

## Study of the Elements Affecting Stability of Party Support at National Level

**Ben Christopher Naorem**  
Scholar,

**Th. Mani Singh**  
Associate Professor

**Anjana Nonngthombam**

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### ABSTRACT

This study compares and analyses the stability and variations in party support at the national level using variables such as voter turnout, closeness of party rivalry, party turnover, and party alliances. The current research is based on an analysis of aggregate data from general elections in India. This is accomplished by comparing patterns on a national scale.

**Keywords:** Voter Turnout, Closeness of Party Competition, Party Turnover and Party Coalitions

### 1. 1. Introduction

The many elements determining the stability of party support in the Indian setting at the national level are discussed in this paper. The most researched factors in party politics literature include voter turnout, tightness of party competition, party turnover, and party coalitions.

It is often assumed that as competing political parties mobilise new voters, new portions of voters, or new social groups, voter turnout rises. In each election, the number of parties and the level of rivalry among them influence people's judgments on whether or not to vote. One could predict that if there are more party options on the ballot, there will be a party that is more closely aligned with individual voters' interests. The vote margin of victory for a party has shrunk as the number of parties and political competition has grown. Elections have become more competitive, or party competition has been more intense. Due to the tightness of party competition, the support base is likely to be skewed, resulting in the incumbent party being replaced by a new party. As a result, parties see coalitions as a vital and helpful strategy to gain power and expand resources in order to maintain their support base. All of these elements, it is suggested, would generally contribute to variations in the stability of support that parties have previously enjoyed in elections.

The impact of voter turnout on party support stability is the subject of the second component of this study, which is divided into six sections. The association between closeness of party

competition and electoral instability is investigated in the third section. The fourth portion investigates the impact of party turnover on party support stability. In the fifth section, the relationship between party coalitions and electoral instability is explored. The final/sixth part highlights the study's primary points.

## **2. Voter Turnout**

In recent years, India's electoral politics have seen a surge in political competition. Voter turnout has been increasing in such circumstances. However, the question is whether they have increased to the point where they are having a considerable impact on party support stability. The engagement of the general public in Indian elections highlights three key points: To begin with, the turnout does not follow the global trend of steadily declining attendance over time. In India, voter turnout has either increased or remained flat. Second, unlike most other democracies, turnout in India does not decrease as one moves up the political ladder. In other words, Assembly and panchayat elections have a larger voter turnout than national elections. Third, unlike Afro-Americans, homeless people, and ethnic minorities in the United States, Indian citizens at the bottom of the social and economic ladder do not vote less than those at the top. In India, a poor, dalit, or minority individual is more likely to vote than a Hindu from an upper caste or higher class. In the last 15 years, India's democracy has seen a democratic resurgence from below (Yadav, 2004).

While voter turnout in most Western democracies has been dropping, it has climbed in India since the country's first general elections in 1952. This upward tendency (55 percent and above) has been cited as a key aspect in the long-term viability of Indian democracy, as voters increasingly engage in elections to elect their governments. To understand the changing character of political engagement in India in the 1990s, Yadav (2000) disaggregates turnout figures in India by regions and significant social groupings. The central argument of Yadav's book is that, while overall voter turnout has remained relatively constant throughout the 1990s, the demographics of individuals who vote have changed substantially. He points out that there is a democratic resurgence among the socially disadvantaged, such as SCs and STs, but that this increase in participation rates has not been witnessed among other disadvantaged groups, such as Muslims and women. He believes that India is arguably the only significant democracy in the world today where the participation of the poorest members of society outnumbered that of the wealthiest (Yadav, 2000:133).

Turnout was low in the first two elections, in 1952 and 1957. Parties were not very powerful during this time, and the INC dominated the Indian party system at both the national and state levels. The era 1962-1967 saw a significant increase in voter turnout and was marked by the emergence of opposition to the INC and a shift away from a one-party government. As Yadav (2000:121) points out, the 1960s were the first period of democratic upsurge following the foundation of Indian democracy. As political competition became more serious and alternatives to the INC's one-party control emerged, voter turnout increased at all levels. The strengthening of the party system and party mobilisation of voters appears to be a major factor in the huge increase in turnout recorded in this time period. Table 1 shows voter turnout and electoral volatility at the national level since the first general elections of 1952.

**2. Table 1: Voter Turnout and Electoral Volatility at the National Level**

3.

<b>Election Year</b>	<b>Voter Turnout (in terms of percentage)</b>	<b>EV</b>
1952	44.9	--
1957	45.4	23.3
1962	55.4	16.2
1967	61.0	17.6
1971	55.3	18.2
1977	60.5	44.3
1980	56.9	45.3
1984	63.6	23.9
1989	62.0	28.2
1991	56.7	12.9
1996	57.9	20.7
1998	62.0	20.0
1999	60.0	16.7
2004	58.1	14.0
2009	58.0	15.6
2014	66.5	23.0

**Source:** Election Commission of India, [http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main1/ElectionStatistics.aspx](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/ElectionStatistics.aspx), retrieved on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2012.

However, a casual examination of the data in table 1 does not support this for all election years. It could be because, despite the fact that people are voting more in elections as their political awareness grows, the electorate's choice for different parties remains limited. On the one hand, India's electoral volatility has been extremely variable, ranging from less than 20% to more than 40% at times. On the other hand, there is no significant variation in voter turnout.

From the first general election of independent India to the present, voter turnout has fluctuated dramatically. During this time, the political and economic factors that influence voter decisions have not stayed constant. The demographic features of the Indian voter have shifted dramatically. Important political events have also occurred, both within the country and outside of it. These factors have influenced the outcomes of certain elections. The declaration of emergency in 1975, for example, had a significant impact on the outcome of the 1977 parliamentary election. Almost every election is different in this way.

Let's take a look at other election years in the past. The INC obtained an overwhelming majority of seats in parliament and every state legislature in the 1952 national elections. INC was given the mandate to rule, and the opposition was given the authority to hold it accountable. The INC survived the major political crisis that ended with the reorganisation of the states, a significant redrawing of the map of India based on language. The next two

elections, held in 1957 and 1962, followed the same pattern, with the INC surviving the major political crisis that ended with the reorganisation of the states, a substantial redrawing of the map of India based on language. In 1957, voter turnout grew to 55.4 percent, and in 1962, it reached 55.4 percent. Between 1957 and 1962, there was a decrease in electoral volatility. Voter turnout was low throughout this time period, which could be due to a lack of political awareness, unfamiliarity with the democratic election process, or the conservative mentality of the population at the time.

In 1967, dissatisfaction with the INC's performance began to emerge. The non-Congress parties did not gain enough support until 1967. The voter turnout was higher than 60%, as seen in table 1. The claim that the INC recruits a representative cross-section of the electorate is not always accurate. The INC's support in the 1967 election does not appear to have a fairly constant social profile. The OBCs were less likely than other groups to support the INC, whilst the dalits and advasis were more likely than other community groups to support the INC. The Muslims appear to be the lone exception, with their support pattern appearing to be rather varied over time (Heath and Yadav, 2002: 121). However, the INC was defeated in many important states in the 1967 election, bringing opposition to power. In 1967, while voter turnout increased, electoral volatility increased as well. In comparison to the 1962 elections, the volatility rate increased by 1.4 percent. With 40% of the vote, the INC retained its position as the dominant party, a 5% decrease from 1962. (around 45 percent ). In 1967, the willingness of various community groups to support the INC fluctuated slightly.

The INC's defeat was one of the factors that contributed to the party's split in 1969. In the aftermath of India's successful war against Pakistan in 1971, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, using a populist electoral appeal, swept aside the other INC splinter and won victory in states lost in 1967 and in several additional mid-term elections. Indira Gandhi's initiatives appeared to have restored Congress hegemony by 1971.

Following the INC's defeat in several states and waning strength in 1967, the New Congress, led by Mrs. Gandhi, shifted its electoral methods. Between 1971 until 1980, the opposition came to power and defeated the INC. In compared to the election year of 1967, voter turnout was low in 1971. In 1971, the voter turnout rate fell by 6%. Disillusionment with the ruling party as a result of a succession of economic and political crises was the reason. Despite a drop in turnout rates, electoral volatility climbed to 18.2 percent. This was due to INC gaining a majority over the other parties and continuing to rule. However, this decade saw the emergence of new parties such as NCO, as well as a drop in the vote share of parties like as SWA and PSP.

