

Role of Regional Political Parties in Indian Federalism

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ABSTRACT: The question of India being a federal polity is a hotly disputed topic among academics. To comprehend the dynamism of current Indian politics, we must first comprehend how India may be seen as a federal policy in terms of its nature, structure, and function. The huge discrepancy between constitutional setup and operational reality in India's political system makes Indian federalism a riddle that is best understood by adopting a dynamic approach. As a parliamentary federation, India represents a unique federal model that combines two contradictory models, namely, parliamentary and federalism. As a parliamentary federation, political parties play a significant role in shaping and influencing the nature and functioning of India's federal process. Based on some chosen literature on federalism and India's background, this essay attempts to comprehend Indian federalism.

KEYWORDS: Indian federalism; Party system

I. INTRODUCTION

Even if India is a federation, the form and operation of Indian federalism has become a hotly disputed topic, whether India is a federation or not. Indian federalism has been described in many ways by federal theorists from various federal systems. K.C. Wheare called India "quasi-federal," describing it as "a unitary state with subsidiary federal elements rather than a federal state with subsidiary unitary features" (1951: 28). India has been defined as "very federal" by Paul Appleby (1953), "bargaining federalism" by Morris Jones (1960), and "federation with significant centralising tendencies" by Ivor Jennings (1953; 1). It was described as "basically unitary" by Edward McWhinney (1966: 132), and as "cooperative federalism" by Granville Austin (1966). "[...] India is primarily federal, but with conspicuous unitary traits," D.D. Basu said. (50, 1985). "India is an instance of *sui generis*," said C.H. Alexandrowicz (1957: 157-170). Differing academics have different perspectives on the nature and operation of Indian federalism, with many constitutional experts refusing to acknowledge India as a federation. "India faced a unique dilemma [...] that had not „confronted other federations throughout history," said Granville Austin in his book *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*. Because federalism was not a defined term with a fixed definition, they could not be addressed by theory" (1966:186). Indian federalism may be seen as a one-of-a-kind experiment in federalism. From a constitutional standpoint, India is a parliamentary federation with a republican character and a centralised federation that creates a strong centre by giving the union so much authority. India is a parliamentary federation with a substantial contrast between its "constitutional shape" and its "operational reality" (Watts, 2006:202). India's federal process has developed and changed along with its political process after 70 years of vibrant democratic democracy. Though there have been no substantial changes in the constitutional framework, India's federal process has evolved and changed along with its political process. The success of Indian federalism is due to the federalisation process that has occurred as a consequence of changes in the political system (Arora et al., 2013).

INDIA AS A FEDERAL POLITY

India is one of the biggest democratic countries in the world, having a federal political structure. Its origins as a federal polity may be traced in India's history, colonial experience, and heritage of national movement, as well as constitutional changes and political party roles. India has a federal history as a multi-national state. During British control, it progressively developed into a "administrative federalist reaction" and then into a "parliamentary federal polity" under the Indian constitution (Singh, 2002: 553; Khan, 1992). In India, federalism is a means (rather than an aim) to offer a "structural framework to suit India's pluralist socio-political nature," as it is in the United States (Verney, 1995; Chakrabarty, 2006). To represent as well as accommodate its geographical variances and multi-diverse identities of various cultural groupings, India uses a flexible federation model. By citing this existing separate cultural identity, Thomas O. Hueglin and Alan Fenna (2015) cited India as an example of cultural federalism. Given India's vastness in terms of geography, territorial boundaries, population, and expanding multi-diversity, the Indian constitution has embraced both a unitary and a federal character as a hybrid federation to maintain national unity while allowing regional autonomy. India may take

any position in every scenario by adopting this flexible methodology. India becomes unitary in times of crisis and emergency, but remains federal in normal times. Although many federal theorists, such as K.C. Wheare, Edward McWhinney, and C.H. Alexandrowicz, did not wish to classify India as a federation in contrast to a classical federation like the United States because of its contradictory character. Carl J. Friedrich (1968), A.H. Birch (1966), William H. Riker (1964), William S. Livingston (1956), Daniel Elazar (1987), Ronald Watts (1998), and John Kincaid (2011) are among the many federal theorists who strongly advocate India as a federation, a new type of hybrid federation among the current 25 federations. The Indian Constitution's founding fathers constructed a political framework that incorporates both aspects, resulting in a federal government with a unitary character.

