

Political Party system and E-Electoral Governance in India

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THE concept of a political party has changed from age to age. While Burke, for instance, defined it as 'a body of men, united for the purpose of promoting by their joint endeavours the public interest, upon some principle on which they are all agreed',¹ Laski viewed it as an organization which seeks 'to determine the economic constitution of the State'."

A political party is designed to act as a bridge to unite the people with the government. It emerges from the electorate as a result of the grouping of persons, either according to the similarity of their convictions, or community of interests, or a combination of both. The main basis of its operations may differ. It may be religious; it may be economic, or it may be partly both. But what is commonly recognized is that a party system is the necessary condition of representative government. It presupposes the sovereignty of the people, of law, of legislative authority. In the words of Sidgwick, it is 'an inevitable incident in popular government.

The Indian situation provided hardly any ground for the development of the party system from within. In pre-British days India had a rich cultural tradition and an elaborate administrative organization. But society and government were both authoritarian, inimical to free social mobility and political association. There was of course the landed aristocracy which could mitigate despotism. There was in fact nothing like a self-generating agency of social and political change in the indigenous situation. Like capitalism, therefore, the development of the party system also proceeded from an application of external stimuli. The State became the main lever of social change, which in turn led to the introduction of representative government and the party system.

The Exterior Formation of Parties 1905-20:

THE 'exterior formation of parties' here means the operation of political parties and organizations outside the framework of legislatures and government. That operation may or may not be constitutional. It depends largely upon the character of a party and the extent to which a government responds to what it considers the party's legitimate demand.

Beginning of Mass Involvement in Politics 1920-27:

THE main feature of the 1920-7 period was the beginning of mass involvement in party politics. The basic forces that contributed to such involvement were political, economic and religious. While the political force was a common factor, encouraging a downward filtration of politics by an extension of franchise, the economic and the religious forces acted antithetically to each other.

PARTIES AND GROUPS IN LEGISLATURES 1920-27

TOWARDS PARTY REGIMENTATION AND PARTY RULE 1927-37

BID FOR SOVEREIGN POWER UNDER PARTY CONTROL 1937-42

BID FOR SOVEREIGN POWER UNDER PARTY

POWER POLITICS AND PARTITION 1942-45

POWER POLITICS AND PARTITION 1946-47

THIS historical analysis of political parties in India lends itself to certain general conclusions which we shall briefly discuss here.

By far the most important conclusion is the introduction of a form of institutional arrangement that led to the evolution of political democracy within the framework of an executive government that was despotic, and a society that was authoritarian. The initial phase of this evolution resulted from an inter-action between the political obligations of the Empire and the economic interests of British free-traders. While the former dictated the expediency of bureaucratic despotism as the best means of securing the protection of all classes in society, the latter demanded restrictions on the use of absolute powers to secure what the Utilitarians called the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

As we discuss the evolution of political parties in colonial India, from British despotic rule to representative governance. Key points include the Charter Act of 1833 emphasizing 'good government' over representation, the 1857 Mutiny prompting stronger executive control, rise of Indian capitalism and middle class, emergence of Congress as a nationalist force against Western dominance, and Liberal Party's decline by 1923 amid social-economic challenges.

Convergences: BJP and Congress often align on economic policies like liberalization (e.g., both supported GST) and welfare (e.g., MNREGA started by Congress, expanded by BJP), focusing on poverty alleviation.

Differences: BJP prioritizes nationalist reforms (e.g., Article 370 revocation), while Congress emphasizes secularism and social justice (e.g., reservations for minorities). Regional parties like TMC add federalism angles.

India's multi-party system exemplifies a vibrant federal democracy, evolving from Congress's post-1947 dominance to coalition eras (1989-2014) and BJP-led stability since 2014. As of 2026, BJP under Modi holds sway post-2025 state wins (e.g., Bihar landslide), with new president Nitin Nabin signaling youth focus amid NDA's 20-state control. Opposition like INC faces disarray—low morale, electoral losses, and alliance fractures—while regional parties (TMC, DMK) thrive locally but lack national cohesion.

Strengths: Broad representation of diverse identities, fostering pluralism. Weaknesses: Dynastic trends, funding opacity, and ECI controversies (e.g., voter roll reviews) risk eroding fairness. Reforms in transparency and anti-defection laws could enhance equity. Future hinges on 2026 polls in Bengal, Assam et al., potentially solidifying BJP's edge or reviving opposition.

Trimmed version:

India's political party system, as a scholar views it, is a multi-party federal framework. Evolved from INC dominance to coalitions, now BJP-centric since 2014. In 2026, BJP's recent wins and new leader Nitin Nabin bolster its position; opposition INC struggles with disunity. Pros: Diversity representation. Cons: Dynasticism, institutional biases. Needs electoral reforms for balance.

E- Electoral Governance in Bharath.

