



- The term coalition has been derived from the Latin word 'Coalitio' the verbal substantive of "Coalescere"-co together, and 'alescere'-to grow up, which means to grow or together.
- Coalition, thus, means an act of coalescing, or uniting into one body: a union of parties
- In the specific political sense the term coalition denotes an alliance or temporary union of political forces for forming a single Government.
- As such coalitions are direct descendants of the exigencies of a multi-party system in a democratic regime.
- Coalition governments are commonly contrasted with single party Governments, in which only one party forms government.
- A coalition is a grouping of rival political actors brought together either through the perception of a common threat, or the recognition that their goals cannot be achieved by working separately.
- In general terms a coalition is regarded as parliamentary or political grouping – which is less permanent than a party or faction or an interest group.

#### FORMS OF COALITION

- Constitutional framework & electoral system of a country determines the forms of coalition politics.
- 'These are three in nature: parliamentary, electoral and governmental.
- Parliamentary coalition may occur in a situation when no single party enjoys majority in India.
- The party which is asked to form a govt makes an attempt to rule as a minority government, relying upon an arrangement with other party or parties for its survival.
- The Janata Dal govt led by V.P. Singh in 1989 was such a govt., seeking support from the opposition parties for different legislation or the govt may survive merely because the opposition not like to defeat the govt either to gain political advantage or not to be deprived of their existing political base.
- The Congress govt led by Narasimha Rao in 1991 was such a govt in its early tenure.
- It represent two or more than two political parties who enter into an agreement which provides for a mutual withdrawal of candidates in order to avoid splitting of votes in the constituencies among concerned parties, where they are strong respectively.
- Such coalitions are difficult to be formed when the parties having strong local base & organisation do not wish to surrender their rights to put up a candidate.

- Such electoral coalition have become common in India in recent past in the form of formation of United Front & National Democratic Alliance.
- Such govts should also be distinguished from non-partisan govt, within which the members of the Council of Ministers do not act as representatives of political parties.
- Coalition govts are the party governments.
- The membership of a coalition govt is conventionally defined as those parties that are represented in the Cabinet.
- Some parliamentary govts, cooperate with parties that are not represented in the Cabinet.
- At the govt level, there can be different types of coalition. The first type is the national govt in which most of the main parties join together to meet a national emergency arising out of war or economic crisis.
- The rationale behind the formation of such a govt is that national crisis necessitates the suspension of party strife.
- The coalition govts led by Asquith & Lloyd George during the First World War & by Winston Churchill during second World War in United Kingdom were the examples of national govts.
- Second is the, Power-sharing coalition govts are formed when two or more than two political parties which are not able to secure majority of their own join together to form a majority govt.
- United Front as well as BJP led coalition govt in the 1990s were such coalition govts
- Power-sharing coalition govts strive to implement such policies and programmes as agreed upon among the coalition partners.
- Continental European countries have experienced such Govts quite often.

#### COALITION BEHAVIOUR

- The political parties who enter into a coalition, aims to maximise their long term influence over decision-making process.
- Due to the awareness concerning the re-distributive consequences of a coalition, the member parties often compete against each other over the allocation of redistribution benefits.
- The competition among the coalition partners is restricted by the degree to which each partner is willing to tolerate competitive demands on the part of the allies .
- In a situation where the tolerance among the coalition partners remain high, competitiveness is rewarded with disproportionately high returns in terms of political influence.