India's federal political system includes dual polity, written constitution, bicameralism, judicial independence, and a clear distribution of authority between the centre and state governments. At the same time, India has some unitary characteristics, such as a strong central government inspired by the Canadian constitution, a single constitution (except in Jammu and Kashmir), single citizenship, integrated judiciary, central government-appointed governors, and the All India Service, as well as absolute power in terms of residuary power. With the help of prominent federal theorists Ronald Watts, Charles D. Tarlton, Carl J. Friedrich, William Riker, and Alfred Stepan's theoretical analysis of federalism, India as a federation represents a unique experimental model of federation, namely a parliamentary federation with republican nature. India, as a parliamentary federation, is centralised from a constitutional and institutional standpoint, holding together from the source of origin, asymmetrical from a sociological standpoint, and demos enabling in terms of political consequences with the role of people in representation, participation, and policy-making in the legislature (Gogoi, 2016).

TABLE 1
Nature of Indian Federation

Source of Origin	Sociological	Constitutional	Rational	Role of Demos	Structure
Holding-together	Asymmetrical	Centralised	Cultural	Demos enabling	Hybrid

Source: Alfred Stepan (1999), Charles D. Tarlton (1965), William Riker (1964), Ronald Watts (1996), Thomas O. Hueglin & Alan Fennas (2015) theoretical analysis were used in the author's study.

India follows the holding-together notion all the way back to its origins. India is the product of the keeping together concept, not of any agreement among its members, which is why India is referred to in its constitution as a "Union of States." Unlike the traditional federation of the United States, any of its components cannot withdraw and dissociate themselves from the federation; instead, they remain an essential and inseparable part of the Indian federation. In contrast to its component states, India becomes a centralised federation with a strong central authority via the keeping together concept. In the guise of defending, maintaining territorial integrity and national unity, India, as a "union of states" with a strong centre, wields considerable influence. The Union administration may simply change the name, political border, and form a new state from existing states by passing a simple majority in parliament. India's union government delegated its jurisdiction to accommodate its diverse territorially based minorities on the grounds of language and race as a means of binding nature together in the name of state construction.

As a consequence, certain of its component units have more autonomy due to the asymmetrical architecture of the system (Stepan, 1999) India presently has 29 states and seven union territories after 70 years of independence. The Indian federation was formed by combining two sorts of units: British provinces and around 552 princely states. Following independence from these two sorts of entities, India was divided into four parts: Part A, B, C, and D, with a total of 29 states. The Indian government adopted the State Reorganisation Act, 1956 via the 7th amendment in 1956, following the recommendations of the State Reorganisation Commission, to establish 14 states and six union territories. Many North-East Indian states were founded again in 1971 by the North-East State Reorganization Act, and three new states, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh, were carved out of existing Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh in 2000 by the 84th constitutional amendment. Telangana, the 29th state, was created on June 2, 2014, from the previous state of Andhra Pradesh.

India has chosen an asymmetrical federalism model based on socio-cultural diversity and existing regional distinctions. With asymmetrical federalism's particular provisions, India seeks to accommodate all identities and balance regional disparities in order to safeguard cultural, linguistic, and religious minorities. India remains a centralised federation in terms of constitutional framework and power relations. By bestowing so much authority over its parts, the Indian constitution made the union strong. M.P. Singh and Douglas V. Verney (2003) noted the centralised structure of the Indian federation in this regard, stating, "The Constitution acknowledged centralization in various ways." Parliament had residual authority, which allowed it to enter the

legislative and executive domains of the states in certain situations. It has the ability to establish new states, change state borders, and even abolish states. It has the potential to change the Constitution. It might potentially replace a state's elected legislature and administration with "presidential rule." (Singh & Verney, 2003: 2; Singh & Verney, 2003: 2; Singh & Verney, 2003: 2; The creation of a centralised federation does not imply that states within the Indian federation have no autonomy. India adopts a cooperation concept among center-states via several constitutional provisions, institutional and informal mechanisms such as the Inter-State Council and Zonal Council, which act as a cooperative body among center-states. In terms of political repercussions, India is one of the most demos-enabling federations, with citizens having a greater role in participation and representation in the legislative process than in demos-constricting federations such as the United States, Brazil, and others. In terms of forms and functions, India is distinct from other traditional federation models such as the American, Australian, and Canadian models.

TABLE 2 Forms and Function of Indian Federation

INDIA	Political System	Federal Form	Power	Intergovernmental Relation	Head of State
	Parliamentary	Divided	Centralised	Cooperative	Republic

Ronald Watts (1998), Thomas O. Hueglin & Alan Fennas (2015), William Riker (1964), M.P. Singh & Douglas Verney (2003).

