

Introduction to Politics, with reference to India

Party System

Party System

Political Parties

- Political parties are the interface between citizens and the state. They bring people into politics, provide a platform for political actions, form governments and play a crucial role in the formulation and implementation of public policy.
- There are three kinds of party systems in the world, viz., (i) one party system in which only one ruling party exists and no opposition; (ii) two-party system in which two major parties exist; and (iii) multi-party system in which there are a number of political parties leading to the formation of coalition governments.

Political Parties in India

National and State Parties

- The Election Commission registers political parties for the purpose of elections and grants them recognition as national or state parties on the basis of their poll performance.
- A party is recognised as a state party if it fulfills some conditions such as:
 - 6% vote share in the last assembly election in that state.
 - One seat in Lok Sabha from the concerned state, plus a 6% vote share in the last Lok Sabha election from that state.
 - If it fails to get either of the numbers, it has to have 3% of the total assembly seats or 3 seats, whichever is more.
- A party is recognised as a national party if it fulfills some conditions such as:
 - It should get a 6% vote share in the last assembly elections in any four states and 4 seats in the last Lok Sabha polls.
 - It should get 2% of all Lok Sabha seats in the last election and these seats should be from at least 3 states.

Political Parties in India

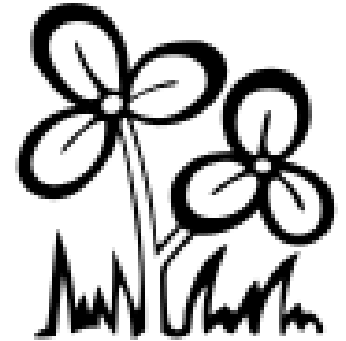
National Parties

1. All India Trinamool Congress
2. Bahujan Samaj Party
3. Bharatiya Janata Party
4. Communist Party of India
5. Communist Party of India (Marxist)
6. Indian National Congress
7. Nationalist Congress Party

Political Parties in India

National Parties

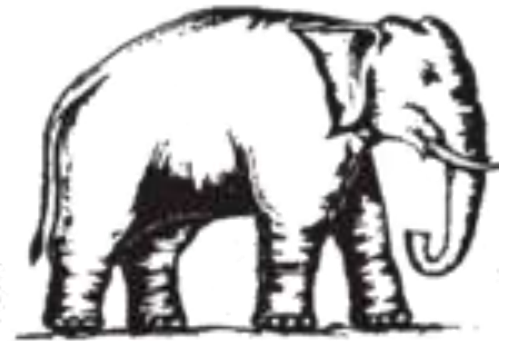
- All India Trinamool Congress:
 - Founded by Mamata Banerjee on 1 January 1998 as a breakaway faction from the Indian National Congress
 - Rapidly rose to prominence in the politics of West Bengal
 - Presently, it is ruling the state of West Bengal beside being the third-largest party in India in terms of number of MPs and MLAs, just after BJP and INC.



Political Parties in India

National Parties

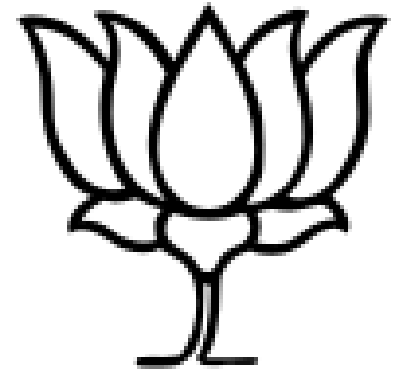
- Bahujan Samaj Party
 - Founded by Kanshi Ram in 1984 with the aim of creating a coalition of Dalits, backward caste people, and minorities.
 - Ideology and programme of the BSP appealed to the Dalits and their political aspirations that had been neglected by the Congress.
 - The BSP has its main base in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh where it was the second-largest party in the 2019 Indian general election with 19.3% of votes and third-largest in the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly election with 12.88% of votes.