#### COALITION GOVTS. :- A COMPARATIVE STUDY

- In pure or modified two party political systems, such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Canada, coalition governments are rare in the peace time.
- In the countries with multiparty systems, such as Belgium and the Netherlands, almost all the govts have been coalitions.
- There are other European countries with multiparty system like Denmark & Sweden where the governments alternate between coalitional or single-party.
- In the normal circumstances the coalition governments are formed by two to five parties.
- However, in India the coalition govt being formed on the basis of as many as 26 parties.
- Switzerland is a unique case where all major parties are regularly included in the coalition governments.
- Coalition govts are essentially features of parliamentary form of governments, but they have been formed also in the countries like France & Switzerland which have 'modified' parliamentary or 'semi-presidential' system
- In the developed countries almost all the parties follow centrist ideology. Power sharing is mostly the main basis of the formation of such governments.
- In the developing countries like India and Sri Lanka the coalition govts have been formed on ideological basis.
- Some developed countries like Italy, Denmark, France and Sweden have also experienced coalition governments formed on the basis of ideological homogeneity.
- Despite the widespread presence of coalition govts there are not sufficient constitutional provisions regarding the 'process of formulations & dissolution of coalition governments.
- German constitutions a significant exception which has provisions which make it impossible for irresponsible parliamentarians to overthrow a government without being ready to support all alternative.
- In Sweden, 1974 instrument of government attempts to describe the process of formation of coalition government in some details.
- Thus in the first three general elections Congress won around forty five percent of the votes & seventy five percent of the seats in the parliament.
- The Congress barring brief interludes continued to rule in almost all the states and at centre.
- According to Morris Jones the Congress system, shown 'dominance co-existing with competition but without a trace of alternation'.
- Such a colossal dominance of Congress of the political system reduced other parties to marginality.
- Congress successfully defined Maurice Duverger's law which expected two party system to emerge in a plurality electoral system by incorporating political competition & consociational arrangements within its boundaries and yet holding it together through a delicate management of factions.
- Creating & sustaining such a broad coalition of factions was greatly helped by the complexities & ambiguities of Indian society which did not allow polarisation or the formation of contradictions
- According to Myron Weiner, It was also helped by traditional values & roles of conciliation that Congress party astutely took up.
- Rajni Kothari has also highlighted the consensual politics based on pluralism, accomodational and bargaining followed by Congress party.
- Around a central disproportionately large party of consensus were arranged much similar opposition parties of pressure, which imposed a coalitional logic on both the ruling party & the opposition parties and groups
- The enormous organisational size, regional spread, and ideological diversity of the Congress transformed congress in a loose organisation with ideologically diverse groups.
- These ideologically & regionally divergent groups played the role of opposition in tandem with the opposition parties with whom they shared homogeneity in terms of ideology & interests
- The small size of the opposition parties ensured that they could influence the political system only by functioning more like indirect pressure groups.
- As Kothari argues "Congress system has always been a system of coalition multi-group in character, & informed by a continuous process of internal bargaining & mobility".
- The coalition logic was not only imposed on the groups inside the Congress but on the opposition parties also.
- During this period the Governmental policies came to be decided more by cross party blocs rather than by inner party voting
- The coalitional nature of Indian politics was evident when the Congress leadership often 'transferred a decision from the space within the party to the

#### COALITION POLITICS IN INDIA 1947-67

- Indian politics in the period between 1947 to 1967 was coalitional in nature. This was at the level of political parties or political formations.
- Functionalist political scientists like Rajni Kothari, Morris-Jones and Myron Weiner developed a theoretical model for this level in the late sixties through the idea of a one-party dominant system or Congress system.
- The dominance of Congress was reflected both in terms of the number of seats & in terms of its formidable organisational strength outside the legislative bodies.

space of the political system as a whole if they were sure of the support of winning coalition'.

#### EMERGENCE OF COALITION GOVTS IN INDIA (1967-77)

- The 1967 elections witnessed the coalition politics in another form, now involving the non-congress opposition parties.
- Opposition parties were able to defeat congress in the assembly elections in six States by joining into an electoral coalition.
- According to Morris Jones , 1967 elections, led to the emergence of a 'market polity' leading to a 'pretty regular & continuous defectors market'.
- Thus the formation of power sharing coalition by the opposition parties & the defection of the congress factions led to the formation of non-congress coalition Govt in nine States.
- The coalition technique which worked so well for Congress did exactly the opposite in case of the opposition parties.
- Means the opposition parties with divergent ideologies did benefit electorally from the widened support base.
- However the same factor led to the crisis in governance leading to the failure of coalition governments.
- Congress, thus was able to come back to power in most of the States.
- However, the post-1967 congress followed a new political process which was marked by the replacement of consensual politics by the confrontationalist politics towards opposition.
- This led to the 'marketisation' of polity & the over-centralisation of power in the party.
- Congress thus adopted a plebiscitary mode of electoral politics which led to the institutional decline in the party.
- This explains the inability of the State leaders of 'congress who were 'nominated' rather than 'elected' in holding the political equilibria in the States by creation and manipulation of interest coalitions & factional politics.
- Led to the emergence of genuine competition to the congress at the State level.
- Although the Congress led by Indira Gandhi reached an unprecedented electoral victory in the 1971 election it was initially seen as the restoration of the Congress dominance.
- It was in many ways a new party that had to negotiate a new terrain of electoral politics marked by the presence of new entrants from the 'middle' peasant castes & the regional groups into the electoral politics turning it into truly competitive.
- Congress was no longer a single dominant party but throughout the 1970 & 1980's it continued to be the natural party of governance, the pole around which electoral competition was organised.
- Thereafter, the success or the failure of the attempts by the opposition parties to put up an

