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### **Coalition Government in India. NDA Vs UPA**

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#### **Abstract**

The multi-party coalitions formed since 1990's in India are regarded as a kind of accommodative politics with all varieties of parties coming together in broad coalitions with national parties. Party system in India at the national level since 1998 has been loosely bipolar divided between the Bharatiya Janata Party led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition and the Congress led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) coalition. In the history of contemporary India, one of the great events had been the ability of 24 party NDA headed by BJP to govern for the entire elected term of 5 years i.e., from 1999 to 2004. This has set a new agenda for governance and has challenged the hypothesis that the coalitions are usually unstable. UPA was formed soon after the 14<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha elections in 2004. This alliance is given the external support from the left front consisting of the four main leftist parties. The completion of full term coalition by the NDA and the likelihood of the UPA also of completing its term have made the Indian coalition system appear as the only alternative available to Indian democracy. Naturally, the study and analysis of two major models of governance headed by a Hindu nationalist party (BJP) and secularism professing party (Congress) highlights the techniques and strategies required for the effective operation of coalition. Indian coalition experiment despite many drawbacks has shown that coalitions do not undermine democracy.

This paper makes a comparative analysis of two different coalitions i.e. the NDA and the UPA. This paper examines the partisanship and power sharing followed in the NDA and UPA coalitions, analyzes the components of the Common Minimum Program and working of the two coalitions. The pulls and pressures felt on these two coalitions are also highlighted to assess the challenges and prospects of coalition politics in India.

In the contemporary period, coalitions have become an inevitable feature of Indian politics even though they existed earlier in different forms. Coalition government is formed when no single party is able to reach the position of being the majority party to form the government and when one party joins another party to contest the elections and form the government. Coalitions or party alliances may be formed prior to elections or after the election making it a political concept. Thus, according to Cambridge Advanced Dictionary *coalition* is considered to be the “*union of different political parties or groups for a particular purpose usually for a limited time*”<sup>1</sup> which implies that two or more actors have communicated and agreed to coordinate their actions. Over the past two decades, India has been experimenting with various coalition governments at the national and regional level. Party system in India at the national level since 1998 has been loosely bipolar divided between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition and the Congress led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) coalition. These two coalitions are a patchwork of parties having state specific base.

This paper examines the coalition system and the politics spawned by the system through the comparative study of NDA and UPA. The completion of full term coalition by the NDA and the likelihood of the UPA also of completing its term have made the Indian coalition system appear as the only alternative available to operate Indian democracy. Naturally, the analysis of two major models of governance headed by a Hindu nationalist party (BJP) and secularism professing party (Congress) highlights the techniques and strategies adopted for the effective operation of coalition system in India. This paper highlights the constraints faced by the dominant partner of the coalition government. The paper examines the two different models of coalitions i.e. the NDA and the UPA headed by the BJP and the Congress respectively. The paper highlights the partisanship and power sharing followed in the NDA and UPA coalitions along with the examination of the Common Minimum Programme. A comparative analysis is made in this paper to assess the coalition politics in India at the national level utilizing historical, descriptive, comparative and analytical methods.

This paper has five parts. In the first part, the emergence and existence of the coalition system in India is highlighted. In the second part, the formation and working of the NDA coalition is examined. In the third part, the present coalition i.e. the UPA and its functioning are brought out. The fourth part brings out the comparison and uniqueness of NDA and UPA. The fifth part highlights the problems and prospects of coalition government and its operation in India.

## **Part 1**

Over the past two decades, India has been experimenting with various coalition governments at the national and regional level. The coalition history at the centre first began with the Congress under Indira Gandhi during 1967-71 when it formed a minority government with the support extended by the communists. Morarji Desai's government (1977-79) under Janata Party even though appeared to be a single party was actually a coalition of several parties. The creation of Janata Party was the response to sudden opportunity to wield power. That is why it fell apart in 1980. V.P. Singh's government (1989-90) was also a coalition with the external support of the BJP. Even though this coalition government tried to withstand the pressure from the Congress and the BJP, it

fell when BJP withdrew the external support to the government. as its leaders were arrested when they went on a *Rathayatra*.

The next coalition was formed in 1996 by the United Front (UF) which came together with a Common Minimum Programme under the leadership of A.B.Vajpayee of BJP. In 1998, again there was the formation of a coalition led by the BJP. In 1999, the coalition led by A.B. Vajpayee was called as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).. In 2004, the Congress headed by Dr Man Mohan Singh formed the coalition known as the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) at the centre. Thus, the history of coalitions in India shows that it is the contemporary development of the political system. (See Table-1 for the details about the number of seats obtained by the parties between 1977-1999).

Thus, the multi-party coalitions formed since 1990s are regarded as a kind of accommodative politics with all varieties of parties coming together in broad coalitions with national parties. Today, out of twenty eight states, there are only seven states in which the Congress or the BJP are the leading parties. In the rest of the states, there is some kind of coalition or the other. Of the 138 state governments since 1977, 40 were coalitions and their average life was only 26 months. Since 1967 there have been more than 30 different coalition governments in Indian states. In Andhra Pradesh coalition government was formed in 1955, in Orissa in 1957, in West Bengal in 1967 and in Kerala the UDF coalition government was formed and so on. Today, coalition government has become a common feature in most of the states.

