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Abstract

### **Das regionale Gesicht der Nation: Kleine Parteien und Koalitionspolitik in der Indischen Union seit 1998**

**(The Regional Face of the Nation: Small Parties and Coalition Politics in the Indian Union since 1998)**

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The Indian political system has seen a regionalization of party representation with a concomitant increase in the attention given to and use of regional discourse and issues - even in national elections and national politics. In the past, smaller regional parties acquired the role of both kingmaker and 'king slayer' on some notable occasions. However, while the increasing visibility of regional political forces and the growing number of politicians in the national parliament who belong to regional parties are undeniable facts, this article finds surprisingly little evidence that regional parties are systematically getting more than their proportional share of offices and influence over Union politics. The prominence that regional parties received in the wake of the United Front governments in the second half of the 1990s, when regionally based coalitions ruled at the centre at the pleasure of the Congress Party, has somewhat overstated their impending dominance as the key to power in New Delhi. On the contrary, in the matter of sharing out much sought-after ministerial posts in the national government, the largest parliamentary parties have been able to outperform their smaller parties in all three Lok Sabha periods since 1998.