

Coalitions politics in India: A historical analysis

Dr. Dilbag Singh Bisla

Director, Centre for Rajiv Gandhi Research and Studies, Aryan's Institute, Rati Bad, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India

Abstract

Any party may gain majority in the lower house, if not, coalitions are formed by the political parties to gain a majority in the lower house for formation of government. This research study will analyze its nature, challenges and prospects of coalition governments in Indian political process. The significance lies in the study of multi-party system, growth of regionalism and its effect on the pattern of Centre-State relations. Further, there is failure of the national consensus on a parliamentary majority because for three decades the national government was headed by a coalition government or by minority government from 1989 to 2014. From 1952 to 1977 and 1980 to 1989 was Congress dominance.

Keywords: politics, multi-party system, growth of regionalism

Introduction

Coalition is a phenomenon of a multi-party government where a number of minority parties join hands for the purpose of running the government. A coalition is formed when many groups come into common terms with each other and define a common programme or agenda on which they work. A coalition government always remains in pulls and pressures particularly in a multinational like India.

The term Coalition is derived from the latin word 'Coalition' which comes from the compound word. 'Co-alescere' Co-meaning together and 'alescere' meaning to grow up. Coalition thus means 'to grow up together!'^[1]

According to the dictionary meaning of the term 'coalition' is 'the combination or alliance, short of union, especially political parties.' It refers to a combination into one body of separate bodies, but permitting them their separate existence. The combination is for joint action and is temporary.

Classification of Coalitions

The parliamentary Coalitions can be classified into two types:-

Pre-election coalitions and Post-election Coalitions

(i) Pre-election coalitions

The Pre-election alliances involve electoral alliances and electoral adjustments. The pre-poll understandings between the parties are very common. They may agree on a common programme or content themselves with an understanding not to oppose each other's candidates in certain constituencies and even to extend them support.

(ii) Post-election coalitions

A post-election coalition results from the eagerness of parties to share political power and run the government. A post-election coalition is facilitated if it is preceded by a proto or pre-election understanding. In a multiparty system, there is a lot of man oeuvring by parties and splinter groups to evolve a majority coalition to form the ministry. There are a lot of negotiations and much of give and take. There may be a good bit of horse trading and other types of exchanges. Considerations of personality, tradition, style and chance figure prominent in the formation of any particular coalition each

group tries to occupy a pivotal position. The pivotal position may be defined as that occupied by the last added group of a minimal winning coalition. Withdraw of this group will make the coalition cease to exist.

It is difficult to pin down the parties which are likely to form a coalition. Sometimes a coalition may be confined to the parties of the Right alone. At another time, it emerges among the parties of the Left only. But, more often which are either to the left of the Right parties or to the right of the Left parties. The distance of the differences between minimal, they show greater tendency to come together and form coalitions.

Coalitions may sometimes spring from racial, communal, religious or economic interests. The unexpected may also happen. Parties to the extreme of each other may join a coalition to share power. Parties with diverse ideologies may come to be bound in a framework of a coalition.

First experience of coalition in free India at the cant level goes back to 1977 when non congress forces united under the leadership of Morarji Desai in the name of Janta government. The four party Janta governments remained in power for about year's i.e.

Once the no confidence motion against Desai was discussed in the lower house Mr. Desai tendered his resignation. The Janta government collapsed like a house of cards in July 1979.^[2] Second coalition, a new coalition was formed with Mr. Charan Singh as the Prime Minister in October 1979. This coalition had the support of CPI (M) and the CPI. There was pro west Fernandes and pro-soviet Bahuguna faction in the coalition.³ But, once President asked him to seek a vote of confidence in the house within three weeks' time, Mr. Charan Singh tendered his resignation before facing the house. Hence became the first Indian Prime minister who did not face the house. Third coalition was formed in the name of national front. National Front and Samajwadi Janata Party: Issues of Bofors, terrorism in Punjab 1984, civil war in Srilanka were some of important factors that affected the outcome of elections Congress (I) minority government led by National Front by V.P. Singh & Ch. Devilal (Janatha Dal + BJP + Telugu Desam + DMK + AGP + BJP + Left). Later BJP withdrew on ideological issues, Mandal Commission, Ram Mandir issue. Meanwhile, Chandra Sekar broke away from the Janata Dal.

Rajiv Gandhi assassination after 1st round of elections in total 3 rounds of elections completely favoured congress. Now started the politics of coalition compromise where BJP to support economic policies of Congress, Congress assist BJP ruled states of MP, Rajasthan, HP & UP, CPI (M) ruled West Bengal established peace with central government, Janata Dal ruled Orissa and Bihar (Bihar Law & Order issue may lead to President rule) compromise, was the minority government of (Indian National Congress+left parties) P.V. Narasimha Rao.

Sixth Coalition BJP Government 1996

It ensured again a triple fight: National Front + Left, BJP, INC. BJP Largest party formed government under AB Vajpayee with I Shiv Sena Cabinet Minister (16 May 1996). Meanwhile BJP sought support of DMK, TDP, AGP, TMC [TN]. But before proving majority AB Vajpayee stepped down as PM (31 May 1996).

