

Coalition Politics In India: A Historical Overview

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Abstract

The paper wants to highlight the evolution of Coalition governments in India. Coalition is a phenomenon of multi-party government where a number of minority parties join hands to run the government. India is a country with different culture, religion, language and cast. Indian constitution follows multi-party system. Due to the system, sometime securing majority in elections for a party becomes a big issue. India is witnessed coalition government since before Independence and till 16th loksabha elections. Although BJP secured majority yet formed government along with other parties and government names NDA government.

Coalition Politics

Coalition politics is a form of government in which number of minority parties come together to run the government. A coalition is formed when many splinter groups agree to join hands on a common platform. Coalition government almost exist in the parliamentary form of government. It is the product of multi party system. In this type of government, no single party is able to secure majority in elections. Coalition may take form either before elections or after elections. Coalition before election is not as pre-poll alliance and coalition after election is known as post poll alliance.

In Indian politics, coalition reflect an opportunistic power driven mentality of various political groups. India being a country of many diversities and pluralities united, continuous to be motivated by parochial and regional consideration. 1.

It is due this character of Indian society that coalition are extremely relevant to the country. So coalition is not merely the coming together of various political parties to capture power, It is also reflective of the fragmentation of social interests at the grass root level. 2.

The term coalition is derived from the latin word coalescere which means to grow together. According to dictionary, coalition means an act of coalescing or uniting into one body, a union of persons, states or an alliance. It is a combination of body or parts into one whole. In the strict political sense the word coalition is used for an alliance or temporary union for joint action of various powers or state and also of the union into a single government of distinct parties or members of distinct parties. 3

The history of coalition government in india is very long. Before independence, J.L.Nehru was the leader of first coalition government formed in 1946 with the support of Muslim league and Hindu Mahasabha. But after independence Muslim league withdrawn from the electoral process and this act gave a strengthen to congress party. At that time, it becomes a major party in Indian politics.

As we have seen the formation of coalition govt in pre-independence era. This situation remains continue in some states after independence. Before 1977, congress was in majority and able to form government independently at centre level. But in some states of india no party was able to form

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government independently. Kerala was its first example.

First election was held in 1952. Congress was the only party at centre level who secured majority. Between 1952-64 J.L. Nehru was the prime minister of India. In spite of multi-party system Congress was in majority. But on the other side, some states were facing problem of not securing majority of single party. Kerala was the first state who witnessed first coalition government. Thanks to a fractured verdict, The Congress formed a coalition government in the state along with Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress in March 1952. In 1954, with the support of Praja Socialist Party. In 1952 Punjab also witnessed the anti-Congress coalition of Akali Dal and other parties. In 1959 Orissa faced the same situation when coalition government was formed.

After the death of Nehru and Shastri, Indira Gandhi became prime minister of India. But conflict was occurred between Indira Gandhi and Syndicates. In 1969 President's election brought the conflict on surface and split the 84 years old Indian National Congress party into two groups.⁵ The declaration of national emergency in June 1975 was effected the Congress party position on national level and resulted the defeat in general election held in 1977. Janta party formed the coalition government along with three other parties in the leadership of Morarji Desai. But this govt. was not stable and next election was held in 1980.

Congress won the election with majority and formed the government in the leadership of Indira Gandhi. Congress recaptured the power. This was the time of one party dominance. In 1984, After the death of Indira Gandhi, Rajeev Gandhi became the Prime Minister of India.

After 1989, the scenario of Indian party system was completely changed. Janta party came into the power and till date at Centre level India is governed by Coalition government. In fact, after 1989, phase which is known as Coalition phase or Multi party system phase, no national political party could capture power or obtain majority in Lok Sabha alone.⁶ In 1989 V.P. Singh, In 1996 H.D. Devgona, in 1997 I.K. Gujral formed the Government. In 1977 BJP led NDA formed the. In the 2014, 16th Lok Sabha elections, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by BJP, won a sweeping victory, taking 336 seats, the BJP self winning 282 seats. But in the parliamentary election of 2014, the national or regional political parties those who are not the part of two main alliances of NDA or UPA, have formed Third Front.⁷

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