

Indian coalition politics: difficulties and consequences

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Abstract

How does governing in coalitions affect coalition parties' responsiveness to voters? In this article, we seek to understand the relationship between political parties' participation in multiparty governments and their responsiveness to voters. We argue that the extent to which coalition parties respond to policy priorities of voters is influenced by the divisiveness of policy issues within the cabinet and the ministerial responsibility for policies. To test our hypotheses, we combine data on the issue attention of 55 coalition parties from the Comparative Manifestos Project with data on government composition and data on the policy priorities of voters from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems and various election studies in 45 elections across 16 European countries from 1972 to 2011. Any party may gain a majority in the lower house, if not, coalitions are formed by the political parties to gain a majority in the lower house for formation of government. This research study will analyze its nature, challenges and prospects of coalition governments in Indian political process. The significance lies in the study of multi-party systems, the growth of regionalism and its effect on the pattern of Centre-State relations. Further, there is failure of the national consensus on a parliamentary majority because for three decades the national government was headed by a coalition government or by minority government from 1989 to 2014. From 1952 to 1977 and 1980 to 1989 was Congress dominance.

Keywords: politics, multi-party system, growth of regionalism, Voter responsive, Election

Introduction

Coalition is a phenomenon of a multi-party government where a number of minority parties join hands for the purpose of running the government. A coalition is formed when many groups come into common terms with each other and define a common programme or agenda on which they work. A coalition government always remains in pulls and pressures particularly in a multinational like India. The term Coalition is derived from the latin word 'Coalition' which comes from the compound word. 'Co-alescere' Co- meaning together and 'alescere' meaning to grow up. Coalition thus means to grow up together! [1]. According to the dictionary meaning of the term 'coalition' is 'the combination or alliance, short of union, especially political parties.' It refers to a combination into one body of separate bodies but permitting them their separate existence. The combination is for joint action and is temporary.

Classification of Coalitions

The parliamentary Coalitions can be classified into two types:

- (i) Pre-election coalitions: The Pre-election alliances involve electoral alliances and electoral adjustments. Pre-poll understandings between the parties are very common. They may agree on a common programme or content themselves with an understanding not to oppose each other's candidates in certain constituencies and even to extend their support.
- (ii) Post-election coalitions A post-election coalition results from the eagerness of parties to share political power and run the government. A post- election coalition is facilitated if it is preceded by a proto or pre-election.

understanding. In a multiparty system, there is a lot of maneuvering by parties and splinter groups to evolve a majority coalition to form the ministry. There are a lot of negotiations and much of give and take. There may be a good bit of horse trading and other types of exchanges. Considerations of personality, tradition, style and chance

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figure prominent in the formation of any particular coalition each group tries to occupy a pivotal position.

The pivotal position may be defined as that occupied by the last added group of a minimal winning coalition. Withdrawing of this group will make the coalition cease to exist.

First experience of coalition in free India

In 1977 when non-congress forces united under the leadership of Morarji Desai in the name of Janta government. The four party Janata governments remained in power for about year's i.e. Once the no confidence motion against Desai was discussed in the lower house, Mr. Desai tendered his resignation. The Janta government collapsed like a house of cards in July 1979. [2] Second coalition, a new coalition was formed with Mr. Charan Singh as the Prime Minister in October 1979. This coalition had the support of CPI (M) and the CPI. There was pro west Fernandes and pro-soviet Bahuguna faction in the coalition.³ But, once President asked him to seek a vote of confidence in the house within three weeks' time, Mr. Charan Singh tendered his resignation before facing the house. Hence became the first Indian Prime minister who did not face the house. Third coalition was formed in the name of national front. National Front and Samajwadi Janata Party: Issues of Bofors, terrorism in Punjab 1984, civil war in Srilanka were some of important factors that affected the outcome of elections Congress (I) minority government led by National Front by V.P. Singh & Ch. Devilal (Janatha Dal + BJP + Telugu Desam+ DMK + AGP + BJP + Left). Later BJP withdrew on ideological issues, Mandal Commission, Ram Mandir issue. Meanwhile, Chandra Sekar broke away from the Janata Dal. Since India's Independence on 15 August 1947, Indian National Congress, the major political party instrumental in Indian independence movement, ruled the nation. The first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, second PM Lal Bahadur Shastri and the third PM Indira Gandhi, all were from the Congress party. However, Raj Narain, who had unsuccessfully contested election against Indira from the constituency of Rae Bareilly in 1971, lodged a case, alleging electoral malpractices. In June 1975, Indira was found guilty and barred by High Court from holding public office for six years. In response, an ungracious Emergency was declared under the pretext of national security. The next election's result was that India's first-ever coalition government was formed at the national level under the Prime Ministership of Morarji Desai, which was also the first non-Congress national government, which existed from 24 March 1977 to 15 July 1979, headed by the Janata Party,[8] an amalgam of political parties opposed to Emergency imposed between 1975 and 1977. As the popularity of Janata Party dwindled, Morarji Desai had to resign and Charan Singh, a rival of Desai became the fifth PM. However, due to lack of support, this coalition government did not complete its five-year term.

Conclusion

Congress returned to the power in 1980 under Indira Gandhi, and later under Rajiv Gandhi as the 6th PM. However, the next general election of 1989 once again brought a coalition government under National Front, which lasted till 1991, with two Prime Ministers, the second one being supported by Congress. The 1991 election resulted in a Congress led stable minority government for five years. The next 11th parliament produced three Prime Ministers in two years and forced the country back to the polls in 1998. The first successful coalition government in India which completed the whole 5-year term was the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as PM from 1999 to 2004. Then another coalition, Congress led United Progressive Alliance, consisting of 13 separate parties ruled India for two terms from 2004 to 2014 with Manmohan Singh as PM. However, in the 16th general election in May 2014, BJP secured majority on its own (first party to do so since 1984 election) and National Democratic Alliance again came into power, with Narendra Modi as Prime Minister and more.

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