The decade from 1989-1999 witnessed instability at the national level. The 13<sup>th</sup> general elections of 1999 brought to power a pre-election, multi – party coalition which lasted for its full term of five years i.e. till 2004. It is the 1999 NDA coalition that set the trend of successful operation of a coalition system. The formation of UPA, the Congress-led coalition was inspired by the structure of the NDA, with one major national party at the helm and several regional parties participating in the government. The UPA coalition government of 2004 is also likely to complete its term which strengthens the possibilities of coalitions being stable at the national level. The present analysis of NDA vs. UPA is undertaken because 2004 general elections witnessed the first election contested by two major coalitions, one led by the BJP and the other by the Congress.

## **Part II**

### **The National Democratic Alliance (NDA)**

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is a coalition of political parties in India which is led by the Bharatiya Janata Party and had 13 constituent parties at the time of its formation in May 1998. The convener of NDA was George Fernandes, and its honorary Chairman was former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. This coalition collapsed within a year as the AIADMK pulled out from the coalition. The BJP and its allies gave themselves a formal identity, the NDA in 1999 elections with a greater majority and new alliances. They campaigned jointly but stuck to their respective symbols. The BJP led NDA fought the 1999 Lok Sabha elections on a common manifesto as it had accepted the reality of coalition government formation.

Yogesh Atal remarking on 1999 elections said that the results “*clearly showed people’s declining faith in the Congress Party and their preference for the continuation of coalition*” 2. Several parties which were not part of the NDA coalition in 1998 allied with the BJP in the 1999 elections.(See Table-3) They were Telugu Desam Party(TDP),

Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Janata Dal-U (JD-U), Indian National Lok Dal, (INLD) Himalaya Vikas Congress(HVC) and four other smaller parties which together contributed to 60 seats in the NDA of 303 seats. A few parties like All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) (18 members), Haryana Vikas Party (HVP) and the Janata which were also the part of the BJP led alliance quit the coalition just prior to 1999 polls. So, there was a fundamental change in the composition of parties / members supporting the NDA.

The BJP had won 182 seats out of which 108 came from five states- Madhya Pradesh – 29, Uttar Pradesh – 29, Gujarat – 20, Rajasthan – 16 and the Capital Territory Delhi – 07. The rest of the total seats were won due to alliance with other parties in as many as 10 states where its allies had also won 115 seats for themselves. The alliance between the BJP and various state based regional parties proved mutually beneficial. (See Table 4)

The Congress on the other hand had obtained nearly all the seats (108 out of total 114) on its own and only 6 seats with the support of its allies (Bihar – 4 and Tamil Nadu 2) where its poll allies could secure 17 seats for themselves indicating vast difference in the nature of BJP and Congress led alliances. The Congress had electoral understanding with only five states – Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Kerala, Bihar and Tamil Nadu. In the first three states, the Congress was the principal player and its allies were only marginal forces. The BJP had contested 139 seats and supported allies in over 190 seats. It received support from allies in 120 constituencies whereas the Congress contested 453 seats and received support from its allies in only 34 seats (Bihar 14, Tamil Nadu 14, Kerala 3, and Maharashtra 3). Both the BJP and the Congress had electoral understanding with smaller parties.

1999 election became a watershed for the BJP in the history of two decades. The party did not publish its manifesto and fought the 1999 elections more as NDA and less as BJP. Vajpayee became the leader of the NDA which adopted a National Agenda for Governance (NAG) for rebuilding India. Almost all the parties participated in the government. Even the TDP which gave external support to the NDA participated by accepting the Speaker ship of Lok Sabha. Some of the NDA's allies were given key portfolios in the ministry. There was a strong desire to share power at the federal level by the members of the NDA. Regional parties were happy to be associated with the national decision making process. All the important leaders of the NDA were provided berths in the Union Council of Ministers.

#### **Common Minimum Programme (CMP) and Working Of NDA**

At the national and regional level, the NDA had different ideologies and programme. The CMP included restructuring of the economy as per globalization process, regional development, social justice for weaker sections like women, harmonious relationship between the federal government and the state government, more autonomy to states etc. The CMP has avoided conflicts among the members of coalition and served as a rule book to them.

NDA started functioning as a coalition right from the time of contesting for election. It distributed successfully the seats among themselves in the elections to the Lok Sabha in 1999. It also resolved differences over the distribution of ministerial posts and of the portfolios at the federal level. NDA succeeded in uniting the anti-Congress and

non-left forces under the banner of the NDA, accommodated the interests of the regional parties and kept the agenda of Hindutva on backburner.

BJP was the strong pillar in the coalition and functioned under the charismatic leadership of A.B. Vajpayee. His leadership ensured the accommodation of diverse interests to maintain the stability of coalition government. Remarking on his leadership it was said as follows “A winning coalition should have a leader of national stature, experience and competence. However, the real leadership quality in a coalition game is in the political maneuverability and manipulation of the situation that will lead to stability and success in the game”<sup>3</sup> Leadership qualities of Vajpayee indicated that he had developed negotiating skills to balance the desires for sharing power among the coalition partners. He was the only non-Congress Prime-Minister to have served the full term as Prime Minister.

