CHAPTER-VI

CONCLUSION

The political parties exist in almost all the political systems all over world. They may be authoritarian or democratic, which seek power through elections or through revolutions and espouse ideologies of the left, right or center or, indeed disavow political ideas altogether. In other words, political parties are unifying agency, which make democracy workable and provide indispensable links between the people and the representative machinery of the government. The party system is necessary for the existence and operations of modern political system, as masses are unable to govern themselves. The parties aggregate certain interests into a set of policy proposals and then attempt to garner victory at polls to install decision makers. The party system is a product of many complex factors like tradition and history, social and economic structures, religious beliefs, racial composition and national rivalries etc.

The party system of a specific country can be defined by the forms and modes of co-existence of political parties prevailing there. The Indian party system was gradually growing under the shadows of freedom movement and within the framework of parliamentary form of government. Both these environments exerted their influence on the present characters and structures of the political parties. Over a period of time, various social, economic, political associations and organizations as Brahmo Samaj-1829, British Indian Association of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay-1851/52, Arya Samaj-1875, Theosophical Society-1875, Hindu Mahasabha-1924, Singh Sabha Movement-1873, Akali Dal-1920, Communist Party of India-1924, Swaraj Party-1922 on the one hand and founding of the Indian National Congress by A.O. Hume in December 1885, provided firm base to party system in the country, on the other. From 1st parliamentary elections in 1952, to 15th Lok Sabha elections in 2009, Indian party system passed through various stages, from one party dominant system to fragmented party system with evolution of ‘bi-polarity’. It is very difficult to categorize it as a one party dominant system, bi-party system, multi-party system
then turn to bi-polarity or “multiple bi-polarity”. In simple words, party system passed through various phases or stages since independence.

The Congress Party in its early stage leading the national freedom movement successfully and transformed itself into a dominant party of the country during the first four parliamentary elections from 1952 to 1967. Rajni Kothari referred it as “Congress System” and Morris Jones, coined as “one party dominant system”. There was free competition among political parties, but Congress Party emerged as a dominant party.

The Indian party system in its evolutionary process, passed through essentially transitional phase of politics of one party dominant system to politics of polarization of regional parties, that is, party system moved from ‘monopoly to competition.’ The parliamentary elections in 1967, did represent a major step in the direction of an increasingly competitive polity and a more differentiated structure of party competition. The opposition parties entered into number of pre-poll alliances in different states, with a view to dislodging the ruling Congress from power at the Centre and in the states. The CPI (M), Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP), Republican Party and Muslims League tied-up to defeat Congress Party in Kerala. The other regional parties formed electoral alliances and then turning into coalition governments in Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat, Haryana and Madras (Tamil Nadu). However, in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, Congress Party constituted government, with the help of independents and others. This trend continued in 1969 assembly elections of Punjab, West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The Akali Dal in Punjab and United Front in West Bengal emerged as viable regional forces to alternate the Congress Party in their respective regions. These alliances were more opportunistic than responsibility. The regional parties tried to use alliance arrangement as to strengthen their support base. This led them to take possession of key portfolios in the government, by which vast power of resources and patronages could be commanded.

The landslide victory of Congress Party in 1971 national elections and assemblies’ elections, established the personality cult of Indira Gandhi over the Indian polity, in general and party system, in particular. She tried to bring the party
as well as government under her personal control by creating a ‘pyramidal type of
decision-making structure’ in the party as well as in the government. Consequently,
all the decisions related with party and government, as who is the Chief Minister,
‘Pradesh’ (state) Party President, selection of party’s office bearers and allocation of
party tickets etc taken by the Prime Minister. Indira Gandhi centralised power
structure within party and adopted intolerant attitude towards non-Congress ruling
parties in various states. In other words, “one party dominant system turned to one
person dominant system.” The post-1967 period saw two very important
developments; firstly, the delinking of parliamentary and assembly elections since
1971 and secondly, suspension of organizational elections within the Congress Party

The process of bi-party system or situation initiated in the country after the
post-emergency parliamentary elections in 1977. The Congress Party faced a
temporarily united opposition, which came from Janata Party, constituted after the
merger of Congress (O), Jan Sangh, Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD) and Socialist Party
just before elections. The Janata Party (JP) won 298 seats and Congress reduced to
just 153 seats in the Lower House. The national elections in 1977 consolidated the
electorates broadly into two camps, because both the parties (JP and INC) got
seventy eight percentage of votes and eighty three percentage of seats in Parliament.
In a similar fashion, there was straight fight between two major contenders, Janata
Party and Congress Party in fourteen Vidhan Sabha polls, held in June 1977. The
Janata Party swept all, except four states as Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Tamil
Nadu and West Bengal. In these states, regional parties namely Akali Dal, National
Conference, All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and
Communist parties, respectively formed governments.