Seven Coalition was formed under the leadership of H.D. Deve Gowda in the banner of united front government. The United front was a coalition government of 13 political parties including outside support of Congress, CPI, Other members of the front included the Samajwadi Party, DMK, Asom Gana Parishad, Tamil Manila Congress, CPI and Telgu Desam Party. The United Front Government headed by H.D. Deve Gowda was like a chariot being pulled at times in different direction by 13 horses. [7] Sharma 1989:27). The Congress revoked its support to Gowda amidst discontent over communication between the coalition and the congress.

Eight coalition was headed by I.K. Gujral from 21st April 1997 [8] to 19 March 1998 as a consensus candidate between others that included Lalu Prasad Yadav, Mulayam Singh Yadav, INC, left parties and others. The INC finally withdrew support from his government on 28 November after Gujral sent Kesri a letter saying he would not dismiss any DMK leaders. Gujral resigned following the withdraw and sent a letter to President K.R. Narayanan that read: "My government has lost its majority and does not want to continue in office on moral grounds" [9]. The President accepted the resignation, but asked for Gujral to stay on in an interim capacity. The President finally dissolved parliament on 4 December once formation of government by and party did not materialize.

Ninth coalition was led by A.B. Vajpayee from 19 Mach 1998 to 10th Oct. 1999. [10] The BJP led coalition was supported by AIDMK, BJD, Akali Dal, Shiv Sena, PMK, TRC and others. This coalition of too many parties did not last long since the demands of AIADMK were not met including the demand of Jayalalitha to sack defense minister George Fernandes. It was but natural that she would withdraw he support and of course she did not surprise anyone. Once Mr. Vajpayee moved confidence motion it was lost by one vote i.e. 269 in favour and 270 against. Hence, Mr. Vajpayee tendered his resignation to the President of India and came to an end what was a shaky coalition.

Tenth coalition govt. was formed under the Prime Minister ship of A.B. Vajpayee from 11th October 1999 to 21th May 2004 under the flag of National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by BJP and supported by 24 political parties including AIADMK, Telgu Desam Party, NC, Trinmool Congress, Shiv Sena, shiromani Akali Dal and others. The coalition led by Mr. Vajpayee had the support of different shades of opinion. It was a coalition of ideologies, cultures, social fabrics, religions and

above all coalition of regions yet NDA was dominated by the upper and middle castes. "The presence of the BJP as the strong pillar in the coalition, the charismatic leadership of A.B. Vajpayee and the skillful way in which diverse interests were accommodated ensured the stability of the coalition government." [11]

Eleventh coalition was formed in May 2004 under the leadership of Dr. Manmohan Singh in the name of United Progressive Alliance (UPA) supported by Nationalist Congress Party, Rashtriya Lok Dal, J & K National Conference, Indian Union Muslim league, Kerala Congress (Mani) and others including left parties. Outside support was given by Samajwadi Party, BSP and Rashtriya Janata Dal. On 8th July 2008, Prakash Karat, the general secretary of the CPI (M), announced that the left front would be withdrawing support over Indo-US nuclear deal. Despite many ifs, buts, oughs the government survived amid controversies over "Vote for cash" Scam which is never bombshell in coalitions. [12]

Thirteenth coalition was formed was formed in May 2014 under the leadership of Narendra Modi in the name of National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by BJP and supported by 28 parties including Shivsena, Telgu Desam Party, Shiromani Akali Dal, RPI (A), Lok Janshakti Party, Maharashtra Gomantak Party, others. The NDA has one-fourth of its allies from Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. It has four allies in Maharashtra, three Northeast, one in UP, two in Andhra Pradesh, two in Kerala, two in Bihar, one in Haryana, one in West Bengal, one in Goa and one in Punjab. [13]

The alliances include regional chieftains from the political important states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Orissa. The constituents of third front are India's regional big-hitters: Nitish Kumar (chif minister of Bihar), Jayalalitha (chief minister of Odisha) and H.D.D. Gowda. There are two notable exceptions to this. One this Mamata Banerjee, who is the powerful chief minister of West Bengal, and Kumari Mayawati, a resurgent lower caste leader in Uttar Pradesh. Some parties like India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu have chosen the third way which means an alliance with the Left parties. The electoral clout of this cross-country formation, however, is unclear: though each enjoys powerful support within their own states, whether their collective vote bases will be sufficient for success at the national level is uncertain.

India is a diverse country with different ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities, it also has diverse ideologies. Due to this, the benefit that a coalition has is that it leads to more consensus based politics and reflects the popular opinion of the electorate. In order to have stable coalitions, it is necessary that political parties moderate their ideologies and programmes. They should be more open to take others point of view as well. The must accommodate each other's interests and concerns. There should not be political bargaining or bargaining for power while formation of coalitions. In India, parties do not always agree on the correct path for government policy. Different parties have different interests and beliefs and it is difficult to sustain a consensus on issues when disagreement arises. However, this is not to say that we have never had successful coalitions. Governments in N.D.A. headed by Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and as well as present N.D.A. Narander Modi Government at centre have been successful coalition.

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