In the first address of the President to the joint session of Parliament on March 25, 1999 Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee of the BJP said that his coalition government would be committed to the governance through consensual approach.<sup>4</sup> They would also uphold “dialogue, debate and discussion” to replace the game of parliamentary majority and minority. Some of the issues in which the new government would seek a national consensus urgently were the electoral reforms, centre- state relations, resolution of inter – state water disputes and welfare of weaker sections while pursuing economic reforms. All the major governmental policies and decisions were to be decided by the regional parties.

Once the coalition pulls became manageable, Mr. Vajpayee lost no time in showing that his government meant business. The first business on which the government had acted was the economy as it set up an advisory council and a panel on trade and industry comprising of economists, industrialists and officials. The resurgent India bonds were to raise four billion dollars to boost investor morale in the face of the prevalent sanctions. He was also able to enter into Cauvery accord which settled ten year old dispute on river Cauvery amicably.

NDA was a coalition which was socially broad based to a great extent. It was dominated by the upper and middle castes but had also given representation to the weaker sections including the SC’s and STs. Only the Muslims were not fairly represented in the coalition government. However, the Muslim dominated National Conference from Jammu and Kashmir was a partner in the coalition government. The Christians and the Sikhs were also represented. All the major religions and castes have found place.

The coalition government had a fairly large representation from the national and regional parties and also from various parts of India. So, it was politically representative of various segments of Indian political society. These parties came from different parts of India. For instance, the DMK, the TDM, Shiv Sena, BJP, TDS came from the South. The National Vikas Congress (NVC) came from the North; the Trinamool Congress (TC), the Samata Party and the JD (U) came from the east. Akali Dal (SAD), Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) came from the west. The BJP had representation in many of the states. The BJP was successful in consolidating the anti – Congress and non- left forces under the banner of the NDA.

Numerically, the NDA was dominated by the BJP. Out of 291 Lok Sabha seats belonging to the coalition partners, 182 seats belonged to the BJP. In other words, 62.5% of the coalition members of the Lok Sabha came from the BJP. So, the BJP became the

main pillar of the coalition government acting as the balancer of different groups. The BJP had the support and cooperation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) which provided the socio-cultural base in the country.

The BJP led NDA completed its full term as it was able to learn the dynamics of coalition politics by accommodating regional aspirations along with the national agenda for governance. This coalition was a coalition of too many parties and factions of parent parties. They had all stronger state agendas and no national agendas. They were worried as to how the coalition would fare. So, a coordination committee of the coalition was formed but it had been almost defunct. However the BJP which led NDA government resolved many conflicts amicably like the issue of government servants joining the RSS. The coalition partners reconciled their differences and adopted a common policy toward the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The champions of state autonomy like the Akal Dal and DMK from Tamil Nadu agreed with the Cabinet decision to reject the autonomy resolution passed by the legislative Assembly of the Jammu and Kashmir state. So coalition partners' leaders also understood the importance of tolerance. TDP and other constituents of the NDA have had a sobering effect on the governance like the enactment of Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), building of a consensus regarding the Kashmir policy or the economic agenda in general. Rangarajan (2000) has examined the working of the NDA government in depth. Bhatia and Singh (2000) have also examined the strategies adopted by the BJP as the dominant partner in the coalition.

Thus, the NDA succeeded in maintaining stability. This stability was because it was a pre-election coalition and the one led by a dominant party having a greater chance of survival. "The *major national party pursued a comprehensive strategy of alliances and seat – sharing arrangements accepting to field fewer candidates in the bargain*"<sup>5</sup> Thus, the BJP cultivated competence to run a coalition successfully even though it had to face many criticisms from the hardcore BJP activists, NDA partners, the Congress and the left. For instance, Advani's emphasis on the Ram temple issue, saffronization bid by Dr Murli Manohar Joshi were sensitive issues which made some of the NDA partners like TDP to question it, apart from the criticisms from the Congress and the left parties. TDP and JD(U) and George Fernandes led Samata Party disapproved of hardliners within the BJP. So, there were occasions when the NDA coalition was on the verge of split but for the moderate leadership and wise handling of the situation by the then Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee who tried to see that such an eventuality was averted on many occasions.

NDA set the trend of successful running of a coalition. There was no executive board or *Politburo* to manage the coalition. Leaders of individual parties made decisions on seat sharing in elections, allocation of ministries and the issues that are raised in Parliament. With varied ideologies there have been cases of disagreement and split-voting within the coalition government. Despite all such problems, the NDA wanted to find long term solution to the problems presented by coalition politics through constitutional amendments after reviewing the Constitution. Its common manifesto also highlighted an agenda for *a proud and prosperous India* which it tried to achieve through the process of *consensus* and *understanding* with the coalition partners.

