

IMPACT OF COALITION POLITICS ON GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

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DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.2813](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.2813)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

Forming a coalition government is an attribute in parliamentary systems after an election because no party has gained an absolute majority. The term 'coalition' originated from 'coalition', which is a Latin term that translates to 'to grow together'. This describes the process of creating an agreement between different political entities. A coalition government is usually formed when one or more parties within the legislature Ally with one or more other parties in a parliamentary election to form a government to share the governance duties. Sometimes, such governments emerge to fill the political void in representations and guarantee political stability, particularly where there is severe political fragmentation. Such governments entail forming a coalition government, which has more to do with compromise and practicality. This is evidenced by quantity voting, culminating in forming the common minimum program, the policy and program that forms the basis of governance and allows partners to retain their ideological identity but with limited interference with the other's fundamentals. The coalition is in constant development and can change through flexibility and, more or less, shifting the political partners involved in the process. These partnerships may be pre-election ones, which unite different interests and policy priorities to create a workable government with the capacity to achieve agreed goals; post-election partnerships are also frequent in India. Pre-poll coalitions are believed to be more favourable as parties joining the coalition agree to go to the election under one banner, which involves presenting voters with one common manifesto. On the other hand, post-poll alliances come up as the solution for sharing the power if no single party has a record majority to maintain stability and continue with governance.

Keywords: Coalition Government, Power-Sharing, Parliamentary Democracy, Political Alliance, Compromise Politics, Minimum Common Program, Pre-election Coalition, Post-election Alliance, Indian Polity, Governance Stability

1. INTRODUCTION

Some important definitions of the term have been discussed below: Coalition government has become a vital phenomenon in parliamentary systems of democracy where no party gains an absolute majority. In such circumstances, it begins to act as a method for the practical aspect of forming the government jointly with the support of several political parties. The word 'coalition' is derived from the actual Latin word 'coalition' but means 'to grow'. This is an etymology that reflects the political manner in which it is possible for different polities to coalesce themselves to form an actual political body. The concept of a coalition government can be traced to teamwork and Figure 1 Coalition governments are multifaceted and constantly evolving due to power-sharing between political parties. In contrast to the fixed basis of a single-party system, coalitions work within a minimal program agreed on by each participating party. Sustainability: This program functions as a roadmap that shapes the coalition's work but admits that each party must maintain components of the political systems they support. Ideally, such alliances are mostly fluid and dynamic in nature, so the partners may cross over to the other side or renegotiate for the strong accommodation of the coalition.

Coalition politics has emerged as an important feature within the political scenario in India during and post the late nineties. The countries have many political parties, and the cross-section of the electorate also complicates sure victory

for any party, hence forming coalitions at both national and state levels. Another form of short-term coalitions which has been observed to give a lot of benefits are pre-election coalitions in which parties agree to have a single and compound list of issues to present to the electorate. On the other hand, post-election formations are worked out as a strategic move when the election results do not produce a majority so that the parties can come together and the government lasts. These coalitions are clearly of a more strategic nature, this being the reality of the need to forge majorities in modern democracies.

Understanding the working of the coalition governments is especially useful for them as the IAS aspirants as it throws the actual working mechanism, negotiation, and management of situations in a political democracy with a significant presence of multi-party systems. Fortunately, the presentation of coalition formation and its implications can give a deeper knowledge of India's democracy and actual problems of cooperative politics. This paper attempts to understand the concept of coalition governments, identify its essential features, and understand its strategic relevance with special reference to the Indian context.

1.1. OBJECTIVES

- 1) **To Analyze the Structure and Functioning of Coalition Governments:** Know about the formation, decision making and impact of political actors in the governance of coalition governments.
- 2) **To Evaluate the Impact of Coalition Politics on Governance Stability and Policy Implementation,** Examine the advantages and disadvantages of coalitions. As such, the following focal areas have been established: political stability, leadership efficiency, and cohesiveness of policies at the national and state levels.
- 3) **To Explore the Role of Regional Parties in Shaping Coalition Politics and Federal Dynamics:** Analyze the effects of regional political parties, particularly their role in forming coalition governments, on the power relations between the central and state levels and a better elaborated and more inclusive framework of federalism.

