



UPS AND DOWNS OF COALITION POLITICS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

India is a democratic parliamentary system since 1950, timely elections are considered as the corner stone of the system which lies in the people. The multi party system in India is the main cause for the formation of the coalition governments at the Centre and also at the States. Different political parties have come together to form the government under the common minimum programme or with compromising ideologies. It may be pre poll alliance or post poll alliances with the aim of capture the power the political parties are eager to make alliance (love)at present. The conditions of coalition politics and its effects on the frequent changes in the leadership and governmental process, failures and success are focussed in this study.

Key words: Coalitions; alliances; political parties; leadership

Introduction:

India is a democratic parliamentary system. It conducts the timely election and form the government constitutionally, which represents the popular sovereignty. In the system of Universal Adult franchise, the people of India enjoy their power by choosing their representatives, who are controlled through the different political parties. In India Elections will be held every five years to form the governments both at centre and the state. India's electoral politics continues to be full of surprises. There are 16 general elections so far, the first was held in 1951-52, after the constitution come into force. Since then we came across many ups and downs in the system.

Background

This paper focuses on the formation of coalition governments at the centre. As history says multi party system is the key feature of the electoral politics in a parliamentary democracy. It paves the way to rise of numerous regional political parties. When national political parties are unable to form the government due to lack of full majority at the centre, the regional political parties will play leading role in the formation by extending their support from the outside or by joining the ministry. The situation which may be leads to instability of the government.

The term Coalition is derived from the latin word 'Coalitio', 'co' means together and 'Alescere' means 'to grow up'. It is an act of Coalescing or uniting into one body or a union of arties when different political forces oin together, coalition is formed.

Bidyuth Chakraborty, in his book, "Forging power Coalition Politics in India", says; 'it is an important to underline that the regional parties have gained significance at the national level, presumably because of the relative decline of the polity-wide parties. Region – centric parties have proposed more than the so-called national parties, indicating a process, though perhaps nebulous now, that highlights their invincible role in forming coalitions. They cannot be ignored, for pan-Indian parties no longer represent the centrist space in Indian politics in it's entirety—which the Congress did because of its success in accommodating diverse regional interests'.

The term Coalition is derived from the Latin word "Coalition" Which is the verbal substitute of coalescere --- co means together and alescere means to go or grow together. According to the dictionary, Coalition means an act of coalescing, or unity in to one body, a union of persons, states or an alliance. In the strict political sense, the word coalition is used for an alliance of temporary union for joint action of various powers or states. According to F.A.Ogg, in his words "it is a system of government where members of political parties unite to form a ministry."

In the opinion of William H.Riker "The word Coalition has long been used on ordinary English to refer to a group of people who come together to attain some end.

As differentiated from the ordinary or dictionary meaning of the term coalition, Ricker has also added a technical definition of coalition when he says:" Recently, however, the word has acquired a technical significance in social science theories with the elaboration (in the last decades) of the theory of n-person games", and that the notion of coalition formation is central to this theory,

since “Coalitions are the characteristic form of social organization by which the outcomes of such games are determined”.

Coalition politics and coalition Government is a unique device of temporary political alliance between or amongst political parties in a Parliamentary democracy. Coalition building has invariably been an integral part of democratic politics and governance.

The Indian political system has been passing through a critical phase of change and transformation since the fourth general election, which has tended to make it lead a precarious and hand to mouth existence.

Hence National parties are joining the hands with Regional political parties to form the government. While forming such governments we can see the ups and downs or pulls and pressures, in continuing and completing terms.

Dictionary of encyclopaedia defines; it's an alliance for combined action especially a temporary alliance of political parties forming a government or of a state”.

Coalition cabinets are common in the countries in which parliament is elected through the Proportional representation. It's not appear in the countries where executive members are selected by the headlike US. Many countries in the world functioning with coalition government, eg. The Nordic Countries, Benelux Countries, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Turkey, Israel, New Zealand, Pakistan and India.