### **Part III**

#### **United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and Its Working**

2004 Lok Sabha election was largely the contest between the BJP and its allies on one hand and the Congress and its allies on the other. The BJP fought the elections as part of the NDA although some of its seat-sharing agreements were made with strong regional parties outside the NDA such as Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh and AIADMK in Tamil Nadu. Congress made several regional level alliances in several states for the first time. The left parties Communist Party of India-Marxist(CPI(M) & Communist Party of India (CPI) contested on its own in West Bengal, Tripura & Kerala confronting both Congress and NDA forces. In several other states such as Punjab and Andhra Pradesh they took part in seat sharing with Congress. In Tamil Nadu they were part of DMK led Democratic Progressive Alliance.

Two parties refused to go along with either Congress or BJP-Bahujan Samaj Party and Samajwadi Party. Both are based in Uttar Pradesh. Congress made several attempts to form alliances with them but in vain. In this election, Congress secured a tally of 145 seats and had gained 31 seats as compared to the 1999 elections. But its vote share dropped from 28.3% to 26.21%. The BJP on the other hand, secured only 138 seats and its tally came down from 182 seats in 1999. Its vote –share also came down from 23.75% to 21.48% (See Table-5)

United Progressive Alliance (UPA) is the present ruling coalition of political parties in India. UPA was formed soon after the 2004 Lok Sabha elections. However, an informal alliance had existed prior to the elections as several of the current constituent parties had developed seat-sharing agreements in many states. Initially, the proposed name for the alliance was ‘Secular Progressive Alliance’

This coalition is dependent on the outside support of left parties consisting of the four leftist parties- CPI (Marxist), CPI, Revolutionary Socialist Party(RSP) and All India Forward Block (AIFB) (Totaling 59 MPs). External support has also been provided by the Bahujan Samaj Party(BSP) (19) and smaller parties such as Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF). At present UPA have 226 seats in the Lok Sabha. The external support provided takes the total number of seats to 320 plus which is well over the required majority figure of 272.

#### **Common Minimum Programme (CMP) and Working Of UPA.**

The UPA’s policies are defined through a Common Minimum Programme and the alliance is generally perceived as a centre-left coalition dominated by the Indian National Congress whose President Sonia Gandhi is its Chairperson. The CMP of UPA is a 22 page document dealing comprehensively with all the subjects and agenda of the constituent elements. Some of these elements are as follows-

1. Since leftists are the major allies, there is an emphasis on employment, minimum wages and unorganized sector. In agriculture, the left leanings are evident in stating that a comprehensive protective legislation “*will be enacted for agricultural worker*”. It also aims at providing good income to farmers.
2. The CMP also seeks the promotion of food security, energy security, science and technology, panchayat raj, women and children, SC & ST, minorities and others. It also aims at development of infrastructure and water resource development.
3. It also promises to set up an Administrative Reforms Commission and improve the fiscal policy to remove the deficits by 2009.

4. To counter the BJP there is also a resolve to '*protect and preserve the social harmony and enforce law to counter obscurantist and fundamental elements who seek to disturb social amity and peace.*'

5. It seeks to counter the previous government's attitude towards smaller states. The CMP of UPA also talks about regional development and improvements of centre-state relations and promises renewed attention to Jammu and Kashmir and North East.

6. It also lays emphasis on defense, internal security and states clearly that it is committed to maintain credible nuclear weapons programme to counter BJP.

7. The CMP of UPA also tries to appease its allies DMK, MDMK and PMK by stating that all languages in the Eighth Schedule will be declared as official languages and Tamil will be declared as classical language.

The above mentioned policy of the UPA thus promises to satisfy the programmes of all its allies (1, 2, 3, 4, and 6) and counters the programme of its rivals (4, 5, and 6). This document also discusses in detail as to how it proposes to implement its programmes. Thus, the UPA Government supported by the left parties has six basic principles for governance.<sup>6</sup> The Common Minimum Programme (CMP) of the UPA government is a comprehensive agenda and a starting point that highlights the main priorities, policies and programmes. The UPA is committed to the implementation of the CMP. :

The Common Minimum Programme in many ways represents the opposite process. The UPA by and large stood up to pressure from the pro – rich – liberal media and business groups. With the pressure of leftist parties, a centrist "*social market economy*" oriented Common Minimum Programme was negotiated. The CMP is a compromise document. Its final version differs from the original draft on issues such as employment, labor, foreign investment, electricity, foreign policy, defense and security. However, a particularly healthy part of the CMP is the emphasis on regional development and redressing growing imbalances, between and within states.

The UPA coalition which is dependent on the support of the left parties unlike the NDA which had a majority of its own is constrained in achieving its goals. UPA government meets the challenge due to the personal credibility and the capability shown by Prime Minister Dr Man Mohan Singh. UPA is a minority coalition dependent on outside support from left parties which have differences on economic policy and also the foreign policy. A minority government has to pay a price to placate irresponsible allies who are driven by ideology or by internal compulsions. Pandering to intransigent allies is understandable in a shaky coalition but the national interest might have to be jeopardized. UPA had to appease the left parties by indefinitely postponing the nuclear deal with America and extra care was displayed in dealing with the Chinese in order to please the leftists. Government is being pushed around by leftists who act like bullies even though they are allies. Thus, in coalitions, it is difficult to determine where the government ends and opposition begins.