Federalism as a technique of providing an institutional system to fit India's multi-cultural socio-political culture "India's democracy was improved by establishing a federal system that handed political authority to Indians who speak diverse languages," according to Atul Kohli (Kohli, 2001: 19). Despite the fact that it is logically incompatible, India has chosen the "parliamentary federation" as the best institutional and governmental structure for the country. In this political arrangement, two incompatible classical theories, namely "parliamentarism" based on power centralization and "federalism" based on power decentralisation, are combined (Chakrabarty, 2003, 2006). In this context, we may state that India's federalism is established by a process that is still changing, referring to Carl J. Friedrich (1968), who proposed the dynamic approach of federalism as a flexible model of federalism by concentrating post-World War II political growth of federalism. India's federalism is the result of a process that began when the British abandoned their unitary administrative legacy, which is reflected in the Indian constitution's federal composition. After independence, the Indian National Congress (INC) continued it under the "Congress System" (Kothari, 1964), and it gradually moved towards a decentralised federation or a more federal polity as a result of various factors such as political process, constitutional amendments, the reactive role of the judiciary, and economic liberalisation after 1991. (Singh, 2002: 553; Arora et al., 2013). Among these elements, the political process has played a significant role in the development and evolution of the country's federal political system. As a result, there is a significant difference between what the Indian federation is presently and what the original constitution established.

INDIA IN TRANSITION AS FEDERAL POLITY

Political parties have become a crucial intervening variable in the character and functioning of India's federal politics as a parliamentary federation. The shift in India's party system from one-party dominance to multi-party coalition dominance has affected not just the fundamentals of inter-governmental ties, but also the nature of those relationships. It also introduces new aspects to the federal system, resulting in the creation of new methods to organise inter-state and center-state interactions (Majeed, 2005). While discussing the development of Indian federalism, scholars M.P. Singh and Rekha Saxena note,

In India, the phenomena of federalism has developed through time and continues to do so. Its historical path has taken it from the imperial "revenue and law and order model" to a "planned development model," a "cooperative federalism model," a federal "bargaining model," and finally, a "collaborative model." It might evolve into a "people's democracy" paradigm based on decentralisation and local government empowerment. (Page 139, 2008) To examine India's federal process transition, the country has gone through three stages of growth since independence, which may be summarised as a change from paramount federalism to cooperative federalism. India's federal process might be regarded supreme federalism from 1947 to 1967, when it was ruled by a single political party. During this time, the Congress party was able to secure an absolute majority in parliament and state assembly elections, which prominent Indian political historian Rajni Kothari (1964) referred to as the Congress System. During this time, Indian states played a minor role; they had to relinquish most of their power to the centre, as well as the majority of decisions about government formation and administration. Because of the same-party dominance in both the centre and the states, the state had to act as an agent and obey the instructions of the centre. The period from 1967 to 1989 may be seen as a watershed moment in Indian federalism, when various developments manifested and a clear contrast between constitutional

structural setup and operational reality in Indian federalism was established for the first time. This time highlighted the conflict and developing friction between the centre and the states by spotlighting the relationship between governing party states and opposition party states in terms of cooperation and bargaining with the centre (Khan, 2003). During this time, state rights were increasingly asserted, as was the need for greater state autonomy and economic independence. Through constitutional provisions, the states also questioned the center's control over the states. States became more active and assertive in response to the centralised federation, as evidenced by the first time by overthrowing the Congress party's hegemonic one-party monopoly with the formation of non-congress governments, first at the state level in 1969 and then at the national level in 1977 through the formation of a coalition government. During this era, the establishment of regional parties in India began a trend of bipolarity between the congress and the anti-congress, which eventually led to the development of the multi-party system (Sridharan, 2012a). With the impact of numerous forces, India has transitioned from a centralised federation to a more federal polity from 1989 to the present. Scholars agree that India's federal politics underwent a massive transition after 1990, which might be described as "new federalism," in which state-based regional parties play a central role. The demise of the Congress system ushers in a new age of coalition politics, marking the end of the period of single-party majority control. After 1989, and especially after 1996, coalition politics became an unavoidable aspect of Indian politics at both the national and state levels, forcing national parties to form alliances with regional parties in order to run the government at the national level. As a consequence, it allows state parties to participate in the coalition's decision-making process at the national level. "Participation in national-level governance has strengthened the payoffs to leaders of regional parties by granting them ministerial slots, higher discretionary money from the federal government, and more secure state governments," Adam Ziefeld remarks in this context (2012: 76).