electoral coalition against Congress made a decisive difference to the electoral outcome.

#### PHASE OF 1977-79

- The third phase in the evolution of coalition politics was marked by the defeat of the Congress in 1977 parliamentary as well as assembly elections ( 6 States).
- The introduction of populist bureaucratic & authoritarian mode of politics in the party had led to the emergency imposed by the Congress government.
- The emergency and a hastily assembled coalition of opposition parties were the main factors responsible for electoral debacle of Congress
- Janata Party was formed after four opposition parties : — the Congress (O) the Jana Sangh, the Bharatiya Lok Dal & the Socialist Party merged
- Janata Party entered in a coalition with the opposition parties at the regional level like Akali Dal to fight the 1977 General elections on a common election symbol & a single list of contesting candidates.
- The coalition govt led by Morarji Desai could not last its full term as the constituent factions within the party retained their ideological differences
- The ambitions of its leaders saw the split in the party & the government fell in 1979.
- Defections - an offshoot of the marketisation introduced since 1967 elections- from the Janata Party led to the formation of a coalition govt of Lok Dal & Congress (S) led by Charan Singh with the outside support of the left parties.

#### THE DECLINE OF COALITION PHASE (1980-89)

- The failure of coalition experiment in the form of failure of Janata coalition govt to complete its full term gave an opportunity to Congress-recovering from a split in 1978- under the leadership of Indira Gandhi to capture power in the 1980 elections
- Congress received a massive victory in 1984 general elections also. Thus for a decade the coalition politics came to an end at the centre. At the state level, however. the coalition politics continued.
- Congress, entered into an alliance with National Conference in J & K and with the DMK in 1980 and with AIADMK in 1984 elections in Tamil Nadu.
- The left parties-led coalition govts were formed in the States of Kerala, Tripura & West Bengal during this period.
- It was during this period that the seeds of future coalition politics emerged.
- Congress despite its electoral triumphs in the plebiscitary elections was continuously losing its ideological & institutional base.
- As such it was unable to respond adequately to the demands & aspirations of the democratically awakened rural social groups

- Moreover, the over centralisation of power in Congress led to the heightened level of Centre-State tensions.
- The ruralisation & regionalisation of Indian politics led to the emergence of regional parties which were supported by the numerically strong & economically powerful rich peasant castes.
- Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh, Akali Dal in Punjab, AGP in Assam were among the regional parties which ensured competition between political parties & a tendency towards personalised control of parties and fragmentation of the parties into splinter groups etc
- All these factors paved the way for the end of the Congress dominance at the State level.
- A bipolarity emerged in the states – That bipolarity at the state level did not, yield a bipolarity at the National level as well as became evident from 1989 General elections.
- The Parliamentary elections in 1991 again produced a 'hung' Lok Sabha. Congress emerged as the largest party but nowhere near the majority mark.
- With no coalitions being possible, Congress formed a minority Govt led by Narasimha Rao
- The minority Government displayed a great skill in Parliamentary Manoeuvres in order to stay in power.
- After effecting a split in the Janata Dal in its favour as well as victories in the by elections the Govt was able to secure a majority of its own.
- However, the assembly elections' between 1993 to 1995 decisively brought to an end the one party dominant multi-party system of an earlier era. Congress no longer remained the core around which the party system was structured.
- Thus in as many as twelve States, non-Congress Govt ruled by the end of 1995.
- Increasing tendency towards a bipolar polity at the State level led to the situation of a two-party system at the national level became improbable.

