CHAPTER-5
Working and Achievements of National Democratic Alliance

National Democratic Alliance was first formed in 1998 and again came to power in 1999 under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The NDA was an alliance of various national and regional political parties led by the BJP. The NDA promised to end political instability created between 1996, 1998 and 1999 elections. Its common manifesto in the 1999 elections was an agenda for a proud and prosperous India.

The NDA Government was the first national coalition government in India to complete a full, five year term in office. The ability of the 24 party NDA to govern the whole term is one of the most remarkable contemporary events in the history of post independence politics in India. In the 1999 NDA government came in Centre with its alliance and worked upto 13 May, 2004. This chapter has been divided into three parts. First part deals with working of NDA, second part is regarding performance of NDA and the third part discusses its achievements.

WORKING OF NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE

The NDA was not dependent on outside support of any political party to carry out its programme. It was at the mercy of smaller allies within the coalition and therefore, its internal coordination mechanism had to be strong. The alliance put in place the most extensive and elaborates

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1 The 24 members of the NDA coalition included 22 formal members of the alliance and two parties that supported the NDA from outside. The formal members of the NDA included the BJP, Indian National Lok Dal, National Conference, Shiromani Akali Dal, Shiv Sena, Sikkim Democratic Front, Biju Janta Dal, Lok Jana Shakti Party, Rashtriya Lok Dal, Akhil Bhartiya Laktantrik Congress, Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Pattali Makkal Katchi, Tamizhaga Rajiv Congress, Manipur State Congress Party, Kerala Congress (Mani), Janata Dal (United), Samata Party, Anna MGR, Indian Federal Democratic Party, Janata Party. The Parliamentary parties that supported the NDA alliance from the outside were the Telugu Desam Party and the All Indian Trinamool Congress the latter later joined the Government.
mechanism to coordinate between partners within and outside the
government. The NDA had a two dimensional coordination mechanism,
which was not restricted merely to the political sphere alone but also
included inter-ministerial collaboration. In the political sphere, it formed
the National Agenda for Governance (NAG) and the Coordination
Committee (CC) besides this, the alliance began to use extensively the all-
party meetings and Chief Minister’s conferences for consultation. At the
governmental level it used the device of Group of Ministers (GOM) not
only for administrative reasons and formulation of policy matters but also
to settle the issues of political significance. The working of NDA coalition
can be studied under two main heads maintenance of coalition and
breakdown of coalition’s government. Maintenance of coalition has been
described at four levels (1) National agenda for governance (2)
Coordination committee (3) All party meetings (4) Government level-
group of ministers.

**Level One: National Agenda for Governance**

The National Agenda for Governance (NAG) like the Common
Minimum Programmes (CMP) of the UF formed the first base on which the
alliance revolved.\(^2\) The NAG was more important for the NDA, as it
reflected a commitment from the main alliance partner, the BJP to adhere
to a moderate agenda not confirming to religious programme only. This
commitment removed the untouchability tag that BJP carried and enabled
the allies to join hands with the party to form the alliance. Thus the NAG
continued to be an important part of daily political discourse and crucial
torchbearer for the alliance unlike the CMP which appeared to have been
ignored after its publication.

Unlike the CMP, the NAG did not go into the details of the
programmes and policies. The NDA alliance sought to go beyond the CMP
\(^2\) The salient points of the NAG are highlighted in Appendix 5.1

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at least as far as the name was concerned as they felt that the word minimum had a negative connotation. The importance to centre-state relations in both the documents reflected the role of the regional and state based parties. The NAG was updated by the alliance before the 1999 General Elections when new allies joined it. It was the basic document on which the alliance went to polls. The NDA was the most complete and perfect alliance as it was largely a pre-election coalition that went to the polls on a common platform.

**Level Two: Coordination Committee**

At the second level, the NDA had a Coordination Committee (CC). Unlike the Steering Committee of the UF, the CC met more regularly and frequently. Considering the fact that the smaller parties held the key to the stability of the alliance, the CC played a key role in the maintenance of the alliance. The CC made it a point to meet before each parliamentary session to ensure floor coordination among the allies. A complete list of the meetings of the NDA, as reported in the media, is given in Appendix 5.2 of this study.

Under the NDA alliance, the role of the CC stood out on three issues particularly that threatened to derail the government. These include the Tehelka Portal Expose, Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), and the Ayodhya and Gujarat crises. In all the three cases, the alliance was able to skillfully handle the situation in its favour. These issues have not been elaborated as each of these could form an independent chapter in itself. What is important from the point of this study is the number of times the CC met on the above issues. This clearly highlights the fact that the floor managers of the NDA were skillful enough to keep the allies together. On each of these issues the government was able to get a sufficient number of allies behind it to defeat the motions of the opposition.