Coalition is not a new concept to Indian Politics, Pre-independent experienced the first coalition government in 1937, during the government of India Act, 1935. Mohammed Ali Jinnah asked for a coalition consisting of Congress and Muslim League in Uttar Pradesh. However, Congress, the party-holding majority did not entertain this demand. Mohammed Ali Jinnah asked for a coalition of Congress and Uttar Pradesh last majority. Congress party was not entertaining the demand. Mohammed Ali Jinnah's argument was coalition was the only way to give fair share to the Muslims in governance, like North West frontier province (NWFP).

Under the Leadership of Pandit Nehru the first formal coalition came in to form and Since independence it can be divided in to three phases:

- First Phase up to 1989, a period of eight elections resulting in electoral majority for one party and relatively stable union governments except for a period of 1967-72 and

- The second, since 1989 marked by fractured verdicts in 1989, 1991, 1996 and 1998
- The third phase is stable coalitions in the year 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014.

Indian Scholar A.R. Desai made an attempt to indirectly define coalition. In his book *States and Society in India: Essays in Dissent (1975)*, that, “ the alliances, United Front, and Coalitions made up to now basically do not reveal any principled stand by any party. Every political party demonstrates cross- opportunism in making alliances, associating with any party or group sub serving vote catching and enabling maximum seats in the bargain”.

Politics in states have been dominated by several national parties including the INC, BJP, NCP, CPI, CPI (M) and various regional parties. From 1950 to 1990, barring two brief periods, the INC enjoyed the parliamentary majority. The INC out of power between 1977 And 1980, when the Janata Party won the election owing to public discontent with the corruption of the then prime minister Indira Gandhi’s government.

The formation of a coalition is not automatic even after the parties realize the urgency of it. The parties in spite of aware of political situation and its possible follow ups; sometimes lack the initiative to form a coalition and the ability to maintain the system.

In this paper an effort is made to analyse the ups and downs of coalition governments in free India.

The first idea of politics of coalition in India came from Dr.Ram Manohar Lohia, who advocated the need of uniting the opposition in order to form non congress government. From 1967 onwards we come across India non-congress governments and at centre in the year 1977, immediately after the emergency, (1975-77) led by Morarji Desai.

Indira Gandhi lost elections in 1977 and the first Coalition government at the national level began. Janata party formed the government, with non-leftist Political Parties. It was pre-merger status to face the election and to give a break to a single party dominant system.

The Era of Coalitions:

1977: The era of the coalition began in the year 1977, March 24th (we can also call in the name era of non-congress governments at the centre) with Morarji Desai as Prime Minister which was welcomed all over the country as the dawn of a new era. There was a sudden merger of several parties including regional parties such as Akali Dal and DMK, at a public meeting in New Delhi

and agreed to submerge their internal differences mainly to politically combat the Congress. Without any systematic discussion on the objectives of the coalition it came to power and without any functional structure to back up the coalition i.e. shared outlook and common agenda.

But it stayed in power only for 857 days (2 years, 2 months and 22 days) Due to stumbling from crisis to crisis the Prime Minister was forced to step down as he was confronted by a no – confidence motion.

Table 1.1

Alliances/ Parties	JANA TA	RSP	CPI	SAD	PWP	FBL	RPI	DM K	IN D	TOTA L
No. of seats won	298	03	22	09	05	03	02	01	02	395

The first coalition government at the national level came as a consequence of this. Coalition politics in India is a direct consequence of the decline of a single party dominant system.

1979:

Charan Singh succeeded the Prime Minister Morari Desai of the nation in the year 1979, July 28th and was able to stay in power only for 171 days, till 1980 January 14th.

There was a split in the Janata Party on the issue of dual membership of erstwhile BJS and RSS. It was the coalition government where Janata party formed the government with the support of congress JPS 74 and Independents outside support. (Charan Singh broke up the Janata party to form the first minority Coalition government at the centre with ‘outside support of the congress’).

Charan Singh as a prime minister did not face parliament even for a day. He was in the prime minister’s seat at the Lok sabha only for two minutes later he submitted his resignation to the President. The reason for downfall of the government was congress party’s withdrawal of its support.

