

A Debate on Decline and Future of Coalition Politics in India

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ABSTRACT : The fact is that future of BJP and its allies depends upon the future of congress and its allies. In other words, the future of congress in India at present does not seem bright. The reason behind it may be that NDA (National Democratic Alliance) in India is at work under the leadership of Sh. Narendra Modi as PM of India. The slogan ‘Make India’ given by BJP had become very popular in General Lok Sabha Election – 2014. Consequently, BJP and its allies have been successful to defeat UPA-II (United Progress Alliance) which was in rule since 2004. It was the first occasion when BJP reached at 282 as a single largest party after 1989. That is why most of the political scholars assume the fact that the decline of coalition is not much a false statement whether it may be or not. However, some of them assume that it is a reality of 2014. But on the other side, some of the scholars also assume that it would be wrong to forecast the end of coalition politics in India. That is why, it becomes a debatable question. Thus the researcher has focused on this issue assuming the fact the decline of coalition politics may be true at the present political scenario, but what will happen in 17th Lok Sabha Elections, nobody can truly say about it.

KEYWORDS : *Coalition Politics, NDA, UPA, Decline, Allies, Make India, Lok Sabha.*

Introduction : The fact is that a coalition government is the product of a particular situation, with no political party achieving a clear majority. In such a situation, a number of political parties join hands and form an ally and prove majority at the floor of the elected legislature, or the house of the people (Lok Sabha or Vidhan Sabha). Further, the parties joining hands may be pre-election or after-election allies. Indeed, the coalition governments reflect the coalitional politics. Therefore, a shift in the parliamentary paradigm can be traced back to the beginning of the coalition era in Indian politics. 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”.*¹

Origin of Coalition Politics in India: The experiment of coalition politics in India is not new one. The age of political uniformity was not seen in 1967 after the general “Vidhan Sabha Elections” in some of the states. It was the beginning of coalition politics in the state politics of India. In 1977, it was the first occasion when non-congress government took oath and some likeminded allied parties formed coalition government at centre level under the leadership of Sh. Morarji Desai. But this government could not complete its tenure and fell very soon in the last of 1979. After the ten years later the same political scenario was seen as was in 1977. After the 9th Lok Sabha Elections in 1989 any political party was not in position to form government with full majority. Therefore, the experiment of coalition was made to form coalition government. Therefore, most of the political scholars assume the fact that the era from 1989 to 2009, was an era of coalition politics in India. All the governments during this time were formed with the help of regional allies and remained hung governments with minority support.

Adnan Farooqui and E. Sridharan write: “*India has seen seven consecutive elections (1989-2009) in which no single party won a majority of seats in the lower house, resulting situations whose solutions were in all cases minority governments dependent on external support. In 1991, the congress formed a single party minority government, but in all other cases minority coalitions dependent on external support were formed, these being large, multi-party coalitions with the participation of several regional parties since 1996*”²

Actually, the congress surprised everyone when it defeated the BJP led NDA and returned to power in 2004 Lok Sabha Elections and getting re-elected in 2009. Zoya Hassan writes, “*This landmark election (2009) resulted in both BJP and CPI (M) becoming politically weaker, but paradoxically the congress party appeared weaker too*”.³ It lost its grip in many states elections in the past decade, such as – Bihar, UP, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu etc. However, the same political scenario was seen in Haryana Vidhan Sabha Elections in 2014. But on the contrary BJP lost its mandate in Delhi Vidhan Sabha Elections in February 2015. This time BJP won only three seats out of 70. Therefore, it is an unpredictable thing to say anymore about voting behavior pattern in state politics in India.

Political Scenario in Coalition Politics: It is a well-known fact that after the decline of congress and the failure of Janta Party in 1979, some small regional parties began emerging and enlarged their support base. However, in 1952, about 50 parties contested elections, while the number in 2009, reached at 342. Since the fragmentation of party system in India that set in after the decline of one-part dominance and the coming to power of Non-Congress coalition government, more and more parties have been formed with the largest number in the last elections from 1989 to 2009.⁴ The fact is given in the table 1:

Table – 1: National and Regional Parties 1989- 2009

Sr. No.	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	Left	10.2	9.7	9.1	7.8	7.6	7.9	7.5
4	BSP	2.1	1.8	4.0	4.7	4.2	5.3	6.2
5	Regional Parties	27.1	21.1	26.2	29.3	29.5	29.3	28.4

(Source: S.P. Kaur, “Regional Parties, Coalitions and their Impact”, Third Concept, Vol 26., No. 305, July 2012.)⁵

The table 1 indicates that the vote share of national parties has declined after 1989 and the vote share of regional parties has increased. Consequently, the scattered mandate has forced the political parties to unite into an alliance. That is why, Congress formed UPA (United Progressive Alliance) and BJP formed NDA (National Democratic Alliance). Thus, an era of coalition politics remained from 1989 to 2009 in India which changed the political scenario of Indian Politics.

