

CUET · POLITICAL SCIENCE · CLASS XII · CODE 323

Recent Developments in Indian Politics

CUET unit: Politics in India Since Independence — Recent Developments in Indian Politics

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Snapshot

- Caps the textbook by tracing five game-changing developments at the close of the 1980s: defeat of the Congress in 1989, rise of the Mandal issue, launch of the new economic policy, the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, and the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi.
- Marks the formal end of the "Congress system" and the beginning of an era of coalition governments and multi-party competition that lasted from 1989 until the BJP's single-party majority in 2014.
- Examines the political rise of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) through the Mandal Commission recommendations and the emergence of Dalit politics through BAMCEF and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP).
- Locates the politics of Hindutva, the Shah Bano case, the Ayodhya dispute and the November 9, 2019 Supreme Court verdict within debates on communalism, secularism and democracy.
- Identifies a new four-element consensus across parties: new economic policies, acceptance of OBC claims, role of State-level parties, and pragmatic alliances over ideology.

Detailed Notes

2.1 Core concepts

- **Context of the 1990s — five developments at the end of the 1980s** that left a long-lasting impact: (i) defeat of Congress in 1989, (ii) rise of the Mandal issue, (iii) new economic reforms, (iv) Ram Janmabhoomi temple dispute, and (v) assassination of Rajiv Gandhi (NCERT §Context of the 1990s, pp. 137–139). These together produced a structurally different politics — coalition-based, ideologically plural, regionally negotiated.
- **Defeat of Congress, 1989.** Congress fell from **415 seats (1984)** to **197 seats**; even though it returned to power in 1991, the 1989 election ended the "Congress system" and the party lost its earlier centrality in the party system. Many parties have since formed governments, none with the kind of dominance Congress earlier had (NCERT §Context of the 1990s, p. 137).
- **Rise of the Mandal issue.** The **National Front government in 1990** decided to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendation reserving central-government

jobs for OBCs; this triggered violent anti-Mandal protests in north India and reshaped politics from 1989 onward. From this point caste-based mobilisation, OBC political assertion, and reservation politics became permanent features of national politics (NCERT §Context of the 1990s, p. 137).

- **New economic reforms. A structural adjustment programme** begun in the closing months of the Rajiv Gandhi government became visible in 1991 under PM **P. V. Narasimha Rao**, with **Manmohan Singh** as Finance Minister. The programme involved a sharp reorientation away from the model India had followed since Independence — opening up the economy, removing licensing, encouraging private and foreign capital. Subsequent governments have continued these policies despite criticism (NCERT §Context of the 1990s, p. 138).
- **Ram Janmabhoomi issue.** The centuries-old dispute over Shri Ram's birthplace in Ayodhya transformed discourse on secularism and democracy; it culminated in the construction of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya following the **constitutional-bench verdict of the Supreme Court on November 9, 2019** (NCERT §Context of the 1990s, p. 139; §From Legal Proceedings to Amicable Acceptance, p. 149). NCERT discusses both the political dispute and the legal closure.
- **Assassination of Rajiv Gandhi (May 1991).** He was assassinated by a Sri Lankan Tamil linked to the **LTTE** during an election campaign tour in **Tamil Nadu**; Congress emerged as the single largest party in 1991 and chose Narasimha Rao as Prime Minister (NCERT §Context of the 1990s, p. 139).
- **Era of Coalitions begins (1989).** Congress had no majority and sat in opposition; the **National Front** (Janata Dal + regional parties) formed a coalition government with **outside support** from the BJP and the **Left Front**, who did not join it. This was the first time two such ideologically opposed forces supported the same government from outside — a coalition signature of the 1990s (NCERT §Era of Coalitions, p. 140).
- **Multi-party system after 1989.** No single party secured a clear majority of seats in any Lok Sabha election held between 1989 and 2014; **regional parties** played a crucial role in forming ruling alliances. The **BJP got a clear majority on its own in 2014 and 2019**, though it continued to lead the NDA (NCERT §Decline of Congress, p. 141).
- **Alliance politics in the 1990s.** In 1996, the **United Front** (Janata Dal + regional parties) came to power supported by the Congress (and not by the BJP), illustrating unstable political equations. The BJP led an **NDA coalition from May 1998 to June 1999** and was re-elected in **October 1999** under **Atal Behari Vajpayee**; the 1999 government completed its full term — a milestone, since it was the first non-Congress government to complete a full five years (NCERT §Alliance politics, pp. 141–142).
- **Rise of Other Backward Classes.** The Janata Party government (1977) was the first national expression of OBC politics; the Janata Dal in the 1980s carried this combination forward. NCERT places this in a long arc — backward-class mobilisation

began with the lower-caste movements of the colonial period and reached national political voice only after the 1980s (NCERT §Political Rise of Other Backward Classes, pp. 144–145).

