

Coalition Government

Why in news?

Recently, Coalition politics has made a comeback at the national stage after 10 years of a de facto one-party rule.

What is a coalition government?

- **Coalition** - The term 'coalition' is derived from the Latin word '*coalitio-*' which means '*to grow together*'.
- Thus, technically, coalition means the act of uniting parts into one body or whole.
- Politically, coalition means an alliance of distinct political parties.
- **Coalition government** - When several political parties join hands to form a government and exercise political power on the basis of a common agreed programme or agenda.
- **Basis of coalition** - It is a direct descendant of the exigencies of multi-party system in a democratic set-up.
- It is a *phenomenon of a multi-party government* where a number of minority parties join hands for the purpose of running the government.
- **Forms of alliance** - It can be formed in two ways
 - Pre-poll alliance
 - Post-election alliance
- **Power Sharing** - Power is distributed among the coalition partners, with key positions such as the Prime Minister or Chief Minister and various ministerial roles shared according to pre-agreed terms.
- **Features** - Coalitions are formed for the *sake of some reward, material or psychic*.
- It implies the existence of *at least two partners*.
- The underlying principle of a coalition system stands on the simple fact of *temporary conjunction of specific interest*.
- It is not a static but *a dynamic affair* as coalition players and groups dissolve and form new ones.
- The keynote of coalition politics is *compromise*, and rigid dogma has no place in it.
- A coalition government works on the *basis of a minimum programme*, which may not be ideal for each partner of the coalition.
- *Pragmatism* and not ideology is the hallmark of coalition politics.
- The purpose of coalition adjustment is *to seize power*.

	<i>Majoritarian democracy</i>	<i>Consensus democracy</i>
1. <i>Executive</i>	Concentration of power in one-party and bare-majority cabinet	Power-sharing in broad coalition cabinet
2. <i>Relations between government and parliament</i>	Cabinet dominance	Balance of power
3. <i>Political parties</i>	Two-party system	Multi-party system
4. <i>Electoral system</i>	Majoritarian and disproportional	Proportional representation
5. <i>System of interest groups influence</i>	Pluralism	Corporatism
6. <i>Government structure</i>	Unitary and centralised	Federal and decentralised
7. <i>Parliament</i>	Concentration of legislative power in unicameral legislature	Strong bicameralism
8. <i>Type of Constitution</i>	Flexibility, simple procedure of amendment or unwritten constitution	Rigidity, complex procedure of amendment
9. <i>Judicial review</i>	Absent or weak	Strong
10. <i>Central bank</i>	Controlled by executive	High degree of autonomy

What are factors for emergence of coalition government in India?

- **Decline of single-party dominance** - The decline of the Indian National Congress's dominance in the late 1960s and 1970s led to a *more fragmented political landscape*, requiring coalition arrangements to form governments.
- **Rise of regional parties** - The emergence of strong regional parties with significant voter bases contributed to the fragmentation of national parties, making coalition necessary to achieve a majority.
- **Diverse electorate** - India's diverse electorate, with varying regional, linguistic, and cultural interests, led to the formation of coalitions to address the interests of different groups and regions.
- **Internal party fragmentation** - Fragmentation within major parties, often results in the formation of splinter groups that align with others to form a coalition.
- **Strategic political alliance** - Strategic alliances between parties, either *to counter common rivals* or to leverage shared interests, have led to the formation of coalition governments.
- **Post-Emergency political landscape** - After the Emergency period (1975-1977), there was a push for more inclusive and representative governance, leading to the rise of coalition politics as a way to reflect a broader spectrum of political views.
- **Electoral system** - At times, the first-past-the-post electoral system may ensure that no single party wins an outright majority thus prompting for coalition partnerships.

HISTORY OF COALITION GOVERNMENT

PERIOD	COALITION	PRIME MINISTER	PARTY IN SUPPORT
1977-1979	JANTA PARTY	MORARJI DESAI	CONGRESS PARTY (O)
1979-1980	JANTA PARTY	CHARAN SINGH	JANTA (S)
1989-1990	NATIONAL FRONT	V P SINGH	JANTA DAL
1990-1991	SAMAJWADI JANTA PARTY	CHANDRA SHEKAR	JANTA DAL (S)
1996-1997	UNITED FRONT	H.D DEVEGOWDA	JANTA DAL
1997-1998	UNITED FRONT	I.K GUJRAL	JANTA DAL
1998-1999	BJP-LED COALITION	A.B VAJPAYEE	B.J.P
1999-2004	NDA	A.B VAJPAYEE	BJP
2004-2009	UPA-I	MANMOHAN SINGH	CONGRESS
2009-2014	UPA-II	MANMOHAN SINGH	CONGRESS
2014-2019	NDA	Narendra Modi	BJP
2019-2024	NDA	Narendra Modi	BJP
2024-current	NDA	Narendra Modi	BJP

What are the implications of coalition government?

Coalition Government	
Merits	Demerits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse and <i>inclusive government</i>. • Strengthens centre-state relations and <i>federalism</i>. • Promotes <i>deliberations and discussion</i> in decision making. • Develops unified agendas and ensure more <i>balanced policy making</i>. • Regional and minorities parties <i>can have a say</i>. • It can <i>enhance accountability</i> by ensuring that different viewpoints and interests are represented and scrutinized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding multiple parties together are prone to <i>unstable government</i>. • Competing interests and agendas can <i>affect national aspirations</i>. • Shifting political alliances can <i>impact policy decisions</i>. • Negotiations can lead to <i>delayed decision making</i> process. • Reconciling to different parties can result in <i>policy gridlock</i>. • It can sometimes <i>dilute the core ideologies</i> of participating parties.

Reference

[The Indian Express| Coalition Government in India](#)