From its inception there were apprehensions in political circles regarding whether the Congress knows the art of running the UPA coalition successfully. However, the Congress leadership like the BJP leadership has also shown the required tact and flexibility in running the coalition system.

The Telangana Rashtra Samithi was the first party to quit the alliance when its ministers quit the Andhra Pradesh Government, and when an official withdrawal was

done at the national level by its President K. Chandrasekhar Rao, who resigned his Lok Sabha seat. MDMK which was giving external support to the coalition began to drift when it tied up with the UPA's rival. All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) during the Tamil Nadu election officially withdraw its support on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2007. The Samajwadi Party has also withdrawn its support to the coalition.

## **Part IV**

### **NDA vs. UPA**

The working of two different coalitions at the national level when analyzed indicates the trend towards which the coalition system is moving in India. India has entered the age of coalitions. Regional political parties have a decisive say in the process of government formation as well as its functioning. The stability of the coalition is affected by the bargaining structures. Opportunism has cast a shadow on the proper functioning of the coalition government. The trend of outside support has also undermined the coalition governance.

Unlike NDA, the UPA is not a supreme majority coalition but a majority coalition dependent on outside support from the left parties which have sharp differences on economic policy and also the foreign policy. In the NDA coalition there were co-operative and competitive strategies co-existing inside the alliance indicating BJP's willingness to compromise to secure government power, whereas, the Congress was slow in reaching this conclusion. The Congress had perceived that its secular agenda would have a wider appeal and that it would not require coalition partners to come to power.

It is pointed out that the UPA coalition is fragile and requires adroit political management to keep it stable.<sup>7</sup> It is because the left parties have differences on economic policy and are also the main political opponents of the Congress in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. The challenge which the UPA faces will be to reconcile contradiction at the state level with support to the Congress led UPA at the national level. At the same time, it has to hold the UPA together. The left parties even though have historic differences with the Congress in certain states agreed to support from outside, the Congress led UPA coalition at the centre. Thus, UPA's fragile coalition is in a way a mockery because the parties do not agree on fundamental issues such as economic reforms. NDA coalition on the other hand performed better than the current coalition especially in understanding India's potential and creating the infrastructure development.

In UPA government, the National Advisory Council (NAC) is headed by Congress President Sonia Gandhi to supervise the Prime Minister. On the other hand, the left as well as the UPA have formed a co-ordination committee to supervise the Government. The common link between the two is that whilst they exercise power neither is accountable to Parliament. This appears to be a strange situation. In the NDA on the other hand, the BJP was striving to keep the coalition together and also maintain the allegiance of the rank and file of RSS – BJP activists. The challenge for the BJP was to retain the support of the RSS while still maintaining its independence of action.

However, the NDA under the leadership of former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee was able to complete its term without a major crisis which has strengthened the coalition system in India. The UPA despite being fragile is also likely to complete its full term which further strengthens the coalition culture in the country especially at the federal level. An analysis and comparison of these two major coalitions indicate that the

leaders of the BJP and the Indian National Congress have developed the negotiating skills to balance the desire for sharing power. The way the two coalitions distributed the seats among themselves and also the ministerial posts and portfolios at the federal level indicate the coalition culture cultivated in the Indian context.

The study of NDA and UPA coalitions and their working in the last one decade highlights the unique strategies adapted by each dominant party along with their partners to maintain stability and power. A comparative analysis done between the NDA and UPA coalitions show the following highlights.

1. Both the NDA (1999) and UPA (2004) coalitions were formed with pre-electoral alliances, understanding and sharing of seats. However, most of the key posts in the ministry under UPA coalition have been retained by the INC rather than sharing with the coalition partners like the NDA did in 1999

2. NDA was a coalition of closely knit parties which were 24 in number led by the BJP.(with the support of three independently elected members of Parliament). UPA is a loosely knit coalition of 14 political parties and with four strong leftist parties extending support from outside which has weakened their position. However, both these coalitions have adopted the Common Minimum Programme for national governance.

3. The NDA coalition was headed by a strong ideological party i.e. the BJP which has strong contentious issues in its party manifesto. Due to coalition needs, it was forced to dilute its ideology. The BJP subdued its distinct ideology for the sake of maintaining the coalition. In fact it had to shelve three contentious issues i.e. on the building up of Ram temple, implementation of Uniform Civil Code and the abolition of Article 370. On the other hand, the UPA headed by the Congress never had a strong ideological orientation as it was from its inception an umbrella like party giving shelter to all kinds of ideologies. Thus, it has no such contentious issues to be shelved indefinitely. The CMP of the UPA however, had the intention of countering the BJP.

4. UPA had to encounter more opposition and difficulties from the leftist parties especially regarding the nuclear treaty with USA than the NDA. NDA did not face crisis like the UPA as the opposition to NDA's policies were more from the RSS, VHP and other affiliates of *Sangh Parivar* rather than from the coalition partners.

