

Party System & Electoral Politics

Day 25. The whole life of the Indian party system — Congress dominance, its breakdown, coalition politics, the BJP-led fourth system and the return of allies in 2024 — with pressure groups, the changing voter and who now sits in the Lok Sabha. **Revise → write a little → don't break the chain.**

Questions traced to this unit (UPSC 2015–2025): **10 × 15-markers · 6 × 20-markers · 2 × 10-markers.**

1 Political Parties — Meaning & Functions

Working definition

A political party is an organised group that seeks to capture political power through elections and government formation.

A political party is “an association organised in support of some principle or policy which by constitutional means it endeavours to make the determinant of government.” — **Robert M. MacIver**

A political party is “an organised collection of persons that claim or share the same political ideals and attempt to dominate the government by operating as a political unit.” — **R. N. Gilchrist**

Functions

Contest elections · form governments · act as opposition · make laws · shape public opinion · recruit leaders · aggregate interests · articulate social demands · connect people with government · provide access to welfare schemes.

Harold Laski treats parties as indispensable to democracy. Against this, **Mahatma Gandhi, M. N. Roy** and **Jayaprakash Narayan** supported **party-less democracy**, stressing direct popular participation.

2 Theories of Political Parties

Theory	Key thinker(s)	Core idea
Normative	Edmund Burke	Parties are groups united by common principles and national purpose.
Cadre & Mass	—	Cadre parties: elite-based, disciplined, limited membership. Mass parties: broad membership, grassroots mobilisation.
Cleavage	Seymour Martin Lipset & Stein Rokkan	Parties rest on social cleavages: centre vs periphery, state vs church, landed vs industrial interests, owner vs worker.
Institutional	Maurice Duverger	Electoral systems shape party systems. First-Past-The-Post tends to two-party competition; proportional representation to multi-party systems.
Rational choice	—	Parties maximise votes, power and influence. Median voter theorem pulls them to the centre; issue positioning adapts to voters.
Cartel party	Richard Katz & Peter Mair	Established parties use state resources to protect themselves from new competitors.
Organisational	Robert Michels	The iron law of oligarchy — power inevitably concentrates at the top.
Functional	Giovanni Sartori; Otto Kirchheimer	Aggregation, articulation, socialisation, recruitment. Kirchheimer's catch-all party dilutes ideology to attract broad electorates.
Marxist	V. I. Lenin	Parties express class interests; bourgeois vs proletarian. Lenin saw the Communist Party as the vanguard of revolution.

“In every party, the tendency towards oligarchy is inevitable. Democratic processes within parties are essential to counter this trend and ensure accountability.” — **Robert Michels**

India is an **anomaly to Duverger's law**: First-Past-The-Post operates here with a multi-party system.

3 Recognition of Parties — the ECI Criteria

India has a **multi-party system**. Parties are classified as national, state and regional. The **Election Commission of India** registers parties and grants symbols.

National party (any one)	State party (any one)
2% of Lok Sabha seats from at least three states.	Three seats, or 3% of Assembly seats.
Or 6% vote share plus four Lok Sabha seats.	Or one Lok Sabha seat for every 25 seats allotted to the state.
Or recognition as a state party in four or more states.	Or 6% vote share plus one Lok Sabha and two Assembly seats; or 8% vote share in the state.

4 Ideology & Social Base of Major Parties

Maurice Duverger treats **class character and ideology** as tools for studying parties — read through the social background of members and leaders, interest groups represented, newspapers and funding groups, and actual policies.