Political Parties in India

National Parties

- Bharatiya Janata Party
 - Was formally launched in 1980, post the split of the Janata Party
 - Successor to Jana Sangh, founded in 1951 by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee
 - Although initially unsuccessful—winning only two seats in the 1984 general election, it grew in strength subsequently.
 - After 1999 General Elections, the BJP led NDA government, headed by Vajpayee, lasted for a full term in office; this was the first non-Congress government to do so.



Political Parties in India

National Parties

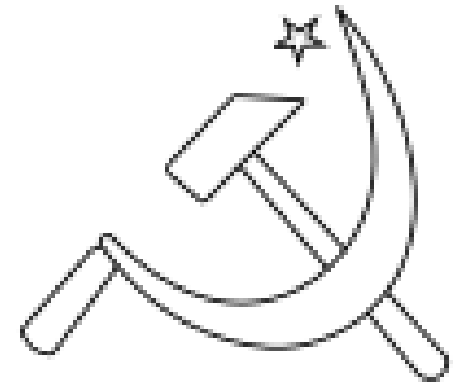
- Communist Party of India
 - The CPI was founded in modern-day Kanpur on 26 December 1925.
 - Believes in the parliamentary road to socialism
 - Currently it has 2 members in Lok Sabha and 2 members in Rajya Sabha.
 - It has the ECI status of a state party in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Manipur.
 - CPI was the main opposition party in India during 1950's to 1960's .



Political Parties in India

National Parties

- Communist Party of India (Marxist)
 - Founded after a split in the CPI in 1964.
 - The 34 years of Left Front rule (where CPI-M was the largest party) in West Bengal was the longest-serving democratically elected communist-led government in the world.
 - Considers the Congress party to be a bourgeoisie party and wishes to create an alliance between peasants and workers



Political Parties in India

National Parties

- Indian National Congress
 - Founded in 1885, led the Indian independence movement
 - Considered to be a “catch-all” party – a "big tent" party whose platform is generally considered to lie in the centre of Indian politics
 - Had an absolute majority on seven occasions and has led the ruling coalition a further three times, heading the central government for more than 54 years. There have been six Prime Ministers from the Congress party



Political Parties in India

National Parties

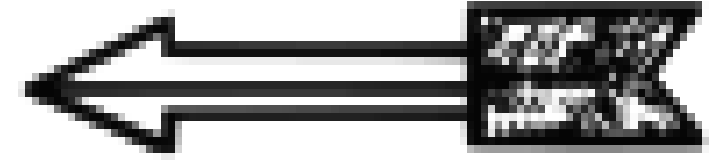
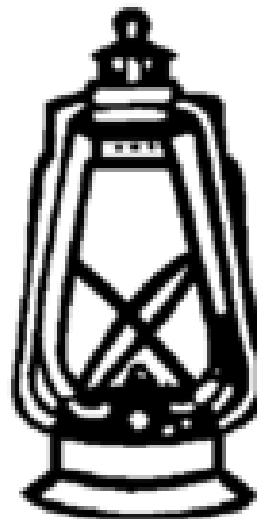
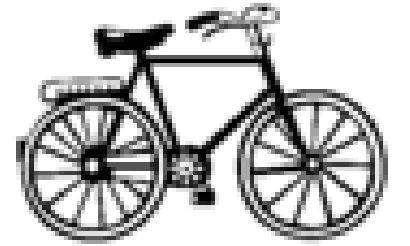
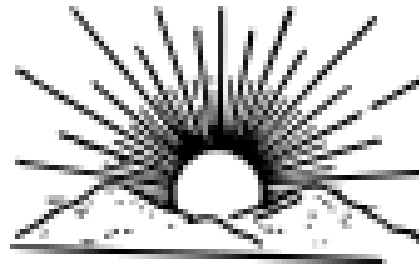
- Nationalist Congress Party
 - Founded in 1999 by Sharad Pawar, P.A.Sangma, and Tariq Anwar. They were formerly members of the INC.
 - The party joined the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) to form the government of Maharashtra in October 1999.
 - In 2004, the party joined the UPA to form the national government led by Manmohan Singh.



Political Parties in India

State Parties

- AAP
- AIADMK
- DMK
- BRS
- JDU
- JD(S)
- RJD
- SP
- TDP etc.