FEDERAL COALITION AND COOPERATIVE FEDERALISM

Famous specialists on Indian federalism Balveer Arora, K.K. Kailash, Rekha Saxena, and H. Kham Khan Suan suggested that federal coalitions have enhanced the federal political culture of the polity when examining the political component of Indian federalism (Arora et al., 2013:114). Scholars agree that 1989 was a watershed moment in India's federal politics, with the introduction of the federal coalition as a new style of power-sharing to accommodate and recognise more widespread federal-state participation via legal and informal institutional mechanisms (Arora et al., 2013). In general, the phrase "federal coalition" refers to an innovative power-sharing system used in Indian coalition politics to define and balance state and national interests. I.K. Gujral, India's former Prime Minister who headed the United Front Coalition government from 1997 to 1998, coined the phrase "federal coalition." According to Gujral, a federal coalition is one that tries to establish and offer room to all of those regions, desires, and political manifestations that originate from different states (Frontline, 1997:22). Gujral's concept of a federal coalition focused on accepting and recognising India's diversity, which was expressed among several regional state-based political parties and via a coalition that could recognise and respect many identities without seeking to homogenise them (Arora, 2000). Many renowned Indian political scholars, including Balveer Arora (2000, 2015) and K.K. Kailash (2007, 2016), M.P. Singh (2001), developed the concept of "federal coalition" as a power-sharing mechanism that brings together usually a polity-wide party as well as numerous single state and multi-state parties, and as an innovative device to recognise and accommodate the needs of diversity while promoting national unity (Arora et al., 2013:114). Balveer Arora (2000) defined federal coalition as an innovative institutional design in India's context to bring together representative of India's diversity without attempting to merge the differences, by comparing Daniel Elazar's (1987) conceptualization of federalism as "self-rule and shared rule" and Arendt Lijphart's (1996) "consociationalism." "Seeks to integrate territorially-based identities inside a coherent frame even in the absence of similar beliefs," writes Balveer Arora (2000: 176). In India's federal process, the federal coalition recognises, accommodates, and has the potential to build a stable arrangement in order to develop a more federal polity. It also allows for larger federal participation of states at the federal level via coalition governance at the national level, filling the void left by India's constitutionally established centralised federation (Arora & Kailash, 2007; Arora, 2015). Federal coalitions provide them more equal footing as a participant in decision-making at the national level, allowing them to express and solve regional and local concerns in the national arena by institutionalising the alliance management and governance system (Arora et al., 2013). Balveer Arora comments, when analysing the state's role in national-level decision-making under the federal coalition's power-sharing arrangement, State-based parties have power and influence on national policymaking and the development of Centre-state relations via federal coalitions. More crucially, via the political process, single-state and multi-state parties have achieved a level of engagement in national policymaking that they could not obtain through formal co-operative federalism structures. In fact, the federal coalition has provided them with participation options that they had previously been denied (Arora, 2015:25). Table 3 mainly shows the formation of coalition governments at the centre since 1989 (excluding 1991-1996 P.V. Narasimha Rao's Congress party's minority government) through the innovative power sharing mechanism of federal coalition,

based on theoretical formulations of federal coalition developed by Balveer Arora, K.K. Kailash, and M.P. Singh. The table primarily depicts the national government formation process, including kinds, length, and electoral strength in both executive and legislative coalitions, as well as seat share in parliament. It also paints a clear picture of the formation of the federal cabinet by demonstrating state party participation in an executive coalition, which helps to explain the growing interdependence between national and state party government formation at the centre as a result of the Indian polity's compulsion for coalition politics. Using William H. Riker's notion of gauging federalism with a party system to study the locus of power among national and state parties, the author has attempted to explain the political component of Indian federalism using this table. With the wave of "Dalitization, Mandalization, and Hinduization" that began in 1989, state-based political parties became the dominating player in both state and national elections, owing to their popular support base. Because of the fractured multi-party system, no national party has been able to create a government at the centre with an absolute single-party majority. In such a setting, forming a government at the centre requires national parties to work closely with regional parties in order to build a government. This constraint of coalition politics not only provides regional parties greater negotiating power, but it also marks a new culture of power-sharing via the new federation coalition process (Arora et al., 2013; Sharma & Swenden, 2017). As a result, the federation alliance is considered as a factor in the development of a more federal polity.