In most states in 1977, the middle castes were the backbone of the INC's opposition. Mrs. Gandhi's solution was to unite the two ends of the social spectrum, namely the top castes and lower dalit castes against the middle castes. The Janata experiment's triumph in 1977 could be interpreted as a reaffirmation of the middle castes (Brass, 1985). With the shifting political fortunes from INC to JP in 1977 and JP to INC in 1980, the volatility rate reached 45 percent in 1977 and 1980. In 1977, compared to 1971, voter turnout was higher. The INC

faced a serious political alternative at both the national and state levels after Mrs. Gandhi and the INC were unexpectedly defeated in the 1977 election, signalling a rejection of authoritarian government (Oldenburg, 2007:5-11). Furthermore, the highest turnout has consistently been reported in mixed constituencies, when the rural electorate is up to 50%, since 1977. In this respect, the pattern of higher voter turnout in rural areas continues in semi-rural/semi-urban constituencies (Palshikar and Kumar, 2004:5413).

During the 1960s and 1970s, political processes were characterised by democratisation. Politics and political parties began to become more regionalized in the 1980s. As the Janata phase faded, the middle castes rallied behind regional organisations. As a result, various regional parties arose in the 1980s. The period between 1984 and 1989 saw the highest voter turnout in history, with 63.6 percent in 1984 and 62 percent in 1989. In 1984, however, the electoral volatility diminished as the INC regained some of its lost support. In 1989, there was a 1.6 percent reduction in voter turnout. The JD government received widespread support. In 1989 elections, the electoral volatility increased by 28.2 percent due to party turnover. As a result, the 1990s saw a significant shift, an era of transition, in which the previous democracy based on single-party dominance crumbled.

INC was no longer a pole around which the political competition is formed in the 1990s, which is known as the post-Congress period. The growth of local players in the shape of state-based parties, as well as intense mobilisation (both caste and communal), a more competitive political field, and arousal of interest in the elections, may have led to turnout of approximately 60% in the 1989, 1998, and 1999 elections. During this time, various state-based parties rose to prominence. During this time, the BJP rose to prominence as India's single largest political party. By forming alliances with regional parties, the BJP was able to widen its electoral base. The BJP's expansion and consolidation came primarily at the expense of the INC's vote share.

Two developments occurred in the 1990s, according to Palshikar and Kumar (2004). The first was an increase in overall voter turnout, and the second was a shift in voter demographics. Both of these might be viewed as victories in terms of the democratic norm's consolidation. Women, dalits, adivasis, and OBCs became more reliant on the vote as a means of democratic assertion in the 1990s. Now, if men, upper castes, and upper and middle classes use the vote as a counter-weapon, the 'democratic upsurge' of the 1990s may fade away in the coming years. After the 1989 election, instability connected with coalitions was seen when a coalition known as the Third Force (i.e. neither INC-led nor BJP-led) came to power. In 1996-98, the same thing happened. The BJP-led coalition that won in 1998 disintegrated, but a new version won in 1999 and served out the remainder of the term. With the BJP in power in 1998 and 1999, the electoral instability in those years diminished. Between 1998 and 1999, voter turnout dropped by 2%. The 'democratic upsurge' in this regard is expected to persist and maybe strengthen, owing to the secular expansion of participation and involvement in elections.

The 'democratic upsurge' has resulted in democratisation of voter profiles, although this trend has not necessarily infiltrated involvement in campaign-related activities. As a result, there is a contradiction. An expansion of the social basis of participants and active citizens is not matched by a diversification of voters. The most fortunate elements of society continue to be active participants. Who will participate in politics and who will be more involved citizens is determined by education and social class. However, some progress has been made in one area. The OBCs have forced their way into the group of active participants. However, dalits, adivasis, the impoverished, and women remain mostly outside the realm of active politics (Palshikar and Kumar, 2004:5417). These variables were either absent or routinized in the 2004 elections, and their initial appeal had faded. In the campaign, there were no new leaders on the horizon, no fresh scandals, and no new challenges. The election was unremarkable, probably a pale repetition of the previous two or three. Given this, voter turnout fell by over 2%, or 58 percent, in contrast to the 1999 elections (Palshikar and Kumar, 2004:5412).

In 2004, the INC-led coalition won by a razor-thin margin, and it was able to keep together and maintain its rule even until the 2009 elections. The electoral volatility decreased in 2004, owing to the fact that the main parties' vote shares were relatively constant from 1999 to 2004. In the 2009 election, turnout among dalits and adivasis decreased slightly, while turnout among Muslims remained relatively unchanged and turnout among middle-class voters increased. The voter turnout in 2009 was similar to that of the 2004 elections, but electoral instability increased. In comparison to the 2004 elections, the vote margin between the INC and the BJP grew by 10%. Between 2004 and 2009, the INC grew its vote share, while the BJP's vote share decreased.

The voter turnout in the 2014 elections was the highest in India's history in national elections, at 66.5 percent. The increased participation of women is one of the key causes for the rise in polling percentages. In cities, voter turnout was also high among the middle and higher classes. The seats with the highest shares of SC and ST people had the most intriguing involvement. When compared to turnout in seats with lower SC and ST proportions, the overall polling was higher. This tendency may indicate that non-SC and non-ST populations vote in big numbers in seats where SCs and STs are the majority (Kumar and Sardesai: *The Hindu*, 27th May, 2014). There was a significant change in electoral support from the INC to the BJP, as well as the creation of new parties such as the YSRCP and AAP, as well as an increase in the vote share of parties such as the AIADMK in the 2014 elections. As a result of all of these reasons, electoral volatility increased by 7.4 percent in 2014 compared to 2009.

As can be seen in table 1, the polling percentage has consistently stayed over 55 percent since the Lok Sabha elections of 1962. Since the 1962 general elections, the national scenario has been that in some election years (i.e. 1967, 1977, 1996, and 2014), when voter turnout rises, electoral volatility rises. In general, we see party turnover in these elections, as in 1977, 1996, and 2014, or a deterioration in the incumbent party's performance, as in 1967. People are more inclined to vote in these elections because they are looking for alternative parties, hence electoral instability is likely to rise in these years. An increase in voter turnout does not always lead to an increase in electoral volatility in three election years, namely 1962,

1984, and 1998. This is because, like in the 1962 and 1984 elections, those who turn out are more likely to support the incumbent party, the INC, or the two main parties, the INC and the BJP, are able to garner a bigger amount of electoral support in the 1998 elections. As a result, the electoral volatility in these elections remained modest. We also discovered that in some election years (e.g., 1971, 1980, 1989, 2009), electoral volatility rose as voter turnout decreased. Similarly, we find a fall in voter turnout in the 1991, 1999, and 2004 elections, leading in a decrease in electoral volatility. Table 2 compares voter turnout and electoral volatility in different countries.

As a result, we discover that increased voter turnout does not always imply increased electoral volatility in all elections. An rise in voter turnout does not necessarily imply that people are frequently shifting their political allegiances or electoral support. The creation of new political parties may not provide a mechanism for voters to swap their party affiliations.

**4. Table 2: Voter Turnout and Electoral Volatility in a Comparative Perspective**

5.

Increase in VT+			Increase in VT +			Decrease in VT+			Decrease in VT+		
Increase in EV			Decrease in EV			Increase in EV			Decrease in EV		
Elections	VT	EV	Elections	VT	EV	Elections	VT	EV	Elections	VT	EV
1957	45.4	23.3	1962	55.4	16.2	1971	55.3	18.2	1991	56.7	12.9
1967	61.0	17.6	1984	63.6	23.9	1980	56.9	45.3	1999	60.0	16.7
1977	60.5	44.3	1998	62.0	20.0	1989	62.0	28.2	2004	58.1	14.0
1996	57.9	20.7				2009	58.0	15.6			
2014	66.5	23.0									
Average of EV		25.8	Average of EV		20.0	Average of EV		26.8	Average of EV		14.5

**Note:** ‘VT’ indicates voter turnout

When the averages of electoral volatility in cases of increased voter turnout and increased electoral volatility and increased voter turnout and decreased electoral volatility are compared from table 2, we find that the electoral volatility is likely to be high when there is an increase in voter turnout (average is 25.8 percent ). As a result, when there are more party options, voter turnout is more likely to grow. The vote victory gap between the winner and runner-up party may narrow as the number of political actors grows, or elections may be seen as tight. The following section examines the relationship between closeness of party competition and stability of party support at the national level.