In short, the electoral changes in 1977 parliamentary elections, affected both
the pattern of voters’ choice as well as institutional framework of the party system.
It brought about an end of Congress System and in its place, ushered two-party
system in the country. The Janata Party’s continued victory in the assemblies’
elections of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in 1978, while Congress Party managed
to retain Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, further strengthen the traits of bi-party system.
However, the massive shift of votes and unfavourable vote-seats distortion were
responsible for rise of two party situations, instead of two-party system. It is so; both Congress and Janata Party were experiencing stresses and strains, and arose scepticism about their long term viability, on the one side, and the ego clashes among top three leaders of Janata Party as Moraji Desai, Jagjivan Ram and Charan Singh, who desired to occupy top positions in the government and previous legacies of the constituents of Janata Party, aggravated the tendency towards fatal factionalism, on the other. The Janata Party experiment exposed the vices of the coalition of parties, formed merely in order to address certain immediate concerns and governed by the idea of mutual convenience, without any long term perspectives on the socio-economic and political concern of the country.

The mandate of national elections 1980, once again established supremacy of Congress Party by wining thumping two-thirds (2/3) majority with 351 seats out of 525 Lok Sabha seats, following disintegration of Janata Party, on the one hand, and party (Congress) also won majority in eight out of the nine Vidhan Sabha elections except Tamil Nadu, on the other. In a way, almost, all political parties were decimated in national elections 1980 and even unable to win sufficient number of seats in the Lower House, to be declared as a ‘recognised opposition’. Indira Gandhi turned increasingly to ‘bureaucratic’ rather than the politician for counsel. The decision-making process became personalized, centralized and ad-hoc. But, the performance of All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and Akali Dal in assemblies’ elections indicated that they were still forces to be reckoned at state levels, on the one side, the electorates learned to discriminate between state assembly elections and Lok Sabha elections and react differently, on the other. The ruling party (INC) at the Centre did not response to regional concern as well as the absence of a strong national opposition party, contributed to the growth of regional parties and regionalization of national parties. The National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir, CPI (M) in both West Bengal and Tripura, newly emerged TDP in Andhra Pradesh and Janata Dal in Karnataka were able to constitute governments in their respective states in 1983, were the best examples.

The 8th Lok Sabha elections held in 1984, after the assassination of Indira Gandhi, which generated sympathy wave in favour of Congress Party. Consequently, the Congress Party gained the highest ever votes share 48.1
percentage with 415 Lok Sabha seats. Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister, began his tenure with resolve to reform and democratize Indian polity, in general and Congress organization, in particular. Rajiv Gandhi ministry brought somewhat fresh approach to the regional problems, especially in relations to non-Congress ruling states that were marked by agitational movements. Rajiv Gandhi signed series of peace accords with major regional parties in Punjab, Assam, Mizoram and Tripura. However, the Congress continued under his leadership, highly centralized, with state and local leadership fragmented, with an absence of organizational vitality.

The victory of Congress Party in 1980 and 1984 parliamentary elections and in subsequent state assemblies, under the leadership of Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi, strengthen traits of ‘charismatic leadership’. The INC was in this phase totally dependent on leader as hegemon, on one side and failure of non-Congress or anti-Congress parties at national level, on the other. Indira Gandhi had patrimonial view of Indian politics. She thought that estate (India political system) inherited from her father (Nehru), which should be transmitted to her heirs (sons). That is why; Indira Gandhi was reluctant to allow her party leaders with an independent popular support to emerge in state or at the Centre. Consequently, the party was organizationally weak because, there was gradual erosion of inner-party democracy, due to suspension of party elections, control over tickets allocation; finance party machinery and appointment of Chief Ministers etc, all became the prerogative of the Centre. Rajiv Gandhi also failed to reserve these trends and revitalize the party structures. Hence, there was a total shift from a mediatory to plebiscitary model in which leader over shadowed the party, thereby weakening it.

The fractured mandate of 1989 parliamentary elections, produced a ‘hung Parliament’, first time since independence, in which no party was able to get an absolute majority in the Lower House. It was more diversified and differentiated pattern of party domination in Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas, tended to give rise to more federalized power structure. As a result of this, there was significant shift in the power structure at the top (Centre), that is, the party system made a formal switch over from one party dominant system to multi-party system. A triangular contest among Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and National Front (NF), began to shape in 9th general elections 1989. The Congress Party emerged as a
single largest party with 197 seats in the Lok Sabha, but decided to sit in the opposition benches. The non-Congress groups or parties notably Lok Dal (A), Lok Dal (B), Janata Party and splinter groups from Congress Party under the leadership of V.P. Singh merged in the National Front. The Janata Dal led NF under the command of V.P. Singh came into power, had only 141 members in the popular House, backed by both rightist-BJP and leftist-CPI (M) in 1989.

The controversial decisions particularly L.K. Advani’s *Rath Yatra* and Mandal Commission report promulgation plan generated rifts among the partners of the NF, which led towards collapse. Chandra Shekhar faction separated from JD/NF, founded a new party Samajwadi Janata Party, which formed government with outside support of Congress Party. So, never had country been governed by such a small group of fifty four parliamentarians. Both, the governments of V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar were short lived and fell after a brief and dismal performance. It is observed that the outside partners, as BJP and Congress Party withdrew their support from the V.P. Singh government and Chandra Shekhar ministry, respectively, which revealed that post-poll alliances were not stable in the case of the NF experiment. Secondly, the size of the largest party, Janata Dal in National Front coalition did not provide any guarantee to its longevity.