5. The UPA enjoyed the support of nearly 320 Lok Sabha members- a number the NDA could never reach despite all manner of compromises and inducements to allies. But the left parties though supporting the UPA government from outside work more as a pressure group and an opposition than as a coalition partner. In fact UPA's foreign policy objectives as contained in its CMP is only the continuation of the goals pursued by the NDA government but still it had to face stiff opposition from within its own coalition and had to fear more from the left partners than from either the BJP or the NDA..

6. UPA gained a high moral ground against the BJP when Mrs. Sonia Gandhi rejected the Prime Ministerial post. She assumes the office of Chairperson of the co-ordination committee of the UPA. Moreover, Man Mohan Singh a person from minority community (Sikh) is leading the government which is healthy for a democracy. The Congress has succeeded in keeping the secular forces united. NDA on the other hand, supported and managed to get Abdul Kalam from the minority to occupy the position of the President which raised NDA credentials as a secular coalition.

7. The NDA however had forcefully pursued the policy of saffronisation of education, research and culture. The UPA which is formed and placed in power in the name of secularism has undertaken many measures to desaffronise these areas. Thus the NDA was regarded as a centre-right coalition and the UPA was regarded as the centre-left coalition.

### **Part V**

Despite all the difficulties faced in running the coalition, it is evident that this experiment with coalition will continue for a long period in the Indian political system as the nature of the polity in the country is centripetal. Today, the compulsion of politics demand that we should try to place in position a healthy two party coalition system. The Common Minimum Programme will remain at the centre to make coalitions a successful experiment.

Coalition experiment in India has led to a remarkable blending of tradition and modernity in Indian society and has allowed various identities to be democratically expressed. India is a plural society which has the legitimate space for multiple visions. India exhibits various levels of pluralism in different walks of life. Thus, coalition system is a natural political process depicting diversity in language, religion, culture etc.

This coalition experiment despite many drawbacks has also shown that pursuance of inclusive politics has always paid rich dividends electorally. Thus, it is perceived that coalitions do not undermine democracy. Moreover, the mandates of Indian electorate in the 14<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha elections have reaffirmed its support to coalition system. So, coalitions are not temporary phenomenon but permanent ones which make one to disagree with Prof. Maheshwari that *“India has entered a transitional phase and that coalitions have become a functional necessity.”*<sup>8</sup>

Since the coalitions have to be accepted as a reality in India there is a need to have a relook into its continuation and plug the loopholes wherever possible to make it more effective and prevent the instability in government. Amendments need to be done in the Indian Constitution to plug the loopholes in the electoral system. Electoral reforms and party reforms require to be initiated to make coalitions more effective and stable. At present, there is a need to provide ground rules for its operation so that stability is maintained. Our parliamentary system has to work effectively with the multi-party system and also the coalition government. Therefore, the parties which join together to form the government must have a common minimum programme and common manifesto *prior* to elections and all the members of the party should agree to abide by it. Major problems should be settled through *consensus* and *agreement*. Moreover, there should be ideological compatibility among the coalition partners. The absence of such compatibility will result in periodic frictions and conflicts among the partners thereby affecting the smooth functioning of the governments.

One more problem in India is that the party coalitions in India always try to expand their base by attracting more parties than required to keep themselves in power which has resulted in reducing the role of an effective opposition. Large sized coalitions are reflective of Indian coalition culture. N.C Sahni rightly remarks as follows *“One of the major effects of coalition politics has been that it has promoted compromise in politics and checked regionalism. It also relieved the government of the restraints and responsibilities which are imposed on the ruling party by the opposition benches under the bi-party system.”*<sup>9</sup>

One of the important challenges of coalition governance that have surfaced in the Indian context is the trend of outside support which has undermined the legislative accountability of parties constituting a coalition. Such parties lack understanding and mature leadership. So, political parties need to redefine and renegotiate their role in the context of coalition politics. Since the coalition system implies the modification of the parliamentary system, the political parties should also develop the capability of separating national issues from state issues. The coalition politics at each level has to involve all parties and all kinds of politics. In this connection, the issue that has to be settled is, whether there should be a pre-electoral alliance or post-electoral alliance. In the pre-electoral alliance, there may be understanding regarding the sharing of seats but the post-electoral alliance is only a marriage of convenience and may break off soon. Today, our party system at the national level could be described as a two party dominant system in a multi-party system, since the Congress and the BJP are the reigning parties leading the allies or partners in sharing power. These two parties need to work out means through which coalitions could remain effective and stable. Whatever solution that is suggested, it is a fact that the coalitions in India are indicative of the pluralistic tendencies in India and Indian politics. The phenomenon of political parties of diverse ideologies and affirmations coming together to share power has been a prominent feature of Indian politics in the last few decades which integrates party system and the nation. Therefore, coalition system needs to be strengthened to make democracy more effective and representative since coalitions are effective in enhancing democratic legitimacy, representativeness and national unity

In conclusion it may be remarked that at present in India, the coalition partners require the spirit of accommodation, understanding and tolerance to make a success of coalition government. This is demonstrated during the last ten years of the working of two models of coalitions headed by a strong ideological party as also the non-ideological party. A definite model of its functioning has developed to retain the stability of the political system. These two models have common features even though both models are unique in their own way. With the blend of these features and with adequate reflection, it is possible to build up a theory of Indian coalition system which could provide answer to the eternal question of operating a democratic structure in a multiple party system like that of India.

