



Emergence of coalition politics in India

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Abstract

The dynamics of party system has led to the conversion of one party Dominance System of India into a Bi-Polar Multi-Party system due to the Regionalization of Indian politics. This brief paper is a modest attempt to describe and analyses the dynamics of the party system in India. The broad objective is to identify the factors and forces that have been bringing about the changes in its nature.

Keywords: coalition, dominant party, alternative, typology

Introduction

The observation that India has acquired a new and distinguishing feature of coalition politics is only partially true. In fact, the trend of coalition governments in our country has assumed the importance of not only being a possibility but also a reality after 1960 as the first coalition ministry was formed in Kerala in that very year. The coalitions are products of the pluralist nature of politics in a parliamentary democracy.

Before examining the nature of the coalition politics in India, it is desirable to understand its meaning. It means 'to go or to grow together.' In the political sense, the term coalition is used for an alliance or temporary union between various political groups for the exercise or control of political power.

This paper is divided into four sections-the first deals with the party system which leads to coalition politics or coalition government. The second is about the typology of coalition at centre and state level. The third highlights suggestions for stable coalitions.

Being a student of Ancient Indian Political Thought, I would also like to analyse the present Coalition system in the light of Kautilya's Mandala Theory with a little bit of modifications in this paper. In India, the Coalition Governments have mainly been the result of Multi-Party System. We witnessed "One Dominant Party" rule of the Congress at the centre and in all the states except Orissa and Kerala till 1967. Despite the split in the Congress in 1969, the single party rule remained intact at the centre till 1977 when the Janata Party-led Coalition Government came to power. But the Single Party Government of the Congress was voted to power in the 1980 and 1984 elections. The National Front Coalition Government was formed after the 1989 elections. However, the Congress again formed a Single Party Government in 1991. Since the 1996 elections, there have been Coalition Governments at the centre.

However, the Coalition Government have been in power in many states from 1967 to 1970, 1977 to 1980 and in the post-1989 period. This leads us to developing the following

typology of the coalitions that have emerged in India at the centre and in states.

1. Pre-election coalitions and post - election coalitions:

The NDA Coalition (1999-2004) was a Pre-Election Coalition, the UPA Coalition (2004 -2009) was a Post-Election Coalition because the Left Front extended support to it after the elections. After the withdrawal of support by the Left Front, support was given to it by the Samajwadi Party.

2. Majority coalitions and minority coalitions:

The NDA Coalition was a majority coalition as the main party had a majority of its own, the UPA Coalition was a Minority Coalition because it depended upon the support of Left Front.

3. Stable coalitions and unstable coalitions:

The NDA Coalition was a stable coalition and it continued till the Lok Sabha was dissolved. But the UPA Coalition had become an unstable due to day to day threat of the Left Front.

4. Limited coalitions and broad coalitions:

The Akali Dal-BJP Coalition in Punjab is a limited coalition as it has only two parties. The NDA and UPA Coalitions are Broad Coalitions because these comprised a hub of a large number of parties.

5. Ideological and non-ideological coalitions:

The Left Front Governments in West Bengal and Kerala are Ideological Coalitions having parties upholding the ideology of communism, the other coalitions have parties with conflicting ideologies and hence are Non-Ideological Coalitions just like the present central government.

Conclusion

Now question arises what should be done for ensuring Stable Coalitions? It may be submitted that Pre-Election Coalitions, the Limited and Ideological Coalitions are necessary for the success of the coalition.

I agree with M.P. Singh's view when he says that the post-1989 Indian party system can follow the model of Kautilya's

theory of Mandala, consisting of a series of concentric circles of friendly allies (Mitra) and unfriendly adversaries. This theory is actually a theory of inter-state relations aimed at conquering the entire Indian subcontinent in the antiquity. However, with suitable modifications, it can, be used for creating stable coalitions. Secondly, the stability of coalitions depends upon the quality of its leaders. Jyoti Basu and Atal Bihari Vajpayee were such leaders, who provided stable coalitions. Thirdly, coalitions can succeed if there is consensus on basic issues and agreement on common minimum program. Fourthly, effective co-ordination mechanism can ensure stability. Fifthly, the success of coalition depends upon the. Coalitional culture in the parties. Last but not the least the "Coalition Dharma" is essential for the success of a coalition.

There is no alternative to the compulsive reality of coalitions. Therefore the above steps must be taken to ensure more stable, more moderate, more distinct and more mature Coalition Governments at the centre and in states.

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