The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister, during parliamentary elections campaign in southern part of Tamil Nadu in May 1991, created a leadership vacuum in the INC and also generated sympathy wave for its slain leader in 1991 national elections. However, no party or combination of parties could aspire towards a majority, then P.V. Narasimha Rao constituted minority government with the help of AIADMK and other smaller allies.

In 90s, three ‘Ms’-Madal, Mandir, and Market, that is *Madal* Commission recommendations for OBC reservations, *Ramjamboomi-Babri Masjid* dispute and new economic policy, became decisive stimulus for change, which created new blend of politics that cut across the established cleavage structure and thus engaging in new kind of mobilization. These developments brought basic changes in party system by polarizing parties on the basis of caste and community. By and large, there was evolution of loose three or four alliance/coalition arrangements by which
national, regional and other smaller parties were able to enhance their position and to coordinate their policies and actions in the Parliament. Consequently, the Congress Party stood at the center of the largest coalition, in which its own representation of 227 was increased to 251, through an alliance with All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and four other minor parties. The BJP alliance with Shiv Sena accounted for another 123 seats. A third coalition, comprised two groupings the Janata Dal led National Front, whose combined strength in the popular House was 140 in 1991 parliamentary elections.

The outcome of 11th national elections in 1996, not only broke down one party dominant system completely, but also of a gradual transition, towards new “region based multi-party system”. All the major national parties Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Indian National Congress (INC) and Janata Dal (JD) competed for power at the Centre. None of these parties had wider support base in the majority of the regions, as the Congress had in Nehruvian era. The political combinations of the BJP, Congress Party and UF/NF reformulated their respective ideologies and realignments among parties at both state and national levels. The Congress Party and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), tried to form alliances with regional/state parties. The BJP tied with SAD (B) in Punjab, Haryana Vikas Manch of Bansi Lal in Haryana and Shiv Sena in Maharashtra etc. While, Congress Party attempted to make an unsuccessful alliance agreement with BSP in Uttar Pradesh. The NF/UF was divided array of parties that could not constitute a cohesive force in the absence of strong leader, who could unite its disparate members. There were number of strong regional parties, did not align with any of three major contenders. As a result of this, the emergence of distinct state party system, which witnessed separate from but closely linked to national party system. The regional parties dominated in their respective regions in which All India and state parties competed for power. The Indian polity entered into a transition period characterized by fluid, fragmented alliance formation and unstable coalition governments, on the one side and the multi-party system at national level, moved towards more “federalization structure”, a process visible in 1989, 1991 and 1996 parliamentary elections, on the other. That is why; A.B. Vajpayee, H.D. Deve Gowda and Inder Kumar Gujral governments collapsed within a year (1996-97). The demise of the UF ministries in April and
November 1997, revealed that the government once again fell due to ‘external ally’ (Congress Party) of the central government withdrew its support. The viability of coalition government totally depended on the outside partner. Now, the balance of power tilted towards regional and smaller players, won 144 seats and 28.62 percentage of votes, while, five major national parties won only 391 seats with 65.26 percentage of votes in Lok Sabha elections 1996. Consequently, the era of coalition/alliance politics started with a bang.

The fractured mandate of 12th Lok Sabha in 1998, confirmed the overall tendency towards “regionalization of Indian politics,” and formation of thirteen parties’ Vajpayee coalition government in March 1998, revealed that Indian Prime Minister would hence forth be made and unmade in state capitals, rather than in national capital New Delhi. Consequently, the regional parties emerged as dominant players at state level, which held balance of power, necessary for the formulation of ruling alliance at the Centre. Most of the political parties except the INC, recognized the significance of pragmatic electoral alliance, which subsequently strengthened the range of regional formations. There started the process of ‘bi-polar tendency’, which created a fragile and transitory coalitional government. Because, regional parties had limited option of alliance, either made electoral pact with the BJP or the INC, to improve their political position, in their respective states and increase their bargaining power with the Centre.

However, these alliances adjustment are neither ideological nor do they have common objectives to cement them together. They are merely short term tactical arrangements developed by ambitious politicians that are rooted in the exchange of mutual benefits and the compulsion of power. The regionalization of politics at state level was more important and continuing factor in shaping national party system. It is first time; a government was based on pre-poll adjustment and headed by the largest political party BJP. The BJP tried to transform itself into a ‘responsible national party’ by shelving its core ideas of Hindutva, that is, party (BJP) change its stand from ‘Ram Mandir’ (Lord Rama temple) to ‘Rashtra Mandir’ (national temple) and now appeared as less untouchable or anti-secular. In simple words, the BJP turned to ‘new softer BJP,’ which froze its main issues. Almost all partners of
NDA shared power with the BJP unlike previous governments of National Front and United Front except, Mamata Banerjee’s Trinamool Congress in 1998.

