



PROS AND CONS OF COALITION POLITICS IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT :

India is a federal Country. It follows the dual polity system, i.e. a double government (federal in nature) that consists of the Central authority at the Centre and States at the periphery. There are two types of political parties in India-National party and regional party. Comparing with other democratic countries, India has a large number of political parties. It has been estimated that over 200 political parties were formed after India became independent in 1947. Coalition government is usually organized when no party is in a position to get a majority in the parliament, and some parties form a coalition group or an alliance for forming a government. A coalition government is a cabinet of a Parliamentary government in which several parties cooperate. The present paper discusses the pros and cons of Coalition politics in India in the context of the era of coalition government.

KEYWORDS : India-National party and regional party , federal Country.

INTRODUCTION

Coalition government is more democratic and hence fairer, because it represents a much broader spectrum of public opinion than government by one party alone. In almost all coalitions, a majority of citizens vote for the parties which form the government and so their views and interests are represented in political decision making. Indian politicians have figured out that coalition politics can not only be played out but also played with and lately, that is what all of them are doing.

Coalitions provide good government because their decisions are made in the interest of a majority of the people. Because a wide consensus of opinion is involved, any policy will be debated thoroughly within the government before it is implemented. Single-party government is much more likely to impose badly thought-out policies upon parliament and people perhaps for narrow ideological reasons. Coalition government is part and parcel of federal structure of politics. A coalition government is a cabinet of a Parliamentary government in which several parties cooperate.

The usual reason given for this arrangement is that no party on its own can achieve a majority in the



Parliament. A coalition government might also be created in a time of national difficulty or crisis, for example during wartime to give a government the high degree of perceived political legitimacy it desires whilst also playing a role in diminishing internal political strife. In such times, parties form all-party coalition (national unity governments, grand coalition). If a coalition collapses confidence vote is held or a motion of no confidence is taken.

Conceptual Issues of Coalition Government:

A coalition government consists of two or more parties which must compromise on principles and share a mandate. This mostly occurs when single party becomes unable to gain a majority of seats in parliament. Coalitions are mostly formed through elections but coalition governments can also occur in times of national difficulties.

A coalition is an alliance of parties formed for the purpose of contesting elections jointly and/or forming a government and managing the governance by a process of seat sharing. So coalition implies co-operation between political parties and co-operation may take place at one of three different levels: Electoral, Parliamentary and Governmental.

Electoral: In which contest for election is done by coalition of two or more parties to fight against a common enemy. This may range from electoral alliance between parties at the National level to a mere understanding at the constituency level.

Parliamentary: This coalition occurs when no single party gains a majority and the party asked to form the government refers to rule as a minority Government on an agreement or an understanding with another external support.

Governmental: The Governmental coalition is an e-power sharing coalition and it occurs when two or more parties, none of which is able to win a majority of its own, combine to form a majority government.

A coalition government is one in which several political parties must cooperate in order to run a Country or region. A coalition government is often considered a very weak form of government because, there is no majority party. In such cases, the only way policy gets approved is by making concessions, hence the forming of a coalition.

The term coalition is derived from the Latin word 'coalition, meaning to go or grow together. Thus it means an act of coalescing or uniting into one body or alliance. It indicates the combination of a number of bodies or parts into one body or whole. In the political sense it is used to indicate an alliance or temporary union between various political groups for the exercise or control of political power. Prof. Ogg defines coalition in the encyclopedia of social sciences, as "Co-operative arrangements under which distinct political parties or at all events members of such parties unite to form a government or Ministry." Thus, it can be said that result of exigencies of competitive multi-party system in a Parliamentary democracy is coalition. It is a phenomenon where more than two political parties come together to form a government sinking their basic ideological differences in the event of the inability of any single party to command a workable majority in the lower house of the legislature.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER:

The major important objectives of the paper are as follows;

1. To understand the working of coalition government.
2. To know the pros and cons of coalition government.
3. To make the suggestions to improving the working of coalition governments.