At the same time, the allies too used the CC to press their demands.
Similar to the UF government, the NDA alliance too faced criticism over hike in the price of goods like fertilizers, oil, gas, sugar, rice and wheat.\textsuperscript{3} It was under pressure from the allies that the government first constituted a Group of Ministers (GoM) and then called a Conference of Chief Ministers to review the price situation.\textsuperscript{4} Though the government did not always bother to the pressures of the allies on the price hike issue, the allies did manage to create sufficient noise for the government to take note.

Unlike the UF where the coordination mechanism was restricted to the national level the NDA’s alliance structure extended this mechanism down to the state level wherever possible. The Congress units resented the support given by the party to the UF alliance and it was the problems at the state level that caused the initial rift between the two. In NDA, primarily an electoral and inter-electoral alliance, coordination mechanisms were set up at the state levels. The dominant partner at the state level headed the alliance. This arrangement not only enabled a better understanding between the different partners of the alliance but also helped balancing the relationship to a large extent. At the same time this federal coordination pattern enabled the partners to split their relations and maintain the partnership at only one level without harming the whole alliance as such.

The relationship with the Congress was the focus of attention in the coordination mechanisms of the UF. In the NDA, on the other hand, maintenance of coherence within the alliance was more critical. While the NAG provided a broad framework for the functioning of the alliance, it was inadequate to the task of creating an understanding between the partners themselves for the purpose of day-to-day functioning of the alliance. The NDA’s refining mechanisms of coalition maintenance went a step ahead of the UF in putting down a framework to regulate the internal

\textsuperscript{3} There were agitations for reduction in APM goods in 2000, and 2001.
\textsuperscript{4} In the latter half of 1998 the prices of most essential commodities has shot up.
functioning of the partnership. For this purpose, at one of the earliest meetings of the NDA, most of the partners in the alliance barring the AIADMK and the TCP issued a joint declaration which laid down the tenets of a dharma of coalition.

The primary purpose of this declaration was to rectify certain failures and lapses that have weekend the image and efficacy of the coalition government. This agreement recognized that the strength of the government was possible only if there was internal cohesiveness and singularity of purpose. If there were differences among the coalition partners these differences could be resolved in the spirit of internal democracy and by following the tenets of coalition dharma. This new agreement between the allies was an attempt to induce coherence and strengthen the alliance from within. If the NAG had more importance for the BJP, the dharma doctrine was intended for the allies also. Thus, the NDA has given the new heights to the coalition politics in India but the internal bickering had definitely downgraded the prestige or confidence of the ruling alliance. The coalition dharma doctrine did little to control the unsatisfied fraternal organizations of the BJP. After one such bout of indiscipline where the Prime Minister was targeted, it was decided that a

5 Joint Statement issued after the Coordination Committee meeting held on February 2, 1999. The full text of this document has been reproduced in Appendix 5.3 of this study. This joint statement was intended not only for the numerous partners in the alliance but also the support groups and organisations of the partners. This was brought out in the context of the fact that some of the allies like the AIADMK and the TCP had been going public with their problems and demands and this was giving the opponents the wherewithal to embarrass the government. Secondly, it was also addressed to group like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal, sister organizations of the main alliance partner the BJP. The activities of these organisations especially in Gujarat and Orissa (attack on Christian minorities in Dangs district of Gujarat and the murder of the Australian missionary Graham Staines in Manoharpur in Orrisa) had also caused serious problems for the government. The allies at the coordination Committee meeting had specifically criticised the BJP for failing to rein in these organisations and also accused it of deviating from the NAG. This declaration was therefore intended to be a guide for both the alliance partner within the NDA and also the sister concerns of the partners. It basically urged the members not to air differences on policies and programmes publicly and sought to make them conscious to the fact the coalition government was a government of each of the partners also. The agreement recognised that this behaviour was not conducive to the process of effective governance and had given the Congress and other opposition parties a chance to attach, and defame, and attempt to destabilise the government.
code of conduct would be established. This was basically an attempt to elaborate and lay down the clear-cut rules of conduct for coalition partners. It was, therefore, in many ways, an extension of the coalition dharma doctrine. However, unlike the previous episodes, considering that the government was comfortable and confident with regard to its numbers in parliament, the message this time was that those who did not agree with the decisions of the government of which they were a part could go. At the meeting of coordination committee, it was resolved to formulate a code of conduct applicable to all parties who were members of the alliance to ensure adherence by all to the canons of coalition politics. The resolution once again reiterated the fact that they would not allow the opposition to increase difficulties within the NDA.