The Janata experiment had failed badly. Anti-Congressism did not prove strong enough as a cementing force between disparate groups. (Subhash C Kashyap)

1989: The next Coalition, National Front formed in 1989, in the 9th lok sabha elections led by Vishwanath Pratap Singh as Prime minister. It was for the first time that a minority government was formed. Incidentally Rajiv Gandhi who had won thumping majority in the year 1984 failed to get majority in 1989. It was the product of popular movement, where people had very high hopes from the person due to his 'Value based' politics. It bought together parties which shared the objective of greater political empowerment of rural India and the poorer classes. But the hopes and aspirations of the people were ignored and shattered. It worked well only for few months but with the near abandonment of the policy of consent it began to survive on 'day-to-day' basis.

It is important to understand the situation that the National Front failed to gain comfortable majority in parliament. And BJP and Left supported National front to keep the congress at bay by any means. It was .an outside support in parliament to pre-empt a congress government at the centre. BJP's withdrawal of its support resulted in downfall of the government.

As stated here was the product of popular movement, that brought together parties which shared the objective of greater political empowerment of rural India and poorer classes due to lack of majority and continued support of parties in Loksabha it could not sustain.

Table.1.2

NATIONAL FRONT GOVERNMENT

JANATA DAL	TDP	DMK	CONGRESS (S)	BJP	TOTAL
141	2	0	1	86	230

1990:

In November 11th 1990 , there was a change in leadership of the coalition government, Chandra shekar became the eighth Prime minister of the nation. This government too could not last long because of congress (I) and its Allies withdrawas the support. Its tenure was also short just 15 months and witnessed the most tumultuous and unusual event in the Parliamentary history of very India.

Its only drawback was Lack of majority and formed the government with the support of Parties. (Due to 'Dependency' on other parties it could not function well or for the stable government).

1996: After eleventh General elections the BJP formed its first minority government on May 16, 1996, under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. BJP had allies during the elections. The 'Confidence Motion' moved A.B.Vajpayee as the Prime minister, in the two days of debate at the Lok sabha he failed to secure the confidence vote Before members voted, the Prime minister announced that he was submitting the resignation of his government. A.B.Vajpayee was in power only for 16days due to No-ConfidHe was in power only for 16 days the smallest tenure in the Indian political history as prime minister.

It is important to mention here that the congress party had refused to lead and form the government. On 1st June 1996 H.D.Deve gowda elected as the leader of the United Front and was sworn in as the Prime minister. for the first time the communist and regional parties enjoyed power at the centre by joining the United Front government.

H.D.Deve gowda was in office more than 10 months. congress party withdrew its support and Deve Gowda government was reduced to minority. He was in power as long as P.V.Narasimha Rao was the president of congress party. With the change of president ship the congress agreed to support the United Front government when L.K.Gujral was chosen as its leader and he became Prime Minister on April 21st 1997 and had to resign on November 28th 1997 after the withdrawal of congress support.

Thus, the first two coalition's governments at the Union and the coalition era had begun in 1996 and continued'. Subhash.C.Kashyap, Former Secretary General Lok sabha: Coalitions in Indian Polity.

Table1.3

UNITED FRONT

NF	LEFT FRONT	TMC	DMK	AGP	OTHER S	TOTAL
79	52	20	17	05	19	192

1998: On March19th 1998 Vajpayee government of the BJP led alliance assumed power which was the Third coalition government in Three years.

Note: Vajpayee's new government depends on the whims of three illustrious ladies on the Indian political firmament Ms.Jayalalitha, Mrs.Sonia Gandhi and Mamatha Bannerjee could

not be sure how long he is to last in power. AIADMK and Trinamul Congress proved a bane of the government. It was outside support. We have seen congress party's expertness in pulling down other parties governments. This government lost its confidence because of Jayalalitha, and 13 months government came to an end. None of the Political parties came forward to form the government. In fact, to be fair to the 1998 brand of the NDA, Jayalalitha remained the only visible sign of contradictions and in compatibilities and she proved the single source of its dismounting.