TABLE 3 Federal Coalitions in India's Federal Polity from 1989 to 2019

Federal Coalition (FC)-Year	National Front 1989	BJP led 1996	United Front I 1996	United Front II 1997	NDA I 1998	NDA II 1999	UPA I 2004	UPA II 2009	NDA III 2014	NDA IV 2019
Strength	283	195	318	318	285	303	338	322	336	353
Total Parties	10	5	13	13	20	21	27	20	29	23
State Parties	4	3	8	8	18	19	22	16	28	22
Executive Coalition	5	2	9	9	10	10	9	6	6	5
Legislative Coalition	5	3	4	4	10	11	18	14	23	19
Total Ministers	39	12	39	42	43	70	67	79	69	58
Ministers from State Parties	3	1	21	24	13	16	20	16	6	4
Largest Party's Seat & Percent in FC	JD 143 (50.53)	BJP 161 (82.57)	INC 140 (44.02)	INC 140 (44.02)	BJP 182 (63.86)	BJP 182 (60.07)	INC 145 (42.90)	INC 206 (63.98)	BJP 282 (83.93)	BJP 303 (85.83)
Coalitionable parties seat & percent in FC	140 (49.47)	34 (17.43)	178 (55.98)	178 (55.98)	103 (36.14)	121 (39.93)	193 (57.10)	116 (36.02)	54 (16.07)	50 (14.16)
Duration (days)	343	16	324	332	572	1683	1826	1830	1824	-
Type of Coalition	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	SC	SC

Note: An executive coalition is made up of parties that join the council of ministers as ruling parties, while a legislative coalition is made up of parties that support the government in parliament but do not join the cabinet. The proportion of seats held by the largest and coalitionable parties is dependent on the federal coalition's overall strength. MC-Minority Coalition (Coalition-forming parties do not have a majority) SC-Surplus Coalition (Coalition-forming parties must have a single-party majority in order to establish a government.)

Table 3 clearly shows that, from 1989 to 2019, India has entered the "era of federal coalition," in which regional state-based political parties have played a very significant influential role in government formation at the national level, which was previously denied to them by formal constitutional arrangements. State parties' participation in the federal coalition is not limited to participating as a supporting party; they have also been assigned crucial positions in the federal cabinet, such as cabinet or minister of states, based on their number of seats. The overall number of political parties as alliance partners has expanded from 10 to 23, with a considerable number of state parties among them, from the National Front (1989) administration to the current NDA (2019) government. We have seen a progressive expansion in the participation of state-based parties in all of these federal coalitions, from three parties under the National Front administration to the current NDA government with 28 parties. The growing number of political parties in each federal coalition has an influence on the creation of the federal cabinet, since many state-based political parties are rewarded depending on the number of seats they have. Many powerful regional parties, such as the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK), the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), the Lok Jan Shakti Party (LJP), the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), the Shiv Sena

(SHS), and the Telugu Desam (TDP), In a power-sharing system like this, the coalition-maker party, which is generally a national party with the most seats, uses a variety of strategies to manage the coalition at both the government and political levels. At the federal level, the federal coalition plays a critical role in ensuring a stable government by safeguarding the interests of both the centre and the states. The Federal Coalition offers a single platform for national and regional state-based political parties to engage in national decision-making as members of both the executive and legislative coalitions, as well as express their opinions and concerns on policy-making issues. As a coalition partner in the federal coalition, they can fulfil these goals in two ways: as members of the executive coalition, they can participate in the federal cabinet, Group of Ministers, and Cabinet Committees; and as members of the legislative coalition, they can participate in a variety of coordinating forums, formal and informal institutional mechanisms such as the Common Minimum Programme, Coordinate Committee, and All Party Meeting, among others (Kailash, 2007). Federal coalitions become the most effective technique for maintaining a stable coalition by safeguarding all regional aspirations and national requirements. We can bring up the 1999 BJP-led NDA federal coalition as the first coalition government at the centre, which was able to maintain a stable government for the duration of its term with the help of 21 regional and national political parties by implementing various formal and informal institutional mechanisms at both the government and political levels. Scholars such as Balveer Arora (2002), M.P. Singh (2002), Douglas Verney (2003), Lloyd I. Rudolph, and Susanne Hoerber Rudolph (2002, 2010) regard the creation of the federalism coalition after 1989 as a transition from old to new federalism, which is currently occurring. By defining "new federalism," they primarily focus on the evolution of the center-state relationship from a centralised federation to a more federal polity by giving states more authority and allowing them to participate more fully in national decision-making via federal coalition.