## REFERENCES

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**TABLE-1****Lok Sabha Election – 1977 – 1999  
Results for Five Main National Parties**

| <b>Election year</b> | <b>1977</b> | <b>1980</b> | <b>1984</b> | <b>1989</b> | <b>1991</b> | <b>1996</b> | <b>1995</b> | <b>1999</b> |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total No of Seats    | 542         | 529         | 542         | 529         | 529         | 511         | 543         | 543         |
| INC                  | 154         | 353         | 415         | 197         | 227         | 140         | 141         | 114         |
| BJP                  | -           | -           | 02          | 85          | 119         | 162         | 182         | 182         |
| JP/JD                | 298         | 31          | 10          | 143         | 56          | 46          | 06          | 21          |
| CPI(M)               | 22          | 36          | 22          | 33          | 35          | 32          | 32          | 33          |
| CPI                  | 07          | 11          | 06          | 12          | 13          | 12          | 09          | 04          |
| Percentage           | 88.8        | 81.5        | 84.0        | 88.9        | 88.1        | 72.00       | 68.1        | 65.2        |
| Total                | 481         | 431         | 455         | 470         | 450         | 391         | 370         | 354         |

**Source:** Balveer Arora, *Political Parties and the Party system, The Emergence of New Coalition*, December 1999, Memo, 8-9.

**Table 2****BJP and Allies Vs Congress and Allies  
Election Results of 13<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha 1999.**

| <b>BJP and Allies</b> | <b>Seats</b> | <b>Congress and Allies</b> | <b>Seats</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| BJP                   | 182          | Congress                   | 112          |
| BJD                   | 10           | AIADMK                     | 11           |
| DMK                   | 12           | KECM                       | 01           |
| HVC                   | 01           | MUL                        | 02           |
| INLD                  | 05           | RJD                        | 07           |
| ID (U)                | 20           | RLD                        | 20           |
| Lok Tantrik           | 01           | <b>Total</b>               | <b>134</b>   |
| MDMK                  | 01           |                            |              |

|                      |            |              |           |
|----------------------|------------|--------------|-----------|
| MSCP                 | 01         | CPI          | 04        |
| NC                   | 04         | CPI (M)      | 32        |
| PMK                  | 05         | FBL          | 02        |
| SAD                  | 02         | KEC          | 01        |
| SHIV SENA            | 15         | RSP          | 03        |
| TRINMOOL             | 08         | <b>Total</b> | <b>42</b> |
| TDP                  | 29         |              |           |
| INDEPENDENT          | 03         |              |           |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>303</b> |              |           |
| OTHERS- BSP          | 14         |              |           |
| SAMA JWADI           | 26         |              |           |
| Independent & others | 18         |              |           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>         | <b>58</b>  |              |           |

**Source:** Deccan Herald, December 22, 1999. Total seats: 543 . Elections held: 538

**Table 3**  
**BJP's Allies- Old and New**

| <b>Old (Before 1999)</b> | <b>New (After 1999)</b> |                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Shiv Sena – 15           | TDP – 29                |                   |
| Samata – 12              | DMK – 12                |                   |
| BSP – 10                 | JDU – 09                |                   |
| TC – 08                  | INLD – 05               |                   |
| PMK – 05                 | LC – 02                 |                   |
| MDMK -04                 | MGRACADMK – 01          |                   |
| IND – 01                 | MGR – 01                |                   |
| <b>Total 55</b>          | HVC – 01                | <b>Total – 60</b> |

**Table 4**  
**BJP AND ITS ALLIES REPRESENTING STATES**

| State        | BJP       | Allies                 |
|--------------|-----------|------------------------|
| UP           | -         | 3 (UPLC and Ind)       |
| Bihar        | 24        | 17 (JD-U)              |
| Maharashtra  | 13        | 15 (Shiv Sena)         |
| Orissa       | 09        | 10 (BJP)               |
| AP           | 07        | 29 (TDP)               |
| Karnataka    | 07        | 03 (JD-U)              |
| Haryana      | 05        | 05 (UNLD)              |
| Tamil Nadu   | 04        | 22 (DMK)               |
| HP           | 03        | 01 (HVC)               |
| West Bengal  | 02        | 08 (Trinamul Congress) |
| Punjab       | 01        | 02 (SAD)               |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>75</b> | <b>115</b>             |