- **Mandal Commission.** Officially the **Second Backward Classes Commission**, set up in **1978 under B. P. Mandal**; submitted its report in **1980** recommending that "backward classes" be understood as "backward castes" and reserving **27%** of seats in educational institutions and government jobs for them, plus other recommendations like land reforms (NCERT §The Mandal Commission box, p. 146). The Commission's recognition of caste — rather than only economic criteria — became politically decisive.
- **Implementation and Indra Sawhney case.** In **August 1990** the National Front government implemented the reservation recommendation for OBCs in central-government jobs; the decision was challenged in the Supreme Court (**Indra Sawhney case**) and in **November 1992** the Court upheld the government's decision, while introducing the "creamy layer" exclusion (NCERT §The Mandal Commission box, p. 146).
- **Rise of Dalit politics. BAMCEF** (Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation) was formed in **1978**; from it emerged the **Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti (DS-4)** and later the **Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)** under **Kanshi Ram** in **1984**. BSP achieved a breakthrough in **Uttar Pradesh** in the **1989 and 1991** elections — the first time a Dalit-led party had this kind of political success in independent India (NCERT §Political fallouts, p. 147).
- **Kanshi Ram (1934–2006).** Proponent of Bahujan empowerment; founder of BAMCEF, DS-4 and BSP; regarded political power as the master key to social equality. His strategy of building Dalit political organisation distinct from Congress patronage transformed the politics of Uttar Pradesh and the Hindi belt (NCERT §Kanshi Ram profile, p. 147).
- **Communalism and the BJP.** After the break-up of the Janata Party, supporters of the erstwhile **Jana Sangh** formed the **BJP in 1980**; it initially adopted "**Gandhian Socialism**" plus cultural nationalism but did poorly in 1984, winning only two seats. After **1986** the BJP began emphasising nationalism and pursuing the politics of **Hindutva** (NCERT §Communalism, Secularism, Democracy, p. 148).
- **Hindutva.** Popularised by **Vinayak Damodar Savarkar**; to be Indian one must accept India as one's **fatherland (pitrubhu)** and **holy land (punyabhu)**. Believers hold that a strong nation rests on a united national culture (NCERT §Communalism, Secularism, Democracy, p. 148).
- **Shah Bano case (1985).** A 62-year-old divorced Muslim woman filed for maintenance under the criminal code; the Supreme Court ruled in her favour. The government then passed the **Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986**, nullifying the judgment in deference to opposition from sections of the Muslim community. The BJP criticised this as "appeasement" of minorities (NCERT §Communalism, Secularism, Democracy, p. 148).

- **Ayodhya issue.** A three-dome structure (the Babri Masjid) was built at the disputed site in **1528**; it was sealed in **1949** due to court proceedings. In **1986** the Faizabad (now Ayodhya) district court ordered the structure to be unlocked for worship. **Shilaanyas** was performed but further construction remained prohibited. In **1992** the structure was demolished, triggering communal violence in several parts of the country (NCERT §Ayodhya Issue, pp. 148–149).
- **Supreme Court verdict (November 9, 2019).** A **5-0 unanimous verdict** of a constitutional bench allotted the disputed site to the **Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teertha Kshetra Trust** for construction of the Ram temple and directed allotment of an appropriate site to the **Sunni Central Waqf Board** for a mosque (NCERT §From Legal Proceedings to Amicable Acceptance, p. 149).
- **Lok Sabha Elections 2004–2019.** In **2004** the NDA was defeated and the **UPA (Congress-led)** came to power with Left Front support; the UPA completed its term despite the Left withdrawing support in **July 2008** over the **Indo-US nuclear deal**. In **2009**, Congress rose from 145 to **206 seats** and Manmohan Singh became PM for a second term. In **2014**, **BJP won 282 seats** — the first single-party majority in 30 years — under **Narendra Modi** (declared PM candidate in **September 2013**). In **2019**, **BJP won 303 seats** (NCERT §Lok Sabha Elections 2004–2019, pp. 151–152).
- **Growing consensus — four elements.** (i) agreement on **new economic policies**; (ii) acceptance of **political and social claims of backward castes** (all parties support reservation); (iii) acceptance of the **role of State-level parties** in national governance; (iv) emphasis on **pragmatism over ideology** — e.g., most NDA partners did not agree with the BJP's Hindutva ideology yet formed government with it (NCERT §Growing consensus, pp. 152–154). This consensus, makes Indian politics now structurally different from the Congress-system phase.