On the eve of 13th Lok Sabha elections in 1999, new structural developments took place in Indian party system, when BJP led formation of more than twenty parties decided to jointly contest elections under the platform of the NDA and A.B. Vajpayee projected as prime ministerial candidate. The alliance arrangement of the BJP led NDA was based on the formula of seats sharing arrangement to avoid confrontation and had Common Minimum Programme (CMP) and accepted common prime ministerial candidate. The BJP searched for new allies, which provided higher degree of political stability, by accommodating the various regional and smaller parties in 1999 parliamentary elections. In other words, after losing no-confidence motion in April 1999 by a single vote, for the first time, major national party (BJP) pursued a comprehensive strategy of alliances by accepting to field fewer candidates in the bargain. That is why; the BJP decided to field 340 candidates only in 1999 elections as compared to 384 in 1998 and 471 in parliamentary elections 1996.

The NDA government headed by Vajpayee emerged as a broad “catch-all-spectrum of parties”, summarized by Paul Wallace. It included major regional parties based on different spectrums, notably Telugu Desam Party (TDP) based on language in Andhra Pradesh, Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) [SAD (B)] was non-Hindu party in Punjab, National Conference (NC) purely Muslim in Jammu and Kashmir, Trinamool Congress from West Bengal fiery secular and Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) was non-ideological etc. The composition of the NDA was much broader in regional and cultural terms than Janata Party, was essentially a north-India phenomenon. Now, NDA became an all-India affair. Under new alliance strategy, the NDA was able to gain comfortable majority in the House of People, but Congress Party did not so, which leading to debacle under its new leader-Sonia Gandhi in 13th Lok Sabha elections 1999. After the demise of United Front (UF) government in 1998, the UF continue on the path of disintegration, being reduced to the Left Front and rump Janata Dal (secular) of H.D. Deve Gowda. A belated attempt was made to unite the ‘Third Forces’ by Sharad Pawar of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Mulayam Singh Yadav of Samajwadi Party, but the idea
did not fructify, because, most of the components of United Front joined the BJP led NDA camp.

The BJP/NDA’s success and Congress failure in 1999 general elections, rested on the two critical factors: ‘leadership and alliance.’ The BJP’s foresight in formulating broad coalition/alliance pacts proved crucial to attain majority in the popular House, secondly, the difference between winning and losing was hinged to understanding and greater acceptability of Vajpayee as well as the rejection of Sonia Gandhi. Similarly, the leadership rather than institutionalization of political parties appeared increasingly important, the alliance cohesion depended on the ability of leadership to reach out in a non-ideological manner to its members as well as to maintain its core party support. Jayalalitha, Mamata Banerjee and Chandrababu Naidu could be wild cards in an alliance and need skillful special handling and countervailing political pressures. Now, the regional parties in this period held balance of power, necessary for the formulation of ruling alliance. The power consideration rather than ideological or specific issues, tend to dominate alliance choices. The Lok Jan Shakti Party, Bharatiya Lok Dal, INDL, TDP, DMK or AIADMK brought classic touch to the balance of power system and a as check on national parties from adopting majority dictatorship.

In brief, the five elections held within a decade 1989 to 1999; outcome of these polls underlined the facts that coalition/alliance politics became inevitable in Indian party system. A national party could only form the government at the Centre, if party made alliance arrangement with regional parties. The impulse behind coalition strategies of both national and regional parties was the need for bridging votes to win plurality of votes for majority of seats in India’s first-past-the-post-system. The regional and smaller parties aggressively pursuing the development interests of their respective states, joined hands with the BJP in 1999 parliamentary elections, which marked the advent of ‘electoral federalism,’ through, skillful bargaining into area, which had hitherto resisted its effort at expansion. Yogendra Yadav sum-up this situation as there was the emergence of “third electoral system.” In first two systems, under the Congress era, the voters exercised only one choice, whether to vote for or against the Congress Party, but that was no longer the case. There were many non-Congress alternatives existing in this period. The INC was no
The Indian politics entered now, into a ‘post-Congress polity.’ The BJP was no longer an urban *bania-brahmin* party and was successful in extending its support base across the country in terms of geographical, social and political-ideological, on the one hand and party appeared as “new softer BJP” by freezing its core issues, on the other. The BJP alignments with DMK and PMK in Tamil Nadu, JD (U) and Samata Party in Bihar on the eve of 1999 national elections indicated that the BJP was now, less untouchable in the aftermath of the demolition of Babri Masjid.

The alliance politics took firm roots in Indian polity when Congress Party recognised the importance of alliance/coalition politics, by entering electoral pacts with TRS, RJD, DMK, NCP, JMM and PDP etc in 14th Lok Sabha elections. The INC after losing assemblies’ elections of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in December 2003, considered as semi-final to 14th parliamentary elections 2004, came to realise that party could not win next national elections without the alliance arrangements. That is why; the Congress Party dropped its previous ‘*akalo chalo niti*’ (move alone policy in polls) of ‘*Panchmarhi resolution*’ in 1998.