This attempt to lay down the new rules of coalition politics was also a reaction to the attempted re-entry of some of the allies who had deserted the coalition during the state Legislative Assembly elections namely the PMK and the TCP. The BJP president Jana Krishnamurthy remarked that the NDA is not a railway compartment with passengers going in and out at every station. It was decided that those who re-join the NDA would not be immediately inducted into the ministry. There would be a cool off period before they could be considered. Though this logic was not formally laid down, it was definitely followed in practice. The PMK was re-inducted

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6 Some of the allies especially the Shive Sena had been making allegations against the Prime Minister, his family and the PMO. Besides this the fraternal organisations of the BJP too had been hurling allegations at the PMO with the hope to derail the economic reforms programme. The Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Nirupam had made some comments connecting the PMO with the Unit Trust of India (UTI) muddle in a debate in the Rajya Sabha. The Prime Minister offered to resign the next day and this set the cat among the pigeons within the coalition. An emergency meeting of the Coordination Committee was called and the Prime Minister is reported to have told those who cannot maintain discipline could go. Later taking to reporters the convenor of the front George Fernandes reiterated that those in the government should not criticise the government decisions ‘and if they do they are free to go’. *The Hindu*, August 2, 2001.

7 The Committee that was to draw up the code of conduct comprised of Sikender Bukht (BJP), Mursoli Maran (DMK), Arjun Charan Sethi (BJD), and George Fernandes (SAP). *The Tribune*, Chandigarh, August 2, 2001.

8 Neena Vyas, “A Revolving Door Called the NDA”, *The Hindu*, September 2, 2001
into the ministry only in 2002 though it had returned to the NDA fold in August, 2001.

In April, 2003 Shiv Sena -BJP alliance in Maharashtra, which was in nineteenth year of existence decided to evolve a code of conduct for all levels. It was also decided that interparty differences must not be taken into the public domain and all outstanding issues should be settled amicably between the partners. This recognition and use of a code of conduct is another indicator of the immense learning capacity of the BJP. The Shiv Sena, had been one of the critic of the NDA, had been a cause of embarrassment to the alliance on numerous occasions.

Almost all the members were part of the NDA, the coordination mechanism for contact with external supporters was not so important for the alliance. Like the UF experience, it was managed primarily through direct relations between the top leadership. These relations were managed through direct contact either through the Prime Minister or the convener of the CC. The NDA, unlike the UF, consciously attempted to keep off inter-party matters from the agenda of the NDA at the national level. As the alliance had the coordination mechanism at the state level too, state level problems were sorted out at that level and were not allowed to go at the national level. Thus the Manipur crisis, for example, between the BJP and the SAP was not discussed as a matter of the NDA but purely as an inter-party issue between the two parties. Similar problems in Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu between the alliance partners have not affected the relations at

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10 BJP MLA’s in the Manipur Legislative Assembly voted against the R.B. Koirjam led SAP government despite a whip being issued by the party. This led to the fall of the government and then subsequently to President’s rule and later elections. The BJP MLA’s at one stage contemplated forming a government. Defection politics in Manipur had benefited the two parties to a great extent. Both the parties did not have any ground level support and had reached the stage where they were in position to form a government or vote down one primarily through defections from the Congress and the MSCP. The Samata was quite unhappy that the BJP had ‘betrayed’ it despite it being one of its most loyal allies. The NDA meeting that was held on the same day ‘did not discuss the Manipur developments according to Jaswant Singh who briefed the press after the meeting. He also added that the issue was an ‘internal matter between the BJP and the SAP’ and that the no one from the BJP would stake claim to form the government. Source: The Hindu, May 22, 2001; The Economic Times, New Delhi, May 21, 23, 2001.
the national level. The peaceful manner in which the parties disposed off the matter without a threat to the alliance was the result of the specific understanding within the NDA of separating the different levels.

A coalition is not a merger of parties. Parties to a coalition do not give up their individual identities and programmes while adhering to the common programme or goals. This became clear during the Gujarat crisis in 2002. The BJP claimed that Gujarat was outside the NDA agenda and the tenets of the coalition did not extend to the state.