#### COALITION GOVTS & POLITICS FROM 1989

- 1989 elections witnessed a coalition formed in the form of Janata Dal by the merger of Janata Party, Lok Dal (A), Lok Dal (B), Janata Dal, subsequently formed an electoral alliance with the parties like DMK, Congress (S), AGP, CPI, CPI (M) and other small regional parties.
- It came to be called National Front which entered into an agreement with the BJP on sharing seats in the 1989 parliamentary elections
- As the Congress & its allies did not stake claim to form the Govt it was the National Front led by Janata Dal which was invited by the President to form the coalition Govt of National Front led by V.P. Singh which was supported from outside by BJP and left parties who did not join the Government.
- National Front minority Govt was the first real coalition Govt at the Centre as the Janata Government was a coalition Government by Proxy & Charan Singh led coalition Government Lok Dal and Congress (S) fell before proving its majority in the Lok Sabha.
- National Front Government failed to lay down a strong foundation of consensual polity, based on democratic power sharing at wider level
- It suffered from internal crisis because of change of leadership in Haryana Janata Dal Govt
- The external crisis built up over the confrontation with the BJP over Ayodhya issue.
- The intense competition for leadership within Janta Dal finally led to the split in Janta Dal.
- The newly formed Janata Dal (S) formed a minority Govt led by Chandra Shekhar with the outside support of Congress after the National Front Govt was defeated in the confidence vote in the Lok Sabha after the withdrawal of support of BJP
- Janata Dal (S) minority Govt fell as Congress withdrew its support in 1991.
- The BJP made a strong showing in the Northern and Western States especially in Bihar and U.P. and emerged as the largest party in the Lok Sabha elections of 1996
- The party formed a minority Govt which barely lasted two weeks before losing vote of confidence in Lok Sabha.
- The regional parties i.e., TDP, DMK, AGP and the Tamil Manila Congress in alliance with Janata Dal formed National front comprising of the communist parties.
- The resultant United Front-was able to form a coalition Govt led by H.D.Devegowda first and then by I.K.Gujral with the outside support of the congress and the left parties
- CPI for the first time in Parliamentary history joined the Government
- The UF coalition Govt collapsed after the withdrawal of support from Congress in 1998.
- BJP taking a lesson from its 1996 experience entered into electoral coalition with the regional parties like AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, Samata Party in Bihar, Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, Akali Dal in Punjab etc.
- Subsequently these parties (eighteen in number) formed a coalition Govt which lasted barely for one year as AIADMK withdrew its support in 1999.
- 1999 elections,say that the two parties Congress and BJP, had electoral alliances with the regional parties in such a manner that coalition Govt became inevitable to emerge.



- A comparative study of the results of the 1996 elections and the 1998 or 1999 elections reveals a major difference between the two.
- The 'hung' Parliament which emerged after 1996 elections was not just a matter of no single party getting a majority but rather of no party or a clear alliance of parties being in a position to govern.
- In 1998 & 1999 elections, however, BJP and Congress have shown that despite no party getting a majority on its own, two 'poles' have become visible-the Congress and the BJP- within the regionalised multi-party system.

#### WORKING OF THE COALITION GOVT

- The principles of collective responsibility, homogeneity and secrecy have been a must for effective functioning of Govt. Coalition Govt fortified in India especially at Centre have been found lacking in this respect.
- The working of the Coalition Govt has been affected by the need to secure inter-party Consensus.
- The heterogeneity of the Coalition partners in terms of their social basis and ideologies often has been resultitig into disagreements between the Cabinet ministers on political and departmental matters.
- This has been hampering the deliberative atid decision-making process of the Cabinet.
- The parties entering into coalition either under the umbrella of United Front or National Democratic Alliance had been confronted with a situation of preserving the identity of Govt & their separated identity as a partner in the Coalition
- The Coalition Govt at centre have been formed, not on the positive basis of ideological or programmatic homogeneity but on the negative basis of capturing the power & to keep others away from power
- Lack of efficacy as well as stability of these Govts
- The presence of regional parties in the Coalition has also led to a perception that the national outlook has often sought to be overshadowed by a regional outlook and also that personal or party gains have often received precedence over collective ones.
- The Steering Committee of the Coalition partners, rather than Cabinet often 'acts as the de-facto deliberative body thus undermining the process of Governance.
- Governance also has suffered because of the weakened position of the Prime Minister in the coalition Govt.
- Prime Minister has been in no position to choose those as ministers in the Council of ministers who do not belong to his own party as they are chosen by their respective party leaders.
- In the recent past the coalition governments have been formed on the basis of a common agreement by the coalition partners to implement a Common Minimum Programme (CMP).