Consequently, the ‘new alliance strategy’ of Congress Party enabled it to form the government under the leadership of Manmohan Singh in May 2004 due to the contribution of 118 Lok Sabha seats by its new allies PDP, TRS, RJD, DMK, NCP and JMM. (Congress Party and its partners’ regional parties got 118 seats in Jammu and Kashmir Andhra Pradesh, Bihar Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, respectively.) In contrast, BJP’s major allies Telugu Desam Party (TDP), Trinamool Congress (TC) and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) did worse and brought just seven seats for the NDA in 2004 national elections. The study note that the importance of electoral alliance became increasingly clear over the past fifteen years, a period in which the rise of regional and caste base parties meant that no national party was able to win majority on its own resources in Parliament. The parties looked for win or majority, by entering into alliance arrangements because, they had strong incentive to aggregate votes through political formation/alliance, by sharing the total number of contested seats, so as not to split but to pool votes. This is because, a small addition of votes has the potential to
increase or decrease the winning chance of party. Many instances, political parties in order to maximize their gains, shed away their respective ideologies in conditions of extreme incompatibility.

The first national elections in 21st century turned out a ‘battle of alliances’ between the BJP led NDA and the Congress headed UPA. The electoral canvassing and results of 14th Lok Sabha elections demarked clear division of polity into ‘two massive power blocs/alliances’. In other words, there was emergence of a bi-polarity in Indian party system, the BJP and the Congress Party, still represented two-poles of Indian polity, but this phenomenon disappeared in most of the states. There are states as Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh etc in which the BJP and the INC are still only players; then there are other states as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh etc where either Congress or BJP is one of the main player. In Tamil Nadu and West Bengal neither the Congress nor the BJP can claim one of the main poles. This gives rise to differential patterns of party competitions in different region. The alliance/coalition politics, creates compulsion for larger party to woo the smaller ones and not the other way. Now, Congress and BJP led alliances are still not incompatible ideological formation, but competitor in India’s federalist, democratic political system.

The mandate of parliamentary elections in 2004 produced a government of “coalition of coalitions”, concluded by Yogendra Yadav. There was no pre-poll alliance, came close to majority. The Congress Party led alliance overtook the NDA tally and manufactured a working majority without any corresponding shift for any popular preferences. The political parties contested 14th Lok Sabha elections 2004, via the formations of coalition contingents, instead of any viable form of electoral mobilization. Their appeals/mobilizations were limited only to a section of the society. However, these coalitions largely opportunistic or office seeking, formed primarily to aggregate votes regardless of programmatic differences. That is why; the NCP shelved its foreign origin ‘issue.’ The Left parties made alliances with the INC in various states, despite historic differences with Congress Party on economic policy; earlier DMK and its smaller allies, as well as Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) allied with the BJP, now they switching over to Congress Party. The BJP disowned its own past agenda. Similarly, the BSP now is talking to represent sarva
samaj (the whole society) rather than pitching dalits against all other castes. The last minute characters of most of these alliances reinforced this point. On the whole, political parties changed the tone and tenor of their political programmes and campaigns. The leaders, who tended to resort to divisive appeals, are increasingly snubbed at the hustling.

During 15th Lok Sabha elections in 2009, the revival of Third Front and emergence of Fourth Front changed the alliance calculations of both coalition makers as the BJP and the INC, in general and set back to bi-polarity, in particular. The Indian party system moved towards “multiple bi-polarity”. The two major national parties (BJP and INC) were still in fractious situation with their respective allies and even as aligning together became compulsion both for national as well as regional parties. That is why; both the nodal national parties wanted to retain, regain, and created spheres of electoral supports, on the one hand, and the evolution of Third Front and Fourth Front might add the bargaining power of regional parties, on the other. The regional allies too wanted to maximise their bargaining space by expending their parliamentary presence. It appeared that the regional forces seemed to ensure that bi-polar politics could not take root at national level and regional parties were playing significant role to check on autocratic functioning of the national parties.

In other words, the regional parties searched for new alternatives to broaden their support base and tried to make non-UPA and non-NDA platform, on the one side, and the BJP, the Congress and the Left parties [CPI (M)] were representing three alliance formations as NDA, UPA and Third Front in 2009 parliamentary elections, tried their best to hold on to their existing allies and win over new ones, on the other. A peculiar kind of alliance system emerged in 2009 Lok Sabha elections, in which coalition makers as BJP, INC and CPI (M), negated a national level alliance with regional forces, but state specifics patch up, to bridge territorial gaps, that is, where national political parties had weak support base and very blink chance to win seats on its own, then they found out suitable ally in specifics region to fill the gap. Consequently, the seats adjustments in particular region or state were not barriers to their contesting partners or allies in other state or region to forge with contrary group(s). As a result, political parties continuously shifted their
stands/loyalties. No one predicted that who was with whom, and who would eventually go with whom. Many times, this of type instances came into notice, when political parties joined contrary camps, as the case with Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), traditionally allied with Congress in Maharashtra and Goa, on the hand and made seats adjustment with BJD as well as Left parties in Orissa, on the other, at the same time, the NCP continued with Congress led UPA-I at the Centre as well as shared power in the Congress led state government in Maharashtra. Chandrashekhar Rao, President, Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS), shifted his loyalty from Third Front to NDA in the last phase of 2009 national elections. The JD (S) was with Third Front in Karnataka, but out of its neighbouring state Kerala. The TDP and AIADMK moved towards Third Front, but did not take definite stand.