2. FEATURES OF COALITION GOVERNMENT

It is important to note that a coalition government represents several features defining its work and interactions. First, such governments are created to reach material or physical benefits, mainly if power is divided and no one party can gain an outright majority. The absolute minimum is the presence of two partners because it is based on the compatibility of temporary and singular interests. The nature of coalition politics is volatile, which means that it is always forming and reforming as situations occur and change across political systems. Due to compromise as an essential element of dealing with a coalition government, ideological rigidity is infeasible. Conversely, coalitions work on a minimum agreement because their goals involve pursuing the common interest with members of the coalition. Still, this interest might not be enough to fulfil the overall policy preferences of all members. Politics triumphs over policies, and compromise is a common feature where set truths must be shed for a significant win. The main reason coalition politics exists is to gain and maintain power. In India, pre and post-conselection health coalitions have been formed. Pre-poll coalitions provide a coordinated basis for approaching the electorates through jointly presented manifestos, while post-election coalitions enable the formation of a government through sharing power.

3. FORMATION OF COALITION GOVERNMENTS IN INDIA

Coalition politics have a special reference to India, where the politics is quite complex and dynamic in nature, offering different types of coalition combinations characterized by the formation of governmental alliances due to broken mandates on a regional and national basis. The trend really started with the Janata Party coalition government (1977-1979) under Prime Minister Morarji Desai following the Emergency period. Charan Singh formed the Janata Party (Secular) from 1979-1980 with this coalition, but the party's rule was quite brief. The second type of alliance can be traced in the National Front coalition (1989-1990) led by V.P. Singh, which could be viewed as a coalition of regional and national political acting in response to a common agenda. Following the tradition of coalition governments, the Janata Dal (Socialist), headed by Chandra Shekhar at the centre, was also active from 1990 to 1991.

The United Front coalitions, which prevailed from 1996-1998, had two leaderships of H.D. Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral are a clear example of what can be called a coalition of multiple relatively small parties. Although it can be said

that the formation of the BJP-led coalition (1997-1998) under A.B. Vajpayee laid the foundation of coalition politics in its own way. However, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)(1999-2004) led by Vajpayee can be termed more stable. It set down the practical tone about coalitions as a permanent form of government. The Singh's United Progressive Alliance (UPA) affianced a national and a regional parties' coalition for two terms, 2004-2014, manifesting the sustainability of coalitions in manner of power.

The NDA, led by Narendra Modi from 2014 to the present day, can easily be presented as the model of a strong coalition government—the NDA has maintained a stable and solid block of votes in both houses and centralized leadership. This historical analysis reveals that political alliance policies are a continuity and the inevitable need in the parliamentary system of Indian politics and determine the current political landscape.

4. SALIENT FEATURES OF COALITION GOVERNMENT

A coalition government is a non-majoritarian government characterized by special features that define its formation, activities and sustainability features. Another advantage of coalition governance is the fact that it can easily mobilise nearly all segments of society. Coalition governments differ from other single basin governments dominantly because they involve multiple politicians who each comes in with several goals of the party. Such openness affords the possibility of all sorts of social, economic and cultural challenges being brought into the political and policy-making sphere and thus making government decisions all-embracing. Since each segment of the society is represented in the formation of the coalition government, it's easier for this government to address as many types and kinds of needs and demands of the people as possible.

Another noticeable aspect is the attempts to provide opportunities for minorities and underprivileged people. In the form of a coalition government, these aggrieved groups have a fighting chance since the smaller or regional parties that would likely constitute these groups and movements have an opportunity to participate in the government actively. This is beneficial in the sense that their issues would be heard & credible hence, enhancing political rationality for the facially disadvantaged. The participation of many partners in a coalition also leads to dialogue that recognizes the socio-economic and cultural differences in the population; policy decisions in such coalitions are the outcome of considering all the different and diverse categories, and this discourages policies that bring about exclusion and marginalization of certain sections of the population.

Decision-making in a coalition government is checked and balanced and more so than that of a single-party form of democracy. They are normally a result of debates, bargaining and harmonization among the members of the coalition partners. Implementing the cooperative model further enables the parties to be compromise-oriented, thereby leading to policies that are informed by extra care than those produced in the adversarial setting. This is beneficial because it can result in less radical and more middle-of-the-road policies since extreme policies are rarely indefinitely pursued due to disagreements among coalition members needed for the change. This process is important in preventing sharp policy interdictions and fostering stability in decision-making, but it may sometimes be slow.

This is especially the case because clear ideological positions do not define practical cooperation in the framework of coalition politics. The formation of a coalition per se involves the compromise of certain principles to agree on working solutions that all parties in the coalition can support. This flexibility is just important to sustain the coalition because of the varying political agenda. To that extent, coalitions generally function based on the 'common minimum programme', which maps out the working agenda and strategies realized and agreed upon by the partners. Even though this program can hardly be conducive to the individual parties' plans of each member party, it offers a functional approach to governance.

