Multiparty System in India's Political Landscape

Why in news?

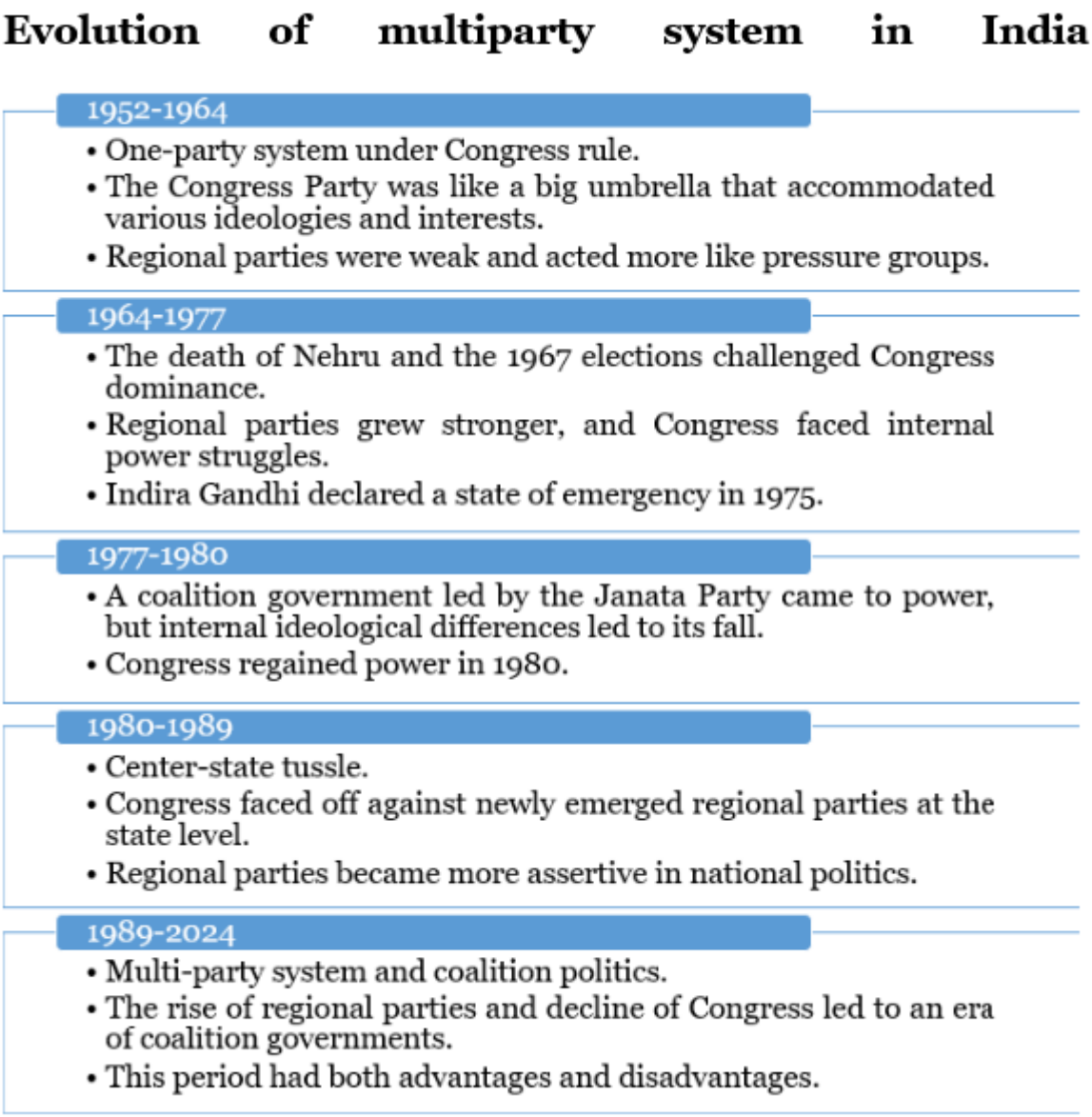
The recently Jammu and Kashmir Assembly passed a resolution urging the Union government to initiate dialogue with it's elected representatives for the restoration of special status.

What is a political party?

- **Political party** – A political party is an organized group of individuals who come together to contest elections, secure political power, and implement policies aligned with their ideology or agenda.
- Political parties serve as intermediaries between citizens and the government, articulating public demands and shaping governance.
- **Recognition of political parties –** In India, the Election Commission of India (ECI) recognizes political parties based on their electoral performance.

Criteria for National party recognition	Criteria for State party recognition
• 6 %of the votes cast in *four or more states* and 4 seats in Lok Sabha or state assemblies. • 2% of the Lok Sabha seats from 3 states. • Recognized as state party in 4 states.	• ***6% of the valid votes polled*** in the assembly election and ***2 seats*** in the assembly of the state. • 6% of the valid votes polled in lok sabha election and win 1 seat. • 3% of seats or 3 seats in the assembly in the legislative assembly whichever is more. • Winning 1 seat for every 25 seats in the lok sabha from the state concerned. • 8% of the total valid votes polled in the state at lok sabha or state assembly general election. This condition was added in 2011.