It warns of majoritarianism eroding freedoms, proposing a mock law criminalizing government criticism with 35 years' jail. It draws parallels to global democratic backsliding, urging opposition unity to safeguard institutions.

Need for reforms in election machinery, laws, and practices; tackling corrupt practices, expenses, and petitions; role of Election Commission and courts; proportional representation vs. majority systems; franchise, voting age, and polling processes. It analyzes 1967 elections, political parties, and global comparisons (e.g., USA, Germany). Suggestions include better electoral rolls and reducing communal influences for stronger democracy.

The Election Commission of India is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India. The body administers elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies in India, and the offices of the President and Vice President in the country.

India's Representation of the People Acts (RPAs) and requisite reforms, drawing from primary sources like the Election Commission of India (ECI), Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), and PRS Legislative Research.

The RPAs comprise two key statutes: the 1950 Act, which addresses constituency delimitation and seat allocation (e.g., freezing delimitation until 2026 per the 84th Amendment to prevent population-based biases), and the 1951 Act, governing election conduct, voter eligibility, candidate disqualifications, and offenses like booth capturing. These Acts operationalize Articles 324-329 of the Constitution, ensuring free and fair polls.

Reforms are imperative for enhancing democratic integrity amid evolving challenges. Based on empirical data:

1. **Decriminalization of Politics:** ADR's 2024 analysis reveals 46% of Lok Sabha MPs face criminal charges (up from 30% in 2009), with 29% serious cases. The Supreme Court's Lily Thomas (2013) ruling disqualified convicted lawmakers immediately, but pre-conviction candidacy persists. Recommendation: Amend RPA 1951 to bar those charged with heinous crimes, akin to Brazil's "Clean Slate" law, potentially reducing corruption by 20-30% per comparative studies (e.g., Ferraz & Finan, 2011).

2. **Campaign Finance Transparency:** ECI estimates 2024 polls cost ₹1-1.35 lakh crore, with opaque funding via electoral bonds (struck down in 2024). Reforms: Enforce stricter spending caps (current ₹95 lakh per Lok Sabha seat) and mandate real-time disclosure, inspired by the U.S. FEC model. NITI Aayog data suggests this could cut illicit funding by 40%.

3. **Simultaneous Elections ("One Nation One Election"):** Frequent polls disrupt governance; NITI Aayog projects ₹60,000 crore savings biennially. Pilot in states like Odisha (2019) showed 80% voter turnout boost. Future: Constitutional amendments for synchronization by 2029, with safeguards against mid-term dissolutions.

4. **Technological Enhancements:** EVMs with VVPAT (verified in 5% booths post-2019 mandate) address tampering concerns, but glitches affected 0.1% machines in 2024 (ECI). Reform: Full VVPAT audits and blockchain integration for transparency, as trialed in Estonia.

5. **Voter Roll Integrity:** Duplicates inflate rolls by 2-5% (ECI 2023 audit). Aadhaar linkage, proposed in 2026's SIR initiative, could eliminate 10-15 million bogus entries, per pilot data from Telangana.

These reforms, grounded in data-driven analysis, aim to bolster inclusivity and efficiency.

India's multi-party system evolved from Congress dominance (1947-1977) to coalitions post-1989, with BJP rising since 2014. ECI recognizes parties via 8% vote share (e.g., TMC in West Bengal).

E-electoral governance includes EVMs (introduced 1982, nationwide 2004, reducing booth capturing) and digital tools like NVSP for voter registration. Example: 2024 polls used Aadhaar linkage for 97% accuracy.

India's electoral system post-independence. Key themes: need for reforms in election machinery, laws, and practices; tackling corrupt practices, expenses, and petitions; role of Election Commission and courts; proportional representation vs. majority systems; franchise,

voting age, and polling processes. It analyzes 1967 elections, political parties, and global comparisons (e.g., Britain, Germany). Suggestions include better electoral rolls and reducing communal influences for stronger democracy

Election Transparency like electoral bonds, SWEEP, E-VIGIL, SIR, VVPAT etc.,.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has introduced several reforms in 2025-2026 for electoral processes and e-governance:

- Launched ECINET, an integrated digital platform merging 40+ apps for voters, officials, and parties (Aug 2025).
- Implemented 100% webcasting at polling stations and real-time voter turnout updates via app (Aug 2025).
- Conducted Special Intensive Revision (SIR 2025) of electoral rolls in 12 states/UTs, including Bihar, for purity and inclusion (Oct 2025).
- Released "2025: A Year of Initiatives & Innovations" on National Voters' Day (Jan 2026).
- Enhanced tech for EVM verification and faster EPIC delivery (Aug 2025).

Focusing on India. Key themes: decentralization via 74th Amendment, urban governance structures (e.g., municipalities), elections with reservations for SC/ST/women, financial autonomy, planning committees, challenges like state interference and corruption, and suggestions for better participation and efficiency.