

WORK IN PROGRESS: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE ROAD AHEAD FOR THE OPPOSITION IN TAKING ON THE BJP

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The [expulsion of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi from the Lok Sabha](#), following a contestable [outcome of a defamation case against him in a Gujarat court](#), has become [a new rallying point for the Opposition](#), at least momentarily. All the technical arguments notwithstanding, his disqualification is seen by most Opposition parties as a political move of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Regional parties continuously adjust their relationship with the two national parties, the BJP and the Congress. From the vantage points of many regional outfits, these two parties are not necessarily two polar opposites. As a general rule, regional parties seek to expand their influence and power through fluctuating relations with the national parties, even when they are technically equidistant from both. The party in power in Delhi has considerable leverage, and regional parties are often vulnerable to pressure. In recent years, central agencies (the Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation) have cornered Opposition leaders, and gone either aggressive or passive on cases according to the convenience of the BJP. While these facts were apparent, regional leaders have remained wary of confronting the BJP, and have often broken ranks with the rest. The Trinamool Congress (TMC), for instance, was not in alignment with the Congress-led strategy against the BJP on the Adani controversy.

The expulsion of Mr. Gandhi has prompted the TMC, the Aam Aadmi Party, the Bharat Rashtra Samithi and the Samajwadi Party, which are usually wary of the Congress, [to condemn the action and call it out as dictatorial](#). These parties possibly realise that mutual rivalries and fear of the BJP and the central agencies could drive them to the margins or, even worse, at the receiving end of more vindictiveness. Fourteen of these parties have now approached the Supreme Court against the misuse of central agencies. The petitioners say they represent 42% of the electorate, and that 95% of the cases filed by the agencies have been against Opposition leaders. This is a move for self-preservation, and these parties are still far from having a joint view on several critical national issues. At the heart of the confrontation between the BJP and the Congress are questions regarding the Adani Group of companies that stands accused of dubious ownership patterns and business transactions. The BJP and the Centre have so far deflected these questions. While Opposition parties such as the Biju Janata Dal in Odisha and the Yuva Jana Samika Rythu Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh continue to stay aloof, it is noteworthy that other Opposition leaders have come out against the expulsion of Mr. Gandhi. Nevertheless, a robust opposition to the BJP is still a work in progress. It suits the BJP to keep the focus on Mr. Gandhi, and not on Mr. Adani.

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