**6. 3. Closeness of Party Competition**

Indian politics is an amazing illustration of how the political system has become more competitive as a result of the growth of opposition parties and their efforts to mobilise voters. The Indian party structure has changed dramatically during the previous six decades. The most significant shift has been the emergence of a growing number of political parties. Over time, the average margin of victory has shrunk. The number of votes cast and seats gained by the main opposition party, as well as regional parties, has increased dramatically in recent

national elections, while national parties' influence has decreased. The emergence of powerful regional parties has made it harder for national parties to gain a majority of parliament seats in national elections. As a result, the parties' electoral support may be jeopardised. The closeness of elections between the winner and runner-up parties has constantly increased as the number of parties seeking and securing representation in parliament has steadily increased. In this situation, it's critical to understand the relationship between party competition and party support stability. This is because closer relationships may exacerbate instability among various parties' support groups.

We can assume that when the rate of vote difference is between 1-10 percent, the party competition between two parties is closer, based on the findings of different scholars such as Diwakar (2008) and Ghosh (2006) on India, Lin, Tseng, and Wang (2011) on Taiwan, Indridason (2008) on France, Helin and Nurmi (2004) on Finland and the United Kingdom, and Franklin (2004) on the United States. If the difference is between 10% and 30%, two parties are relatively close; if the difference is greater than 30%, the parties are not close. I used the vote gap between the two top parties to calculate the closeness of the party battle. In the case of coalitions, rather than comparing the closeness of two coalitions, I looked at the closeness of the two top parties leading two separate coalitions. Since the first general elections in 1952, Table 3 depicts the closeness of party rivalry and electoral volatility at the national level.

**7. Table 3: Closeness of Party Competition and Electoral Volatility at the National Level**  
8.

Election Years	Largest Party in terms of vote percentage (P <sub>1</sub> )		Second Largest Party in terms of vote percentage (P <sub>2</sub> )		Closeness (P <sub>1</sub> -P <sub>2</sub> )	EV
	Party	Percentage	Party	Percentage		
1952	INC	45.0	SP	10.6	34.4	--
1957	INC	47.8	PSP	10.4	37.4	23.3
1962	INC	44.7	CPI	9.9	34.8	16.2
1967	INC	40.8	BJS	9.3	31.5	17.6
1971	INC	43.7	NCO	10.4	33.3	18.2
1977	BLD	41.3	INC	34.5	6.8	44.3
1980	INC(I)	42.7	JNP	19.0	23.7	45.3
1984	INC	48.0	BJP	7.4	40.6	23.9
1989	INC	39.5	JD	17.8	21.7	28.2
1991	INC	36.6	BJP	20.0	16.6	12.9
1996	INC	28.8	BJP	20.3	8.5	20.7
1998	INC	25.8	BJP	25.6	0.2	20.0
1999	INC	28.3	BJP	23.8	4.5	16.7
2004	INC	26.5	BJP	22.2	4.3	14.0
2009	INC	28.6	BJP	18.8	9.8	15.6
2014	BJP	31.1	INC	19.3	11.8	23.0

**Source:** Election Commission of India, [http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main1/ElectionStatistics.aspx](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/ElectionStatistics.aspx),

retrieved on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2012.

Between 1952 and 1971, the parties were less tight. During this time, the INC dominated Indian politics. Before independence, the INC was a broad-based nationalist movement that evolved into the country's most powerful political party. Despite the emergence of a number of opposition groups, it was recognised that the INC was the leading party reflecting a historical consensus that continued to enjoy electoral support and political trust. Observers of Indian politics, such as Morris-Jones, referred to the Indian system as one of "one-party rule," while writers such as Rajni Kothari referred to it as the "Congress System." Without a doubt, the so-called "one-party dominance" or Congress system was a competitive party system. However, the rival parties had quite different roles to play. The Congress structure, according to Rajni Kothari, comprised of a consensus party and a pressure party. Between 1952 until 1967, the INC was the most powerful political party in the country. Even after 1967, the INC had a powerful grip on national and state politics.

On the basis of INC electoral success from 1952 to 1971, India was labelled as a one-party domination regime. In the Lok Sabha, it has always been able to secure a majority of seats. This, it has been said, was due to the INC's advantage under the 'first-past-the-post' system. Despite winning a majority of Lok Sabha seats, the INC's electoral percentage share was not proportional to the number of seats it won. INC, for example, won 364 seats in the 1952 elections with just 45 percent of the vote; 371 seats with 47.8% votes in 1957; 361 seats with 44.7 percent votes in 1962; 283 seats with 40.8 percent votes in 1967; and 352 seats with 43.7 percent votes in 1971. As the vote/seat disparity between the winning and runner-up party widens, the asymmetry between votes and seats grows. As a result, we find that from 1952 and 1971, the difference between INC and the second-largest party was over 30%.

Electoral support for the parties was relatively consistent between 1952 and 1971, as the electorate remained loyal to INC. Between 1957 and 1971, the volatility rate was below 20% on average. The results of the 1967 election were shocking. The INC lost majorities in a number of states, and its majority at the federal level was reduced to a razor-thin margin. There was no serious opposition to the INC, and political forces were not clearly divided. Both right-wing and left-wing forces scored victories. Coalitions provided an opportunity for the severely fragmented opposition to gain power. As a result, the results of the 1971 mid-term parliamentary elections were just as surprising as they were in 1967, restoring the ruling party's control. In 1971, the people's reaction to INC was not solely based on emotional attachments, as it had been just after independence. It was a conditional answer based on a promise made in the "Garibi Hatao" tagline.

The disintegration of the consensus culture that had been so obvious in previous years resulted in increased tensions between the parties in the electoral battle during the period 1967-1977. On the one side, non-Congress governments were elected in states, while on the other, Indira Gandhi moved to assert her authority within the INC. During this time, there was also a new phase of decoupling national elections from elections to state legislatures. In several Indian states, frequent elections have resulted in a loss of party support. Many saw the JP's triumph

in the 1977 national elections as the beginning of a new and welcome chapter in India's electoral history. The developments of 1977 were thought to be an indication of the clear emergence of a fully competitive electoral system. In terms of vote percentages, the INC and the second-largest party, BLD, became significantly closer in 1977. The rate of closeness was 6.8%, which was around 30% lower than the rate of closeness experienced by the country between 1957 and 1971. In the previous year, however, volatility rates reached a high of 44.3 percent.

In 1980, the volatility rate jumped to 45.3 percent. It might be argued that the process of democratic re-engineering that the developments of 1977 aimed to bring about was reversed as a result of electoral politics in 1980, with the INC party regaining power at the national level and in many states (Shastri, 2003:3-4). From 6.8% in 1977 to 23.7 percent in 1980, the rate of closeness decreased. On the basis of the 1980 elections, the Indian party system appears to have been reverted to what Morris Jones referred to as the "one-party dominating system," Rajni Kothari referred to as the "Congress system," and Joseph La Palombara referred to as "the prominent party system."

In 1984, with a closeness rate of 40.6 percent, the party competition was the least fierce. In this election, the volatility rate dropped to 23.9 percent. With Mrs. Gandhi's assassination in 1984, the INC was able to persuade the public that India was in danger, that the opposition parties had exacerbated the risk, and that only the INC could safeguard the country. Normally, voting for the opposition meant voting for change, but Rajiv Gandhi appeared to be the most credible agent of change in the 1984 elections. Many people who would have voted against Indira Gandhi voted for Rajiv Gandhi because they needed a leader who could change and improve the country's deteriorating political and moral norms. He garnered the support of both those who were dissatisfied with the system and those who profited from it and wanted it to continue because he gave the appearance that he stood for change while maintaining the system's continuity. Thus, under Rajiv Gandhi's leadership, the INC not only regained power, but also achieved the greatest ever vote percentage and number of seats in INC history. The one-party control or Congress system, as it was in the 1950s, was restored once more. However, as it turned out, the repair was just temporary.

INC was defeated in the 1989 elections by an opposition alliance led by the National Front/JD. During this time, the BJP was gradually establishing itself as a viable political force in India's party system. After the JD and the INC, it was the third largest party in the Lok Sabha in 1989 elections. The INC and JD were separated by 21.7 percent. From 23.9 percent in 1984 to 28.2 percent in 1989, the volatility rate increased. Since 1989, regional parties have expanded in number and electoral strength, forcing the two largest national parties, the INC and the BJP, to rethink their "go-it-alone" attitude. As a result, the two national parties began to seek regional allies for support (Singh and Koh, 2010: 333).