Party System in India

Evolution

- 1952-64 :The Nehruvian era of national consensus
 - The first decade after independence, the INC was the dominant party. Rajni Kothari has named it the Congress system
 - The congress system had two kinds of parties – the congress (which was the party of consensus) and the opposition parties (who acted as parties of pressure)
 - The opposition parties worked at the margins and exerted pressure. Inside the margins were the various factions that constituted the Congress. Continuous pressure from within and outside.
 - The Congress internalised political competition. Different interests were accommodated.
 - The party system worked within a framework of consensus rather than confrontation.

Party System in India

Evolution

- 1964-71: An Uneasy Transition
 - With the death of Jawahar Lal Nehru, and 1967 elections posed challenge to dominance of the congress system
 - The Congress failed to secure majorities in eight states and its majority in the Lok Sabha was reduced to very narrow 54% of the seats.
 - Split within the Congress
 - 1971 – re-establishment of Congress dominance (demise of the Congress system)
- 1977-80: Janata Party Experiment
 - A coalition government at the Centre for the first time

Party System in India

Evolution

- 1980-89: Increasing Inter-Party Conflict
 - Rise of regional aspirations
 - Increasing conflicts between the Congress and regional parties
 - They started gaining national presence as well – the TDP became the main opposition party in 1984.
 - Increasing use of President's Rule

Party System in India

Evolution

- 1989 – present : multi party system and coalition politics
 - The party system got fragmented. As a result, we find the emergence of coalition governments
 - During 1989-90 – The National Front (NF), a coalition of regional political parties, led by the Janata Dal, came to power
 - Similarly, the United Front coalition formed two governments between 1996 and 1998
 - This was the era when national parties could not gain a majority of its own. The congress in 1991 formed a minority government and the BJP in 1996 stayed in power only for 13 days. The BJP later formed the NDA and formed government after 1998 and 1999 elections.
 - Between 1967 and 1989, Congress was still the dominant party but started losing at the state level and lost power at the centre for a short period. Post 1989, however, the congress party has been declining. Between 2004 and 2014, the Congress led UPA came to power.

Party System in India

Evolution

- Two general elections 2014 and 2019, saw a single party (BJP) getting the full majority on its own, breaking the 25 years of compulsions of coalition politics.
- However, the Government is still formed out of alliance of many political parties.

Party System in India

Evolution

- In 1967, the Congress lost power in eight out of the then sixteen states. New social cleavages started getting politically mobilised by the regional parties. Like language based parties such as the DMK and other caste based parties.
- Over the last four decades, the number and strength of regional parties has expanded. This has made the Parliament of India politically more diverse.
- It is because of the regional political parties that our party-system has been federalized. The Centre has begun to address their problems and respond to their aspirations through accommodation.

Party System in India

Evolution

- From single party dominance to fragmentation
- From congress system to coalition era
- Arena of conflict shifting from centre to state
- Pragmatism rather than ideology
- Consensus on some key issues (less effective choice for voters)

Party System in India

Features

- Multi party system
- Presence of regional parties
- Traditional basis of political mobilisation – identity politics
- Lack of internal democracy within parties
- Many parties lack ideological cohesion
- Personalised – parties that are organised around an eminent leader who then becomes more important than the party and its ideology

Pressure Group

- A pressure group is a group of people who are organised actively for promoting and defending their common interest. It is so called as it attempts to bring a change in the public policy by exerting pressure on the government. It acts as a liaison between the government and its members.
- The pressure groups are also called interest groups or vested groups. They are different from the political parties in that they neither contest elections nor try to capture political power. They are concerned with specific programmes and issues and their activities are confined to the protection and promotion of the interests of their members by influencing the government.

