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Q8(c)

How far is it correct that the regional parties have strengthened the Indian democracy and federal system? Substantiate your answer with suitable examples

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · PSIR GS 1 · 15 marks · Party System

Party System: National and regional political parties, ideological and social bases of parties; patterns of coalition politics; Pressure groups, trends in electoral behaviour; changing socio-economic profile of Legislators.

Core demand of the question

- How far is it correct that the regional parties have strengthened the Indian democracy and federal system? Substantiate with suitable examples. (15 marks)

Revision summary

Regional parties widened democratic choice after 1967 and 1989.

DMK, **TMC**, and **AAP** show linguistic, state-alternation, and new-urban routes into power.

Coalition politics and **Bommai**-era federalism made states harder to dismiss or ignore.

GST Council and linguistic statehood claims are federal gains with regional vehicles.

Internal oligarchy and spoils are the democratic costs.

The strengthening claim holds as a net historical judgment.

Introduction

Regional parties have strengthened Indian democracy and federalism by giving linguistic and state majorities a national voice and by forcing coalition bargains. They have also produced opportunism, dynastic machines, and centre-state blackmail. The statement is largely correct for the coalition decades, with those costs named.

Body

Democracy strengthened

- After 1967 and especially after 1989, voters could punish a national party without abandoning parliamentary politics. That is **Dahl**'s contestation at the state scale.
- **DMK** and later AIADMK made Dravidian social justice and Tamil linguistic dignity electoral, which widened who counts in the demos.
- **TMC** in West Bengal displaced a long Left Front without extra-constitutional rupture, a democratic alternation.
- **AAP** used city services and anti-corruption talk to enter Delhi and then Punjab, adding a new organisational type to the party system.
- Regional media and state-level leadership reduced the informational monopoly of a single Delhi party, which **Gramsci** would call a more plural civil society.

Federalism strengthened

- Coalition governments at the Centre (1989-2014, and in later mixes) made Chief Ministers veto players on cabinets, which **Sarkaria** wanted as political federalism, not only legal lists.
- **S. R. Bommai** (1994) is often used when regional parties resist **Article 356**; the judgment's federal reading grew in a multi-party climate.
- GST Council voting gives states, often ruled by regional parties, a formal fiscal voice.
- Telangana's creation after a regional movement, and earlier linguistic states, show regional parties as vehicles of boundary federalism.
- The Inter-State Council was still weak; regional parties used extra-constitutional alliances more than **Article 263**, which is messy federalism, but still federal bargaining.

Limits and counter-examples

- Some regional parties have been personalist and intolerant of local opposition, which is **Michels** at the state capital.
- Support-for-stability bargains extracted Union ministries as spoils, which can weaken programmatic democracy.
- Ethnic regionalism in the North-East can harden exclusion even while it checks a distant Centre.
- A dominant national party can recentralise; regional strength is conjunctural, not a locked federal guarantee.

How far correct

- It is correct that regional parties made India a competitive federal democracy rather than a one-party Congress system.
- It is incorrect if "strengthened" means they always deepen rights or always respect opposition.
- Examples that substantiate the positive claim are **DMK** in Union coalitions, **TMC**'s state alternation, **AAP**'s new entry, and **Bommai**-era resistance to dismissal.
- **The balanced score is:** more voices, more state bargaining power, uneven internal democracy.

Flow diagram

Regional parties -> Wider contestation
 Regional parties -> Coalition federal bargains
 DMK -> Regional parties
 TMC -> Regional parties
 AAP -> Regional parties
 Bommai -> Coalition federal bargains

Conclusion

Regional parties have, on balance, strengthened democracy by widening contestation and strengthened federalism by making states political principals. **DMK**, **TMC**, and **AAP** illustrate the gain. Spoils, dynasty, and exclusion illustrate the bill. The claim is largely true, not absolutely true.

Facts & figures

DMK

Dravidian party; repeated Union coalition partner; Tamil federal voice since the 1960s-70s.

TMC

Displaced the Left Front in West Bengal through elections, a regional democratic alternation.

AAP

Delhi and Punjab wins on services and anti-corruption, a late regional-urban party type.

Bommai (1994)

Secularism and floor-test discipline of **Article 356**, used in a multi-party federal climate.

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