It is observed that Trinamool Congress (TC), TDP, AIADMK, DMK, PMK, NC and BJD swung in and out NDA, depending on their state level calculations. In Jammu and Kashmir, National Conference (NC) replaced People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and in West Bengal, the Congress’ tied knot with TC. The RJD, SP and LJP were the partners of UPA-I, but formed the Fourth Front on the eve of 2009 parliamentary elections. It is interesting to note that the leaders of the Fourth Front stated that it was alliance within alliance, which was not contrary to the Congress Party. Likewise, Congress Party decided to contest 15th general elections alone in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, but did not strategically field candidates in some seats, clearly this strategy provided space for communication with Fourth Front. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Samajwadi Party (SP) being at loggerheads in Uttar Pradesh, but shared platform in Lok Sabha to support FDI Bill on multi-brand retail sector in December 2012. Further, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Chief, SP who indirectly supported FDI Bill on multi-brand retail sector, that is, strategically did not cast their votes against the Bill, on the one side and party (SP) along with Left parties and BJP, participated in ‘Bharat Bandh’ (all India strike) held on 20 September 2012 against the Centre’s decision to allow FDI in multi brand retail trade, on one hand. It is therefore very difficult to know as to who was with whom and who would eventually go with whom.

It is worthy to note that the regional and smaller parties particularly the AIADMK, JD(S), SP, RJD, TDP, BJD and others were alternately warming up the
idea of Third Front and getting cold about it. These regional forces and others like BSP opposed the UPA government one day and support it another day. Clearly, this ad-hocism prevalent across the board helped UPA-II chug along despite its devious failures and foibles. This trend created an atmosphere of ad-hocism in governance. With this background, the regional and smaller parties emerged merely as “rent seekers”, which were happy as long as, they were allowed to do things of their choice in the ministry. Such rent seekers had no commitment in evolving public policy and driven by their limited political or even individual goals.

The shifting party goals can lead towards the phenomena of ‘politics of cohabitation’ concluded by one of the scholar. The new rules of alliance/coalition game emerged in 2009 parliamentary elections. The political parties simultaneously performed multiple roles in a federal system, i.e., the political parties in government at one level, could be in opposition at another level. The parties in a coalition had life before coalition, have a life within as well as outside the coalition also, all three lived at times simultaneously. In a way, the parties in different platform had their own election manifestos and commitments in national elections 2009. They did not put out any common political programme. Only Left parties choose to put forward an alternative economic and foreign policy, but as a part of Third Front, it too did not have a common programme. But, Third Front failed to project itself as credible and attractive alternative.

The study finds out that coalitions/alliances were neither ideological nor had any common objective to cement them together. They were merely short-term tactical arrangements established by ambitious politicians and rooted in the exchange of mutual benefits and compulsions of power. In short, political parties underwent a gradual transformation from “policy-oriented parties to office seeking parties.” The ideological differences between parties were now, minimal and hence, they were likely to adopt the same mixture of policies when in power. These alliances were more pragmatic than ideological, which made boundaries of parties highly flexible and permeable.

In brief, the eight national elections held between 1989 and 2009 in India, did not produce an absolute majority for any single party or alliance formations
except in 1999. Consequently, minority or coalition governments formed at the Centre, which reflected the expanding process of democratization, was based on spatial, and not ideological compatibility. This was the case of Janata Dal led National Front (NF) in 1989 and United Front (UF) in 1996; BJP’s National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in 1998 and 1999, as well as the Congress led United Progressive Alliance (UPA)-I and II in 2004 and 2009. These groups particularly the NF, the UF the NDA and the UPA formed government on the basis of pre-poll and post-poll alliance arrangements.

It is observed that Samajwadi Janata Party ministry of Chandra Shekhar in June 1991, United Front government of Deve Gowda in April 1997 and Inder Kumar Gujral in November 1997 fell due to outside partner Congress Party withdrew its support from the central government. The National Front government of V.P. Singh in November 1990 and the NDA ministry of Atal Bihari Vajpayee in April 1999 collapsed due to the withdrawal of support by external partner BJP and AIADMK (part of Vajpayee Cabinet) respectively. In contrast, the UPA-I and II governments also faced the crises of destabilization by both pre-poll and post-poll allies. The Left parties as post-poll allies of the UPA-I withdrew their support in August 2008 and pre-poll alliance partners’ DMK and Trinamool Congress left UPA-II in 2012, but Manmohan Singh ministry saved both times by the backing of post-allies. It is therefore very difficult to determine whether pre-poll or post-poll alliance system provided more stability than the other. Before 2004, it is believed that pre-poll alliance arrangements were more stable than post-poll alliance, but in the case of UPA-I and II it is not true. However, all these government worked under intense pressures and strains. These alliances continued to appear unstable with one ally or the other at frequent intervals threatening to withdraw support or reconsider its support to the government if its demands were not met.