Pressure Group

Pressure Groups in India

- Business Group
- Trade Union and Labour Organisations
- Agrarian or Peasant Organisations
- Religious and Cultural Organisations
- Caste Organisations
- Tribal Organisations
- Linguistic Groups
- Student and Youth Organisations

Introduction to Politics, with reference to India

Election Commission

Election Commission

Constitutional Provisions

- Permanent and independent body established to supervise, direct, control and conduct free and fair elections in India.
- Article 324 of the Constitution provides that the power of superintendence, direction and control of elections to parliament, state legislatures, the office of president of India and the office of vice president of India shall be vested in the election commission.
- Election commission of India is not involved with the elections to panchayats and municipalities in the states. For this, the Constitution of India provides for a separate State Election Commission.

Election Commission

- Composition: Article 324 lays down the composition for EC of India: It states:
 - The Election Commission shall consist of the chief election commissioner and such number of other election commissioners, if any, as the president may from time to time fix.
 - The appointment of the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners shall be made by the president.
 - When any other election commissioner is so appointed, the chief election commissioner shall act as the chairman of the election commission.
 - The president may also appoint after consultation with the election commission such regional commissioners as he may consider necessary to assist the election commission.
 - The conditions of service and tenure of office of the election commissioners and the regional commissioners shall be determined by the president (subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament)

Election Commission

- From 1950 to 1989, the EC was a single member body consisting of only Chief Election Commissioner. It became a multi-member body consisting of one Chief Election Commissioner and 2 Election Commissioner in 1993.
- The chief election commissioner and the two other election commissioners have equal powers and receive equal salary, allowances, and other perquisites, which are similar to those of a judge of the Supreme Court.
- In case of difference of opinion amongst the Chief election commissioner and/or two other election commissioners, the matter is decided by the Commission by majority.
- Tenure: Six years or until the age of 65 years, whichever is early. They can resign and can be removed from the office too.

Election Commission

- The Election Commission is assisted by deputy election commissioners. They are drawn from the civil service and appointed by the commission with tenure system. They are assisted, in turn, by the secretaries, joint secretaries, deputy secretaries and undersecretaries posted in the secretariat of the commission.
- Further they are also assisted by Chief Electoral officer, District Election Officer, Returning Officer, Presiding Officer, Electoral Registration Officer, Polling Officer and Observers.

Election Commission

- Independence of the office is maintained through –
 - Security of the tenure i.e., Chief Election Commissioner cannot be removed from his office except in same manner and on the same grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court.
 - Fixed Service Conditions: The service conditions of the chief election commissioner cannot be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment.
 - Expenses Charged on Consolidated Fund of India.
 - Conduct cannot be discussed.
 - Any other election commissioner or a regional commissioner cannot be removed from office except on the recommendation of the chief election commissioner

Election Commission

- Powers and Functions: The EC performs administrative, advisory, and quasi-judicial functions:
 - Main goal is to supervise, direct, control and conduct free and fair elections in India.
 - To prepare and periodically revise electoral rolls and to register all eligible voters.
 - To fix territorial constituencies boundaries as per Delimitation Commission Act.
 - To publish notifications with respect to date and schedule of elections.
 - To scrutinize and manage nomination of candidates to contest elections.
 - To ensure model of conduct is followed strictly.

Election Commission

- To grant recognition to political parties and allot election symbols to them.
- To act as a court for settling disputes related to granting of recognition to political parties and allotment of election symbols to them.
- To advise the President and Governors on matters relating to the disqualifications of the members of Parliament and MLAs, respectively.
- To cancel polls in the event of rigging, booth capturing, violence and other irregularities.
- To advise the president whether elections can be held in a state under president's rule in order to extend the period of emergency after one year.
- To register political parties for the purpose of elections and grant them the status of national or state parties on the basis of their poll performance.

Electoral Process

- The elections will be based on Adult Franchise and the elections to the Lok Sabha and the state assemblies are to be on the basis of adult franchise.
- Thus, every person who is a citizen of India and who is 18 years of age, is entitled to vote at the election provided he is not disqualified under the provisions of the Constitution or any law made by the appropriate legislature (Parliament or state legislature) on the ground of non-residence, unsound mind, crime or corrupt or illegal practice.
- 61st Constitutional Amendment Act 1988 reduced the voting age from 21 years to 18 years in 1989.
- The Constitution talks about establishing only one general electoral role for every constituency for elections of both Parliament and state legislatures. No separate electorate.
- The Elections in India for Lok Sabha and State Legislative assemblies follows the First Past the Post system while for elections of President, VP and Rajya Sabha members, the system of proportional representation by means of single transferrable post is followed.