Party	Ideology & key moments	Social base
Indian National Congress	Socialism, secularism, democracy, non-alignment, democratic socialism, state control of the commanding heights, anti-monopoly, land ceilings, Panchayati Raj, later liberalisation-friendly. Avadi Session 1956 (socialistic pattern); 1971 Garibi Hatao; Emergency 20-point programme; 1989 Panchayati Raj; 1999 capitalist economy linked to the global system with secularism.	Began with the educated urban middle class; broadened in the 1920s to upper castes, Brahmins, Scheduled Castes and Muslims; led by upper-caste landlords, urban intellectuals and business; declined in the Gangetic region after 1991.
Socialist parties	Claimed workers, peasants and the lower middle class. Praja Socialist Party stronger in towns, Samyukta Socialist Party among poor peasants; no stable all-India alternative. Ram Manohar Lohia shaped backward-caste mobilisation.	Workers, peasants, lower middle class.
Bharatiya Janata Party	Rooted in the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (Shyama Prasad Mukherjee , 1951). Nationalism and national integration, democracy, positive secularism, Gandhian socialism, value-based politics; Deendayal Upadhyaya 's Integral Humanism; later liberalisation within NDA governance; cultural nationalism and Hindutva.	Expanded from upper castes, traders and shopkeepers to rural voters, lower castes, non-dominant OBCs and welfare beneficiaries.
Communist parties	Marxism-Leninism, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal democratic revolution, socialist society, working-class leadership, secularism, a self-reliant economy, opposition to communalism. CPI supported Indira Gandhi during the Emergency; CPI(M) advocated People's Democracy and a working-class-led front.	Working class, middle classes, agricultural labourers, small peasants; strongholds in Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura; pockets in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

Reading the parties

Myron Weiner notes Congress adopted traditional values and conciliatory roles; **Rajni Kothari** stresses its consensual politics of pluralism, accommodation and negotiation. On the BJP: **Thomas Blom Hansen** links its rise to democratic transformation, middle-class anxieties and majoritarian rhetoric; **Christophe Jaffrelot** to Hindu identity politics and Congress's reduction to a minority-associated party; **Milan Vaishnav** to discipline, technology and campaigning; **Pratap Bhanu Mehta** to governance and aspiration; **Ashutosh Varshney** to the pairing of Hindutva and development. On the Left's decline: **Praful Bidwai** (weak grassroots and high-command culture), **Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd** (neglect of caste), **Prabhat Patnaik** (resistance to neoliberalism), **Aijaz Ahmad** (renewal for globalisation and identity), with **Sumit Sarkar** and **Sudipta Kaviraj** urging self-correction.

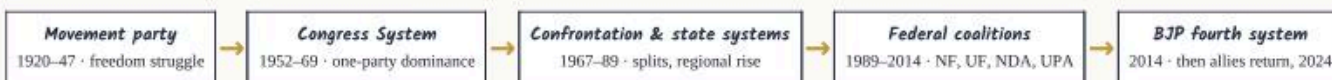
5 Evolution of the Indian Party System

Party system

A party system refers not only to the number of parties but also to their relevance, competition, alliances and power relations.

M. P. Singh maps the phases: movement party system (1920–1947); Congress System (1952–1969); confrontation between Indira Gandhi's Congress and the Jayaprakash Narayan movement; differentiation between national and state party systems in the 1980s; federal coalition system since 1989; BJP-led dominant (fourth) party system after 2014; and the re-emergence of coalition politics after 2024.

From movement to dominance to coalition — and back



6 The Congress System

Rajni Kothari called Congress dominance the **Congress System**. It worked as a broad umbrella party: it combined government and opposition functions within itself, reduced opposition parties to pressure groups, accommodated left and right tendencies, held a centrist ideology, represented multiple interests and became the central institution of Indian politics.

The Congress System was “dominance coexisting with competition but without a trace of alteration.” — W. H. Morris-Jones

Congress won majorities in 1952, 1957 and 1962 and stayed dominant until 1967. Despite a vote share below 48%, **First-Past-The-Post** converted it into large

7 Breakdown of the Congress System

From 1967 the system unravelled: Congress lost dominance in several states; regional parties and leaders emerged; lower classes and agricultural communities pushed back; **Charan Singh**-led parties rose in the North; reservations for backward classes became an alternative agenda. Congress split in 1969. The Emergency (1975–1977) damaged its legitimacy, and the **Jayaprakash Narayan** movement mobilised anti-Congress politics. The Janata Party (1977, a merger of five parties) followed; the 1989 election brought the Janata Dal-led National Front under **V. P. Singh**.

W. H. Morris-Jones called the post-1967 shift a **market polity**, where competition moved from within Congress to inter-party conflict.