2.2 Definitions to memorise

Term	Definition	Page
Congress system	The phase of one-party dominance in which Congress held centrality in the Indian party system; ended with the 1989 election.	137, 140
Mandal issue	The dispute between supporters and opponents of OBC reservations that followed the National Front government's 1990 decision to implement the Mandal Commission's job-reservation recommendation.	137
Structural adjustment programme / new economic reforms	The set of economic policies, started under Rajiv Gandhi and visible from 1991, that radically changed the direction Indian economy had pursued since Independence.	138
Mandal Commission	The Second Backward Classes Commission, set up in 1978 under B. P. Mandal; reported in 1980; recommended 27% reservation for OBCs in jobs and educational institutions.	146

Term	Definition	Page
Indra Sawhney case	The Supreme Court case challenging implementation of OBC reservations; in November 1992 the Court upheld the government's decision.	146
BAMCEF	Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation, formed in 1978; took a strong position in favour of political power to the "bahujan".	147
DS-4	Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti — bridge organisation between BAMCEF and BSP, founded by Kanshi Ram.	147
Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)	Party founded by Kanshi Ram in 1984 emerging from BAMCEF and DS-4; supported largely by Dalit voters and broke through in UP in 1989 and 1991.	147
Hindutva	Concept popularised by V. D. Savarkar — to be Indian one must accept India as one's fatherland (pitrubhu) and holy land (punyabhū); used by the BJP after 1986 for political mobilisation.	148
Shah Bano case	1985 Supreme Court decision granting maintenance to a divorced Muslim woman; nullified by the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986.	148
Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986	Legislation passed to undo the effect of the Shah Bano judgment in the realm of Muslim personal law.	148
Ram Janmabhoomi movement	Mobilisation by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, BJP and allied organisations demanding construction of a Ram temple at the disputed Ayodhya site.	148–149
Shilaanyas	Foundation-laying ceremony — done at the disputed Ayodhya site, but further construction prohibited at the time.	149
National Front (1989)	Coalition led by Janata Dal with regional parties; supported from outside by BJP and Left Front; V. P. Singh as PM.	140
United Front (1996)	Coalition of Janata Dal and regional parties supported from outside by the Congress (not BJP).	141
NDA / UPA	National Democratic Alliance (BJP-led, in power 1998–2004, 2014–) and United Progressive Alliance (Congress-led, in power 2004–2014).	142, 151–152
Indo-US nuclear deal	The civil-nuclear cooperation agreement over which the Left Front withdrew support to UPA-I in July 2008.	151
Bahujan	Conceptual category used by Kanshi Ram referring to Dalits, OBCs, Adivasis and religious minorities together.	147

Term	Definition	Page
Other Backward Classes (OBCs)	Socially and educationally backward classes recognised under Article 16(4) and the Mandal Commission's recommendations.	144–146
Creamy layer	Better-off sections within OBCs excluded from reservation as per the Indra Sawhney judgment.	146
Pitrubhu	"Fatherland" — Savarkar's criterion that India must be regarded as the original land of one's ancestors.	148
Punyabhū	"Holy land" — Savarkar's criterion that India must be regarded as the land of one's faith.	148
Hindutva politics	Mobilisation by parties that draw on cultural-nationalist Hindu identity for political support.	148

2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

- **Cartoon of the "roller coaster" of 1990s politics** showing Rajiv Gandhi, V. P. Singh, L. K. Advani, Chandrashekhar, Jyoti Basu, N. T. Rama Rao, Devi Lal, P. K. Mahanta and K. Karunanidhi — illustrates the ups and downs of various political parties in the 1990s (p. 137).
- **R. K. Laxman cartoon** of Manmohan Singh with Narasimha Rao in the initial phase of the New Economic Policy (p. 138).
- **Sudhir Tailang cartoon** showing the National Front government led by V. P. Singh supported by Jyoti Basu (Left) and L. K. Advani (BJP) (p. 140).
- **Ajit Ninan cartoon** depicting the change from one-party dominance to multi-party alliance system (p. 142).
- **Table: Central Governments since 1989** — list of Prime Ministers and their tenures (p. 143).
- **Charts: Party Position (seats) and Vote Share in Lok Sabha** comparing Congress, BJP and Janata "family" of parties (pp. 150–151).
- **Party Position in 17th Lok Sabha** illustration (p. 155).
- **Process chain — Ayodhya:** 1528 structure → 1949 sealed → 1986 unlocked → Shilaanyas → 1992 demolition → 9 November 2019 SC 5–0 verdict.
- **Process chain — Mandal:** 1978 set up → 1980 report → August 1990 implemented → November 1992 upheld in Indra Sawhney.