**Source:** Frontline, 5 November, 1999 for the names of allies of BJP in 1999

**Table-5**

**2004 Lok Sabha Election Results**  
**Allies of NDA, UPA & Others**

| Alliances                           | Party   | Votes      | %    | Change | Seats | Change |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------|------|--------|-------|--------|
| <u>National Democratic Alliance</u> | <u>Bharatiya Janata Party</u>                   | 85,866,593 | 22.2 | -1.5   | 138   | -44    |
|                                     | <u>All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam</u> | 8,547,014  | 2.2  | ?      | 0     | ?      |
|                                     | <u>Janata Dal (United)</u>                      | 9,924,209  | 2.6  | -0.5   | 8     | -11    |
|                                     | <u>Nationalist Trinamool</u>                    | 8,047,771  | 2.1  | -0.5   | 2     | -6     |

|                                      |  |   |            |      |      |     |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|------------|------|------|-----|
|                                      | <u>Congress</u>                                    |   |            |      |      |     |
|                                      | <u>Shiv Sena</u>                                   | 7,056,075                                 | 1.8        | +0.2 | 12   | -3  |
|                                      | <u>Shiromani Akali Dal</u>                         | 3,506,681                                 | 0.9        | +0.2 | 8    | +6  |
|                                      | <u>Biju Janata Dal</u>                             | 5,084,428                                 | 1.3        | +0.1 | 11   | +1  |
|                                      | <u>Nagaland People's Front</u>                     | 715,366                                   | 0.2        | -    | 1    | -   |
|                                      | <u>Mizo National Front</u>                         | 182,864                                   | 0.0        | -    | 1    | -   |
| <u>United Progressive Alliance</u>   | <u>Indian National Congress</u>                    | 103,405,272                               | 26.7       | -1.6 | 145  | +32 |
|                                      | <u>Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam</u>                   | 7,064,393                                 | 1.8        | +0.1 | 16   | +4  |
|                                      | <u>Nationalist Congress Party</u>                  | 6,915,740                                 | 1.8        | -0.5 | 9    | +1  |
|                                      | <u>Rashtriya Janata Dal</u>                        | 8,613,302                                 | 2.2        | -0.5 | 21   | +12 |
|                                      | <u>Lok Jan Shakti Party</u>                        | 2,771,427                                 | 0.6        | ?    | 4    | ?   |
|                                      | <u>Telangana Rashtra Samithi</u>                   | 2,441,405                                 | 0.6        | ?    | 5    | ?   |
|                                      | <u>Pattali Makkal Katchi</u>                       | 2,169,020                                 | 0.5        | -0.1 | 6    | +1  |
|                                      | <u>Jharkhand Mukti Morcha</u>                      | 1,846,843                                 | 0.5        | -    | 5    | -   |
|                                      | <u>Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam</u>      | 1,679,870                                 | 0.4        | 0.0  | 4    | -   |
|                                      | <u>Indian Union Muslim League</u>                  | 770,098                                   | 0.2        | 0.0  | 1    | +1  |
|                                      | <u>Republican Party of India (Athvale)</u>         | 367,510                                   | 0.1        | ?    | 1    | ?   |
|                                      | <u>Jammu and Kashmir People's Democratic Party</u> | 267,457                                   | 0.0        | -    | 1    | -   |
|                                      | <u>Left Front</u>                                  | <u>Communist Party of India (Marxist)</u> | 22,061,677 | 5.7  | +0.3 | 43  |
| <u>Communist Party of India</u>      |  | 5,434,738                                 | 1.4        | -0.1 | 10   | +6  |
| <u>Revolutionary Socialist Party</u> |  | 1,717,228                                 | 0.4        | 0.0  | 3    | -   |
| <u>All India Forward Bloc</u>        |  | 1,365,055                                 | 0.2        | ?    | 3    | ?   |
| Others                               | <u>Bahujan Samaj Party</u>                         | 20,713,468                                | 5.3        | +1.1 | 19   | +5  |
|                                      | <u>Samajwadi Party</u>                             | 16,645,356                                | 4.3        | +0.5 | 36   | +10 |

|  |   |                    |     |      |            |     |
|--|---|--------------------|-----|------|------------|-----|
|  | <u>Telugu Desam Party</u>                     | 11,844,811         | 3.0 | -0.6 | 5          | -24 |
|  | <u>Janata Dal (Secular)</u>                   | 5,732,296          | 1.5 | +0.6 | 3          | +2  |
|  | <u>Rashtriya Lok Dal</u>                      | 2,463,607          | 0.6 | ?    | 3          | ?   |
|  | <u>Asom Gana Parishad</u>                     | 2,069,610          | 0.5 | -    | 2          | -   |
|  | <u>Jammu and Kashmir National Conference</u>  | 493,067            | 0.1 | 0.0  | 2          | -2  |
|  | <u>All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen</u> |                    | 0.1 | ?    | 1          | ?   |
|  | <u>Kerala Congress</u>                        | 353,529            | 0.1 | 0.0  | 1          | -   |
|  | <u>Sikkim Democratic Front</u>                | 153,409            | 0.0 | 0.0  | 1          | -   |
|  | <u>National Loktantrik Party</u>              | 367,049            | 0.1 | ?    | 1          |     |
|  | <u>Samajwadi Janata Party (Rashtriya)</u>     | 337,386            | 0.1 | ?    | 1          |     |
|  | <u>Indian Federal Democratic Party</u>        | 256,411            | 0.1 | ?    | 1          |     |
|  | <u>Bharatiya Navshakti Party</u>              | 171,080            | 0.1 | ?    | 1          |     |
| Independents                                 |   |                    | -   | 5    | -          |     |
| <b>Total</b>                                 |   | <b>387,453,223</b> | -   | -    | <b>543</b> | -   |
| <i>Source: Election Commission of India.</i> |   |                    |     |      |            |     |