Following withdrawal of support by one of the alliance partners-AIADMK- Vajpayee Government lost on the floor of the house by a single vote after a life of 13 months in office. The adverse vote turned out to be a blessing in disguise for the Vajpayee Government in as much as the 13th general held in September 1999 BJP led National Democratic Alliance came to power with a convincing Majority.(Subhash c kashyap) Once the elections are declared by the President, BJP had experienced a lot in the previous elections and government. That's the reason it changed strategy, in the year1998 elections onwards through giving importance to wide range of alliances. It also set aside its Hindu nationalist agenda, during alliances so BJP had 13 Pre election allies to contest in elections.BJP thus captured its power as the largest party in the Lok sabha and the leader of largest pre- election alliance.

Table 1.4

BJ P	AIADM K	S P	BJ D	SAD	WBTC	SS	PM K	LS	DMK	HV P	J P	TOTAL
182	18	12	9	8	7	6	4	3	3	1	1	254

Alliance partners, NTR Telugu Desam Party and Mizo National Front did not win a single seat. This government also had an alliance with TDP, JKNC,HLD(R),AC, MSCP, SDF, ANGLO INDIANS(nominated members) BSMC, citizen common front, RJP (anand Mohan) total 285 members.

Beyond ideological agreements and disagreements, the BJP's efforts both in 1998 and 1999, to create a countrywide pre-poll political coalition deserved attention. In 1998 it made its way and 1999 had clear majority to form a government.

Table.2.1

Year of coalition governments	Leader/pri me minister	Alliances/mergers	Tenure	Reason for downfall(p arty/Indivi dual)	Issue
1977	Morarji Desai	Small non leftist political parties merged together without any discussion	1977-1979		Dual membership of erst & while BJS &RSS
1979	Charan singh Janata Party	Split in JP, Janata party-74, Congress-71, & Independent outside support	28-7-79 14-1-80	Withdrawal of support of Congress	He was not ready to be blackmailed into withdrawing Indira Gandhi's emergency related court cases.
1989	V.P.Singh	National Front- JJD-141, TDP- 2, Congress I, Leftists, Bjp-94	2-12-89---- 10-11-1990	Withdrawal of support by BJP	Lack of ownership/ leadership/Ayodhya issue
1990	Chandra shekar	Split in JP, JDs- 55 Congress-193 & independents	11-11-1990- 21-06-1991	Withdrawal support by congress	Hindutva and reservation package for the 'other backward castes' i.e. mandal issue.
1996	A.B.Vajpayee	BJP-194 and its allies	16-05-1996- to 1-6-96	Unable to prove majority	
1996	H.D.Devegowda Janata Dal	United Front-194 (inclusive 13 parties) congress outside support- 140	1-6-1996 24-4-1997		Unfriendly relation with new congress chief sita ram kesari

1997	I.K.Gural Janata Dal	United Front-194 (inclusive 13 parties) congress outside support- 140	21-4-97 to 28-1-1998	Withdraw al of congress support	Ain commission report & insistence on the removal of DMK ministers from the cabinet.
1998	A.B.Vapay ee	BJP+pre alliance with 13 political parties.	19-03-1998 to 24-04- 1999	Withdraw al of AIADMK support	Protecting herself from the cases booked against her.

After the Fracture verdicts given by the people parties tried to form the coalition government with pressures either through compromising their party ideologies or many more compromises. But governments were unstable could not completed its full term. The reason is not only ideology conflicts but also leadership problems personal issues also held responsible in fall of the government when we take the example of Vajpayee government with AIADMK leader. Same things happened with V.P. Singh when he refused to compromise with Indira Gandhi emergency Issues. Regional parties played a significant role sometime crucial role in forming and bringing down the governments. Through this we see at centre minority governments functioning and giving a break to a single party government which was there for a long time.

Bidyuth Chakrabarty, says, 'What seems crucial in this process is not 'ideological purity' but 'the exigency of the situation,' where the former seems to be a liability rather than an asset. Parties with clearly defined ideologies now appear to be inclined to form coalitions with clearly defined ideologies now appear to be inclined to form coalitions with the object of challenging, if not resisting, a 'worse political foe.' Significant in this configuration, is the formidable presence of regional parties that hold, on occasion, the key to the very survival of the coalition.'