Coalitions are never permanent and fixed and can change and be altered. This means that member parties may come and go in the light of political events and/or policy issues, resulting in the constant dynamic of coalition politics. This flexibility in structures corresponds with the constant bargaining and changing of coalitions needed to maintain a working majority in a heterogeneous and complicated parliament system. This dynamism guarantees that parties in a coalition government address new political and social environments simultaneously, making it vulnerable to instability where deals between partners are not upheld.

5. REASONS FOR THE FORMATION OF COALITION GOVERNMENTS

Election to the legislative assembly typically compels the formation of coalition governments due to the failure of any particular political party to gain an overall majority. It results in the formation of the necessity of alliances in which two or more political parties come together to form a government with majority support of the legislature. Coalitions of this nature enable participating stakeholders to remain fully identifiable legally while being on the same page in terms of goals and objectives that form the backdrop of co-governance. This arrangement allows for different players to engage in policy formulation and implementation and input which may lack full transformation while retaining their base and relevance.

The first stimulus that can be considered to be primarily responsible for the phenomenon of the formation of a coalition government in India is pluralism. India is a country that has seen many linguistic, religious, cultural and social diversities. It is expected that such a political pluralism exists given that the political society comprises various political parties representing severed interests. Hence, political systems are typically depolarized, and, in this case, there isn't a clear winner that will dominate the process or feasibly predicted outcome. Coalition governments, therefore, come out as a more realistic way of bringing together these divides as groups with different political divides come together to form a working government. The structure of a coalition system is delineative of the multi-caste structure of Indian society, an essentially requisite and appropriate political structure that fits into the country's needs.

The monopoly of the Congress party immediately after independence also contributed to the elevation of the coalition governments. Right from the time of its formation, India was politically dominated by the Congress party for many years, and it used to dictate terms over other regional and small parties. However, with the rising political consciousness at the regional level and the decline of the Congress party, various political structures have come into light, demanding state and local autonomy. These regional parties discovered coalition systems as a reasonable way of attaining influence and even representation. Such coalitions enabled these parties to participate in governance affairs effectively, provided that they were the voice of their various constituencies.

A second reason why India has formed coalition governments is because of the complexion of the electoral system that exists in the country. The creation of independent members of parliament ensures that in the proportional representation of voters' ballots, the first-past-the-post voting system allows the parties that may not have a large support base within the country to conduct elections and secure seats in the legislative assembly. Such inclusion allows these parties to play the governance role through coalitions whereby legislative and executive minorities contest for representation and form part of governance representing the minorities. In this sense, coalitions become a way of ensuring that all major political players of the various parties are considered alongside the regionally based minor political parties.

Coalitions in India have benefited from the country's highly embodied political culture, where political players seek personal/regional/community gains. This individualism results in a polarized political climate in which coalitions are necessary to win the majority that is used in forming a government. As a system that can entail different political parties, the coalition government also has its disadvantages: instability and inability to adopt policies as some member parties may have different priorities. Nevertheless, failure in this count does not reduce the fact that India has remained a democratic country, and coalition governments are a true depiction of democracy, and more so, the Indian democracy, despite the numerous odds against its success and mainstream stability.

6. THE INFLUENCE OF REGIONAL PARTIES IN COALITION GOVERNMENTS

The largest effect of coalition politics in India is that the role of the regional players has become stronger. These parties, being local and state-oriented entities, work in a much-constricted periphery, which most often sticks to regional interests rather than addressing national issues. This stems from the fact that they require power at the state level and will, therefore, take populist measures to maintain and achieve this power. Thus, while enhancing inclusiveness by incorporating all political forces, including minorities, into the government, the very system of coalitions distorts the governance profile. Some issues of national importance may be ignored as partners in government seek to adopt measures that will only favor their states.

Regional parties have gained popularity and replaced the centre as the focal decision-maker of the country. This transfer is a two-edged sword. On one hand, it brings support in a more participatory system of governance since it enhances the voices of the regional officials and their people. At the same time, it can reduce the power of the central

government and cause difficulties in forming a single nation's policy. Being aware that regional parties bring more effective political debate to the table, they may destabilize the coalition. For the same reason, their strong local mandates limit the ability of a prime minister to coordinate the activities of coalition partners, encouraging policy divergence. It complicates the idea of the government having a single overall approach to the nation and even threatens legislative stability and policy stasis.

Indeed, the regional parties that joined the coalition government frequently changed power since these groups could hardly get powers if they weren't in coalition governments. It has been argued that because of this, 'coalition systems are undemocratic' because minor parties have." Such circumstances are adverse as they can threaten the performance of the central, big national parties and cause fluctuations. Nevertheless, regional players have injected a level of democracy to the Indian political system by increasing the broad-based representation of the country's population. Today, they can speak, and their voices would be heard and considered at the regional level at least.