Thus, we see that newer mechanisms have evolved as the practice of coalition politics established itself. Secondly, as alliances are assured of having the numbers behind them and are not dependent on any single group for its support they become bolder and tighten the rules of coalition politics and do not necessarily yield to the demands and ranting cries of the partners.

**Level Three: All Party Meetings**

The NDA coalition made extensive use of the all-party meeting mechanism as a means of coordination. The all-party meeting took into account the concerns not only the supporting parties but also the entire political spectrum represented in and sometimes outside parliament. The institution of all-party meetings brings together all political parties on a

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11 In may 2002, in Jharkhand, the issue of nomination to the Rajya Sabha caused friction between the Samata Party (SAP) and the BJP. A Rajya Sabha seat had fallen vacant on the death of a SAP member and the party staked claim for the seat. The BJP, however, overlooked this claim. The state unit wanted in cut off relations with the NDA at the state level. It felt that the state Chief Minister was neglecting the party and was not involving it in the decision making. The Convener of the NDA in Tamil Nadu, K. Karunanidhi expelled the BJP from the front at the state level. The DMK was highly critical of the local BJP siding up with the AIADMK, its archival on numerous issues. K. Karunanidhi is reported to have said that the “DMK will continue to be a constituent of the NDA at the centre, as Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee is an honest man”. Similarly the MDMK was opposing both the BJP and the DMK at the state level while being a part of the NDA at the national level. *The Economic Times*, New Delhi March 24, 2002. The local BJP unit also wanted to remove the DMK from the NDA at the centre due to Karunanidhi’s ‘anti-Hindu’ remarks. See *The Hindu*, September 16, 2002.

12 This was best exemplified when the government did not given in to the demands of the TDP on the Gujarart issue even as the party threatened to walk out of the alliance. The piqued TDP did not nominate a replacement for the Speaker’s post that it had held until the demise of its nominee.
common platform. The all-party meeting route is used by governments to elicit the opinion of, or make some clarifications to political parties on some legislation or proposed legislative measures, and to discuss matters of national and international importance among other things. The advantage of this mechanism was that it gave the government a sounding board and most importantly enabled discussion to take place in a relaxed and informal manner compared to parliament or any other such formal forum. This enabled parties to freely express their opinion and reach compromises, which might not be possible in parliament, where winning and losing, are recorded and publicised.

The all-party mechanism has served multiple purposes for the NDA. First, it has enabled the alliance to consult external support partners who were part of the legislative coalition but did not take part in NDA, CC meetings like the TDP. Secondly, the NDA coalition did not have the requisite numbers in the Rajya Sabha for passing legislation and depended on the support it received from the opposition on this matter. This necessitated the coalition to maintain cordial relations with the different parties and use the bipartisan route more frequently. Finally, it also enabled the alliance to move away from the tight constraints imposed by the coalition partners and to get a wider backing and thus reduce pressures from within.

**Level Four: Governmental Level-Group of Ministers**

The NDA coordination machinery was not limited to the political level alone but also took place at the governmental level. The NDA federal coalition began to make use of inter-ministerial groups, which like the all-party mechanism, served multiple purposes. These groups popularly called Group of Ministers (GoM) usually composed of three to four members of the union cabinet. However, its membership was not restricted to the cabinet alone as at times the Deputy Chairman of the Planning
Commission also headed such groups. Besides the empowered committee members, other departmental ministers were also called to give their opinion. The list of GoM’s that were constituted during the period under study has been given in Appendix 5.5 of this study. The matters concerning the GoM were secret.\footnote{13}{The Statesman in a news report on the constitution of a GoM on India Millennium Missions, 2002 quoted a ‘secret paper’ that was circulated among the GoM members as its source of information. The Statesman, New Delhi, December 2, 2002.}

The GoM’s, served the purpose of coordination within a coalition ministry, it helped to minimise differences of opinion and conflicts within the cabinet. It also helped in making important policy decisions and vetting other policy and programme recommendations. This mechanism was also used for the purpose of looking into matters of concern to different allies of the coalition. An enquiry by a inter-ministerial committee like the GoM significantly enhanced the status of the issue and gave the impression that it was being considered at a very high level.\footnote{14}{The SAD (Badal) had threatened to withdraw from the NDA I alliance if the Uddam Singh district was incorporated into the new state of Uttaranchal. A GoM on the issue helped pacify the party as it felt sufficient importance had been given to the issue. This becomes more evident in the case of another VIP ally, the TDP. Rajasthan had been crying for drought relief probably every single year. However, the government took extreme care when it came to dealing with a similar problem in the state of Andhra Pradesh. A GoM on drought in Andhra Pradesh was constituted to deal with the issue. This GoM was constituted in the year 2001 much before the country as a whole was affected by the same problem in 2002. Significantly in 2002 there was no such group to deal with the crisis. This is only an indication of possibilities of the GoM mechanism being used to partners to the allies.}

