

**HISTORY AND IMPACT OF SPLITTING REGIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES BY MAJOR NATIONAL PARTY IN MAHARASHTRA STATE****Dr. Kshirsagar Dilipkumar Dagdu****Head and Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science,
Azad Mahavidyalaya, Ausa Dist. Latur.****ABSTRACT:**

This research paper explores how Defying many odds, the BJP has held on to the political space it conquered five years ago and succeeded in expanding its territorial imprint. It did so through a campaign that was substantially different from the 2014 General Election campaign, which was marked by the rejection of the Congress and an enthusiastic embrace of the BJP's promise of development for all. Five years later, much has changed in India with regard to the political system, which has become more centralized and less liberal. Since the 2019 election, the second Modi-led government has pushed the transition from a de facto Hindu majoritarian state towards a de jure Hindu majoritarian state through the adoption of controversial policies affecting some of the basic normative tenets of India's old constitutional order, so much so that the BJP's rise to power has transformed not only the party system, but also the political system itself. This is reflected in India dropping several ranks in most indices of democracy. At the same time, Indian national and state politics have followed divergent paths: the BJP dominates the national stage unchallenged by any rival, but is finding it increasingly difficult to sustain its sway in state elections leaving the question of the Hindu nationalist.

**KEYWORDS:** *Regional Political Parties, Shiv Sena, NCP, Impact, Political System.***INTRODUCTION**

India is the nation with a multi-party system that has experienced varying degrees of fragmentation. The country has a diverse and vibrant political landscape, with regional parties playing a significant role in representing local interests. While this fragmentation can create challenges in forming stable governments at the national level, it has also ensured that diverse voices are heard and regional aspirations are acknowledged. In India, coalition governments have become the norm, necessitating consensus-building among different parties. This has led to compromises and negotiations that, while time consuming, have often resulted in more inclusive policies and the accommodation of diverse viewpoints. The political system's ability to manage fragmentation and foster cooperation between parties has contributed to India's resilience as a democratic nation. The fragmentation of the party system in Indian politics after 1989 fundamentally transformed the political landscape, moving it from single-party dominance (specifically the Congress system) to an era of competitive multi-party coalition politics. This shift led to both positive outcomes, such as enhanced representation, and negative consequences, including political instability and policy challenges.

Party system fragmentation can arise from various factors, including ideological differences, regionalism, electoral rules, and societal diversification. Ideological differences among parties can lead to the emergence of multiple parties catering to distinct voter preferences. Regionalism, on the other hand, can encourage the formation of parties representing specific geographic areas or ethnocultural groups, further contributing to party fragmentation. Additionally, electoral rules such as proportional representation tend to facilitate the entry of smaller parties into the political arena, as they do not require a significant threshold of votes to gain representation.

The state of Maharashtra came into existence in May 1960. The Marathi-speaking districts of the Bombay Province, the Central Provinces, Berar and the princely state of Hyderabad were grouped together to form today's Maharashtra. These areas are now known as regions of the state as follows: Vidarbha (Marathi-speaking districts from the Central Provinces and Berar), Marathwada (the districts from the Hyderabad state), western Maharashtra (the districts from the Bombay Province), and Konkan (coastal districts from the Bombay Province). The social composition of Maharashtra reflects the structure of society as it is found in these regions.

ROLE OF REGIONAL PARTIES IN COALITION GOVERNMENTS IN MAHARASHTRA:

Regional parties have played a pivotal role in shaping India's coalition governments, particularly since the decline of single-party dominance in the late 1980s. These parties represent the aspirations of specific states, linguistic groups, and communities, ensuring a more inclusive political landscape. Their influence in coalition governments has significantly impacted policy-making, governance, and the balance of power at the national level. Maharashtra has several key regional parties, notably the fractured Shiv Sena (one faction led by Eknath Shinde, another by Uddhav Thackeray) and the split Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) (one led by Ajit Pawar, the other by Sharad Pawar), alongside parties like the MNS, Bahujan Vikas Aghadi, Rashtriya Samaj Paksha, and smaller groups such as the Peasant and Workers Party, all playing significant roles in the state's political landscape alongside national parties like BJP and Congress.

Shiv Sena: Shiv Sena, represented by bow and arrow, was established by Bal Thackeray in 1966 as a party with local political roots defending the rights and interests of Maharashtrians, especially in Mumbai (then called Bombay). The party was concerned at first with resisting the economic domination of non-Maharashtrians, and most notably South Indians, in Mumbai, as well as with upholding the cause of Marathi language and culture. With time, the ideology of Shiv Sena developed to have very strong elements of Hindu nationalism as well as its regionalist platform. Bal Thackeray led the party in developing a very strong grassroot organization in Mumbai and its surrounding areas by taking recourse to direct action and using very aggressive mobilization tactics. Shiv Sena entered government in Maharashtra for the first time in coalition with the BJP in 1995, when Manohar Joshi became Chief Minister. The party has had specific strongholds in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region and sections of Konkan and Western Maharashtra. After Bal Thackeray's passing in 2012, his son Uddhav Thackeray took over as leader, slowly moving the party toward a slightly more moderate stance. In 2019, following Maharashtra Assembly elections, the Shiv Sena ended its historic alliance with the BJP on the Chief Minister's chair and formed the Maha Vikas Aghadi government with ideologically farthest NCP and Congress parties. In 2022, the party was hit by a serious split when Eknath Shinde, with a large majority of MLAs, revolted against the leadership of Uddhav Thackeray, causing the collapse of the MVA government. This led to rival groups of Shiv Sena, with the Election Commission ultimately accepting the Shinde group as the legitimate Shiv Sena and permitting it to use the party symbol of bow and arrow. The original group headed by Uddhav Thackeray took the name Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) with the flaming torch as its symbol.