7. CHALLENGES TO PRIME MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The third important issue – that coalition governments affect is the leadership of the PM or the head of the elected executive branch. In a coalition setup, a prime minister realises that he or she has some constraints that can, in a way, hinder him or her from making decisions on his or her own. This is mainly because the government's stability fully depends on coalition partners, even the most insignificant ones, who can establish some claims and withdraw their support if they are not satisfied. This kind of climate fosters a political setting in which the prime minister is forced to accommodate persons from the various parties in the coalition and make necessary compromises in order to retain the balance within the coalition, which greatly waters down leadership.

The other area of conflict is in this regard where the prime minister has to deal with the formation and management of cabinet in coalition government formation. This differs from the situation in a single-party majority when the prime minister may choose a team of preferred ministers for their competence or reliability. The cabinet in a coalition is often predetermined as the result of negotiation with the coalition's members. Of course, this means that positions may be awarded to friendly candidates even if they do not possess ministerial capability or portfolio competence. Conflicts of interest are inherent in multi-member coalitions can slow down decision-making and reduce the capacity of the prime minister to impose coherent and effective policies.

They also encompass policy-making and the governance process if it is to be implemented. In a coalition government, the prime minister will have to get the assent of the coalition's constituent parties before major policies can be implemented. Instead, this tendency to rely on approval can delay decision-making processes and yield rather unassertive or unoriginal policies. This steady tango to court the coalition partners reduces the authority of the prime minister, consequently, the domestic and the foreign policies are compromised. This may also affect political stalemate whereby important decision-making processes are slowed down or weakened to cultivate the stability of the coalitions.

However, that should not be mistaken, for coalition politics also has its benefits when it comes to governance. It fosters the flow of...and, as such, the generation of ideas and agreements that are much more fair in our world as they are well-discussed and argued upon. Of course, this can be very time-consuming, yet allowing different stakeholders to present the problem to the decision-making process more accurately might be more effective. However, as with virtually all the advantages detailed above, these have to be gleaned with the potential drawbacks in mind, and this can only be achieved with good leadership qualities. That is why a prime minister in a coalition should be a professional in negotiations to keep the coalition together while at the same time effectively governing the country.

8. STRUCTURAL SHIFTS AND THE IMPACT ON INDIAN FEDERALISM

The election of coalition governments also requires important shifts in the structure of the Indian federal system, both about the central state and the political authority. In a way, it was a centralized system where the central government possessed a lot of power over the states in India. However, this has been evident due to the shifting of coalition politics. Hence, the federal system has become more cooperative. This shift is partly owed to regional parties, which tend to seek more decentralisation and articulate the power to represent them in return for their support regarding compact arrangements.

Extra-constitutional bodies like coordinators or steering committees arise among these structural alterations caused by coalitions. These entities usually have critical participation as messengers between the partners and make policy decisions outside the normal governmental policy-making process. Although these bodies can help improve coordination within the coalition, the price further erodes the established parliamentary democracy and the power of the cabinet and the prime minister. This can translate to governance processes being divorced from democratic processes and being an outcome of behind-the-scenes bargaining.

The other significant impact of coalition politics is also rightly paid to the restructuring of federalism in India. Enhancing the regional parties in the national governance system has helped to bring equitable centre-state relationships. Article 356, which allows the presidential rule in states, has been misused but has gradually reduced because of the effect of coalition politics, which makes it politically costly for the central government to upset regional partners. This change has encouraged a far more authentic style of cooperative federalism, where discussion replaces coercion from the centre. The emerging structure can be more in tune with the pluralist political landscape and aspirations of several states within India to be integrated into the competitive framework of governance.

However, concerning these changes, one can see both democratizing opportunities and threats. Coalition politics may also intertwine the National and State activities, and as a result, it becomes challenging for the central government to support and enforce sound National policies actively. This emphasis on regional interests may imply that national priorities may not be well-coordinated several times, as this would lead to policy fragmentation. This can be particularly disadvantageous when tackling issues that may require a Panas approach, such as economic reform, national security, or foreign policy.

Some think India requires reforms to clarify the operating contours to enhance the strength of the organisations governed by the coalitions. Such measures include limiting the size of the ministries to avoid expanding the cabinet, avoiding December and changing the electoral system for the better. Coordinated policy offers can also be given a stronger and substantially more integrated direction from a shared common minimum programme that political partners agree to. Finally, therefore, the variable effects of minorities and their combinations in a democracy such as that of India are that, notwithstanding the problems inherent in the practice of coalition politics and the fact that sub-groups base their membership on the differences between them and the mainstream, there is potential for a more representative form of governance where the latter is managed correctly.

9. CONCLUSION

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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