

CBCS B.A. POLITICAL SCIENCE HONS
SEM-4 CC-8 : POLITICAL PROCESSES & INSTITUTIONS
IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE
TOPIC-III : Historical Context of the emergence of the Party System
and Types of Parties

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Synopsis: political parties is greatly associated with the extension of right to vote in political elections and development of representative government. They are the vehicles on which democracy runs. The relations among different parties are closely interrelated of practising the political systems.

Historical evolution of the Party System in different countries are different viz. in Britain two-party system emerged- presently conservative Party, in United States there have been six party systems – presently Republican dominance is evidenced, in Canada four party systems identified in the history (1891) – and in Italy the First Republic (1946-1994) party system was dominated by the Christian Democracy (CD) and the Italian Communist Party (ICP).

The party system can be categorized by the number of relevant political parties available viz. i) One party system- a single party forms the government-Peoples Republic of China etc., ii) Single Dominant Party System- one party successively won election victories, iii) Two Party System- two main political parties dominate the politics and may enjoy the power alternately- United States etc. and iv) Multi Party System-Multiple political parties have the capacity to gain control of government, separately or in coalition-India etc.

1. Introduction

A political party, according to Epstein Leon D., is of a group that "***seeks to elect governmental officeholders under a given label***".

According to Duverger, the formation of political parties is greatly associated with the extension of right to vote in political elections and development of representative government. Political parties are important because they involve in representation, elite recruitment, aggregation of interests and such others.

Thus, political parties are the vehicles on which democracy runs. The relations among different parties are determining in the way of practising the political systems. The way of practicing the political system depends on the complex interrelationships between and among parties. However, all parties of the state are influenced by the prevalent political and constitutional system.

Political party is available everywhere in all forms. Political party is universally present in one form or another. Political Parties, unlike Pressure groups, contest elections to seek power; whereas pressure groups seek merely to influence the government. According to Weber's phrase, 'parties live in a house of power'. Political Parties are specialized associations, as society move towards modernity, they turn complex and more organised. The main objective of a political organization is to capture power, which distinguishes it from other groups in the political system, however the distinction is rather blurred at times, especially in regard to pressure groups.

Political parties play vital role in democratic state. They hold government accountable both inside the parliament and outside it. Both the ruling parties and opposition parties play their own roles. The process of policy formulation is directed by the ruling parties, whereas to hold the government accountable is served by the opposition parties.

The party system is a critical mediating factor in the possible relationship between democratic politics and social transformation. In democratic states party system is an indispensable factor. The term party-system refers to competitive interaction of parties. Party Systems are described by the number of parties within a given country during a given time, along with their 'internal structures, their ideologies, their respective sizes, alliances, and types of opposition'. The party system of different political systems like developed, developing or undeveloped is regulated by several factors as the nature of social composition, economic divisions, cultural diversities, religious and ethnic affiliations and political differences.

The party system reflects political system and political culture the state. The party systems may be '**democratic**' and '**totalitarian**'. In democratic model of party system, opposition parties are allowed which lead to the existence of big or multi-party system, whereas in totalitarian model of party system, only a single political party exists. As **Verney** remarks: "*Political parties as the term is commonly understood, can, therefore, flourish only in liberal societies where there is general agreement on fundamentals, the acceptance of the integrity and good faith of one's opponents*".

However, Apter observes: *In Western practice a political party is a function of a larger system in which it operates; that is, it is a servant of the constitutional framework. Totalitarian parties are different; and to understand their role, it is necessary to examine totalitarian societies and government.*

Party System in developing countries, particularly in African and Asian regions, is outcome of their historical legacies. In Western Countries political parties emerged from the democratic trends like the voting rights and parliamentary system. Whereas in developing countries they came into existence because of national liberation movement and not only for running the government. **Kothari** argues that *in absence of healthy opposition the dominant ruling party becomes highly corrupt and gradually losses the legitimacy, thereby the shift of even that truncated democracy by the military rulers.*

2. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF PARTY SYSTEM IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES:

- **BRITAIN**

In United Kingdom, the **two-party system** emerged. During the civil war and Glorious revolution in the late 17th century, there was a division in English Politics. Against the absolute rule and Tories, the Whigs did support Protestant constitutional monarchy. The supporters of strong monarchy i.e. conservative royalist, originated from the Royalist faction of the English Civil War.

They intended to offset the Republican Tendencies of Parliament. Later on however the Whigs party extended its base to integrate industrial interests and wealthy merchants. Since 1688 (i.e. Glorious revolution) to 1715 (Hanoverian Succession), there had been several struggles between these two factions over the Stuart Dynasty and the new constitutional state. The tendencies of these two factions however halted after the accession of George-I and then Whig supremacy under Robert Walpole.

In the 1970s, the old Whig leadership got dissolved into a decade of factional chaos. During the chaos, the first party emerged was the Rockingham Whigs.