In 1991, compared to the previous election, the closeness improved to 16.6%, although the margin remained large. The BJP achieved its greatest electoral victory since its formation in 1991, riding on the wave created by its leader L.K. Advani's rath yatra and the movement to

build a temple to Lord Ram in Ayodhya, becoming the second largest party in the Lok Sabha with 20% votes, behind the INC, which received 36.6 percent votes (Brass, 1990:87).

As a result, save for the INC, BJP, and Communists, none of the other national parties have survived. Furthermore, since 1952, when the Socialist Party finished in second with 10.6% of the vote, the second-place party has changed in every election. Many of the ostensibly national parties lacked a genuine national presence. In general, despite mounting evidence of the INC's electoral loss, the INC was the only national party with a nationwide base, and there was no national alternative to the INC (Brass, 1990:102). After 1991, the BJP, like the INC, began to emerge as a long-lasting polity-wide party.

Party fragmentation continued to rise throughout the 1990s, although coalition politics remained the norm. The party system shifted to a multi-party system, with the INC and the BJP leading two strong blocs. However, the subsequent coalition or minority governments have struggled to last the entire term, culminating in four general elections between 1991 and 1999. The 1990s were dubbed the "decade of elections." The Indian voter had the opportunity to voice his or her preferences in four national elections held in quick succession throughout this decade. What must be emphasised, however, is that the 1990s were an era of political flux, with each election result demonstrating the clear advent of a period of true and irreversible competitive electoral politics (Shastri, 2003:6). On the one hand, the party system was growing more competitive, yet after 1989, no single party was able to secure a majority and form government on its own. The BJP and its allies experienced consistent growth in the 1991, 1996, and 1998 elections, owing to political expansions such as the formation of stronger and broader alliances with previously unaffiliated parties, as well as regional expansion, which saw the NDA become competitive and even the largest vote-getters in previously INC-dominated areas.

Between 1996 and 1998, the electoral volatility stayed around 20%. The closest proximity was 0.2 percent in 1998. This occurred because the INC received 25.8% of the vote, while the BJP received 25.6 percent. In 1999, the volatility rate dropped to 16.7%, and by 2004 it had dropped to 14%. Because there was no credible third front option in 2004, the conflict was more of a head-to-head affair. The election was mostly a struggle between the BJP and its allies on the one hand, and the INC and its allies on the other.

Between the 1999 and 2004 elections, the closest gap between the two biggest parties, the INC and the BJP, maintained at 4.5 percent. In 2009, the volatility rate increased slightly to 15.6 percent. This was due to the BJP's vote falling from 22.2 percent to 18.8 percent and the INC's vote rising from 26.5 percent to 28.6 percent. The INC-led UPA was re-elected in 2009, with a significant rise in Lok Sabha seats. In 2009, both the NDA and the BJP were on the decline. Regional parties increased their vote share to 28.4% in 2009. As a result, the winner's party, i.e. The second-placed party, INC, and the third-placed party, INC, The BJP's share of the vote dropped from 4.3 percent in 2004 to 9.8 percent in 2009. In 2014, the closeness rate fell to 11.8 percent. In comparison to the 2009 elections, the BJP's victory vote margin over the INC grew significantly in 2014. In comparison to the 2009 elections, the

electoral decision in 2014 was reversed. The BJP's vote percentage climbed from 18.8 percent to 31.1 percent, while the INC's vote share declined from 28.6 percent to 19.3 percent.

When a result of table 3, it can be seen that as the distance between parties widens, electoral volatility does not necessarily rise. When the closeness between parties rose in the 1967, 1977, 1989, and 1996 elections compared to the prior year of each of the four elections, electoral volatility increased as well. The INC's poor performance in 1967, the incumbent party's transition in 1977, the reversal of the INC's dominant trend with the rise of JP in 1977, the INC's loss by JD in 1989, and the succession of three governments in 1996 all contributed to an increase in electoral volatility. Similarly, we find that the closeness of party rivalry rose in compared to the preceding year of each of the four elections in 1962, 1991, 1998, and 2004, but that electoral volatility decreased. This is due to the continuance of the INC as the dominant party in 1962 and the ability of the INC and the BJP to garner maximum amount of vote in 1991, 1998 and 2004 elections respectively.

For 1957, 1971, 1980, 2009 and 2014 elections, when the closeness of party competition decreased in comparison to the previous year of the each of the five elections, the electoral volatility increased and for 1984 and 1999 elections, the decrease in closeness of party competition resulted in decrease in electoral volatility. Taking the cut-off values from the literature into account, it can be shown that there was a greater degree of competitiveness between parties only in 1977 and between 1996 and 2009, i.e. the rate of closeness was below 10%. In a comparative viewpoint, Table 4 indicates closeness, party competitiveness, and electoral volatility.

As seen in table 4, increased closeness in party competition does not necessarily lead to instability in party support in all election years. When the first and second parties are more closely aligned, electoral volatility may be reduced.

#### 9. Table 4: Closeness of Party Competition and Electoral Volatility in a Comparative Perspective

10.

Increase in CPC +Increase in EV			Increase in CPC + Decrease in EV			Decrease in CPC+ Increase in EV			Decrease in CPC+ Decrease in EV		
Elections	CPC	EV	Elections	CPC	EV	Elections	CPC	EV	Elections	CPC	EV
1967	31.5	17.6	1962	34.8	16.2	1957	37.4	23.3	1984	40.6	23.9
1977	6.8	44.3	1991	16.6	12.9	1971	33.3	18.2	1999	4.5	16.7
1989	21.7	28.2	1998	0.2	20.0	1980	23.7	45.3			
1996	8.5	20.7	2004	4.3	14.0	2009	9.8	15.6			
						2014	11.8	23.0			
Average of EV		27.7	Average of EV		15.8	Average of EV		25.1	Average of EV		20.3

**Note:** 'CPC' indicates closeness of party competition

When the averages of electoral volatility in cases of increased closeness of party competition and increased electoral volatility are compared from table 4, we find that when the degree of competitiveness between parties is higher, the electoral volatility is likely to be higher (average is 27.7 percent ). When the level of competition rises, it's more possible that the incumbent party will be defeated, resulting in party turnover. The relationship between party turnover and party support stability at the national level is examined in the next section.

#### 4. Party Turnover

Since 1977, Indian elections have been characterised by an anti-incumbency effect. Anti-incumbency, as measured by a decrease in the incumbent party's share of seats and votes, is a prominent characteristic of Indian elections. It's been substantial, and statistically significant. The pattern of anti-ruling party bias in surveys is far from consistent, and it varies from election to election, causing the parties' support bases to shift. The distinction is significant since the number of main competitors in an Indian election generally determines the winner. An incumbent party may increase his share of seats and votes and still lose an election simply because his political rivals may have agreed to put up a unified front against it.

Any one of the four factors could be to blame for Indian voters' anti-incumbency sentiment. (a) It may represent a vote against the ruling party at the national level (national government incumbency); (b) It may represent a vote against the ruling party in the state where the constituency is located (state government incumbency); (c) It may represent a vote against the party that won the seat in the previous election, regardless of whether the party is in power at the national level or in the state (party incumbency); (d) It may represent a vote against the sen (Borooah, 2006:1). This section focuses on incumbent party, the defeat of the incumbent party resulting in party turnover and thereby its impact on electoral volatility. Table 5 presents party turnover and electoral volatility at national level between 1952-2014.

#### 11. Table 5: Party Turnover and Electoral Volatility at the National Level

12.

Election Year	Name of the incumbent party/party heading coalition	Incumbent Party Won/Lost	EV
1952	INC	Won	--
1957	INC	Won	23.3
1962	INC	Won	16.2
1967	INC	Won	17.6
1971	INC	Won	18.2
1977	INC	Lost	44.3
1980	JP	Lost	45.3
1984	INC	Won	23.9
1989	INC	Lost	28.2
1991	JD	Lost	12.9
1996	INC	Lost	20.7

1998	JD	Lost	20.0
1999	BJP	Won	16.7
2004	BJP	Lost	14.0
2009	INC	Won	15.6
2014	INC	Lost	23.0

**Source:** Election Commission of India, [http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main1/ElectionStatistics.aspx](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/ElectionStatistics.aspx), retrieved on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2012.

We can see from Table 5 that there was no party turnover for the first two decades. From 1952 until 1967, one-party supremacy based on the "Congress system" reigned supreme. Between 1957 and 1971, the average volatility rate was less than 20%. The opposition did not function as an alternative to the ruling party, but rather as pressure groups on the periphery. The one-party dominance system had two distinguishing features: first, there was plurality within the dominant party, which increased its representativeness, gave flexibility, and maintained internal competition. At the same time, it is preparing to absorb outside groupings and movements, preventing rival parties from acquiring strength (Hardgrave and Kochanek, 2008:270).