Thus coalitions have evolved newer and sturdier mechanisms of coordination. Where there was not agreement, coalition politics moved to the stage where coalition agreements were made after the alliance formed. Finally, with the NDA coalition the parties went for elections with a pre-electoral agreement. The newer institutional mechanisms that have been devised have been designed to cope with new situations that the traditional agreements between partners cannot do. This innovation has not only managed to keep the government together but also allow a reasonable
amount of flexibility and dynamism needed by the partners to take care of their interests and needs of their respective groups or regions.

**Breakdown of Government**

From the above discussion it is clear that no federal coalition has been able to complete its full term of office except the NDA. The present coalition of the NDA has been the longest serving one. Though there is no single cause that has led to the breakdown of federal coalitions, there appear to be some factors that are common to all cases. In this section, we focus on some of the factors that have led to the breakdown.

**Competition at the State Level**

The competition at the state level brought together a particular combination of political parties. The main reason for the breakdown of alliance can be traced to the same factor. This has been recognized by one of the architects of federal coalitions in India, V.P. Singh. Speaking of the relations between the Congress and the UF coalition in 1996, he recognized that the Congress had no alternative to support the government at that moment but as elections drew nearer, the ground conflicts at the state level would become sharp and the chances of withdrawal would increase. While pointing to the differences between the UF and the NF, he noted that there was not much conflict with the government at the state level among the supporting parties last time. This was because the areas of influence of the Left, of National Front influence and of the BJP were well defined.

Within the NF there were problems between the JD and the numerous regional parties. The JD was often accused of encroaching into territories of the regional parties. The AGP, DMK and the TDP had made

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specific complaints on this count. N.T. Rama Rao is reported to have underlined this point very strongly at the NF presidium meet. He held that if the concept of the NF had to take root, constituents like the TDP, AGP and DMK would also have to be allowed to grow strong. It was not enough for the JD alone to boom. The Prime Minister in his reply promised that guidelines would be issued and there would be attempts at greater coordination at the state level.\(^\text{17}\)

Various reasons were attributed to the pull-out of the BJP from the NF alliance. One of the prominent reasons was that the BJP brought up the *Ram Mandir* issue primarily as a reaction to the decision of the NF government to implement the *Mandal* Commission recommendations. It was felt that the party held that this issue was an attempt by JD to split the unified Hindu vote constituency that the party was trying to cultivate.

The first tension between the Congress and the UF arose when the latter decided not to support the BSP Congress alliance in UP and the UPCC asked the CWC to withdraw support to the UF government at the centre. This was despite the fact that then president of the Congress had personally requested the UF to consider the issue. Sitaram Kesri, therefore had a personal stake in the UF support to the coalition in UP. The UF, on the other hand, could not support the coalition, as one of its partners the SP did not have good relations with the BSP. This non-cooperation on the part of the UF seriously undermined the leadership of Sitaram Kesri within the congress. Following this, the CWC first, in November, authorised its president to decide on the next course of action on the UF-Congress ties and later in February 1997 it decided to withdraw the unconditional support and instead gave issue based support to the UF government. Besides this, it also authorised its president to take to the leader of the UF

and take appropriate steps. The Congress, main contention was that UF failed to help the Congress consolidate the forces of secularism against the BJP.

Similarly with regard to the NDA, the AIADMK whose pull out led to the fall of the government, was bent upon the central government for dismissing the DMK government at the state. It even claimed that there was an agreement between the BJP and the AIADMK on this issue. A senior BJP leader speaking on the condition of anonymity it was reported that Jayalalitha, is not fighting with the BJP, she is fighting for her political survival in cases in which she was involved and politically, she was to keep her demand for the dismissal of the Tamil Nadu government. The NDA government however, did not accede to her demands, and consequently, she raised the Bhagwat issue to pull out of the government.