8 The BJP System & the Fourth Party System

The 2014 election marked a new phase. **Chhibber** and **Verma** read it as the arrival of the **fourth party system**: the BJP became the system-defining pole, Congress was marginalised, the Left declined and many regional parties lost ground. Hindutva, welfare, leadership and nationalism combined; **Narendra Modi**'s leadership became central, backed by media strategy, organisation and finance.

Congress System (1952–69)	BJP / fourth system (2014–)
Broad social coalition, national agenda, electoral dominance, weak national opposition.	Shares the same broad coalition, national dominance and weak national opposition.
Flexible and accommodative.	Firmer ideological grounding in Hindu nationalism.
Dominance was internally plural.	Dominance is more centralised.
Opposition survived as pressure within the party.	Regional parties still challenge the BJP in many states.

The 2024 Lok Sabha reset the picture: the BJP won 240 seats and the NDA reached 293, forcing reliance on the Janata Dal (United) and the Telugu Desam Party and reviving coalition bargaining. The fourth system weakened but did not disappear — **Milan Vaishnav** and **Caroline Mallory** argue many of its attributes remain intact despite the correction.

9 Intra-Party Democracy

Intra-party democracy

Internal transparency, participation and accountability within political parties.

Problems in India

High-command culture · dynastic leadership · centralised nominations · weak internal elections · factional manipulation · money and muscle power · ideological flexibility without accountability · limited Election Commission authority under **Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act**.

Robert Michels's iron law of oligarchy explains the concentration of power. **Susan Scarrow** argues internal democracy strengthens party legitimacy, and **Giovanni Sartori** calls parties schools of democracy. Critics counter: **Maurice Duverger** warns it can weaken cohesion, **Leon D. Epstein** stresses the cost to efficiency, and **John H. Aldrich** warns internal processes can be captured by interest groups or charismatic figures.

Reform track

The **2nd Administrative Reforms Commission** notes over-centralisation distances authority from accountability; the **Law Commission's 170th Report** and the **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution** call for legislation on internal democracy and party functioning. Add transparency in finance, internal elections, candidate-selection reform, anti-defection reform and an enforceable legal framework.

10 Right, Left, Third Front & the Aam Aadmi Party

Right-wing parties

Christophe Jaffrelot warns the BJP's rise signals majoritarian pressure on pluralism and secularism; **Rajni Kothari** against polarisation and identity politics; **Aseem Prakash** links environmental narratives with Hindu-nationalist framing; **Suhas Palshikar** flags authoritarian tendencies; **Pratap Bhanu Mehta** shrinking freedoms and institutional weakening; **Wendy Doniger** against a monolithic representation of Hindu culture.

Left-wing parties

Declined through organisational rigidity, a weak caste response and globalisation. **Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd** (neglect of caste), **Prabhat Patnaik** (welfare against neoliberalism), **Romila Thapar** (secular historical approach), **Aijaz Ahmad** (adapt to identity and globalisation), **Sumit Sarkar** (engagement beyond class) and **Sudipta Kaviraj** (rigour without dogmatism).

Third Front

A coalition of regional and smaller parties representing marginalised groups, Muslims, backward castes and regional interests. It struggles for lack of a national vision and cohesive agenda, often forming post-election arrangements — showing both the limits of national parties and the instability of purely anti-Congress or anti-BJP blocs.

Aam Aadmi Party

Emerging from the India Against Corruption movement led by **Anna Hazare**; founded by **Arvind Kejriwal** in 2012. Focus: anti-corruption, Jan Lokpal, transparency, accountability, Swaraj, education, healthcare and urban governance — an urban middle-class demand for clean politics and welfare delivery.

Suhas Palshikar (adopted old tactics), **Milan Vaishnav** (long-term fiscal viability), **Pratap Bhanu Mehta** (reset urban-governance expectations), **Yogendra Yadav** (transparency-oriented), **Rajeev Bhargava** (ethical governance) and **Christophe Jaffrelot** (neglected urban middle-class aspirations).