- **National parties in India –** As on 2024, ***6 parties*** are recognized as national parties.
  - Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)
  - Indian National Congress (INC)
  - Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M)
  - Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)
  - National People's Party (NPP)
  - Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)
- **State parties in India –** As on 2024 there are ***58 parties*** recognized as state parties.



What are the factors contributed for rise of regional parties?

- **Linguistic reorganization of states –** The creation of states based on language in 1956 fueled regional identities, providing fertile ground for regional parties to thrive.
- **Growth of regional consciousness** – Regional identity has grown due to historical, cultural, and linguistic differences which fueled demands for autonomy, recognition, and greater resource allocation.
- **Uneven development –** Disparities in economic and social development among states have led to emergence of regional parties.
- **Caste-based political mobilization –** The mobilization of caste groups to cater the specific needs of the communities.
- **The "sons of the soil" movement –** It demanded local employment and resources for native people of the state, especially in states with significant migration.
- **Ethnic differences –** Ethnic diversity, particularly in the northeastern states, has led to the rise of regional parties addressing local ethnic and cultural aspirations.

Political scientist Paul Brass argued that most of the national parties are

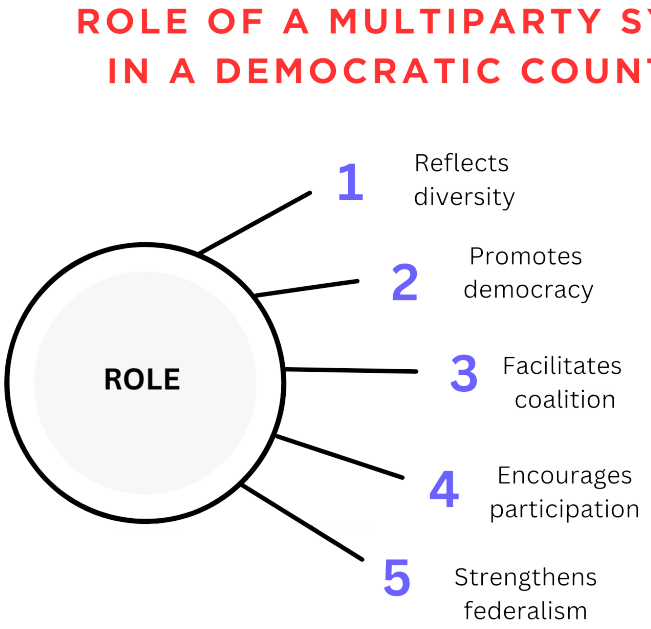
regional parties spread over a few states. Hence, he called the party system in India an 'unstable fragmented multiparty system'.

What is the role of regional parties in reshaping India's political landscape?

- **Emergence of multiparty system** – Rise of regional parties in the states led to a multiparty system in India's political landscape.
- **Coalition politics –** Regional parties play a pivotal role in coalition governments, shaping national policies by negotiating their regional demands.

In the 1980s, state assembly elections elevated the electoral presence and influence of regional parties.

- The recent Lok Sabha election also proved that no single party can secure a majority without the support of regional parties.
- **Balance of power** – The rise of regional parties has loosened the strong centered nature of constitution by balancing the power between the center and states.
- **Decentralization** - Regional parties tend to work towards decentralization of power in national politics.
- **Strengthened federalism –** Regional parties have ensured that state-specific issues are prioritized, balancing central policies with local needs.
- **Cooperative federalism** – The multi-party system has strengthened cooperative federalism, as the center must negotiate with regional parties to pass legislation.
- Institutions like the NITI Aayog have become platforms for collaborative policy-making.
- **Political inclusiveness –** Coalition politics facilitated political inclusiveness, allowing regional parties to represent their constituencies effectively at the national level.
- **Policy innovation –** Successful welfare programs like Tamil Nadu's mid-day meal scheme and Odisha's KALIA scheme highlight the impact of regional parties on governance.
- **Strained central-state relations –** The rise of regional parties has decentralized power, enabling states to assert their autonomy.
- Conflicts over resource allocation, legislative matters, and the role of governors have strained centre-state relations.
- **Unequal economic growth –** The witnessed competition among states for attracting foreign direct investments, which widened the existing income and consumption gap between states.
- Competition among states for investments after the 1991 economic reform, has widened disparities, leading to grievances about uneven devolution.



Centre state relation commissions
• **Sarkaria Commission (1983) -** Chaired by Justice R S Sarkaria (B Sivaraman and S R Sen were other members). • The commission submitted its report in 1988 and made 247 recommendations. • **Reccomendation** • Foster cooperative federalism • Non-partisan governors. • Establishment of a Inter-State Council under Article 263 of the Constitution to facilitate coordination of relations between the centre and states. • **Punchhi Commission (2007)** – Chaired by Madan Mohan Punchhi, along with four other members. • The submitted its report in 2010 and made 273 recommendations. • **Recommendations** • Creation of a national integration council • Amendments to state emergency provisions (Articles 355 and 356) • Non-partisan appointment of governors • Consultation with states before legislating on matters in the Concurrent List

What lies ahead?

- Balance between autonomy and unity by negotiation and cooperation.
- Transparent and equitable allocation of financial resources to maintain harmony between the center and states.
- Inclusion of Regional Aspirations to ensure that diverse communities are represented, fostering inclusive democracy.

Reference

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