In 1967, the Congress system collapsed after electoral defeat in various states and a diminished majority in the Lok Sabha with 283 seats and 40.8 percent votes. Mrs. Indira Gandhi's efforts in 1971 helped the party reclaim the position it had lost in the 1967 election. In 1971, the volatility rate was still lower. The new INC appeared to be centralised and customised. It shifted from an accommodating to a confrontational political approach.

In 1977, India saw its first political party change. The 1977 defections were the outcome of Indira Gandhi's repressive measures implemented during the 1975-77 emergency government. Those who left the INC created the BLD, INC(O), and Congress for Democracy, among others (CFD). In 1977, these INC splinters joined forces with socialists and the BJS to form the JP, putting an end to the INC's 25-year reign. As a result, political parties' electoral support bases shifted dramatically, particularly away from the INC.

As seen in table 5, the volatility rate increased to 44.3 percent in 1977, up from 18.2 percent in the previous election. With the electoral reinstatement of INC in 1980, a second party transition occurred. With the shift in electoral fortunes from JP to INC, volatility soared to 45.3 percent this year. INC won 351 seats and 43 percent of the vote in a landslide victory. Despite the fact that voters replied in terms of immediate self-interest, the outcome was a call for a more effective administration. Under Rajiv Gandhi's leadership, the INC won a landslide win in 1984. People's support for the INC remained strong. In 1984, the electoral volatility decreased.

The general elections of 1989 resulted in third-party turnover, signalling the start of a new era in the Indian party system. The INC, which previously held a hegemonic position in the Lok Sabha, has lost its hegemony. India entered a phase of fragmented multipartism after the

1989 elections. With the INC's disintegration, various regional parties began to establish their claim to political space. India has been governed by coalition or minority administrations since 1989. In 1989, the volatility rate was 28.2 percent. No single party was able to achieve a majority in the Lok Sabha for the first time since independence. Despite holding the majority of members in Parliament (197), the INC was unable to establish a government. Instead, the JD, which had 143 seats, forged an alliance with its National Front (NF) supporters to form a minority government reliant on outside backing from the BJP and Communist parties.

Despite losing more than half of its members in Parliament, the INC's vote share only fell from 48.1 percent in 1984 to 39.5 percent in 1989. In 1991, the fourth party changed hands. The INC's polled vote stayed relatively unchanged in 1991, resulting in a decrease in the volatility rate. The INC was re-elected in 1991, but it did not reverse major tendencies in the party's collapse. The INC gained 227 seats in 1991, up from 197 in 1989, but their vote share fell from 39.5 percent in 1989 to 36.6 percent in 1991. The INC's ability to secure more seats was largely due to increased divide within the opposition rather than the INC's growing support.

The incumbent party was defeated in the general election of 1996 for the second time. The INC's primary opponents in the election were the BJP and its allies, as well as the UF (which included the LF and the JD). The BJP emerged as a major political force at the national level during the election, syphoning up votes from rival parties. The level of volatility has risen to 20.7 percent. Internal factionalism within the INC dominated the election, resulting in a huge number of defections, and five years of INC dominance had sparked anti-Congress opposition unity. On the eve of the elections, a coalition of leftist and regional opposition groups called the NF-LF was formed. On the right, a resurgent BJP believed that its newfound popularity would allow it to dethrone the INC as the country's most powerful party. The BJP attempted to establish a coalition government with regional partners, but it was unable to secure a majority. The INC suffered its most heinous defeat in history. Deve Gowda, the leader of the JD, formed a UF coalition government. His administration lasted 18 months. The UF government was then constituted by I.K Gujaral with the help of the INC (Nikolenyi, 1998: 368).

In 1998, the sixth political party changed hands. The volatility rate stayed essentially unchanged, at 20%, from the previous election. The BJP was successful in forming a government. The BJP formed a strong alliance with over a dozen regional parties to prevent the isolation that led to the fall of its 13-day government in 1996. Despite winning 25.6 percent of the vote and 179 seats, the BJP fell short of a majority in the elections. The party's support surged again in the 1998 elections, thanks to Vajpayee's personal popularity, a split in the anti-BJP vote between the INC and the UF, and, most importantly, the success of the party's coalition strategy (Hardgrave and Kochanek, 2008:338).

The BJP and its partners gradually gained ground in the 1991, 1996, and 1998 elections, owing mostly to political expansion through the cultivation of stronger and larger coalitions

with previously unconnected parties. The BJP-led NDA has become competitive and even the largest vote-getter in historically INC-dominated areas as a result of the regional expansion. These variables influenced the outcome of the 1999 election. The volatility rates have reduced to 16.7%. This is due to the BJP's and regional parties' efforts to maintain their electoral support. The BJP lost a single vote in 1999 owing to the withdrawal of one of their coalition partners, the AIADMK, due to a lack of coherence in the 24-party NDA. The INC, the largest opposition party, was unable to secure enough support from regional and left-wing groupings to create a majority administration.

India appeared to have entered a "Post-Congress phase" in its political history in the 1990s. The INC lost its ability to bring together factions that were sometimes diametrically opposed, including as upper castes, dalits, and Muslims. Indeed, the INC dominance formula relied on this ability to cover competing social groupings until the early 1990s. It was a true "catch-all" gathering. According to the CSDS's pan-India opinion polls, the INC was able to attract between 35.8% and 50.5 percent of voters from all social groups until the 1980s. Brahmins, SCs, STs, and Muslims continued to be overrepresented in the INC electorate in 1989. The INC obtained 41 percent of Brahmin votes, 44.2 percent of SC/ST votes, and 45.8 percent of Muslim ballots in a district where the INC received 39.5 percent of legitimate votes. Throughout the 1990s, the INC's support dwindled across the board. The BJP and a huge number of regional parties benefited the most from this fall, from the disintegration of the social alliance that had kept the party in power (Chibber, 1999; Jaffrelot, 2003; and Chandra, 1999). The national character of Indian politics had changed as the INC could no longer play the role of a catch-all party (Yadav, 2000).

Since 1996, the chances of the INC losing a seat in which it was the incumbent have increased considerably, despite a decrease in the number of INC incumbent seats, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of seats contested. From the 1996 election onwards, there appeared to be an anti-incumbency factor working against the INC. The INC lost over half of the constituencies in which it was the incumbent party in the 1998 elections, and nearly two-thirds in the 1996 and 1999 elections. However, starting with the 1996 election, the INC had a 50-50 chance of being elected from seats it had held in the previous election. This indicated a broader deterioration in the INC's fortunes rather than anti-incumbency sentiment.

Borooah (2006) provides four methods for determining the strength of INC anti-incumbency sentiment after 1996: One way to analyse is to compare the INC's electoral performance as an incumbent party to its overall electoral performance (i.e. the ratio of incumbent wins to losses to total wins to total losses). It was discovered that in the 1996 and 1999 elections, the chances of an incumbent party winning were nearly twice as big as the chances of an incumbent party losing. As a result, there was no anti-incumbency feeling toward the INC on this metric. The INC's electoral success as an incumbent and non-incumbent party, as well as the representation of incumbents and non-incumbents in the total number of seats contested by the INC, can be compared in a second method. In the 1998 and 1999 elections, it was discovered that the chances of an INC victory as a non-incumbent party were higher than the chances of an INC victory as an incumbent party. As a result, there was anti-incumbency

feeling toward the INC on this bill, as well as during these elections. A third option is to look at its election record in marginal seats as both an incumbent and a main challenger. It indicated that while the INC was the incumbent party, it performed better in marginal seats than when it was the main opponent. Finally, the INC's vote share in seats where it was the incumbent and seats where it was the challenger was reviewed. This revealed that winning INC incumbents received more votes than winning INC non-incumbents, but losing INC incumbents received more votes than losing INC non-incumbents (Borooah, 2006:16-17).

