

Polity IV Country Report 2010: India

Score:	2009	2010	Change	
Polity:	9	9	0	
Democ:	9	9	0	
Autoc:	0	0	0	
Durable:		60		
Tentative:		No		

SCODE	IND	CCODE	750	Date of Report	1 June 2011
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Polity IV Component Variables

XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP
3	3	4	7	2	4

Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)

End Date		Begin Date	26 January 1950 (Ind.)
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Polity Fragmentation: No

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Constitution	1950
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Executive(s)	Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (INC); selected 22 May 2004
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Legislature	<p>Bicameral:</p> <p>Lok Sabha (545 seats: 543 directly elected, 2 appointed to represent the Anglo-Indian community; most recent elections, 16, 22-23, 30 April and 7, 13 May 2009)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indian National Congress (INC) and allies: 262 National Democratic Alliance [coalition consisting of BJP and others] (NDA): 159 Third Front [coalition consisting of LF, CPI-M, CPI, RSP, AIFB]: 79 Other parties: 43 Nominated: 2 <p>Rajya Sabha (245 seats: 233 elected by state and union territory legislatures, 12 appointed; most recent elections, 29 March 2000)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congress: 64 BJP: 45 CPI-M: 17 TDP: 11 Other parties: 94 Non-partisans: 14
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Judiciary	Supreme Court
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Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

India is a parliamentary democracy in which citizens have the right to select their chief executive through electoral mechanisms. During the first three decades after achieving independence from England, the Congress Party dominated both the Federal and regional governments of India. The Congress Party achieved this feat by drawing on its nationalist legacy, the extensive use of state patronage, and the accommodation of numerous class and communal interests inside the party structure. The Congress Party suffered its first electoral defeat in 1977 following the two-year state of emergency declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. During the past twenty years the hegemony of the Congress Party has weakened. While still a primary actor in Indian politics, nevertheless, non-Congress prime ministers have governed the country on numerous occasions since the lifting of the state of emergency in 1977. Most recently, in 1999 Atal Vajpayee led a 25-party coalition (headed by his Hindu nationalist BJP) to electoral victory over the Congress Party and numerous other class- and regional-based parties. While these elections were deemed to be one of the fairest in recent memory, political violence continues to be a common feature of electoral politics in India. Legislative elections in May 2004 reversed this trend and the Congress Party (INC) regained control of the government after an upset victory over the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance. INC president Sonia Gandhi announced that she would not become Prime Minister and, upon her recommendation, President Kalam appointed Manmohan Singh as the country's first Sikh and first non-Hindu Prime Minister.

Executive Constraints: Executive Parity or Subordination (7)

Under the Indian Constitution executive power is formally vested in the president but, in reality, these powers are held by the prime minister. As is the case in most parliamentary systems, the prime minister is directly accountable to the national assembly. This horizontal accountability is further accentuated by the coalitional nature of Indian politics in recent years. In an effort to hold together the tenuous coalitions that have characterized India politics in the last 20 years, India's prime ministers have been forced to compromise on major issues in order to maintain the confidence of a majority faction in the Lok Sabha. Failure to stitch together a lasting coalition within the Lok Sabha has led to the revolving door nature of governance in the past decade. In an effort to hold together the fragile National Democratic Alliance, Prime Minister Vajpayee has dropped many of the radical sectarian-based objectives of the BJP that helped propel him to national prominence during the 1990s.

Political Participation: Political Liberalization or Democratic Retrenchment: Limited and/or Decreasing Overt Coercion (9)

The nature of political participation in India is complex. The influences of class, caste, religion, language, and regional identity are constantly creating cross-pressures that threaten to bring down the institutions of democratic governance. While the secular and inclusive nature of the Congress Party initially served to strengthen the institutions of democracy in this society, during the last twenty years the weakening of Congress hegemony has been associated with the increasing factionalization of both the party system and the society at-large. While it may be argued that the conciliatory manner in which the BJP-led government has conducted itself in the last few years demonstrates the strength of the institutional mechanisms of democracy in India, this scenario overlooks the degree to which the BJP has continued to pursue its sectarian goals at the state and local levels.

So long as the Congress Party was able to integrate the divergent interests of Indian society into a centralized institutional framework, the democratic system was able to operate in a highly regulated manner. The locus of political power was held at the federal level and class-based politics were institutionalized through party competition. While the institutions of Indian democracy remain strong, nevertheless, in recent years they have been increasingly challenged by the centrifugal nature of Indian society and the institutional decay of the post-Congress party system. During the last two decades linguistic, religious, class and caste-based divisions have shaken the illusion of Indian unity. Decentralized political competition, serious and recurring political violence, and the rhetoric of hyper-nationalism

¹ The research described in this report was sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF). The PITF is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The views expressed herein are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.

compete directly with the vestiges of central control, political pacifism, and social tolerance which were once, perhaps naively, associated with Indian politics.

While the institutions of national democracy continue to function in the country, power has been slowly devolved to the states while the strength of national institutions have been eroded by endemic corruption, in-party factionalism and the rise of exclusionary and state-based political parties. Over 160 parties competed in the 1999 parliamentary elections, with representatives from 39 parties (and 5 independents) gaining seats in the legislature. Although it has been argued that the Indian system is moving toward a two-coalition system at the center (and a two-coalition system in each state), the composition of these voting blocks at both levels is constantly changing because of party hopping by individual leaders and coalition hopping by the parties. Organizational decay is a phenomenon shared by virtually all of the major parties in India. Parties as institutions have virtually collapsed. Most parties serve principally as vehicles for individual ambitions while intrigue, infighting and factionalism are their defining characteristics. While the BJP has become a genuine national party in recent years (no longer confined to the Hindi-speaking North), its expansion has been offset by the declining national power of the Congress Party and the rise of regional- and caste-based parties. In general, national outcomes are an aggregate of state-specific factors with national themes and personalities playing an increasingly marginal role.

In recent years tensions both within Indian politics and between India and neighboring Pakistan have escalated sharply; domestic and international politics in India are tightly intertwined. Domestic politics in India had become so raucous by late 2001 that India's highly popular Prime Minister Vajpayee had offered to resign in August due to his inability to lead the fractious coalition government and his own BJP party. In addition to the difficulties of managing conflicts with the many ethnic and tribal groups in the east and northeast provinces, India has been affected by spillover from the increasing violence in neighboring Nepal. Maoist rebels from Nepal have formed alliances with Naxalite groups within India. India has also complained to neighboring Bangladesh that it is harboring militants from areas around its borders. The Hindu-Muslim conflict that is symbolized by the long-running violence in Kashmir is the main locus of tensions in the region, however. Tensions with Pakistan over the war in Kashmir continued to climb through 2001 and reached a crisis following a 13 December 2001, terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament. Indian and Pakistani conventional and nuclear forces were arrayed in direct confrontation that was only slowly defused in 2002 through concerted international efforts. Complicating the international crisis was a domestic crisis that erupted when Hindu-Muslim riots paralyzed Gujarat state beginning in late February 2002 and continuing through April 2002, where as many as 2000 people lost their lives. Islamic militants were also charged with killing over 180 people in bomb attacks in Mumbai in July 2006.