2.5 Key Articles / Treaties / Events

Reference	Source / Subject	NCERT cite
1989 Lok Sabha Election	Congress fell from 415 to 197 seats; end of Congress system	p. 137

Reference	Source / Subject	NCERT cite
National Front Government, 1989	V. P. Singh PM; outside support from BJP and Left	p. 140
Mandal Commission (Second Backward Classes Commission), set up 1978	Reported 1980; recommended 27% OBC reservation	p. 146
Mandal implementation, August 1990	Triggered anti-Mandal protests	p. 137
Indra Sawhney case, November 1992	SC upheld OBC reservation + creamy-layer exclusion	p. 146
New Economic Policy / Structural Adjustment, 1991	Narasimha Rao PM, Manmohan Singh FM	p. 138
Rajiv Gandhi assassination, 21 May 1991	Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu; LTTE	p. 139
BAMCEF, 1978	Founded by Kanshi Ram	p. 147
BSP founded, 1984	Kanshi Ram	p. 147
Shah Bano case, 1985	SC ruled for maintenance under CrPC	p. 148
Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986	Nullified Shah Bano judgment	p. 148
BJP founded, 1980	From the post-Janata break-up; initially "Gandhian Socialism"	p. 148
1984 Lok Sabha — BJP 2 seats	Founding-year electoral debacle	p. 148
Ram Janmabhoomi movement	VHP-BJP campaign for Ayodhya temple	pp. 148–149
Babri Masjid demolition, 6 December 1992	Triggered nationwide communal violence	p. 149
Ayodhya verdict, 9 November 2019	5–0 unanimous SC constitution-bench decision	p. 149
United Front, 1996	Janata Dal + regional parties with Congress outside support	p. 141
NDA government, May 1998 – June 1999 / Oct 1999 – 2004	Vajpayee — first non-Congress government to complete 5 years	p. 142
Indo-US nuclear deal, July 2008	Left withdrew support to UPA-I	p. 151
UPA-II, 2009	Manmohan Singh second term; Congress 206 seats	p. 151
2014 Lok Sabha — BJP 282 seats	First single-party majority in 30 years; Modi PM	p. 152
2019 Lok Sabha — BJP 303 seats	Second BJP majority	p. 152

2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

- Confusing the year the Mandal Commission was set up (1978), reported (1980), implemented (August 1990), and upheld by the Supreme Court (November 1992).
- Mixing up the **National Front (1989, V. P. Singh)** with the **United Front (1996)** — both had Janata Dal and regional parties, but the BJP supported only the 1989 one; the Congress supported only the 1996 one.
- Confusing **BAMCEF (1978), DS-4 and BSP (founded 1984)** — all linked to Kanshi Ram.
- Remembering that the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act was passed in **1986** to nullify the **Shah Bano (1985)** judgment, not the other way round.
- Confusing the **2014** number (BJP 282, first single-party majority in 30 years) with **2019** (BJP 303).
- The Supreme Court verdict on the Ayodhya dispute was a **5-0 unanimous constitutional-bench decision on November 9, 2019** — not a split verdict.
- BJP was formed in **1980** (out of the post-Janata break-up); the **Jana Sangh** is its earlier avatar — not the same party.
- Rajiv Gandhi assassinated in **May 1991**, in **Tamil Nadu**, by an LTTE-linked assailant — not in Delhi.
- Congress won **197 seats** in 1989 (down from 415 in 1984), and rose to **206 in 2009** under UPA-II.
- The Left withdrew support to UPA-I in **July 2008** over the **Indo-US nuclear deal**, not the WTO or any other issue.

Practice MCQs

PYQ Alignment

This chapter is a high-yield CUET topic — questions regularly test the five developments of the late 1980s, the Mandal Commission timeline (1978 → 1980 → 1990 → 1992 Indra Sawhney), the founders/founding years of BSP and BAMCEF, the Shah Bano–1986 Act sequence, the Ayodhya 2019 verdict (5-0, constitutional bench), and the four elements of the new political consensus. NTA tends to favour statement-based, match-the-following, and assertion–reason formats anchored to these named events and years.