11 The Party System — Assessment

The Indian party system mirrors the country's federal, social and electoral complexity. It began with Congress dominance, moved into multi-party competition, entered coalition politics after 1989, became BJP-centric after 2014 and returned to coalition bargaining after 2024. Caste, religion, region and class continue to shape competition. First-Past-The-Post did not produce a simple two-party system because India's **social cleavages are regionally varied**.

12 Regional Parties & Federalism — Meaning

Regional party

A party that operates primarily within a state or region and represents local interests, identities or aspirations.

They may be regionally located, regionalist, caste-based, linguistic, religious-regional or tribal parties, or statehood movements turned parties.



13 Regional Parties — Causes of Rise

Decline of Congress · linguistic reorganisation · over-centralisation · regional economic inequalities · caste mobilisation · assertion of Dalits and OBCs · sons-of-the-soil movements · uneven development · cultural protection · local leadership · coalition politics.

Vidhyut Chakraborty argues local leaders were closer to common people and more concerned with local issues; **Surendra Mohan** that central leadership failed to protect cultural identities and address regional inequalities; **Douglas Verney** links their rise to the decline of Congress and the unravelling of the Janata Party; **N. T. Rama Rao** argued regional parties better understand state-specific problems. **E. Sridharan** identifies parliamentary–state election linkages, the federal system, grassroots connections and linguistic state organisation.

14 Regional Parties — Claims & Agenda

Three core claims: national parties do not address specific regional interests; regional pride, honour, culture and identity must be protected; the Centre should devolve more powers.

Agenda — statehood, autonomy, special packages, cultural rights, language protection, caste representation, minority protection, resource control, employment for locals and federal devolution.

Hard claims — secession, radical restructuring, strong autonomy. **Soft claims** — decentralisation, protection, fiscal devolution, greater representation.

15 Regional Parties — Role & Impact

They shape coalition formation, national policy, Rajya Sabha negotiations, federal bargaining, resource distribution, language policy, identity recognition, welfare design and constitutional federalism.

Zoya Hasan notes more than 18 regional parties have held power at state and national levels; **Christophe Jaffrelot** calls them kingmakers after the 1990s; **E. Sridharan** that they reshape Centre–State bargaining; **Vernon Hewitt** and **Shirin M. Rai** that national dependence on them reduced the misuse of President's Rule; **Niraja Gopal Jayal** sees subaltern identity-based parties broadening democratic frontiers, and **Prakash Sarangi** the opening of democratic space.

Positive

Strengthened federalism · increased regional representation · brought local issues into national politics · reduced over-centralisation · mobilised weaker sections · gave voice to linguistic and cultural communities · improved Centre–State bargaining · moderated exclusionary national parties during coalition periods.

Negative

Can promote narrow regionalism and parochial politics · weaken national policy coherence · cause coalition instability · use money and muscle power · deepen social and regional divisions.

Zoya Hasan warns that parties lacking their own ideology may mobilise existing fault lines; **Milan Vaishnav** calls the rise of regional parties an “eternal theme” of Indian politics. The real question is not whether regional parties should exist, but whether they can balance regional aspirations, federal cooperation, national integration and inclusive development.

16 Coalition Politics — Meaning & Forms

Coalition

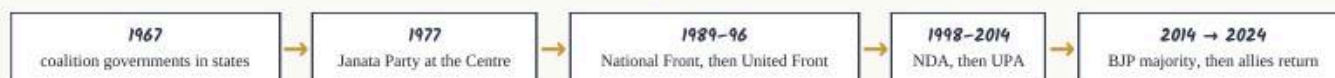
An alliance of parties or groups to share power when no single party can govern alone. **William Riker** explains coalition as a power-sharing arrangement.

Parliamentary coalition — no party has a majority; a minority government survives on outside support (V. P. Singh, 1989). **Electoral coalition** — pre-poll seat-sharing to avoid splitting votes (NDA, UPA). **Governmental coalition** — parties share cabinet and governance, usually on a **Common Minimum Programme**. Variants include national governments, minority governments with outside support and power-sharing coalitions.