This has also limited central interference in the use of anti-federal articles such as Art-356 (Presidential Rule in States) and the governorship. After 1989, it is thought that central interference via Article-356 and the governor's role against state governments (mostly state governments of the opposition party) has decreased (Arora 2002; Singh 2002). Federal coalitions serve as a strong deterrent to central supremacy in this situation (Sadanandan, 2012). After 1989, the use of this anti-federal item, Art-356, and the governorship against state governments has decreased. The inclusion of state-based regional parties in the coalition administration at the centre, as well as the *Bommai vs Union of India*, 1994 verdict, which put Article 356 under judicial review, were the main drivers of these reforms.

During the one-party rule from 1947 to 1989 (except the Janata Party's administration in 1977-79), the central government used this anti-federal feature, namely Article 356 and the governorship, as a political weapon against states, particularly those led by opposition parties. The era of federal coalition also brings a new change in the composition of the Lok Sabha, which shows a complex picture in terms of representation of different parties, from national parties to state parties, in a very fragmented way (Arora, 2003a), which forces coalition politics at the national and state levels. This fragmented multi-party system resulted in the emergence of a "Binodal" party system led by the NDA and UPA, with the gradual rise of regional parties (Arora, 2003a). It has become extremely difficult to form a single-party majority government as a result of the non-hegemonic position of national parties and the dominating role of regional parties, which has led to the maintenance of a power balance with this decentralised federal party system, and states can now use In a federal coalition government, the union government is unable to impose its will on the state government.

The state government is now in a position to relinquish its dictatorial role, while state-based parties that are members of the federal coalition can exert control over the union government through mechanisms such as the Common Minimum Programme and the Coordination Committee, which reflect the states' greater bargaining power over the federal government (Arora et al., 2013; Arora, 2015; Kailash, 2007). Inter-governmental cooperation has grown in significance since 1989, thanks to the federal coalition, and the central government now plays a coordinating role via various mechanisms at the executive level, dealing with a shared agenda on particular topics (Arora, 2000). The federal coalition established a power balance between the states and the federal government, resulting in friendly and peaceful ties between the two. "The intricacy of electoral federalism, as well as the existence of a significant number of single-state parties in federal coalitions," writes Balveer Arora, "make it almost difficult to exclude state-level issues from parliament, even if it were thought desirable" (Arora, 2003b: 33). The evolution of India's party structure is seen to have an impact on the country's economic direction. Since 1989, there have been numerous changes and developments in the Indian political system, which Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoerber Rudolph (2002) referred to as "federalization of party system with federalized market economy," in which state governments have more room for decision-making through coalition governments, which have introduced greater economic and political decentralisation and will lead to a path of greater cooperative federalism.

II. CONCLUSION

Subrata K. Mitra (2014: 156) mentions Ronald L. Watts' (1998) four general conditions or aspects based on the works of Wheare (1951), Friedrich (1968), Riker (1975), Dikshit (1975), Watts (1981), and Elazar (1981) when discussing the general conditions for the successful functioning of India's federal process (1987). The first is "[...] the level of elite accommodation and popular participation in the process" (Watts, 1998: 128). Second, "the significance of rivalry between federal and state governments, as well as between state governments." Watts (1998), p. 130 "[...] the intricacy of intergovernmental administrative and budgetary ties," says the third point. Watts mentions "[...]the role and impact of political parties, including their number, character, and relations among federal, state, and local branches, to understand the dynamic relationships within federations" (Watts, 1998: 130) and fourth, based on Riker's analysis, "[...]the role and impact of political parties, including their number, character, and relations among federal, state, and local branches, to understand the dynamic relationships within federations" (Watts, 1998: 130 Watts (1998), p. 130. This article has attempted to explore the essence of Indian federalism from the standpoint of party politics, using theoretical analyses offered by notable federalist thinkers. In compared to other traditional types of federation, India as a federal polity provides a unique model of federation that distinguishes itself as an Indian model of federalism. Political parties play a critical role as a key intervening variable in influencing the form and functioning of India's federal process as a federal democracy with a parliamentary political system. Political parties have not only changed the fundamental assumptions of inter-governmental interactions by adding new elements that have an influence on the federal structure, but they have also enhanced India's democratic political culture. As a result, it pushes us to consider in terms of India; if the federal experiment has worked in India, it is due to the country's democratic politics, not to its constitutional provisions.

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