In Indian politics, today, regional parties are contributing Coalition governments both at centre and at the states. A reflection of different diversities in India is not avoiding the regional governments to make the government or fall of the government. The collapse of the governments is depends on the situation if it is for the sake of personal then it is illustrative here (UF government in 1996). Sometimes support is given and partners are protected but it is for a shorter period. If this is the one sort of the coalition we have discussed in brief which was unstable and with lots of complexities we have the next coalitions which completed its term successfully .It does not mean that they never faced a problem to complete its term because of its compromising

nature, pre alliances and post alliances we see the success of coalition governments in India starting from 1999 till today.

This paper throws a light on the successfully completed coalition governments. The 1999 elections resulted in the defining moment in India's recent political history. For the first time since 1984, an incumbent government was returned to power through a democratic process.

The dissolution of the 13th Lok Sabha resulted in the early elections than they were due.

1999: The alliance what is led in 1998 continued in 1999 too, that is it had 24 partners. Which was a state by state agreements. BJP led Coalition won a decisive victory, winning 299 of the 537 contested seats. The government was able to complete its full term under the leadership of Vajpayee. This was significant because of many reasons. This coalition government had involved regional political parties in its pre alliances compromised in many issues to complete term. It strengthened the federal character, Article 370, Hindutva etc.

George Fernandes, the NDA convener, says it is the kind of leadership reason for the success of the coalition government. Vajpayee stated, 'Trust and honesty' was needed to complete term, despite holding a completely different ideology.

The 1999 national poll indicates the disintegration of the third force. The National front of 1989 and the 1996 United Front were history.

A pre election alliance of 24 parties had begun and became the first non-congress government to complete full five year term in the fourth coalition government in four years.

Table 3.1

B JP	T D P	JD(U)	BJ D	D M K	S H S	TR MC	IN LD	S A D	MD MK	P M K	H VC	MAD MK	AB LTC	MS CP	S D F	I C
18 2	29	21	10	12	15	8	5	2	1	5	1	1	2	1	1	1

Though it had allies with Janatantrik BSP, Arunachal Congress, Democratic Bahuan Sama Morcha and TRC these parties failed to win the elections. It also had a Post- election allies with JKNC with 4 seats and RLD with 2 seats support.

2004: In the 14th Lok Sabha elections held in 2004, it was immediately apparent that the ruling coalition NDA had been voted out of power and its place taken by another coalition of political parties the UPA 2004-2009. It consisted of 19 parties and won 222 seats based on around 36% of votes with the external support of the leftist parties (61 seats) it gained a majority in the Lok Sabha and formed a government. It was based on a variety of intra-state spatial alliances as well as ideological commonalities on economic policy between the Congress and the left.

Table 3.2

CON G	TR S	IND(CO N)	RJ D	L P	NC P	M M	PD P	MU L	RPI(A)	DM K	MDM K	PM K
145	5	1	24	4	9	4	1	1	1	16	4	6

The other allies of UPA were KCM, JDS, RPI, PRBP, PDS and AC failed to win elections in 2004.

2009: In the 2009 Lok Sabha elections UPA won again with a surprising majority, the INC self winning more than 200 seats.

The 2009 general election saw three main national pre-poll alliances. In Coalition politics of India, many parties changed alliances before, during and after the elections. After announcing the Prime Minister Candidature, regional political parties joined the hands of the three Major coalitions. But third front stated it will be declaring the Prime Minister candidate after the elections. The other Pre alliances were made with UPA and NDA. UPA won the elections and formed the government with the external or outside support of other parties like, SP, BSP, RJD, JD(s and Independents.)

The result of 2009 elections was expected according to many Analysts. (The result of NES-2009, published in the 'THE HINDU' news paper) This government was able to complete its term successfully

Table.3.3

INC	NCP	RLD	NC	IUML	KC	NPF	SDF	BPF	TOTAL
206	9	5	3	2	1	1	1	1	229

2014: In the 2014, 16th Lok sabha Elections, The National Democratic alliance (NDA), led by BJP, won a sweeping victory, taking 336 seats. The BJP won 282 seats 31% of total seats. It is the first time since the 1984 Indian General elections that party has won enough seats to govern without the support of other parties.

