

India

Rice

Since its independence, India has been a parliamentary democracy with both a President (who plays a largely ceremonial role) and a Prime Minister (the head of government). The political parties in India have changed many times over the years—often, a faction of a party will split and form a new party, adding a letter to the name of the previous party to show the difference (example: INC vs. INC-I). With the advent of smaller, regional parties gaining seats in the national Parliament, the larger parties have been forced to form coalitions with a large number of these smaller parties (sometimes, as many as twenty) in order to gain a majority and form a government. These coalitions are often referred to by a different name than any party involved in the coalition (example: United Progressive Alliance), and the Prime Minister can be from any of the parties involved in the coalition.

In 1947, India gained independence, and Jawaharlal Nehru, a member of the Congress Party (INC) became Prime Minister. He ruled a coalition of the INC/Sikh/Christians/Parsee/Mhas. In 1952 the coalition parties left coalition and INC ruled on its own. This is a minor SOLS change. When Nehru died in May 1964, he was replaced by Gulzarilal Nanda, who was the interim Prime Minister for thirteen days, until the Congress Party elected a new leader (and Prime Minister), Lal Bahadur Shastri on 9 June 1964. This is not a SOLS change, as Nehru and Shastri were from the same party. Shastri remained Prime Minister until his death on 11 January 1966, at which point Nanda stepped in as interim Prime Minister (for one week), until 19 January 1966. This is not a SOLS change. Supposedly by the choice of “The Syndicate” (the nickname for a group of four Congress bosses who controlled the party), Nehru’s daughter, Indira Gandhi, was chosen to lead the Congress Party and be the next Prime Minister. This is not a SOLS change.

Indira Gandhi held the office of Prime Minister for three terms, until March 27, 1977. She lost the elections of that year to the candidate from the Janata Party (JP, a party comprised of essentially those opposed to Gandhi and the reforms she had enacted during the State of Emergency from 1975-1977), Morarji Desai. This is a SOLS change. The Janata Party was comprised of four smaller parties, the Bharatiya Janata Sangh (abbreviated Janata-S), the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD), the Congress-Organisation party (INC-O, made up of members of the Congress Party who had opposed the Emergency), and the Socialist Party. It is important to note that Desai was the leader of the BLD. In 1979, the Socialist Party pulled out from this coalition, and Desai’s government collapsed. On 28 July 1979, a new government was formed under Prime Minister Choudary Singh (a member of the Janata-S party) with a coalition of Janata-S and INC-O. Janata-S was a faction of Janata. Since Singh only had only the support of a subset of Desai’s SOLS, we code a minor SOLS change here.

Singh held office until the elections of 1980, when he was defeated by Indira Gandhi, now running as a member of the Congress-Indira (INC-I) Party, which she had created after she was ousted from office. Indira Gandhi remained in power until her assassination on 31 October 1984. After her death, she was replaced as Prime Minister by her son, Rajiv Gandhi. This is not a SOLS change, as they were from the same party. On December 2, 1989, Rajiv Gandhi was defeated in elections by a coalition led by Vishwanath Pratap Singh. V.P. Singh was a member of the National Front party (NF). The National

Front, like the Janata Party, was made up of several smaller, leftist parties, including the Janata Dal party (JD), which was Singh's original affiliation. V.P. Singh's government was comprised of a coalition of NF, the right-wing Bharata Janata Party (BJP), and the Socialist Party (LF) (Fickett 1993). Together, they formed an Anti-Congress bloc. This transition is coded as a SOLS change.

V.P. Singh's government lasted until 1990, when the BJP pulled out from the governing coalition. At that point, a breakaway faction of the Janata Dal party, known as the Janata Dal-Shekhar (JD-S) party formed a new government under Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar. This is a minor SOLS change.

This coalition was also short-lived, as the relationship between the two parties in the ruling coalition deteriorated. New elections were held on June 21, 1991, and INC-I, under its leader P.V.N. Rao won enough of a majority to form a government without coalition partners. This is a SOLS change. Rao continued as Prime Minister until 1996.

The elections of 1996 were controversial. The BJP won the largest number of seats in Parliament, but, due to their aggressively pro-Hindu stance, they were unable to find enough coalition partners to form a government. The leader of the BJP, who was technically the Prime Minister during this time, was Atal Vajpayee. We have coded this as a SOLS change 30, to reflect that BJP won the election, and did attempt to form a government. After thirteen days, a coalition of thirteen parties came together to form the United Front (in the same manner as the National Front and the Janata Party). The coalition consisted of JD/TDP/DMK/TMC/AGP/SP/KCP/MPVC/Cong-T/CPI-M/CPI/FB/RSP (Chander 2004, 42; Hardgrave and Kochanek 2008, 329-330). The coalition selected H.D. Deve Gowda as their Prime Minister. This is a SOLS change. Later that year a 14th party, the Communists, was added (WKB, 280; "Gowda brings" 1996). This is a minor SOLS change. However, within ten months of his election, Gowda was forced out of office by the INC-I members of the coalition, and was replaced by Inder Kumar Gujral on 21 April 1997. At that point, more parties joined the coalition, so I have coded it as a minor SOLS change. Gujral remained in office until 19 March 1998, when INC-I pulled out of the governing coalition and forced new elections.

In the elections of 1998, the BJP again won the largest number of seats. This time, they were able to find twenty smaller, regional parties to enter into a coalition with them (which was known as the National Democratic Alliance), and therefore could form a government under Vajpayee (SOLS change). In 1999, the PM Vajpayee and the NDA resigned. For a short while Vajpayee was head of an interim government, before being re-elected as PM later in 1999 (Inter-Parline Database on National Parliaments 2010), forming the same coalition as before the resignation. This government was in power until 2004, when they lost the majority. In the 2004 elections, the INC came out with the most number of seats, and formed a government in a coalition with several smaller parties (under the name of the United Progressive Alliance). The leader of the INC, Sonia Gandhi, declined to take the office of Prime Minister, and declared Manmohan Singh to be the UPA candidate. Singh took office on 22 May 2004.

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