Trinamul Congress offered revolving door support to the NDA. The party’s equations with coalition had been thoroughly determined by the local situation in West Bengal. The party pulled out of the coalition due to the Tehelka disclosures that degraded the reputation of the government. The party then decided that it would stay neutral in case of a division in Parliament. The Tehelka issue in retrospect was a blessing in disguise for the party. It enabled it to exit the government and form an alliance with the Congress to fight the left Front in the state. An alliance with the BJP for the state level elections would not have added as much as alliance with the Congress would have. However, the party and its alliance were not able to stop the continuing reign of the Left Front government in the state. After elections, Mamata Banerjee (TCP) was at the forefront of those calling for

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18 CWC resolution November 04 meeting, The Hindu, November 05, 1996, New Delhi, CWC February 16, meeting, The Hindu, February 17, 1997.
19 The Hindu, July 12, 1998.
a re-induction of the defence Minister George Fernandes (SAP). The party then re-joined the NDA alliance, though it was not inducted into the government.

In 2002, TCP once again pulled out of the alliance on the ground that the proposed railway zone reorganisation was against the interests of the West Bengal. The ruling Left Front government too had been critical of the move by the railways, but the TCP’s protest overshadowed the government stand. The party then re-joined the NDA during the winter session of parliament when the government constituted a committee to look into matters. The TCP’s role at the national level was clearly shaped by local level considerations.

The pull out of Ram Vilas Paswan (LJP) from the NDA government is another example of the state level competition having an impact on the federal coalition. Paswan’s attempt to become a leader of the Dalits and to create a base for himself in Uttar Pradesh conflicted directly with that of the BSP. Hence, when the BJP decided to join hands with the BSP to form the government in Uttar Pradesh, he pulled out of the government. He claimed that he was quitting over the Gujarat issue, however, his statement came before the Uttar Pradesh elections and even after he told a different story. As early as November 2001, he sought to fortify his position by calling for a common the NDA manifesto for the ensuing polls in the State. At that time, he also said that though the constituent parties in the NDA had their own programmes, they had pursued an agenda on which there was consensus. Thus the pressures on federal coalitions came from many directions and were unrelated to the factors which brought together the constituents of the coalition.

21 Mayawati (BSP) is reported to have said that Paswan did not represent any caste group in the state. Paswan retorted that it was his love for Ambedkar that was important, and caste and religion were divisive issues. His party focused on development issues, like right to work, education and health.
Lack of Management

Another reason for the breakdown of alliances can be traced to the absence of a proper institutionalised consultation mechanism within the coalition. The NF did not have any mechanism and consultation was done as a matter of courtesy. The BJP was constantly complaining that it was not being consulted despite supporting the government. The party was shocked with the fact that its nominee, Jagmohan, was suddenly removed from the post of Governor of Jammu & Kashmir. The party demanded that it should be consulted on serious issues like Kashmir and Punjab. Similarly, on the Mandal issue, the BJP and the Left were annoyed with the government for announcing it without detailed consultations.²²

The main connection between the Congress and the UF coalition was missing and this was precisely the reason for the fall. The over-reliance on personal relations between the two leaders rather than on any concrete plan of action proved to be its main undoing.

In the NDA coalition, dharmas was observed more in breach than in principle. The main party, the BJP, and the constituents have at some time or the other moved away from the tenets that they set for themselves. There were numerous instances of constituents of organisations linked to them pulling in a different direction from that of the alliance. The oil price and budget issue in 2000 saw the different allies publicly voicing their displeasure, despite the discussion in the cabinet. There was also the ungainly spectacle of coalition allies going to meet the Prime Minister directly to ask him to intervene. Mamata Banerjee (TCP) even resigned on this issue before being coaxed back. In the table below, a few prominent instances when contrary voices emerged from the government, the federal coalition partners, or organisations linked to federal partners in the year

²² K.L. Sharma held that the government went about announcing the implementation of the report in too much of a haste suggesting that it was cobbling together an election constituency rather than solving a problem. The Hindu, August 27, 1990.
2002 have been highlighted. The table does not highlights a complete list of contradictory positions within the alliance, but it only shows to be an indicator of the differing voices made in the public sphere.