The government in 2014 was expected to some extent. People chosen Narendra Modi party and supported its allies too. Common minimum programme of NDA and UPA played a significant role. Even in the 1999, 2004, 2009 elections common minimum programme reflected the results of lok sabha elections. Political parties ideologies, opportunities, slogans such as India shining. Common man or Aam Aadmi, acche din etc influenced the minds of the people.

Governments have not completed its full term due to pulls and pressures on the govt.

Table 3.4

BJP	DMK	TDP	SS	SP	SAD	LP	RLSP	AD	AINRC	NPP	NPF	TOTAL
281	1	16	18	1	4	6	3	2	1	1	1	335

Table 4.1

Year of Lok Sabha elections	Prime Minister	No. of Alliances	TERM	RESULT
1999	A.B.Vapayee	NDA--BJP+24 parties pre alliances	1999-2004	Successfully completed its term
2004	Man mohan Singh	UPA_ I+ 19 parties	2004-2009	Completed term
2009	Man mohan Singh	UPA_ II	2009-2014	Completed Term
2014	Narendra Modi	NDA-II	2014-?	

Conclusion

Every coalition government is not necessarily an evil or incapable of serving public interest. In parliamentary form of government none of the political parties are getting majority. We have

seen the era of coalitions at centre in the year 1977 and at the state in the year 1967. In the first phase of the coalitions there is a functioning of the minority governments which also gave a break to single party dominance. The table shown in this article clears number of coalitions we have seen which were unstable till 1999. Coalitions were unstable because of difference of opinion among the leaders, clashes with party ideologies, blackmails, pressures and non compromising nature in leadership etc...The same thing repeats in the second phase of the coalitions. Sometimes it also happened that parties either regional or national had become opportunistic to capture the power. With the emergence of regional parties and the erosion of national parties in states, there had to be a political re-alignment in power sharing at centre, when the country, especially the political class, was not ready for it. The coalitions; it might be a pre alliance or a post alliance.

A single more powerful party can shape the policies of the coalition disproportionately. Smaller or less powerful parties can be intimidated to not openly disagree. In order to maintain the coalition, they will have to vote against the Party's platform in parliament. If they do not, the party has to leave the government and loses executive powers. The coalition is that sea where even the smallest provides an equal importance to every party involved in the active policies.

The third phase of the coalitions what we have seen is that is BJP led NDA and Congress led UPA were successfully completed its term successfully. These governments adopted different strategies to complete its term in all the sectors. The main strategy is also a common minimum programme of UPA and NDA. Other programmes what they have introduced slogans such as, INDIA IS SHINING; COMMON MAN etc influenced the minds of people. In an electoral system like India where people have a choice to choose their representatives they are aware of what is needed for them. India is a nation of diverse religions, caste, languages, regions etc. Regional political parties reflect the Indian democracy. These are the voice and choice of the people. It changed the political situation in the nation. Single party government dominated India for several years but since 1977 we could see coalition governments in India especially at centre. In the year 1979, 1989, 1996, 1998,1999,2004,2009 and 2014 are the coalition governments. 1999 to 2014 it's a stable coalition in India either by UPA (United progressive alliance) or NDA. (National Democratic Alliance) once defeat of UPA and Victory of NDA. Lord Bryce in his book "Modern Democracies" says, 'Any administration formed by a coalition of Parties is usually weak, not merely because the combination is instable but because men whose professed principles differ are likely to be entangled in inconsistencies or driven to unsatisfactory compromises.'

In India Coalition governments are inevitable today. It is the responsibility of each and every national and regional political party to act towards the development of the nation. Parties need to

sacrifice a lot especially related to its election Manifestoes, Ideologies, Leadership question, and other factors. It's not for the stability of the government or to form the government but for the public good and national development. Parties involved in the government need to think about the good administration, create more confidence in the International issues and national interest. Strong governance gives the stable governments. Though BJP won majority in 2014, still it had pre poll alliances with regional and national parties throughout the nation. Common minimum programme of NDA II and slogans influenced the minds of the people. If the government fulfils the assurances given by it during the elections it reflects the real Democracy.

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