Electoral Process

- As per the Constitution, there should be not more than 6 months gap in conducting elections between last session of the dissolved House and the new House.
- The Commission usually announces the dates for elections via press conference before the process for the same is set in motion.
- The Model Code of Conduct comes into effect after the announcement of elections. The model code of conduct is basically the list of guidelines that is given to the candidates and political parties for elections to discipline and manage their conduct with respect to speeches, election manifestos, election campaigns and processions, information on polling day and booths, general conduct etc.
- The formal process of elections starts with the notification given to the electorate with respect to elections, after which the candidates can start filling their nominations in the constituencies, they wish to contest elections from. The nomination is investigated/scrutinized by the Returning Officer.

Electoral Process

- Two weeks' time is given to the parties and the candidates for election campaigns after the announcement of the elections, which generally ends 48 hours before the polling date.
- As per the section 126 of Representation of People Act 1951, 48 hours before the elections are scheduled and till it is concluded, a silence period has to be maintained under which no candidate and political party are allowed to campaign. This silence period is given to allow the people i.e. the electorate to be provided the time to think on who they want to vote for.
- Because of the vast magnitude of operations and the massive size of the electorate, polling is held on a number of days for the national elections.
- A separate date for counting is fixed and the results declared for each constituency by the concerned Returning Officer.

Electoral Process

- Electronic Voting is the standard means of conducting elections using Electronic Voting Machines, sometimes called "EVMs" in India. The use of EVMs and electronic voting was developed and tested by the state-owned Electronics Corporation of India and Bharat Electronics in the 1990s.
- They were introduced in Indian elections between 1998 and 2001, in a phased manner. The electronic voting machines have been used in all general and state assembly elections of India since 2004.
- Prior to the introduction of EVMs, paper ballots and manual counting was used to count the votes. However, soon the authenticity of EVMs were being questioned under various petitions in High Court and Supreme Court.
- Therefore, VVPAT system i.e. Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail system was introduced after the SC judgement in People's Union for Civil Liberties vs. Union of India case (2013) and was used on trial basis in 2014 general elections.

Electoral Process

- EVMs and accompanying Voter-verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) are now used in every assembly and general election in India and a small percentage of the VVPATs are verified.
- On 9 April 2019, Supreme Court of India ordered the Election Commission of India to use VVPAT paper trail system in every assembly constituency but verify only about 2% of the EVMs i.e., 5 polling stations per constituency before certifying the final results. The Election Commission of India has acted under this order and deployed VVPAT verification for 20,625 EVMs in the 2019 Indian general election.
- Any elector or candidate can file an election petition if he or she thinks there has been malpractice during the election. Election petitions are tried by the High Court of the state involved, and if upheld can even lead to the restaging of the election in that constituency.

Electoral Process

Electoral Reforms

- Lowering of Voting Age
- Electronic Voting Machine (EVMs)
- Restriction on contesting from more than 2 constituencies
- Prohibition of Arms
- Prohibition on sale of liquor
- Disqualification for Insulting the National Honour Act (1971)
- The ceiling on election expenditure: Amount an election candidate can legally spend for their election campaign and has to account for, which includes expenses on public meetings, rallies, advertisements, posters, banners, vehicles and advertisements.

Electoral Process

- Voting through postal ballot: In 2013, the EC decided to expand the ambit of postal ballot voting in the country. Previously, only Indian staff in missions abroad and defence personnel in a limited way, could vote via postal ballots. Now, there are 6 categories of voters who can use the postal ballot: service voters; special voters; wives of service voters and special voters; voters subjected to preventive detention; voters on election duty and Notified voters.
- Awareness Creation: The government decided to observe January 25th as 'National Voters Day' to mark the EC's founding day.
- Introduction of NOTA
- Introduction of VVPAT (Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail)
- Transparency in election funding: Electoral bonds (2017)