**Contradictory pulls and pressures within the NDA**

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<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Charges/position</th>
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<tr>
<td>February 2002</td>
<td>Industrial Disputes (amendment) Act</td>
<td>Shiv Sena openly decides to oppose proposed amendment; cabinet reportedly passed despite protest from Shiv Sena nominee; in 2001 Shiv Sena had a “Maharashtra bandh” against the state government’s and labour policies; Thackeray threatens to pull out Shiv Sena ministers</td>
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<tr>
<td>February-April 2002</td>
<td>Railway Budget</td>
<td>Mamata Banerjee blasts railway budget :- ‘anti-people’ TDP satisfied</td>
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<td>March 2002</td>
<td>VHP shila pujan programme</td>
<td>Ayodhya issue raked up</td>
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<td>March-September 2002</td>
<td>VHP remarks against Prime Minister and communal statements relating to Gujarat Global terrorism</td>
<td>Charges BJP of taking/not taking decisions under influence of Western powers</td>
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<tr>
<td>March-April 2002</td>
<td>Union budget</td>
<td>BJP MP’s from Delhi blame budget from defeat in civic polls; debate in parliament –BJD and TCP members term Finance Minister proposals as ‘pro-rich and anti-poor’, want roll back of kerosene and fertilizer prices; Shiv Sena allegations that budget prepared under pressure from foreign institutions;’ TDP reconsider reduction of fertilizer subsidy; MDMK-kerosene prices</td>
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<tr>
<td>March-August-2002</td>
<td>Eastern Railway Zone Bifurcation</td>
<td>TCP openly critical; joins hands with archenemy Left From to protest decision; decides not to be “part and parcel” of alliance. SAP adamant; Minister threatens to resign if there is a revocation of the decision</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2002</td>
<td>Indo –Pak relations</td>
<td>FarooqAbdulrah critical verbal offensive against the central government; referred to ‘weak knees’ of the government in handling the issue</td>
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<td>Shiv Sena supporter physical attack on Hurriyat leader</td>
<td>Shiv Sena MP asserts that if the Union could not root out terrorists then individuals would have to take matters into their own hands.</td>
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Thus it is clear that the differences between the allies spilled out into the public sphere. Though coalition politics is premised on bargaining and compromises but most of this takes place within closed doors. As long as it

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>June 2002</td>
<td>Gujarat Crisis</td>
<td>BJP adamant stand defending Modi : violating the basic or core principals of the constitution</td>
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<td>June 2002</td>
<td>VSNL</td>
<td>Disinvestment Minister Arun Shourie and communications Minister Pramod Mahajan disagree over VSNL investing funds in Tata Teleservices</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2002</td>
<td>Cruelty to Animals</td>
<td>The Health Minister and the minister for Animal Welfare clash over ethics and animal experiments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June-July 2002</td>
<td>FDI in Print Media</td>
<td>Shiv Sena, TDP, BJD, flay Union Cabinet decision to allow FDI into the print media-against ‘national interest’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July-September-2002</td>
<td>Planning Commission Task force on Employment opportunities</td>
<td>George Fernandes at the SJM meeting attacked the report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July –December-2002</td>
<td>Disinvestment</td>
<td>Critique : Mid term received – George Fernandes (SAP), Ram Naik, Anath Kumar, Uma Bharati (all BJP), BJD- Nalco issue ; SHS –Hotel disinvestment and oil sector; DMK, TDP support disinvestment programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2002</td>
<td>Cabinet Seats</td>
<td>JD(U) sour over inadequate seats, party leader quoted as saying ‘if the PMK, with five MP’s can get two ministers of state, the JD(U) with tan effective strength of ten MP’s, should get greater representation in the Union Council of Ministers.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2002</td>
<td>RSS : Jammu and Kashmir</td>
<td>Forms a Trifurcation Front divide J&amp;K into three parts Jammu, Ladakh and Kashmir Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2002</td>
<td>Big Brother attitude</td>
<td>Sap parliamentary party meet critical of BJP : ‘big brother’ attitude failure to strengthen cohesiveness of ruling coalition ; inability to discipline members ; refusal of the PM’s interaction with the members who supports; and foreign its own vies of critical issues like Gujarat and disinvestment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2002</td>
<td>Fertilizer Unit Closure</td>
<td>SAP, JD(U), MPs from Bihar and Jharkahand join hands with LJP, CPI and CPM MPs to protest closure of fertilizer units; even hold joint press conference; TCP in West Bengal also joins issue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
remains so, the principle of collective responsibility, the essence of parliamentary government is maintained. However, when matters are brought to the public, it is a clear violation of this principle and also an attempt to use public pressure to get one’s way. Besides this, as far as coalition management is concerned it is an open indicator of bad management. Many of the differences were in the area of disinvestment in the oil sector, the telecom tangle, and so on were actually a reflection of the larger corporate battles.\textsuperscript{23} It was reported that the SHS was batting for a particular corporate interest opposing the disinvestment in Centaur hotel, Mumbai.

