

The Scenario of Coalition Politics in India: An Overview

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Abstract:

The fact is that the first occasion in Indian politics came in 1977 when the first coalition government was formed by the Janta Party Leader, Morarji Desai. But after the fall of this government, a radical political change in Indian politics emerged and a short lived coalition government was formed by Charan Singh. Then in 1989 an era of regional parties emerged and from 1989 to 2009 Indian politics experienced many coalition governments. Recently in 2014 NDA has formed a new type of coalition which has been made possible even after a full majority of BJP winning 282 seats in 16th Lok Sabha Elections. However, some of the political analysts argue that the era of coalition in India has withered away, but on the whole it would be wrong to forecast such statement. We cannot ignore the fact that coalition politics has become a part

and parcel of Indian political system and it will also exist in future, is assumed by most of the intellectuals in India very recently.

Keywords: Indian Politics, Coalition Government, UPA, NDA, Regional Parties.

Introduction: A coalition government is the product of a particular political situation in which no political party is found in achieving a clear mandate. In such political scenario, a number of political parties join hands and form an ally and prove majority at the floor of the elected legislature that may be Lok Sabha or Vidhan Sabha. However, this process may be executed before or after the elections. Moreover, Indian democracy has shown a remarkable flexibility in different kinds of political situations and has acquired a fair degree of political stability in the recent political scenario after the 16th Lok Sabha elections. Nevertheless, we

can't ignore the fact that the decent competition among various political parties has compelled Indian party system to move towards strong and cooperative federal policy in the country.

Research Objectives: However, the present study highlights the political scenario of coalition governments in India at the centre level from 1989 to 2014. Nevertheless, some of the research objectives of the study are as under:

- To highlight the political scenario in the era of coalition politics in India.
- To analyze the political performance of regional and national parties in coalition politics from 1989 to 2014.
- To highlight the recent trends in coalition politics in India.

Research Methodology: The present research paper is based on the secondary sources of data collection. For this purpose, the study material has been collected from various journals, magazines, newspapers, websites and

reference books. To pace the study, an analytical and empirical approach has been used. However, the research has also been supported by the observational facts by the researcher.

The Concept of Coalition Politics: The word '*Coalition*' is derived from the *Latin* word '*Coalitio*' which means to grow together. Most of the scholars assume the fact that this term may be defined as a cooperative arrangement under which distinct political parties or all members of such parties unite to form a government or ministry. In general, the term coalition means temporary combination of groups or individuals formed to pursue specific objectives through joint action. Nevertheless, the term used in political science, has gained currency out of the exigencies of a multi-party system in the democratic set up of India after 1989.

P. Yellaiah writes, "*The term coalition politics in the comparative political theory discursively refers to the phenomenon of inter-party grouping of the government and the opposition in the parliament setting*

without a clear majority for any one political party”.

The Scenario of Coalition Politics in India: The first general elections in 1952 gave the remarkable results with full dominance of Congress party and it won 364 seats out of 489 seats. Then in 1957, it won 371 seats out of 494 seats and 360 seats in 1962 in the 3rd Lok Sabha elections. Thus the initial phase of Indian politics at the centre level was dominated by the Congress party under the leadership of Pt. J.L. Nehru which continued till 1967. But in 1967, in many states the hegemony of Congress was broken out by some regional parties and now a tendency of coalition politics was experienced in many states; but at the centre level it was experienced in 1977 when the Janta Party formed a coalition government with the help of its allies. However, this government could not remain in power for a long time.

Most of the political analysts assume the fact that the 9th Lok Sabha elections in 1989 gave a fragmented mandate and a new era of coalition politics in India started which

continued till 2009. Regarding the tendency of coalition politics in India, J.S. Kundu remarks: *“After the 9th Lok Sabha elections in 1989, any political party was not in a position to form a government with full majority. Therefore, the experiment of coalition was used to form the government. However, this was the beginning of a golden era of coalition politics in India which continued till; but all the coalition governments during this period were formed with the help of regional parties and remained hung governments with minority support.”*

Here it is also noteworthy that 9th Lok Sabha elections gave a scattered mandate and a coalition government formed by BJP and Janta Dal during 1st December 1989 to 7th November 1990. This was a *“National Front Government”* headed by Prime Minister V.P. Singh. This government fell very soon after a period of 341 days including the rule of P.M. Chander Shekhar. Meanwhile, after Lok Sabha elections in 1991, a new coalition government was formed under the leadership of Prime Minister

P.V. Narsimha Rao which continued till 1996. Meanwhile, during and after the 1996 Lok Sabha elections, the emergence of regional parties went on more vigorously which resulted the dawn of more powerful coalition era in Indian politics by grouping the regional allies while forming the government at centre level. However, during this time all the national parties lacked a nation wide vision and the emergence of regional parties became a dominant factor in to the power corridor at the centre level in India.

