1998) 2004).

4. Taagepera and Shugart (1989) emphasize ballot ture, district magnitude, and electoral formula as the variables. Lijphart (1994) emphasizes, in addition, ivative variable, effective threshold of representation, ssembly size, and considers the special cases of dentialism and *apparentement* (linking of party lists).

5. See Lijphart (1994: 22, Table 22).

6. For a detailed analysis of the early debates on ting an electoral system, see Sridharan (2002b: 69).

7. A measure of the fragmentation of the opposition : represented by the percentage share of the largest Congress (in today's terms, non-ruling party) vote

in the total opposition vote. The higher the IOU, the less fragmented the opposition space.

8. Regional party is something of a misnomer as it implies a party strong in two or more states in a region. All the regional parties, however, are single-state-based parties, except the Janata Dal (United), which is strong in Bihar and Karnataka, and the CPI (M), strong in West Bengal, Tripura, and Kerala, if one considers them regional parties. These sets of states do not constitute recognizable regions. The JD (U) and the CPI (M) are really national parties with a limited geographical spread, the former being a rump of the once much larger Janata Dal.

9. For the BJP's use of coalitions as a strategy to expand its base across states, see Sridharan (2005).

10. For details of the alliances, pre- and post-election in 1998, see Arora (2000: 184-5, 190, 194).

11. For details of the argument and figures, see Sridharan (2004).

12. For a concise overview of regional parties in the party system up to the mid-1990s, see Manor (1995).

13. See Chhibber (1999: 105); Chhibber and Kollman (2004).

14. See Brass (1980), for Singh (1990), Frankel (1991), and (1989).

15. See Kohli (1991), for an analysis of the 'crisis of governability' centred on the centralization of the Congress party. This argument gells with Riker's ideal type of disillusioned voting, in Riker (1976). See Chhibber (1999: ch. 5), for an argument emphasizing the exit of traditional supporters of the Congress, rather than the entry of new groups into politics.

16. See Chhibber (1999: chs 2 and 5).

17. For a general analysis of the decline of the Congress and the emergence of a post-Congress polity, see Yadav (1999). For specifics that show the polarization of the vote by community and caste, see Heath (1999), and for the BJP vote see Heath and Yadav (1999). See Chandra (1999), for an analysis of the rise of the BSP.

For a view that Duverger's law does not apply to a significant fraction of constituencies over time, see Diwakar (2007).

18. See Sridharan (1997), for a detailed version of the argument presented in capsule below.

Dwakar's (2007) argument is still consistent with convergence towards state-level bipolar its not two party systems, in most states.

19. For a view that Duverger's law does not apply to a significant fraction of constituencies over time, see Diwakar (2007).

20. Diwakar's (2007) argument is still consistent with convergence towards state-level bipolar if not two-party systems, in most states.

21. For a detailed overview of state-level coalition politics in India, see Sridharan (1999). For a detailed state-wise analysis of the BJP's coalition strategies since 1989, see Sridharan (2005). For a detailed analysis of the Congress' coalition strategies and their criticality in the 2004 elections, see Sridharan (2004).

22. Ordeshook and Shvetsova (1994) argue that Duverger's law will work even under conditions of social (ethnic, religious, linguistic, and so on) heterogeneity, while Taagepera and Shugart (1989) tend to argue that the effective number of parties will increase with the increase in social heterogeneity.

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