17 Coalition Politics — Evolution

Bidyut Chakrabarty argues coalitions are not new to India. The sequence runs from state coalitions in 1967, to the Janata Party at the Centre in 1977, the National Front under **V. P. Singh** in 1989, the United Front of thirteen non-BJP parties under **H. D. Deve Gowda** and **I. K. Gujral** in 1996, the NDA under the BJP in 1998–1999, the UPA under Congress in 2004–2014, a BJP majority within a continuing NDA in 2014–2019, and the re-emergence of coalition dependence under the BJP-led NDA in 2024.

The coalition line, 1967 to 2024



18 Coalition Politics — Features (India vs the West)

Indian coalitions run on cross-cutting cleavages — left–right, secular–communal, centralist–regional, caste-bloc. Parties are often less institutionalised, many catch-all and clientelist. First-Past-The-Post encourages pre-election alliances, federalism intensifies bargaining, small vote shifts produce large seat changes, and minority governments may be more attractive than broad coalitions.

Bidyut Chakrabarty draws the contrast sharply: Western coalitions are often **coalition by design**, Indian ones **coalition by political calculations**. India tends to oversized rather than minimum-winning coalitions; ideological convergence is weaker; rainbow coalitions are common; negative coalitions form to stop another party; and the core party often does not consult partners adequately.

19 Coalition Politics — Impact & Healthy Culture

Positive

Strengthens federalism · includes regional parties · moderates extreme positions · gives voice to smaller groups · reduces over-centralisation · encourages negotiation · makes governance more representative. **Balveer Arora** links it to the federalisation of the party system; **Zoya Hasan** sees its inclusiveness.

Negative

Policy paralysis · instability · patronage politics · short-term populism · weak collective responsibility · ministers following party leaders rather than the Prime Minister · small parties threatening withdrawal. **Atul Kohli** stresses instability and fragmentation, **Myron Weiner** governance challenges and **Paul R. Brass** short-term compromises.

Conditions for a healthy coalition culture

Clear coalition agreements · a common minimum programme · mutual respect · transparent power-sharing · coordination committees · conflict-resolution mechanisms · a stable Speaker's role · consultation with partners · an ideological minimum consensus. Comparative models: Germany (detailed public coalition agreements), the Netherlands (policy and ministerial negotiations) and Sweden (long-term policy continuity).

20 Pressure Groups — Meaning & Difference from Parties

Pressure group

An organised body that seeks to influence government policy without directly seeking political power.

Herman Finer calls them “anonymous empires”; **Richard D. Lambert** an unofficial government because they influence policy and administration; **David Easton** treats them as input channels in the political system. **Harold D. Lasswell**'s question “Who gets what, when how?” shows why they are central to politics.

“The pressure groups are, by and large, autonomous and politically neutral bodies, which bargain with the political parties and the bureaucracy irrespective of the political complexion of the government in power.” — S. E. Finer

Basis	Political parties	Pressure groups
Aim	Capture power	Influence power
Scope	Broad issues	Specific interests
Elections	Contest elections	Do not contest as main actors
Ideology	Usually need ideology	May or may not have ideology
Accountability	Electoral accountability	Limited public accountability
Methods	Campaigns, government formation, legislation	Lobbying, advocacy, protest, petitions
Role	Govern or oppose	Pressurise and bargain

The line can blur: **Shiv Sena** began as a pressure organisation in Maharashtra and became a party. **Lobbying** is a method, not an organisation — persuasion of legislators, officials and policymakers in lobbies, ministries, committees and policy networks, used alongside protest, media campaigns, litigation and public mobilisation.

21 Pressure Groups — Types (Almond & Powell)

Gabriel Almond and **Powell** classify interest groups into four types.

Institutional — located within formal institutions: bureaucracy, military, legislatures, political parties, religious bodies.

Associational — organised bodies formed to articulate interests: trade unions, business associations, civil associations, the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, the Indian Chambers of Commerce, the All India Trade Union Congress.

Anomic — spontaneous, protest-based: riots, demonstrations, rallies, processions, signature campaigns, street meetings.

Non-associational — based on kinship, caste, language, tribe, region, status or class, with informal leadership through families, caste heads and religious leaders.