Following the two Lok Sabha elections in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the party system's fragmented nature remained mostly unchanged. In the 2004 elections, the seventh party transition occurred, with the INC re-emerging as the ruling party. The BJP's meteoric rise came to an end when it was defeated in the 2004 elections. Many people compared the BJP's fall to the INC's stunning defeat in 1977. The election of 2004 was more of a head-to-head contest between the INC and the BJP than any prior Lok Sabha election in the 1990s because there was no plausible Third Front option. On the one side, there was the BJP and its allies, and on the other, there was the INC and its allies. Surprisingly, the rate of volatility in this election had decreased. It was because, since the 1999 elections, there had been little variation in the vote share of the INC and the BJP. In reality, both parties saw a drop in the number of votes cast. INC's vote share dropped from 28.3 percent in 1999 to 26.5 percent in 2004, while the BJP's share dropped from 23.8 percent in 1999 to 22.2 percent in 2004. In the 2009 elections, INC's performance improved slightly. The percentage of volatility has risen to 15.6 percent. The INC solidified themselves between the 2004 and 2009 elections, increasing its strength from 145 MPs in 2004 to 206 seats in 2009.

With the switch from the INC to the BJP in 2014, the electoral volatility increased by 7.4 percent. With 44 seats and 19.3 percent of the vote, the INC's performance deteriorated considerably, while the BJP's performance improved to the point where it was capable of creating a single-party government. In the 2014 elections, the BJP was able to capture 282 seats and 31.1 percent of the vote on its own.

As seen in table 5, party turnover is noticeable in eight elections where the incumbent party or the coalition's leading party has lost. When there is party turnover in five out of eight election years (i.e. 1977, 1980, 1989, 1996, and 2014), electoral volatility increases in the following election year compared to the prior election year. During these years, there was a shift in the political parties' support base, as well as party turnover. Party turnover did not necessarily contribute to greater electoral instability in the remaining three elections (i.e. 1991, 1998, and 2004). This could be owing to the two major parties' ability to consolidate electoral support: the INC and the BJP. The vote win gap between the two major parties was not particularly large. Table 6 compares party turnover and electoral volatility across countries.

As a result, we don't have clear evidence that party turnover is always the result of massive movements in the competing parties' electoral support bases. As seen in Table 6, when there is a change in political parties, it does not always mean that party support will be unstable for

all election years. Electoral volatility may reduce as a result of party turnover.

### 13. Table 6: Party Turnover and Electoral Volatility in a Comparative Perspective

14.

PT+Increase in EV			PT+Decrease in EV		
Elections	PT	EV	Elections	PT	EV
1977	JP	44.3	1991	INC	12.9
1980	INC	45.3	1998	BJP	20.0
1989	JD	28.2	2004	INC	14.0
1996	JD	20.7			
2014	BJP	23.0			
Average EV		32.3	Average EV		15.6

**Note:** 'PT' indicates party turnover

When the averages of electoral volatility in cases of party turnover and increased electoral volatility and party turnover and decreased electoral volatility are compared from table 6, it is clear that when the incumbent party is defeated, electoral volatility is likely to increase (average is 32.3 percent ). In order to avoid defeat by a new party, the incumbent party may form alliances in order to increase its authority. The relationship between party coalitions and the stability of party support at the national level is the subject of the next section.

### 5. Party Coalitions

The nature and dynamics of India's party system are unlike any other. Although Indian politics is a multiparty system, it has been characterised by one dominating party system for lengthy periods of modern India's electoral history, with the INC at the centre. Since the 1970s, the Indian political system has become increasingly competitive, both at the national level and at the state level. Political formations and interests have been developed into full-fledged political parties, notwithstanding their perplexing diversity. The divided mandate that has resulted in hung parliaments and multi-party coalitions has been a recurring characteristic of political outcomes since 1989. With the development of multi-party coalitions at the national level and in numerous states, the era of single-party governments has come to an end. Political instability has emerged from several types of complications, with regular fluctuations in party support for political parties in India.

In India, coalitions are mostly owed to a group of determined individuals who get together to govern for personal and political gain. Power is the unifying factor. Experts and political parties agree that the period of coalition politics has only just begun, and that it appears that it will soon become the norm in the country. After years of functioning under a one-party dominating system, India's political system is now based on coalition politics, in which different political parties share power at the national and state levels at the same time. Regional political groups are gaining traction, and single-party government is no longer an option; coalition politics is the only way to go. Coalition politics, according to experts, is the result of the emergence of regional parties and national objectives.

The effectiveness of regional parties in articulating the demands of assertive backward castes and dalits or untouchables is one of the reasons for their growing relevance. In terms of geographic location, these parties remain regional, but they are national in terms of concerns that affect the entire country. Their participation in the national coalition reflects a more competitive and polarised political environment. The continuation of coalition administrations like the NDA and UPA demonstrates not just the fall of one-party control and the rise of regional and minor parties, but also a majoritarian political culture crisis centred on the supremacy of a single party led by a charismatic leader. According to Arora (2002), Roy (2004), Sridharan (2008), Singh (2008), Pandey (2010), and Kumar (2010), the era of coalition government has had both beneficial and negative effects (2011). This section focuses primarily on the relationship between party coalitions and, as a result, its impact on party support stability in 1989 and between 1996 and 2014. Between 1952 and 2014, Table 7 shows single-party governments, party coalitions, and electoral volatility at the national level.

Table 7 shows that India has undergone multiple fragmented verdicts since 1989, resulting in the emergence of minority or coalition governments. Since 1989, no single political party has secured a majority of Lok Sabha seats. In the preceding three and a half decades of Indian democracy, the INC gained a majority of seats and formed single-party governments in seven of the first eight elections, from 1952 to 1984. For the first time in 1977, the INC was defeated by a coalition of practically the whole opposition. The election was won by the Janata Party. The INC(O), the BJS, the BLD, the Congress for Democracy (CFD), and the Socialist Party were the five primary groups in the Janata Party group to build an all-India alternative to the INC. CPI and CPM were two other supporters. But the Janata Alliance did not last as a party and it began to disintegrate into separate parties by the end of 1979.

### 15. Table 7: Single-Party Government, Party Coalitions and Electoral Volatility at the National Level

16.

<b>Election Year</b>	<b>Single Party Government</b>	<b>EV</b>
1952	INC	--
1957	INC	23.3
1962	INC	16.2
1967	INC	17.6
1971	INC	18.2
1977	JP	44.3
1980	INC	45.3
1984	INC	23.9
1991	INC	12.9
<b>Election Year</b>	<b>Party Coalitions</b>	<b>EV</b>
1989	JD <sup>+</sup>	28.2
1996	JD <sup>+</sup>	20.7
1998	BJP <sup>+</sup>	20.0

1999	BJP <sup>+</sup>	16.7
2004	INC <sup>+</sup>	14.0
2009	INC <sup>+</sup>	15.6
2014	BJP <sup>+</sup>	23.0

**Source:** Election Commission of India, [http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main1/ElectionStatistics.aspx](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/ElectionStatistics.aspx), retrieved on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2012.

In the 1980 election, the INC (I) re-established its dominance, resulting in a change in electoral support from the Janata Alliance to the INC(I) (I). The INC (I) was able to gain enough seats to create a majority government in 1980. Efforts to unite the elements of the JP and establish opposition unity continued throughout the 1980s, but to little avail. Indira Gandhi's assassination in October 1984 removed the focal point that could have brought the opposition together. The opposition in Parliament was essentially wiped out as a result of the results (Hardgrave and Kochanek, 2008: 322).

Table 7 shows that election volatility appears to be considerable, averaging 25.2 percent on average between 1957 and 1991, while single-party administrations were in power. This is due to a strong anti-incumbency wave during this period, which saw a major movement from INC to JP in 1977 and then back to INC in 1980, resulting in considerable electoral instability. During the remaining election years, the INC has reigned as the incumbent party. Table 7 also shows that when there are party coalitions, electoral volatility appears to be lower on average, at 19.7% in 1989 and 1996-2014. This is because, despite being part of separate coalitions, the two biggest polity-wide parties, the INC and the BJP, received close to 50% of the vote in their favour. The exception was the 1989 elections, when the JD administration was created and electoral volatility was greater compared to prior elections in which party alliances were formed. Let us now look at the election years in which there were party coalitions.

The creation of JD in 1989 gave the process of forming alliances a considerable boost. The JD was a merger of two Lok Dals, led by Ajit Singh and Devi Lal in North India, and the JP of R.K Hegde in Karnataka, under the leadership of V.P Singh, who was expelled from the INC. The JD was a successful pre-election alliance that reintroduced the concept of a coalition as a viable alternative, supporting the strategy of giving the INC one-to-one opposition. This was a two-tiered partnership. The National Front (the JD, the two Lok Dals, and the JP), three regional parties (the TDP, DMK, and AGP), and the Congress formed a formal pre-election cooperation (Socialist). The second level was a more informal seat swap between the National Front and the BJP on one hand, and the Left parties on the other, notwithstanding their ideological differences (Chakrabarty, 2006:5-6).