#### ANALYSIS OF RECENT COALITION GOVTS

- According to Prof. E. Sridharan current NDA govt is a "surplus coalition" govt featuring a party that already has the strength to form a govt but has taken on board other coalition partners
- In comparative politics literature, we tend to distinguish between 'ideological coalitions' & 'governance coalitions'.
- Characterising the current NDA as an ideological coalition is not quite right.
- It is not quite clear what those ideological principles are that hold this coalition together.
- In surplus coalitions the leadership charisma left very little room for the coalition partners to place their differences.
- According to Suhas Palshikar, the criticisms about coalitions not lasting their terms is not borne out by evidence, coalitions of convenience tend not to have coherent policy agendas and tend to be divided from within
- Coalition govts can get a lot of things done, & when they do that, they stick together too.
- But the coalitions of convenience tend to more likely be corrupt and spend more money than those that are ideological because everyone has got a hand in the pot.
- Coalition govts are not necessarily truly democratic, but they can at least be plural in the views that they represent.
- That possibility also arises when the parties are not adequately representative of the larger public, but only of smaller sections, regions, communities.
- In India, coalitions only emerged when the Congress's ability to be representative of the larger spectrum faded.
- The BJP's coalition (right from Vajpayee's time) was not necessarily one of ideology.
- Pramod Mahajan & Vajpayee, during NDA-1, carefully set aside controversial issues.
- They made public statements that issues such as Ram Mandir, Article 370, and Uniform Civil Code were indeed the BJP's core ones, but since its potential partners did not agree with these, it would keep them aside while forming the coalition
- According to Irfan Nooruddin in his book, "Coalition Politics & Economic Development", coalitions are associated with periods of greater economic growth, less economic volatility and more foreign investment.
- There is more credibility to the govt's policies, because it has a harder time making radical changes
- Something like demonetisation would have been hard to conceive in a coalition govt
- Given the nature of India's States, coalitions have been about regional pluralism.
- The 31% votes BJP won in 2014, were deeply concentrated in some areas of the country.

- To form a national govt it was required to bring in regional parties in the east and in the south into this coalition
  - Evidence from Western Europe shows that coalition governments tend towards greater fiscal spending.
  - Some would say that is due to redistribution, while some would argue that this is due to lack of fiscal discipline — smaller parties could extract more than their fair share as they could threaten to walk out.
  - In the paper published by Pradeep Chhibber & Irfan Nooruddin suggested that two-party competition would result in greater public goods spending, while in a fragmented party system, there would be greater distribution of 'club goods' which would involve spending for specific communities represented by smaller parties in some States (India)
  - At the State level you would get redistribution, but not necessarily in the way you would ideally want it to be.
  - There a reluctance to form pre-election coalitions despite a larger commonality of interest because
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- there is one national-level player and several regional parties.
  - In both cases, the national party seeks to expand its geographical reach across and within States.
  - In such situations, these parties seek to keep their cards closer to their chest & play them after the elections based on the outcome.
  - Party activists are expecting rewards from party high command in the form of electoral ticket decision in these respects are the part of pre-electoral workout
  - By their very nature, the coalitions tend to be more federal and allow wider scrutiny of the executive's decisions. Such governments allow more say to the members of civil society and social activists. Initiatives like the RTI, RTA and Land Acquisition Act might not have been possible under an all-powerful supremo.
  - Coalitions are not inherently unstable & growth is not synonymous with strong leader - most of the coalition govt fell due to high political aspirations of major national parties.



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