22 Pressure Groups — Role, Kothari & the Changing Face

Positive — represent diverse interests, mobilise citizens, provide expertise, monitor government, promote transparency, innovate policy, act as checks and balances, give voice to the marginalised. **Negative** — disproportionate influence of wealthy groups, policy fragmentation, corruption risk, elite capture, narrow special interests, weak accountability, policy gridlock.

Rajni Kothari reads pressure groups as agents of modernisation and reservoirs of leadership, notes communal pressure groups are dominant in India, holds that they lack legitimacy, that Congress dominance restricted their role, and that opposition parties under the Congress System were “Parties of Pressure”. **Rudolph & Rudolph** highlight caste associations as pressure groups; **Myron Weiner**, in *Politics of Scarcity*, communal pressure groups; **Robert Hardgrave** and **Stanley Kochanek** the changing nature. Since liberalisation, business groups grew stronger, foreign lobbies became visible, the NAC, NSAB and NITI Aayog incorporated interest inputs, farmer movements regained national influence, NGOs and civil-society organisations expanded, and state surveillance and regulation also increased.

Examples



Robert Hardgrave argues identity-based groups articulate interests and raise political consciousness; **Jean Blondel** calls them community interest groups;

Anand Chakravarty warns that banning pressure groups may deepen alienation and secessionist trends.

Changing nature

From elite lobbying, business memoranda and quiet ministerial access to mass movements, media-centred campaigns, public-interest litigation, social-media mobilisation, highway blockades, digital campaigns and coalition building. **Arvind Rajagopal** links the Anna Hazare movement with media politics; **Irfanullah Farooqi** reads Shaheen Bagh as active citizenship; **Amita Baviskar** and **Michael Levien** see the farmers' movement as a public victory over corporate-backed laws.

23 Electoral Behaviour — Meaning

Voting behaviour

The study of how and why voters vote.

“The term ‘voting behaviour’ is not new. But it has been used of late to describe certain areas of study and types of political phenomena which previously had either not been conceived or were considered irrelevant.” — Samuel S. Eldersveld

J. K. Plano and **Riggs** define it as a field studying how people tend to vote and why. **Richard Rose** and **Harve Mossawir** identify voting functions: choice of rulers, choice of policies, exchange of influence with representatives, allegiance to the constitutional order, possible disaffection and emotional meaning.

Mukulika Banerjee's ethnography shows Indian voters treat voting as a citizenship duty, a sacred duty, an inversion of power, revenge, community assertion, the selection and rejection of rulers, and the protection of democracy.

24 Determinants of Voting

Caste

Deep social roots; shapes candidate selection and mobilisation. Mandal raised its electoral salience; urbanisation changes caste voting but does not remove it.

“Politics is more important to caste and caste is more essential to politics than previously.” — W. H. Morris-Jones

Religion, charisma, money

Religion shapes mobilisation, candidate selection and issue framing — the Muslim League, Akali Dal, Hindu Mahasabha, Shiv Sena, BJP and AIMIM show its role. **Charisma**: **Jawaharlal Nehru**, **Indira Gandhi**, **Atal Bihari Vajpayee** and **Narendra Modi**, with slogans such as Garibi Hatao, “Indira means India, India means Indira” and Har Har Modi, Ghar Ghar Modi. **Money power** shapes campaign reach, candidate selection and voter contact, and the Election Commission has struggled to fully control expenditure.

Campaigns, manifestos, economy, media, women

Campaigns run from rallies, processions and door-to-door contact to posters, radio, television, film personalities, newspapers, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter/X and digital outreach. **Manifestos** promise welfare, jobs, development and identity protection, and performance against them affects incumbency. **Economy and**

performance matter — prices, jobs, public goods, corruption, inflation, growth, welfare delivery and pocket-book voting; **Atul Kohli** stresses economic performance, and **Poonam Gupta** and **Arvind Panagariya** connect growth with incumbent success. **Media:** **Robin Jeffrey** highlights its role in shaping opinion, with digital campaigns widening information but raising misinformation risks. **Women voters** increasingly make autonomous choices; welfare schemes such as Ujjwala target them and turnout has risen.

25 The Changing Indian Voter

The Indian voter today votes in greater numbers, is better informed, more performance-conscious, more media-exposed and more open to welfare evaluation, less mechanically tied to caste — but still shaped by identity.