The National Front of 1989 was an unusual Indian partnership. It did not strive to unite highly disparate groups into a single party, learning from the JP's experience in 1977-79. Instead, it formed a coalition of disparate parties around a single platform. It did it by bringing overtly regional parties into the coalition and accommodating the Left. Furthermore,

it resurrected the concept of 'seat adjustments,' which was first deployed by the INC's opponents in 1977. It attempted to achieve a compromise between two ideologically diametrically opposed forces. Its demise was blamed on a widening schism between the BJP and other National Front members, which resulted in the BJP's withdrawal of support for the administration (Sridharan, 2003:139). In compared to the 1984 elections, the volatility increased with the advent of the National Front government. The transition from the INC to the JD government in 1989 was foreseen. When the INC lost to the JP for the first time in 1977, it had 154 seats and 35% of the vote, compared to 197 seats and 40% of the vote in 1989. This demonstrates that the shifts in electoral support were greater in the 1977 elections than in the 1989 elections. The JD government did not endure long, and V.P Singh was succeeded at the end of 1990 by Chandra Shekhar, who served as caretaker Prime Minister until June 1991.

The INC, unlike the BJP in the late 1980s and early 1990s, was in a period of steady decline. The INC had a strong party machine and internal discipline in the post-independence period, but this began to weaken in the 1960s. In the 1980s, there was a gradual erosion of internal party democracy, increased use of centralising institutional devices, and interference in state government operations under Mrs Indira Gandhi, leading to a loss of autonomy, de-institutionalization, and even weakening of party organisation in the states. Despite enormous victories in 1980 and 1984, the party did not reclaim its dominance in the Hindi heartland, particularly among the SCs and minorities, resulting in a progressive shrinkage of its regional and social base in the states, allowing regional/state parties to flourish. Deep schisms within the political system, exacerbated by the BJP's sectarian mobilisation that failed to form a government and the INC's demise, prompted regional parties to band together and experiment with a 'Third Front' separate from either the INC or the communal BJP.

Following the fall of the JD National Front administration in 1990, opposition unity disintegrated once more, as it had done in 1979, and the National Front's constituent sections fought the 1991 elections. The JD government stayed inert after the INC's electoral victory. With the INC returning to office with a majority, the volatility rate fell to 12.9 percent, owing to a sympathy wave triggered by Rajiv Gandhi's killing during the election process. The 1991 elections were a three-cornered fight with approximately the same electoral alliances, although the National Front was pitted against both the BJP and the INC. The INC was able to construct a single-party minority administration with the help of the 11-member AIADMK and several smaller partners. It began expanding its ranks by separating lesser parties like the TDP and Ajit Singh's Lok Dal group. By 1991, the BJP's upper caste Hindu constituency had reached its limit, and it was no longer enough to achieve a national majority. The INC dissolved after 1991 as a result of its failure to integrate regional elites. Many independents and regional parties arose in this vacuum, with some attempting to establish tiny alliances among themselves (Carroll, 2008:11).

The federal administration went through a period of upheaval from 1996 to 1999, marked by many short-lived partnerships. During this time, the average level of electoral volatility was around 20%. The party system remained stable, possibly as a result of the formation of a bi-

nodal framework led by the INC and the BJP. The two nodes of the political system are these two prominent multi-state parties. They frequently seek out partners for strategic rather than ideological grounds. The INC and the BJP are the country's two most powerful multi-state or polity-wide parties today. For a long period, the INC was the sole multi-state polity-wide party, and the BJP just joined this category in 1996. With minor changes, the combined share of the two biggest multi-state parties has stayed nearly constant. The share of the other multi-state parties, on the other hand, has fluctuated more. It's also worth noting that the percentage of single-state parties and Independents has risen steadily over time. The INC has carved out a niche for polity-wide multi-state parties, while the BJP and other multi-state parties have been gradually pushed out (Arora and Kailash, 2011:8-9).

Because no party was able to win a majority in the 1996 Lok Sabha elections, the United Front, led by Deve Gowda and I.K.Gujral, and supported by the INC, created two short-lived, unstable coalition governments. Attempts to create an unified economic policy and the inter-relationship among the partners were two contentious topics in both. The failure of these two efforts in the mid-1990s led to the realisation that a stable coalition at the centre requires a mix of national and regional parties.

The National Front-Left Front collaboration was founded in 1996. The JD coalition won by building a broad-based post-election coalition government akin to the National Front of 1989. The JD, the SP, the CPI, the CPM, the Forward Bloc, and the RSP were the coalition's main players. These parties, in turn, made electoral compromises with a number of regional parties. In the 1996 elections, the BJP won the most seats (161) with a total of 161. The Indian President has asked the party to form the government. The BJP faced stiff opposition from secular opposition groups anxious to keep a Hindu nationalist administration from taking power. As a result, the BJP government was compelled to quit after only 13 days in power. The National Front-Left Front government reached out to secular and regional parties, resulting in the formation of the United Front (UF), a 14-party alliance to replace the BJP, which is reliant on INC's outside backing. The JD, SP, CPI, CPM, RSP, Forward Bloc, Tamil Manila Congress (TMC), DMK, TDP, AGP, All India Indira Congress (Tiwari), Karnataka Congress Party (KCP), and Madhya Pradesh Vikas Congress (MPVC) were the key constituents of the UF (Hardgrave and Kochanek, 2008:329- 30). There was no ideological battle between the left and the right this time, as there was in 1989. The problem was that many of the UF's constituent parties saw the INC as their main political adversary. This rendered the INC inherently 'uncoalitionable,' which proved to be a major flaw. The INC withdrew their support in 1997, resulting in the 1998 elections (Sridharan, 2003:140).

In 1998, the BJP created the National Democratic Alliance with 13 other parties to form a truly viable national political alliance (NDA-I). AIADMK, PMK, MDMK, TRC, Janata Party of Tamil Nadu; Samata Party of Bihar; Samata Party of Uttar Pradesh; BJD of Odisha; SAD of Punjab; TMC of West Bengal; SHS of Maharashtra; Lok Shakti of Karnataka; and HVP of Haryana were among the parties that belonged to it. Haryana's HLDR, Arunachal Pradesh's ARC, Sikkim's SDF, and Andhra Pradesh's TDP were among the post-election allies. There were also Independents from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Assam, and Tamil Nadu and

Karnataka, as well as Anglo-Indians from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka (Pai, 1998: 836-37). The key outcomes were an increase in the BJP's seat and vote tally. The BJP and its allies only succeeded in replacing the UF coalition with another short-lived coalition in the 1998 election, despite emerging as the single largest party and creating a coalition government. Second, various regional parties have arisen as a result of pre- and post-election alliances, shaping the nature of the national party system to a large extent. With the loss of a crucial NDA-I ally, the AIADMK, early in the campaign, new elections were called, and the BJP focused even more on forming a credible pre-election alliance capable of gaining a majority.

Running on a common manifesto in 1999, the BJP led NDA-II strengthened itself by bringing together 24 regional parties like TDP, Janata Dal United (JDU), SAD, DMK, PMK, MDMK, BJD, SHS, HVP, INLD, Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), MNF, MSCP, SAP, TMC, Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC), Lok Shakti and including splinters from INC. The NDA-win II's in the 1999 elections brought back political stability, as the BJP-led coalition became the first non-Congress administration to serve a complete five-year term. According to Lefebvre and Cyril (2009), the emergence of the BJP-led NDA marks a fundamental shift in the party system toward stable coalitions made up of national and state-based parties. In the sense that it has increased the federal character of the national polity, the NDA is a new phenomenon. Previous coalitions represented the INC and all other parties in opposition to the INC, but lacked the federal character of the NDA or UPA in the 2004 and 2009 elections.

During the period 2004-2009, the volatility rate fell to 14 percent in 2004 and slightly climbed to 15.6 percent in 2009. In 2004, the INC and the BJP had a combined seat share of 283 seats, down from 296 in 1999. In 2004, the INC's vote share climbed while the BJP's vote share declined. In terms of vote share, there was little difference between the parties. The INC received 28 percent of the vote in 1999, but only 27 percent in 2004. In 1999, the BJP received 24 percent of the vote, which dropped to around 22 percent in 2004. Between 1999 and 2004, the variation in electoral support for INC and BJP in terms of vote percentage garnered was not as large.