Furthermore, after the general elections in 1998, BJP emerged as the single largest party with winning 182 seats and it formed a coalition government of 13 months with the help of its allies Akali Dal (s), DMK, BJD, Janta Dal, Lok Shakti and Shiv Sena. On the whole this coalition government included 13 regional parties and it was supported by TMC from outside .But in 1999 Lok Sabha elections BJP and its allies (NDA) secured a comfortable majority and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee took the oath with the

help of 23 regional parties. It was the largest number in the history of Indian political system. This government remained in power for five years. Then after the 2004 general elections the UPA led by the Congress formed a coalition government under the leadership of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh which was repeated in 2009 Lok Sabha Elections which was called UPA-II. Now in 2014 Lok Sabha elections NDA won 336 seats out of which BJP won a full majority with winning of 282 seats and formed a coalition government including its 12 allied parties under the leadership of Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi.

Political Performance of National and Regional Parties (1989- 2009):

The fact is that the emergence of regional parties in Indian politics gave a great set back to all national parties and consequently they decreased the vote bank of national parties. The scenario of political performance of national and regional parties from 1989 to 2009 is given as under:

Table – 1: Political Performance of National and Regional Parties

S.N.	Party	1989	1991	1996	1998	1999	2004	2009
1	Congress	39.5	36.6	28.8	25.8	28.3	26.5	28.6
2	BJP	11.4	20.1	20.3	25.6	23.8	22.2	18.8
3	BSP	2.1	1.8	4.0	4.7	4.2	5.3	6.2
4	Left	10.2	9.7	9.1	7.8	7.6	7.9	7.5
5	Regional Parties	27.1	21.1	26.2	29.3	29.5	29.3	28.4

(Source: Election Commission of India's Reports 1989 to 2009)

The data given in the table 1 indicates that the emergence of regional parties has decreased the vote share of national parties, BJP and Congress. That is why; these national parties remained very far from the full majority needed to form a full majority

government. Actually, this data shows the scattered mandate from 1989 to 2009. Consequently, the regional parties remained determinant factor in performing coalition governments at the centre level during this period.

Table 2: Political Performance in Lok Sabha Elections- 2014:

Sr. No.	Party	Seats Won	Seats Share	Vote Share
1	BJP	282	51.93%	31.0%
2	Congress	44	8.10%	19.31%
3	NDA	336	59.86%	38.10%
4	UPA	60	10.68%	22.03%
5	Left, Regional Parties & others	147	29.46%	39.87%

(Source: Election Commission of India)

This data indicates that BJP won 282 seats with a vote share of 31 percent and seats share of 51.93 percent; but congress could only win a vote share of 19.31 and seats share of

8.10 winning only 44 seats. It was the first time when the congress did not remain in the situation of opposition and its allies also lost their dominance in this election. But regional parties

including the left remained in profit and they got a share of 29.46 percent seats and a vote share of 39.87 percent. It was the first time when the voters gave a full mandate in favor of BJP and its allies.

Recent Trends in Coalition Politics:

After the political scenario of 16th Lok Sabha election, BJP formed a full majority government under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi. Very recently a debate started whether coalition politics will wither away from the Indian politics. The reason behind it was very clear that the vote share of Congress shifted to BJP and its allies in this election which declined the role of Congress and its allies. But most of the political scientists are not ready to accept the fact of declining of coalition politics in India. They argue that the charismatic leadership of Shri Narendra Modi has proved all misconception wrong about the withering of politics in India. Today, it is an assumed fact that coalition may be possible in a full majority mandate. However, the future of Congress does not seem more secure in future. That is

why; some of the scholars talk about the decline of vote bank of the Congress party. They argue that the policies and programs in the Congress manifesto have totally remained fail during 16th Lok Sabha elections. The Congress had no ideology which could affect the Indian voters in favour of the party. Consequently, it led to scatter the vote bank and could only 44 seats. However, an analysis of the performance of BJP in recent months indicates that the party has many challenges as national building. If NDA does not fulfill its commitment made by Shri Narendra Modi regarding the corruption and black money, it may replace like Congress in 17th Lok Sabha elections.

Conclusion: To conclude we can trace out that BJP has a very clear vision about the policies and programs as 'Make in India'. However, there are many challenges before the NDA government regarding the corruption and black money. If the government fails to fulfill its commitment then its future will no longer safe; but the real test of this government depends on the

problem of internal security, border security, terrorism, naxalism, issue of secularism, black money, slow economic growth etc. Now it is assumed that the charismatic leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi would be able to solve all problems existing in the country and India will be a great emerging economic power in global order in recent future.

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