METHODOLOGY:

The present paper is based on secondary data, collected from the books, journals, magazines, government reports, census reports. It employs the descriptive as well as analytical methods of research.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS:

Coalition government is the order of the day. The present political turmoil called as coalition conflict. The present paper discusses the pros and cons of coalition government in Indian Scenario. It will give primary and prime knowledge of coalition governments. And it examines the importance and impact of coalition governments on the developments of Nation. Further it analyzes the myth and realities of coalition governments in India.

REASONS FOR FORMATION OF COALITION GOVERNMENT:

In India the coalition governments have mainly been the result of multi-party system. As sometimes no single political party is able to muster clear-cut majority in the Legislative Assembly the parties are obliged to seek support and co-operation of other groups to form the government. Sometimes coalitions are also formed before the elections and a number of political parties chalk out an agreed programme and contest election on the basis of the programme from a common platform. This type of arrangement has an obvious advantage in so far as it smoothens the radicalism of the parties joining the coalition without in any way effecting image.

Generally the coalitions are formed on account of one of the following three reasons;

1. No single political party is able to secure a working majority in the popular house on account of the presence of multiparty system. Under the circumstances a number of likeminded political parties form the coalition to provide workable majority and run the government. France provides a typical example of this type of coalition.
2. Secondly, in a bi-party system a deadlock may be created due to even balance between two political parties. This may lead to one of the two parties allying itself with a minor group such as neutrals or defectors to get the majority in its favour.
3. Thirdly, a coalition may be necessitated crisis when the previous political groups may suspend their political strife and collaborate in the general cause of protecting and promoting their national interests. In Britain coalition government was formed to deal with the abnormal conditions during the First World War. The various political parties sunk their differences to give a united fight to the enemies of Britain.

ADVANTAGES OF COALITION GOVERNMENT:

Coalitions are invaluable in democracy because they create structures for organizations and individuals to share ownership of common goals. Democracy work can be strengthened considerably through the use of coalitions. However, there are both advantages and disadvantages to forming or joining a coalition

One of the main advantages of a coalition government is that due to having to share a mandate, this leads to broader representation, as the two parties have to compromise on their opposing ideologies in order to create policies that result in legislation. Greater policy scrutiny is also prominent in coalition governments which could prove beneficial for the electorate as this should in theory benefit a larger proportion of individuals than a single party government as the two opposing parties reflect a boarder spectrum of voters.

The disadvantages of single party majority leadership is that the Government of the time being confident of its own strength allows the laws it frames a passage through parliament and these are made functional with insufficient debate, majority having already consented to the 'leaders' views. Coalition politics overcomes this defect by having to reconcile a much wider public opinion, both in terms of policy and geography, as reflected in the covenants of different parties coming together to provide the government of the country. Some of the advantages of coalition governments are as follows.

1. Helps develop new leadership skills amongst number.
2. Provides, peer support and encouragement.
3. Brings together a diverse range of people and organization.
4. Reduces duplication of effort and resources.
5. Assists in individual and organizational network.
6. Facilitates exchange of information and skills.
7. Enhances the credibility and influence.
8. Enlarges the 'we' feeling among the member.
9. Provides safety for democracy efforts and protection for member.

DISADVANTAGES OF COALITION GOVERNMENT:

Conflict within governance due to conflicting ideologies of the two parties, can make a government fractious, whilst also weakening government. If parties are at a standstill on certain topics and cannot come to quick conclusions, they will not be able to work together. Their continued disagreements will slow down the power of the government.