The Two-Party system had acceptance that the party which was not in power would remain as the Loyal opposition to the government. In 1783, after coming of William Pitt the younger, a genuine Two-Party system started. However, in the early 19th century the Two-Party system under political reform got further matured, thereby the franchise was extended and the politics got divided between conservatism and liberalism.

The present Conservative Party did emerge from the Tamworth Manifesto in 1834 which gave the basic principles of conservatism. On the other hand, in 1859 the Whigs under the leadership of Lord Palmerston formed the Liberal party.

• THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In the United States in 1790s, with political controversies the two political parties the Federalist party and the Democratic-Republican party evolved. Nevertheless an 'Era of Good Feelings' emerged in 1816 for a decade in party politics. The Democratic-Republican party converted into the Jacksonian Democrats and Whig Party. Later on the Jacksonian Democrats which was led by Andrew Jackson, evolved into the modern democratic party and Whig party which was led by Henry Clay, also evolve into Republican party. However, in the United States there have been six party systems throughout the history, which are as follows:

FIRST PARTY SYSTEM: Jeffersonian Republicans and Federalists (1796-1816):

The First Party System is the outcome of the factions in the George Washington administration. There were two factions- the Federalists led by Alexander Hamilton and the Democratic-Republican party led by Thomas Jefferson. The Federalists argued for a strong national government with emphasis on a strong economy and industry. Whereas the Democratic-Republican argued for a limited government with domination of farmers and state's rights. After the 1800 Presidential election, the Democratic-Republicans gained major dominance for the next twenty years, and the Federalists slowly died off.

SECOND PARTY SYSTEM: Democrats and Whigs (1840-1856):

It was developed as a result of the one party rule of the Democratic-Republicans since they couldn't resolve the pressing issues of time i.e. Slavery. In this era the wealthier people supported the Whigs and the poorer people supported the Democrats. This phase lasted until 1860.

THIRD PARTY SYSTEM: Republicans and Democrats (1860-1896):

It began with the starting of civil war - In this system there were conflict, party differences and coalitions. Geographically the Democrats dominated the southern part which were opposing the ending of slavery, whereas the Republicans dominated the Northern part which were supporting for ending slavery. The Third Party System lasted until 1896.

FOURTH PARTY SYSTEM: Republicans and Democrats (1896-1932):

In this system progressivism, immigration and the political repercussions of the American civil war were prevalent. The southern and western part supported the Democrats, whereas the North-eastern business did support the Republicans. However, the immigrant groups had been courted by both parties. The Fourth Party System came to an end around 1932.

FIFTH PARTY SYSTEM: Democrats and Republicans (1932-1968):

Due to the Great Depression, this system could see the new deal coalition by **President Franklin D. Roosevelt**. This new coalition supported new welfare programs and included several underprivileged, working class, minority groups and others. African-Americans were also attracted by this coalition who had previously largely supported the Republican Party due to Lincoln's freeing of the slaves. Till 1968 this system was prevalent.

SIXTH PARTY SYSTEM: Republicans and Democrats (1968- present):

The transition to this system appears to have begun with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with the Democrats subsequently losing their long dominance of the South in the late 1960s, leading to a Republican dominance as evidenced by election results.

- **CANADA**

Steve Patten points out that there have been four party systems identified in the history of Canada.

The first party system was dominated by two largest parties Liberals and the Conservative. This system started from pre-confederation colonial politics, which had its 'heyday' from 1896 to 1911 and the mobilization crisis ended in 1917 .

The Second party system started from 1935 to 1957 with the emergence of the First World War,. Several political parties like Progressives, Social Credit Party and Co-operative Commonwealth Federation were active.

The Third party system emerged in 1963 and had its heyday from 1968 till 1983. The New Democratic Party challenged the two largest parties and emerged as a strong third party. The Keynesian economics was dominant policy during this period.

The fourth party system there were Reform Party of Canada, Bloc Quebecois, and the merger of Canadian Alliances with Progressive Conservatives. In this system most parties moved to one-member-one-vote leadership contests. The market-oriented policies, which excluded Keynesian policies was dominated in this system, however the welfare state was maintained.

IV Italy

In Italy with the foundation of the Italian Republic (1946), the party system starts as the pre-fascist parties never had wide popular base. The so-called First Republic (1946-1994) party system was based on a proportional electoral law, which was dominated by the **Christian Democracy (CD)** and the **Italian Communist Party (ICP)**. Both these political parties together gathered around 85 per cent votes in average. However, in late 1980s both these parties got shattered owing to the bribery scandals of *Tangentopoli*, which consequently destroyed the party system.

3. DIFFERENT TYPES OF PARTY SYSTEM

The party system can be categorized by the number of relevant political parties available. These can be analysed under following heads:

One party System - one party system prevails in the state where only a single party forms the government, usually based on the existing constitution of that state. Thus only one party has the exclusive control over political power. The remaining parties may either declared outlawed or permitted just limited participation.