Nationalist congress party (NCP): Tariq Anwar were disqualified from the Congress on the issue of Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin and whether she could be a candidate to rule the nation. The NCP is ideologically a centrist, secular party that believes in social democracy, farmers' welfare, and regional

development, especially in Maharashtra. Under Sharad Pawar's leadership, the party has maintained a pragmatic approach to coalition politics, willing to align with various political formations based on specific contexts. The NCP's power base has predominantly been in Maharashtra, particularly in the western regions and among the Maratha community. The party has played a crucial role in Maharashtra politics, forming governments in alliance with the Congress for multiple terms and participating in various coalition arrangements. On a national level, the NCP was a part of the governments of the United Progressive Alliance for 2004-2014, with Sharad Pawar as the Union Minister of Agriculture. The party has seen intra-party conflicts and splits in the recent past, such as an important split in 2019 when Sharad Pawar's nephew Ajit Pawar transiently joined hands with the BJP to create a short-lived Maharashtra government. In 2023, there was another significant split in the party, further dividing its organizational setup. Despite this, the NCP still remains influential in Maharashtra politics and holds seats in both Parliament houses

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The aim of this paper is to analyse the impact splitting regional political parties by major national party in Maharashtra state.

Research Methodology: This study is based on secondary sources of data such as articles, books, journals, research papers, websites and other sources.

Impact of splitting regional political parties:

- 1. Political Instability:** One of the primary concerns arising from splitting regional political parties is the potential for political instability. In multi-party systems with numerous parties holding small percentages of seats, it becomes challenging to form stable and effective coalitions. Governments may be prone to frequent changes or gridlock, hindering policy implementation and governance.
- 2. Policy Gridlock:** With a plethora of parties, each with its own set of policy preferences, reaching consensus on critical issues becomes difficult. As a result, policy gridlock can occur, impeding the ability of the government to address pressing challenges and making it hard to pursue long-term policy goals.
- 3. Weakened Accountability:** splitting regional political parties can lead to a diffusion of responsibility among parties, making it challenging for citizens to hold any single party accountable for its actions. The lack of clear mandates and blurred party identities can decrease political accountability and create disillusionment among voters. • **Erosion of Trust:** A highly fragmented party system can contribute to decreased public trust in political institutions. Frequent changes in government, lack of stable policies, and perceived inefficiency may lead citizens to lose faith in the democratic process and, in extreme cases, even reject democratic principles altogether.
- 4. Delinking state politics from national politics:** The hardening of the BJP's tone and its legislative zeal took place at the same time that the party suffered a series of electoral setbacks in state elections. In all state elections held since the 2017 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, the BJP has won only two states out of twelve elections that took place in major states, losing ten of them to the Congress or regional parties. Contrary to the usual positive spillover effect observed between national and state elections (Nellis Citation2015), the BJP has since May 2019 lost three states – Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Delhi – and had to form a coalition government in Haryana. The differences of vote share registered by the BJP between these four elections and the 2019 General Election hover around the 20 percent.

CONCLUSION:

Although slow, the erosion of democracy is a linear and cumulative process, which gradually makes a qualitative change, when a difference of degree is transformed into a difference of nature. The (electoral) year that 2019 has been may be remembered as such a milestone. But electoral politics, and now legislation, which are both tools for these transformations, are in turn shaped by the deeper

societal change occurring among various segments of India's electorate. Although the post-2019 elections scene has shown that there still are forces to oppose the BJP's hegemonic project, it is not possible to predict which way the next five years will swing. Party system fragmentation is a multifaceted phenomenon that plays a critical role in shaping the political landscape of multi-party systems. While it can offer political diversity, increased representation, and accommodation of diverse interests, excessive fragmentation poses significant challenges to political stability and effective governance. The impact of party system fragmentation on political stability is evident in the difficulty of forming stable coalitions and the potential for policy gridlock. Frequent changes in government and ineffective policy implementation erode public trust in democratic institutions, leading to political disillusionment and a sense of political instability. The lack of clear mandates and blurred party identities also weakens political accountability, hindering the ability to address societal challenges effectively. However, party system fragmentation is not inherently detrimental, and its implications vary depending on the context in which it operates. Some multi-party systems manage to strike a balance between political diversity and stability by promoting coalition-building and fostering consensus politics. In these cases, splitting regional political parties enhances representation and accommodates diverse viewpoints without impeding effective governance.

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