The study underlines the facts that the BJP and the Congress, the two largest national parties adopted and pursued fundamentally different strategies, towards the formation of alliances in these elections. The BJP continued its persistent strategy to increase breath and extent of its alliance across the country. The Congress’ strategy of alliance building consisted of teaming up with parties that defected from the NDA such as DMK, MDMK and PMK in Tamil Nadu, reaching out to former Congress
splinter group (NCP) and making seat adjustments with two Communist parties of the Left Front. In other words, the Congress Party had wider range of alliance choices, than the BJP, when it came to selecting alliance partners. The Left parties in 2004 and smaller parties consistently refused to ally with the BJP, because these smaller parties rely heavily on Muslim votes. The BJP selected its allies from remaining political parties. In Lok Sabha elections 2009, the Congress twisted in its alliance strategy from flexible coalition maker to ‘self respect national party’, brought more seats for party. Consequently, only six parties’ coalition of the UPA-II defeated the depleted NDA with much greater margin of 104 seats.

The results of 2009 parliamentary elections indicated that Congress’ alliance strategy paid it rich dividends. Consequently, the UPA won 262 seats, with Congress Party alone getting 206 seats and crossing 200 mark for the first time since 1991. On all counts, the position of the Indian National Congress (INC) in the Parliament was impregnable, but it does not mean, the revival of the past glory of Congress Party as a dominant party. No doubt, the Congress Party increased its strength in the popular House from 114 in 1999 to 206 in 2009, but its resurgence was partial and even party was not able to access the bottom of social pyramid, particularly in two major states as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. There are also many states where the INC was in no position to take on the BJP. Further, the Congress Party was decimated in 16th Lok Sabha elections 2014, which recorded its lowest ever tally with forty four seats. The INC got only two seats in Uttar Pradesh and none in four big states as Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Odisha. In West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh (Seemandhra and Telangana), the INC did not touch double digits in 2014 national elections. In a way, the grand old party (INC) lost the status of recognised official opposition party in the Lower House because it did not attain ten percentage of the total seats.

The 2009 elections opened-up some new possibilities for party system. The last two decades, which witnessed an expansion of Third space (Left and regional parties) in Indian politics, now it’s (Third space) support base and strength shirked. This does not mean that, regional parties were not on their way out. The performance of DMK and AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, Shiv Sena and NCP in Maharastra, JD (U) in Bihar, TC in West Bengal, and SAD (B) in Punjab showed
these regional players were here to stay. Even though, Narendra Modi, Sheila Dikshit, Bhoopinder Singh Hooda, Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy and Virbhadra Singh, gave regional touch to their national parties, did better than others by raising local and regional issues as ‘Vibrant Gujarat’, SEZs and development issues, Kaveri water and ‘padyatra’ (march past) etc, respectively. It is assumed that the assembly elections gained national importance, the national parties need the regionalist to support their government in Delhi in the phase of 1996 to 2009, and this regionalism tends to promote sectarian interests at the cost of national goals. Another interesting fact is that the 15th parliamentary elections became more of a collection of numerous state elections in which local issues were defining the contests. ‘The localization of national election’, was only a reflection of changing India. A distinct feature of change is the emergence of regional outfits coinciding with decline of national parties, which represented new social forces.

By and large, both the regimes of UPA-I, II and NDA led by Manmohan Singh and A.B. Vajpayee respectively were handicapped by acute dependence on regional players. Both the leaders (Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh), however, had the capacity to take others along and resilience to carry on with their coalition regimes for full term. Despite the facts, they enjoyed considerable respect from coalition partners. The two Prime Ministers, at times, had to roll back their policies and decisions under walk out threats held out by one alliance partner or another. Both, the head of government could not choose their teams, a prerogative of any Prime Minister, enjoys in parliamentary form of government. Generally, the ministers were nominated by regional satraps and often undesirable elements found berth in the Cabinet, much to the discomfort of both Manmohan Singh and A.B. Vajpayee.

The study notes that under the rule of NDA and UPA-I and II, the power of Prime Minister shifted to an “extra constitutional body”, particularly Coordination Committee of NDA and National Advisory Committee (NAC) of UPA, which acted or behaved like a ‘supreme commander’ over the Prime Minister. The BJP led NDA and the Congress Party run UPA-I and II claimed in their report cards that they had considerable achievements during their tenure in the office. It is found that they pursued almost same kinds of new liberal economic policies and tactics, when, they
were in office or in the opposition. The governments of NDA and UPA, did their best to solve the problems of *aam aadmi*, but common men still faced various problems. The NDA and the UPA were neck deep in various scams. The people were stunned, when 2G scam exposed by Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report. The corruption cases and scandals eroded the credibility and legitimacy of the governments of A.B. Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh.