The INC was able to build a pre-election coalition of 17 parties for the 2004 elections. The BJP's meteoric rise came to an abrupt halt in the 2004 elections, and many compared the party's collapse to the INC's shock defeat in 1977 under Indira Gandhi's leadership. The United Progressive Alliance (UPA-I), led by INC, defeated the NDA-II and took control of the government. MDMK, PMK, DMK (these three parties switched from NDA-II to UPA-I in 2004), IUML, JMM, KCM, MUL, NCP, RPI(A), AC, JKPD, LJNSP, Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), Rashtriya Parivartan Dal (RPD), RPI, and TRS were the other members of the UPA-I coalition. The Left Front, led by CPM, lent their support to the coalition. In 2009, the balance of power between the BJP and the INC moved substantially in favour of the INC. The INC received a substantial mandate from the voters in this election, resulting in a 1.6 percent, or 15.6 percent, increase in electoral volatility from 2004. In terms of vote shares, the alliance pattern has stabilised, demonstrating that alliances have clearly established the primary tactic for parties seeking sustainable status. The INC-led UPA-II was

founded in 2009 with the assistance of the NCP, RLD, JKNC, IUML, and KCM, as well as SP, BSP, RJD, JD(S), SDF, Bodoland People's Front (BPF), AIUDF, and Bahujan Vikas Aghadi (BVA).

The BJP-led NDA coalition was created with 29 member parties in the 2014 elections. DMDK, PMK, MDMK, TDP, SHS, SAD, Swabhimani Paksha, LJSP, RLSP, HJC, Apna Dal, NPP, and NPF were among the alliance's key members. The BJP-led NDA won a landslide win in this election. With the anti-incumbency wave against the INC-led UPA-II established in 2009, electoral volatility surged to 23%.

As seen in Table 7, the tendency of coalition politics began in India in some form in 1977. It was put on hold in 1980 and 1984. It's tough to imagine India without coalition governments since 1989. This was due to the steady decline of the Congress system, which was accompanied by party fragmentation. With the emergence of the National Front coalition in 1989, electoral volatility heightened for the 1989 elections. The electoral instability rose in 1996, with the emergence of the JD alliance, compared to 1991. With a marginal variance of 0.7 percent from the 1996 elections, the volatility rate stayed nearly unchanged in 1998. The electoral volatility in 1999 decreased due to the continuance of the same alliance as in 1998. Despite the loss of the BJP-led NDA-II coalition in 2004, the vote share of the BJP and INC did not vary substantially between 1999 and 2004, resulting in a decrease in electoral volatility. From 2009 onwards, electoral support appears to be more evenly split between the INC and the BJP, as evidenced by the 2014 elections. As a result, electoral volatility increased from 15.6 percent in 2009 to 23 percent in the 2014 elections.

As a result, as seen in the election years of 1998, 1999, and 2004, party coalitions do not always contribute to an increase in electoral instability. This could be due to the electoral support bases of the two national parties, the INC and the BJP, which lead two separate coalitions at the national level, the UPA and the NDA. The electoral support for the two major parties has been relatively constant since 1996, with only minor deviations; both parties are able to secure roughly 50% of the vote. As they share political power, the parties are able to maintain their support bases. The 2014 elections were an anomaly; despite the fact that the two parties polled nearly 50% of the vote, the BJP received the most votes. Table 8 shows changes in electoral support for the coalition's leading parties at the national level from 1989 to 2014.

**17. Table 8: Shifts in the Electoral Support of the Parties heading the Coalition at the National Level**

18.

Parties	Year of Elections							
	1989	1991	1996	1998	1999	2004	2009	2014
INC	39.5	36.6 (-2.9)	28.8 (-7.8)	25.8 (-3.0)	28.3 (+2.5)	26.5 (-1.8)	28.6 (+2.1)	19.3 (-9.3)
BJP	11.3	20.0	20.3	25.6	23.8	22.2	18.8	31.1

		(+8.7)	(+0.3)	(+5.3)	(-1.8)	(-1.6)	(-3.4)	(+12.3)
JD	17.8	11.8 (-6.0)	8.1 (-3.7)	--	--	--	--	--
Total Votes Polled by INC and BJP	50.8	56.6	49.1	51.4	52.1	48.7	47.4	50.4

**Source:** Election Commission of India, [http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main1/ElectionStatistics.aspx](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/ElectionStatistics.aspx), retrieved on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2012.

**Note:** 1. (+) indicate Gain and (-) indicate Loss in electoral support.

2. In 1991, there was no party coalitions but in order to show the shift, the 1991 column is included.

## 6. Conclusion

To sum up, this study looked at the impact of many factors on the stability of party support at the national level. Voter turnout, closeness of party competition, party turnover, and party coalitions are the many elements. The literature on each of the above elements leads to the conclusion that they are all likely to enhance party support instability. However, according to this study, there is a mixed pattern in the association between each of these criteria and the stability of party support.

Examining the relationship between voter turnout and electoral volatility, it is found that the electoral volatility seems to be high for five (i.e. 1957, 1967, 1977, 1996 and 2014 respectively) out of eight elections, when there is increase in voter turnout. The rise in electoral volatility between 1957 and 1967 could be attributed to a partial shift away from the ruling party due to disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the government, as well as the emergence of new parties such as the PSP, SWA, and RPI, all of which were capable of securing certain vote percentages. The rise in polling percentages between 1957 and 1967 could be attributed to a rise in political awareness and interest in democratic elections. The electoral volatility appears to be strong in rest elections held in 1977, 1996, and 2014, owing to the availability of party alternatives for the mobilised voters.

The electoral volatility appears to be lower in the remaining elections (i.e. 1962, 1984, and 1998), when voter turnout increased. The relationship between party competitiveness and electoral volatility has a mixed pattern as well. The electoral volatility appeared to be significant in four out of eight election years (i.e. 1967, 1977, 1989, and 1996) when the closeness of party rivalry rose. In these four elections, the degree of competition between the first and second place parties looks to be considerable, as evidenced by INC and PSP in 1967, JP and INC in 1977, and INC and JD in 1989 and 1996. Due to unhappiness with the INC's performance in 1967 or the incumbent party's defeats in 1977, 1989, and 1996, electoral instability appears to be strong. When there is an increase in the closeness of party rivalry in the remaining four elections (i.e. 1962, 1991, 1998, and 2004), electoral volatility appears to be lower. According to the cut-off values for closeness of party competition, there is higher closeness of party competition in 1977 and between 1996 and 2009 election years, when the closeness rate is below 10%.

When it comes to party turnover and electoral volatility, it's been discovered that in five of the eight elections (i.e. 1977, 1980, 1989, 1996, and 2014), the electoral volatility looks to be significant. The anti-incumbency tsunami causes voters to switch from the incumbent party to a new party in order to bring about government change. As in the 2014 elections, when the support base is skewed, the incumbent party is defeated (defeat of INC by BJP). During party transition, there is a greater level of variation in electoral support, making electoral volatility appear to be excessive. However, in the last three elections (i.e. 1991, 1998, and 2004), party turnover did not necessarily result in increased electoral volatility. This is because, since 1991, there has been some level of closeness in party competition between the INC and the BJP, so even if a different incumbent party, such as the JD in 1991, is defeated, electoral support has remained confined to the INC as the first place party and the BJP as the second place party between 1991 and 2009.

When the relationship between party coalitions and party support stability is examined, it is discovered that in four out of seven elections (i.e. 1989, 1996, 2009, and 2014), party coalitions result in more electoral volatility. The electoral volatility appeared to be high in 1989, when the first successful coalition government at the Centre was formed. Suddenly, the INC's rule was shattered, and the government shifted to the JD. In 1996, a move from the INC to the JD alliance occurred once more, resulting in party support volatility. The electoral support gap between the INC-led UPA-II and the BJP-led NDA-II increased in 2009, and the vote victory disparity between the two parties heading two separate coalitions continued to widen in the 2014 elections. As a result, electoral volatility increased in the 2009 and 2014 elections, respectively. In the remaining three elections (i.e., 1998, 1999, and 2004), we see close party competition between the INC and the BJP, which lead two separate coalitions. As a result, there appears to be less electoral volatility.

As a result, the link between the above-mentioned parameters and the stability of party support exhibits a varied pattern of association. These factors are likely to result in increased electoral volatility in some election years, but they may not necessarily contribute to party support instability in others. In the next study, we'll see how true these statements are in the context of states, based on what we've learned from the literature.

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