CUET 2023 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.14 (CUET 2023) Match the following movements with states: A. Narmada Bachao Andolan B. Anti-Arrack Movement C. Chipko Movement D. Movement for Right to Information I. Andhra Pradesh II. Rajasthan III. Gujarat IV. Uttarakhand Options:

- A) A-II, B-I, C-III, D-IV B) A-I, B-III, C-III, D-IV C) A-III, B-I, C-IV, D-II D) A-IV, B-I, C-II, D-III
- Tests: Recent developments in Indian politics **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.15 (CUET 2023) Medha Patkar is associated with:

- A) Chipko Andolan B) Narmada Bachao Andolan C) Anti-Arrack Movement D) Bharatiya Kisan Union
- Tests: Recent developments in Indian politics **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.16 (CUET 2023) Who is the founder of the Bahujan Samaj Party?

- A) Mulayam Singh Yadav B) Kanshi Ram C) Mamata Banerjee D) Lalu Prasad Yadav
- Tests: Recent developments in Indian politics **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.17 (CUET 2023) Arrange the following developments in chronological order: A. Defeat of the Congress Party B. New economic reforms C. Demolition of Babri structure at Ayodhya D. Assassination of Rajiv Gandhi E. Rise of Mandal issue Options:

- A) B, C, A, D, E B) D, B, C, A, E C) C, E, D, B, A D) A, E, B, D, C
- Tests: Recent developments in Indian politics **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.19 (CUET 2023) The 14th Lok Sabha elections were held in:

- A) 2009 B) 2004 C) 2014 D) 2001
- Tests: Recent developments in Indian politics **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.20 (CUET 2023) Who was the Chairman of the Second Backward Classes Commission?

- A) B. P. Mandal B) Kanshi Ram C) H. D. Deve Gowda D) V. P. Singh
- I continued reading the next pages of your uploaded paper (around pages 31–63) and converted Questions 21–50 into English in the same format: question number + question + options. Tests: Recent developments in Indian politics **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.21 (CUET 2023) Match List I with List II (Prime Minister – Tenure) A. V. P. Singh B. Chandra Shekhar C. H. D. Deve Gowda D. Inder Kumar Gujral I. November 1990 – June 1991 II. April 1997 – March 1998 III. December 1989 – November 1990 IV. June 1996 – April 1997 Options:

- A) A-III, B-I, C-IV, D-II B) A-I, B-III, C-IV, D-II C) A-III, B-II, C-I, D-IV D) A-IV, B-I, C-III, D-II
- Tests: Recent developments in Indian politics **Answer:** Not in extracted key

CUET 2024 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.19 (CUET 2024) What does BAMCEF stand for?

- A) Backward and Muslim Communities Employees Federation B) Backward and Minority Communities Education Federation C) Backward and Minority Communities

Employees Federation D) Backward and Majority Communities Employees Federation
Tests: Recent developments in Indian politics **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.20 (CUET 2024) Match List-I with List-II. List-I (Prime Minister) | List-II (Period) A. H.D. Deve Gowda | I. May 2004 – May 2014 B. I.K. Gujral | II. June 1996 – April 1997 C. V.P. Singh | III. April 1997 – March 1998 D. Manmohan Singh | IV. December 1989 – November 1990 Options:

- A) A-II, B-III, C-IV, D-I B) A-I, B-III, C-II, D-IV C) A-I, B-II, C-IV, D-III D) A-III, B-IV, C-I, D-II
- Tests: Recent developments in Indian politics **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.21 (CUET 2024) Who was the founder of Bahujan Samaj Party?

- A) Mayawati B) B.R. Ambedkar C) Jagjivan Ram D) Kanshi Ram
- Tests: Recent developments in Indian politics **Answer:** Not in extracted key

CUET 2025 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.7 (CUET 2025) Which initiative was launched by the government between 1987 and 1991 involving development campaigns?

- A) Development Outcome Programme B) Garibi Hatao C) New Democratic Initiative D) Socialist Pattern of Society
- Tests: Recent developments in Indian politics **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.19 (CUET 2025) Which of the following statements about elections in India are correct? (A) Congress won more seats in 1989 than in 1984 (B) 1991 elections marked end of Congress system (C) 1989 elections led to defeat of Congress (D) 1989 elections formed coalition government Options:

- A) (A), (B) and (C) B) (A), (B) and (D) C) (B) and (D) only D) (C) and (D) only
- Tests: Recent developments in Indian politics **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.23 (CUET 2025) The Shah Bano case dealt with:

- A) Post-partition rehabilitation of Muslims B) Maintenance of a Muslim woman by her husband C) Waqf Board D) Triple Talaq
- Tests: Recent developments in Indian politics **Answer:** Not in extracted key