The recent 16th Lok Sabha elections 2014 was different from earlier elections, which produced one major party forming government (BJP led NDA) at the Centre. This new trend changed power structure at the top. Indian polity, in general and party system in particular now entered into an era of ‘single party absolute majority’, that is, Indian party system in transition from multiple bi-polarity to single major party (BJP) occupied the position of dominance in the ruling alliance NDA 2014. The Bharatiya Janata Party’s astounding victory in 16th parliamentary elections 2014, came largely due to the aggressive and strategic electoral campaign by its prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi. Consequently, the formation of BJP led NDA government at the Centre, under the strong leadership of Narendra Modi, emerged as an only ‘one power center’. The tally of NDA particularly, the BJP gave comfortable room to its Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take decisions on his own, unlike his predecessor government (UPA-II), and cannot point a finger at the BJP’s allies. In other words, the BJP got absolute majority in the Lower House with 282 Lok Sabha seats, which depicted party is not depended on the support of alliance partners and remain in power for full term. Consequently, constituents of the NDA will have lost much of their importance in national policy affairs and in power sharing arrangements. The structure of Modi’s Council of Ministers reflected that allies of the BJP adjusted, but on Narendra Modi terms and conditions. The LJP, TDP, SS, SAD (B), have six, sixteen, eighteen and four members of Parliament (MPs) painted with same brush, that is, gave one Cabinet berth in ‘Modi sarkar’ (government). Obviously, it undermines the position of the largest allies of NDA in their respective region except SAD (B).

The mandate of 16th national elections revealed that electorates voted for a strong and decisive leadership at the Centre to “end the twenty five years of coalition era” that started with the installation of BJP-Left supported V.P. Singh
government in 1989. Another important aspect of the results is that all regional leaders particularly Kumari Mayawati, Chief, BSP; M. Karunanidhi, President, DMK; Lalu Prasad Yadav, Chief, RJD and Mulayam Singh Yadav, President, SP on the one side, and Nitish Kumar JD (U) government in Bihar, on the other, who seen supporting the discredited policies of the UPA-II government, were wiped out in general elections. Only those regional satraps namely J. Jayalalitha, Mamata Banerjee, Naveen Patnaik, Chandrashekhar Rao, Chandrababu Naidu and Jagan Mohan Reddy, who maintained distance from the previous government (UPA-II) and its leaders, survived in their respective regions. The Modi tornado crushed out the Congress Party, which for the first time since independence, was reduced to double digit tally of forty four Lok Sabha seats and lost the office of the Leader of Opposition. Suhas Palshikar argues that outcome of 16th Lok Sabha represents the new phase of ‘post-Congress polity’. The Congress Party will not be the main contender against the BJP in this phase; it will not have the intellectual capacity or political energy to truly put forward an alternative to the BJP either in term of governance or ideological mooring of politics. Suhas Palshikar adds further that Narendra Modi turned out 16th general elections into a plebiscite on his leadership, that is personality based elections. The BJP as a party was only the backdrop to this main script.

The study draws following observations:

- There was emergence of bi-polarity in party system. It is better being called multiple bi-polarity.
- The parliamentary and assembly elections turned out to be the battle of alliances among political formations. The political parties now contest elections via alliance contingent, that is, Congress Party, BJP and Left parties, led UPA, NDA and Third Front respectively as well as Lalu-Mulayam-Paswan group known as Fourth Front in 15th Lok Sabha election 2009.
- The Congress Party and Bharatiya Janata Party coming out as a coalition maker parties, on the one side and regional and smaller parties became the pool of coalitionble parties.
There is regionalization of the national political parties and nationalization of the regional political parties as reflected in the electoral discourse in the power sharing coalition matrix (1996 to 2009).

There was progressive decline in strength of the two major national parties as the Congress and the BJP and rise in the number and strength of state/regional parties in last two decades (1996 to 2009).

The regional satraps emerged as important actors in the game of politics at the national level.

The regional and sub-regional parties deeply entrenched in party system. The national political parties heavily dependent on them for their support for the formation of the government at the Centre.

Prime Minister would hence forth be made and unmade in state capitals, rather than in national capital New Delhi. Now regional parties hold balance of power.

The political parties underwent a gradual transformation from policy oriented parties to office seeking parties.

There is development of ‘coalition dharama’ (culture). However, political parties stand for dharam for the stability of government, but avoid taking action against tainted ministers and corrupt persons.

The political parties are not growing with democratic values and principles. They are highly centralised, autocratic and unaccountable.

The dynastic domination/rule is not now Congress Party phenomena. It rapidly spreads in almost all the political parties. That is, there is growing trends of nepotism and facilitation in every party, either regional or national is to fall behind with daughter, son and wife etc. Approximately 150 members of Parliament (MPs) belonging to dynasty (family) either big or small in the last 15th Lok Sabha.

The ideological differences between political parties got blurred, while, the differences between populist and state politics become more manifest. The
neo-liberalism remained the dominant ideology whether it was the UPA or the NDA in power. The working of NDA and UPA in the government indicated that there are two rival parties (BJP and INC) with one vision and one agenda. In other words, there is single party, Congress cum BJP.

- There were local mini waves, based on local issues, which decided the contest in 15th parliamentary elections 2009. In other words, the localization of national elections is only a reflection of changing India.

- Increase in criminalization in party system, which went up to 17.2 percentage in last general elections.