

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](#)