The 2019 result was a “win of social strong chemistry against caste arithmetic.” — Narendra Modi

Subrata Mitra and Singh, in *Democracy and Social Change in India*, argue electoral politics is a tool of democratic social transformation; **Yogendra Yadav** sees voters moving from identity politics to **Identity Plus** politics.

“The voting behaviour of Indians is many times more mature than the voting behaviour of voters in Western countries.” — Prannoy Roy, Ashok Lahiri & David Butler

“The credit for the success of India’s democracy goes to the great common people shown by ordinary voters in India.” — M. P. Singh

26 State Funding & Electoral Reform

State funding

Public financial support for parties or candidates.

In favour — reduces dependence on corporate money, creates a level playing field, checks black money, improves fairness, encourages clean candidates, strengthens democracy. **Concerns** — may fund non-serious parties, is hard to monitor, may not end private funding, requires strong audit, and burdens the exchequer.

Committees and reports — **Indrajit Gupta Committee** on State Funding of Elections (1998), the Law Commission Report on Reform of Electoral Laws (1999), the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2001) and the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2008). A workable middle path; partial state funding, in-kind support, strict audit, transparent donations, spending caps, internal party democracy and strong Election Commission oversight.

27 PR, EVMs, the Election Code & Delimitation

Proportional representation allocates seats in proportion to vote share, encourages smaller parties, helps minorities and dispersed groups and can increase coalition politics. India uses **First-Past-The-Post** for the Lok Sabha and Assemblies; its FPTP has still produced multi-party competition because of social diversity and federalism.

Electronic Voting Machines bring faster counting, fewer invalid votes, less paper handling and logistical efficiency, but trust and transparency concerns require audit mechanisms such as the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail. **Election Code of Conduct** revision debates centre on campaign fairness, misuse of state machinery, hate speech, religious appeals, money power, social-media regulation and enforcement capacity.

Delimitation

The adjustment of constituency boundaries and representation.

India held Delimitation Commissions in 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002. The **42nd Amendment (1976)** froze seat revision; the **84th Amendment** extended the freeze until after the first census after 2026. Population growth created disparities — densely populated and northern states outran southern ones, urban constituencies grew very large, and the value of a vote now differs across states. **Population Census-2027** has revived the debate, raising representation fairness, federal balance, North–South tension, women’s reservation implementation, reserved-seat recalibration and democratic equality.

28 Socio-Economic Profile of Legislators

Shankar and **Valerian Rodrigues** classify the profile of MPs into three phases.

Three phases of the Indian legislator

Phase I · till 1967

Brahmin and upper-caste dominance; lawyers the largest profession, agriculturists second; many foreign-educated; women and minorities under-represented

Phase II · 1967–89

Intermediate castes rise; Green Revolution strengthens rural elites; agriculturists dominant; politics a full-time profession; women 8–10% — Yadav’s “first democratic upsurge”

Phase III · from 1989

Plebeianisation; OBCs and Dalit parties expand; criminalisation and money power rise; women and minorities still under-represented — the “second democratic upsurge”

29 Criminalisation & the 18th Lok Sabha

Criminalisation is a major concern. In the 17th Lok Sabha, 233 MPs had criminal cases and 159 faced serious charges. In the 18th Lok Sabha, 251 MPs (around 46%) have criminal cases and 170 (around 31%) face serious charges — including rape, murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping and crimes against women.

Milan Vaishnav, in *When Crime Pays*, argues voters may elect criminal politicians because they are seen as problem-solvers for caste, community or local networks. The **Supreme Court** calls criminalisation a bitter truth and a termite to democracy.

Profile of the 18th Lok Sabha

Education — all elected MPs literate; 78% at least undergraduate; 5% hold doctorates. **Profession** — mostly social workers or agriculturists; 7% lawyers, 4% medical practitioners. **Economic standing** — 93% have family assets above Rs 1 crore; average assets around Rs 46.34 crore; Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani declared the highest. **Women** — 74 women MPs, around 14%, slightly below the 78 in 2019; India remains behind South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Representation concerns — upper castes remain over-represented; OBC representation has increased but is uneven; Muslims remain under-represented (Sachar Committee concerns); women are seriously under-represented; poorer groups, sub-quota OBCs and minorities face barriers; and money, dynasty and criminality shape entry.