The single party evolves based on non-availability of separate parties which is considered against the national unity. Other argument that the single party is the vanguard of the people etc. But some subordinate allied parties are allowed to exist for making permanent coalition like popular front. Almost all single party states might have been ruled either by such parties which followed the Marxism-Leninism ideology or by parties of nationalist or fascist ideology. In the former category the Soviet Union can be cited as an example. Single party state can also be seen to be ruled by the parties which came to power after independence from the colonial rule. This one party has had played dominant role in the decolonisation process.

Examples: There are various states where single party system prevails like—People's Republic of China (Communist Party of China, since 1949); North Korea (Worker's Party of Korea, since 1948); Cuba (Communist Party of Cuba, since 1959); Laos (Lao People's Revolutionary Party, since 1975); Vietnam (Communist party of Vietnam, since 1954) etc.

DOMINANT PARTY SYSTEM:

Single dominant party system where there is "a category of parties/political organizations that have successively won election victories and whose future defeat cannot be envisaged or is unlikely for the foreseeable future".

There are several parties which have been regarded as being dominant at one time or another, as **Kuomintang** in the Republic of China; **African National Congress** in South Africa; **People's Action Party** in Singapore; **the Liberal Democratic Party** in Japan existed until 2009. However, such dominance has not always been a challenge, as in case of India **the Indian National Congress**, a single dominant party after independence had been seen by some as source of support, stability and consolidation of Indian democracy.

Contrary to the single party system, the dominant party system can be available in a democratic system. However, other parties do not get a realistic chance of winning, whereas the dominant party genuinely gets the votes of the vast majority of the voters. Within authoritarian dominant party system, which is also termed as '**electoralism**' or '**soft authoritarianism**', the opposition parties are legally allowed to operate, but they are actually too weak or ineffective to seriously challenge the dominant party.

TWO PARTY SYSTEM:

In two party system, the two main political parties dominate the politics in the state. Typically placed either side of the center, have a realistic chance of forming a majority. Other parties are very minor or solely regional.

The two party system can be identified followingly:

- (i) Several minor parties may exist, but only two major parties enjoy sufficient power.
- (ii) One party having majority rule the state and other one plays role of strong opposition.
- (iii) Alternatively shift between these two parties only.

Examples: United States, Jamaica and Malta. In parliamentary systems like in United Kingdom, the term two party system indicates an arrangement in which the two main political parties dominate elections, however there are some viable third parties which do win the seats. In Spain two major parties evolved which have strong influence, but there are also several smaller parties with varying degree of influence.

A coalition of lesser parties may also be possible under the circumstances when neither any party gets majority and consequently a hung parliament evolves. These systems are

sometimes termed as two-party system but they are mostly described as multi-party system. Hence between two party system and multi-party system there is not always a distinct boundary.

In India there are also the signs of presence of two-party system, with **UPA (United Progressive Alliance)** and **NDA (National Democratic Alliance)**. However, these are alliance of several smaller parties, not of just two political parties.

Bangladesh is also moving towards the two party system, as after the restoration of democracy in 1991, the **AL (Awami League)** and **BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party)** are only playing the major roles and have been forming the government alternatively.

South Korea sometimes has indicated the characteristics of a two party system, but actually it has a multi party system. **Brazil** had two party system during its military dictatorship (1964-1985).

MULTI PARTY SYSTEM:

In multi-party system multiple political parties have the capacity to gain control of government offices, separately or in coalition. Due to that reducing the chances of single party government and more likelihood of coalition government. In the coalition government of this system, the multiple political parties do have capacity to regulate the government separately or in coalition. However, it is difficult to define the multiparty system in term of number of political parties, in this system when coalition government is formed there may be coalition of smaller parties for keeping the major parties out of power.

In parliamentary form of government, the multi-party system appears to be more common than the presidential form of government. Even in the parliamentary form of government this system is more common in electoral system of the proportional representation than first past the post system.

There are the main challenges of the multi-party system related to pitfall and difficulties to coalition governments. After the general elections when no single party gets majority, the post-election negotiations and horse trading takes place, which takes weeks or sometimes months to finalise (as in Italy and Israel). Some times when coalition government is fractured or unstable, then there is more attention to squabbles amongst the different parties than the functioning of the government. The multi-party system unable to provide a clear ideological alternative. In this system the coalition politics is laden with negotiations and conciliations, rather than the conviction and politics of principle.

The multi-party system has been used effectively in most of democratic states like India, Germany, South Africa, Pakistan, Brazil, Italy, Japan, Denmark, Finland, Indonesian, Ireland, Israel, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, , Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, and Philippines. In all these states, no single party form the government, rather the government is formed by the multi parties.