The biggest disadvantage of a coalition government is that the end product depicted is very unstable and vulnerable as the core element of the coalition has to keep up with all the promises made to its partners and do the impossible-make everyone happy with the flatter offered to him or her. By doing so the government has to sacrifice on various key policies and important programmes. A succession of undisciplined activities, horse-trading events and defections take place which lowers the public morality, all just to serve to each party's narrow political interests. Some of the important disadvantages of coalition are as follows;

1. Difficult to agree common objections.
2. Forming and managing a coalition can be a very time consuming process.
3. May be dominated by one powerful organization.
4. May require to compromise position and prestige.
5. Power is not always distributed, equally among the members.
6. Decision-making can be slow.
7. Coalition activities can be difficult to monitor and evaluate.
8. If the coalition process breaks down it can harm every one's advocacy by damaging members' credibility.

All these disadvantages can be overcome and there are no reasons not to get more involved in coalition.

COALITION GOVERNMENT: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Coalition government has also been criticized for sustaining a consensus on issues when disagreement and the consequent discussion would be more fruitful. To form a consensus, the leaders of ruling coalition parties can agree to silence their disagreement on an issue to unify the coalition against the opposition. The coalition partners, if they control the parliamentary majority, can collude to make the parliamentary discussion on the issue irrelevant by consistently disregarding the arguments of the opposition and voting against the opposition's proposals-even if there is disagreement within the ruling parties about the issue.

Conflict within governance due to conflicting ideologies of the two parties, can make a government fractions whilst also weakening the government. If parties are at a standstill on certain topics and cannot come to quick conclusions, they will not be able to work together. This will affect the powerful government. The continued disagreement will slow down the government. Politics in India may not yet to be the last resort of the dishonest and the corrupt, yet it cannot anymore boast of the qualities people associate with public service. Today, it is nothing more than a means to gain and exercise power. The politician at the time of independence had raised politics to a high level of moral idealism, setting aside personal and sectarian interests in favour of the common good. They sought power for the people, for the nation, and not for the individual.

Today, personal power and personal ambition have become the keywords in political vocabulary of the politicians. The public and the nation's interests have been replaced by personal and sectarian interests. This has disastrous consequences for the actual conduct of the polity.

Coalition provides bad government because the parties involved will be is unable to take a long term view. Sometimes an ideological compass is necessary for governments to navigate in difficult political and economic waters, and coalitions lack such a unifying philosophy. In addition planning for the long-term often requires decisions to be made that are unpopular in the short term. Coalitions often fail such tests because temporary unpopularity may encourage one of the parties involved to defect, in search of a populist advantage.

Coalition government is actually less democratic as the balance of power is inevitably held by the small parties who can barter their support for concession from the main groups within the coalition. This means that a party within little popular support is able to impose its policies upon the majority by a process of political black mail.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

It is true that the Indians did not have a very good experience with coalition Government experiments. But the coalition government in India is here to stay. In the light of above mentioned impact of coalition government on Centre-State relations. I would like to suggest few reforms for the proper regulation of the coalition form of Government.

1. The Coalition Government must be made legitimate. A broad based programme as suggested by second reforms commission must be adopted so that Socio-Economic development of the Country is met.
2. The Governor's office must be made free from the clutches of the political parties and reforms must be brought about for the same in order to maintain the sanctity of the office of the Governor.
3. Political parties must sink their ideological difference among the members.
4. Political parties must adopt Common Minimum Programmes (CMP) for welfare of people.
5. Coalition government must form coordination committee.

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

A coalition with a common manifesto without any threat from any sides, working with a common goal is a dream of today and tomorrow. National parties often tend to exploit the weaker regional parties as they have had less action in the scene before.

Thus, in the end it can be said that though the coalition form of the government provides an opportunity to different socio-cultural and economic parties to participate in the Governance of the Nation, it brings about a lot of tussle between the centre and state. The regional parties at the centre attempt to articulate and aggregate regional interests' irrespective interest of National which in turn affects the overall development of the Nation. Also the most important office which is necessary for the proper maintenance of Centre-State relations that is the office of the Governor is also politicized in order to maintain the stability of the coalition government. Coalition arrangements, as these elections and those conducted since the 1990's have demonstrated time and again, have come to stay in the Indian political scenario.

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