Table – 2: Lok Sabha Election 2014 and Party Performance

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	59	10.68%	22.03%
5	LEFT, Regional Parties and Others	148	29.46%	39.87%

(Source: Election Commission of India)

The table 2 shows that BJP won a majority in the 2014 elections getting 282 seats and with its allies won 336 seats in 16th Lok Sabha. On the other hand, Congress and its allies won only 59 seats. If we talk about seat share percentage, it was 59.86% in favor of NDA and only 10.68% in favor of UPA. Likewise, vote share percentage was 38.10 in favor of NDA and 22.03 in favor of UPA. However, regional parties including LEFT got 29.46 percent share of total seats and 39.87 percent of total votes in Lok Sabha Elections – 2014. This data clearly indicates that this time mandate is in favor of BJP and its allies and any single party is not able to perform as an opposition in 16th Lok-Sabha.

The Issue of Decline of Coalition Politics: We know that it is a unique feature of political parties in India that they have traced their origin to the Indian National Congress (Congress). When the leaders of these break-away parties could not get a place of reputed status in the Congress party, they separated and formed a new party. Some leaders, however, left congress because of their ideology. Some of these parties survived but some could not. The tendency among the politicians to give their political loyalties was not to ideologies but to particular individuals or leaders. It is also true in the present political scenario that, if the political workers fail to get favors, they withdraw their support and join other party. This tendency has caused politics in India towards a directionless leadership emergence after the death of Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. This fact is supported by many scholars in various research works on the party system in India.

Furthermore, during the Lok Sabha Elections- 2014, the above facts were observed very true and UPA lead alliance scattered and Congress could get only 44 seats in this election. The discussion about the decline of the congress party and likewise, decline of coalition politics became one of the most important debatable issues in Indian politics. The main reason behind this lies in the fact that BJP has won a clear mandate getting 282 seats and 336 adding its allies.

Regarding the debate on the decline of coalition era of Indian politics, Adnan Farooqui and E. Sridharan's statement may be taken as a true statement. They write: "*With the BJP winning a majority in 2014 elections, the question arises as to whether the coalition era in Indian politics is over and a new era of majority governments, led this time by the BJP, replacing the congress, has begun. If we analyze the nature of the BJP majority and the state of the opposition and conclude that coalition politics, particularly the importance of pre-electoral coalitions for victory, coalition government for effective governance, and for the BJP's future expansions, remains very much alive, and that the coalition era is not over.*"⁶

Meanwhile, Subham Ghosh in his article, "BJP's victory march does not mean coalition era is over in India", concluded that the BJP's performance in elections over the last 12 months has made a number of quarters believe that the era of coalition in India is perhaps nearing its end. The party has dominated in a number of states in northern and western states in the recent assembly and general elections and also produced decent results in states where it has been a marginal force till date.⁷

Future of the Coalition Politics: Now, it is debatable question whether coalition politics in India is over or moving towards its end. If we analyse the performance of BJP in the recent months or within one year, it has shown a contradictory side. Some of the intellectuals and scholars assume the fact that coalition politics in India is not over, but it has moved towards a new power shifting in political scenario in recent time. BJP's identity as a party has emerged with two individuals namely Narendra Modi and Amit Shah. But, in Delhi Vidhan Sabha Elections – 2015 have given a great setback to BJP. PM Narendra Modi and Amit Shah could not either make any help of BJP in Delhi Vidhan Sabha Elections - 2015 and BJP could only win three seats. Furthermore, one year's achievements of BJP are not so praiseworthy that it could gain popularity or public support in next general elections and be able to get the same mandate. The political scenario within one year has changed. The party has not been so much successful to implement its commitments made before public during election time. The government has not

been successful to control price hike and corruption. Further, it has been completely failure to bring the black money back to the country. The idea of 'Make India' seems to be flopping very soon and vision of good governance to the people seems unachievable in the recent time very soon or later. Then, how can we say that the era of coalition politics is over. It would be decided by the next general Lok Sabha Elections about the future of coalition politics in India.

Conclusion : To conclude the debate we can say that BJP lacks a majority in the Rajya Sabha. It has to be embrace coalition spirit if it wants meaningful legislation in Parliament. However, Narendra Modi can take some strong steps to accelerate the pace of economic growth and gradual changes in its structure. If we look into current political scenario, there are many challenges before BJP government. That is why, all reputed leaders of the party has to work untidily and with full soul and spirit to visualize the slogan of '*Make India*'. Furthermore, whether the coalition era is over or not, would be decided BJP's performance on various grounds including the question of national security and the meaningful solution of the Kashmir issue, terrorism, nexalism and some other specific problems as unemployment, slow growth rate of the economy, welfare of farmers, labourers and backward areas of the country. Therefore, the question of decline of coalition political is not much important, but it is debatable at present in Indian politics. Rather than the issue of national integration and economic development are crucial needs of the country and a challenge before the government. That is why, it is hoped that BJP would control the economic problems of the country and increase the reputation of India in global order.

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