30 Conclusion

Indian politics is best read as a continuing negotiation between social diversity and democratic institutions. Parties have moved from Congress dominance to coalition politics, BJP dominance and renewed coalition bargaining; pressure groups from elite lobbying to mass protest; voting behaviour from loyalty and identity alone to identity plus welfare, development and leadership. Representation has broadened socially but remains distorted by money, criminalisation and the under-representation of women and minorities. Indian democracy has survived because it has absorbed conflict through elections, parties, federalism and movements. Its next task is to convert representation into responsiveness, and electoral participation into substantive social justice.

31 Power Quotes

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“The voting behaviour of Indians is many times more mature than the voting behaviour of voters in Western countries.” — **Prannoy Roy, Ashok Lahiri & David Butler**

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33 How UPSC Asks It — the last decade, mapped

Parties, dominance & the party system

UPSC 2016 · 15m Comment on the emergence of Backward classes in the Indian politics.

UPSC 2016 · 15m Discuss the pattern of political parties from one dominant party system to coalition politics in national politics.

UPSC 2017 · 20m India has moved from a “one-party dominant system” to a “one-party led coalition”. Discuss.

- UPSC 2019 · 10m** Political personalities are more significant than political parties in India.
- UPSC 2020 · 20m** To what extent has the inadequate intra-party democracy affected the functioning of Indian democracy?
- UPSC 2021 · 20m** “The Indian party system is shaped by a complex interaction of the country’s federal structure, electoral system and social cleavages.” Explain.
- UPSC 2023 · 15m** The decade 1989–1999 has created an epochal shift in the Indian party system at the national level. Identify the major national trends in the party system during this era.
- UPSC 2025 · 15m** Illustrate with examples how political parties in India have played a crucial role in drawing the historically disadvantaged groups into the mainstream political system.

Regional parties & federalism

- UPSC 2015 · 15m** Account for the rise of regional political parties and assess their role in contemporary India.
- UPSC 2018 · 15m** Explain the increasing role of regional political parties in the national politics.
- UPSC 2022 · 15m** How far is it correct that the regional parties have strengthened Indian democracy and federal system? Substantiate your answer with suitable examples.

Coalition & minority governments

- UPSC 2021 · 15m** The role of the President of India becomes more significant during a minority government and a coalition government. Explain.

Pressure groups & movements

- UPSC 2024 · 15m** Critically assess the role of pressure groups in the decision-making process of the government.

Electoral behaviour & the voter

- UPSC 2019 · 20m** Development has overshadowed the influence of caste in electoral behaviour in recent elections. Discuss.
- UPSC 2022 · 20m** Electoral behaviour of voters is governed more by the social and economic factors than the political factors. Explain.

Electoral reforms — PR, EVMs, code, funding, delimitation

- UPSC 2017 · 10m** State subvention/funding may be an effective instrument in strengthening electoral democracy in India. Comment.
- UPSC 2025 · 20m** The decision to conduct Population Census-2027 has reopened the debate on delimitation in India. Discuss its various aspects.

Socio-economic profile of legislators

- UPSC 2019 · 15m** The changing socio-economic profile of our legislators does not augur well for the health of Indian democracy. Comment.

34 Today's Practice — write before the evening

1. The decision to conduct Population Census-2027 has reopened the debate on delimitation in India. Discuss its various aspects. **UPSC 2025 · 20m**
2. Critically assess the role of pressure groups in the decision-making process of the government. **UPSC 2024 · 15m**
3. The decade 1989–1999 has created an epochal shift in the Indian party system at the national level. Identify the major national trends in the party system during this era. **UPSC 2023 · 15m**

Model answers drop tonight on the Telegram channel — [@psirbyamitpratap](#). Every point above is covered in full in your **Foundation & OGP** class notes and handouts — revise, then write. **Don't break the chain.**

See you tomorrow with Day 26 — Social Movements.