**Game of Power Sharing**

In the Indian system, this process of power sharing is largely done by the allocation of portfolios such as that of Cabinet Ministers, Ministers of State, Deputy Ministers, arrangement of important positions of authority, sinecures, Constitutional posts that of Governors, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Legislative posts such as headship and membership of parliamentary committees, consultative joint committees and others where nominations made by the Prime Minister such as appointing the Chairman and members of Indian Council of Cultural Relations, Lalit Kala Akademi, Indian Council of Social Science Research, etc. This is a fine art and the ruling party allocates such positions of authority in an effort to give the support, political and strategic in the realms of power. This is usually done on a mutual give and take basis. There are innumerable instances to show that this is done on a continuing basis. The first such one was pledged by Telegu Desam Party which played the most opportunistic and hard role to get. In 1999 its member G.M.C. Balayogi was given the post of the Speaker. Telugu Desam perfected the art of manipulating the Vajpayee government and getting things its way and at times even forced the central

\textsuperscript{23} *The Hindu*, 6 June, 2002.
government into conceding aid, supplies and favourable decisions for Andhra Pradesh. Chandra Babu Naidu, its supremo, played a far determining and dominating role than Jayalalitha’s AIADMK ever did in the course of the history of thirteen months in Vajpayee’s first coalition government. The main vehicle for grand coalition was the cabinet, which is a unique aspect in India. Cabinets were produced by the broadly representative and inclusive nature of a single dominant party. Earlier the Congress Party’s policy of inclusion and its political dominance had generated grand coalition cabinets with ministers belonging to all the main religious, linguistic, caste and sub-caste and regional groups.24

There has been a tradition with the BJP coalitions whether they were formed in 1998 or in 1999 to accord more importance to small coalition partners. For example, coalition partners such as the AIADMK and the Samata Party received a disproportionate number of cabinet positions in the BJP government in exchange for their support. In 1998 the AIADMK from Tamil Nadu held only 18 seats and the Samata Party had only 12 seats in UP and Bihar in the Lok Sabha, but they held six key cabinet berths in the coalition government. Similarly, in the coalition formed in 1999, the Samata got prime cabinet portfolios such as that of Defence, Railways and held at least seven cabinet berths at one time. The Samata Party’s strength in the Janata Dal United under whose banner it fought the elections in 1999 was 18 out of the 21 for JD (U).25

Another feature of the minority governing coalition led by the BJP was that some regional parties became critical for survival of the multiparty coalition. Among them were the Telegu Desam Party, the Samata Party prominently and the AIADMK and DMK alternately at other

times. Chandrababu Naidu played the kingmaker’s role. In almost every crisis his views and intervention were sought. He very skillfully played the largest tranche of 29 MPs that he brought into the coalition (though technically speaking, he was merely supporting the coalition from outside) and the Telegu Desam, especially its leader had become crucial in every deliberation, strategy and resolution of conflicts in the coalition. Not merely this, there are reports that Naidu managed to gain economically, by wresting from the Centre innumerable grants, aid, packages for Andhra Pradesh which amounted to thousands of crores of rupees. Similarly, Samata Party due to the skill of George Fernandes, a one time socialist was considered critical to the survival of the BJP-led coalition. On the other hand, the post-electoral bargaining of regional parties also took new forms. For example, after the coalition was formed in 1998, the AIADMK supremo Jayalalitha made increasing demands on the coalition. Throughout the 13 months tenure, she continuously used her influence within the BJP government to make demands to stall a series of corruption investigation against her. The DMK who followed her in the 1999 coalition similarly, did the opposite - asking for action against Jayalalitha when in power. Other coalition supporters had not been so lucky as these parties. Since Jayalalitha demanded and got an increased share of cabinet positions for her party at the Centre, Mamata Banerjee also demanded her inclusion with the Railway Portfolio and other portfolios for her followers. Though initially, she was not given the post, only two railway conversion projects in her state of West Bengal were approved. Mamata’s elevation as the Union Cabinet Minister for Railways was done on the basis of other calculations and that also at a much later stage in the 1999 coalition. Further, in the 1999 coalition, once Mamata Banerjee renounced her past after resigning from ministership with an eye on the Bengal assembly elections. Howere, her plea to become Railway Minister again did not find
favour on the eve of cabinet reshuffle in early 2002. Even her efforts without adequate cause and mobilization in Bengal over the relocation of the Headquarters of the Eastern railways from Calcutta to Bihar could not take effect. This was interesting because Mamta had tied her successes or failures as a Minister of Railways with a Cabinet rank at the Centre with her personal graph of ascendancy or otherwise in Bengal. This indicated the weakness of her party Trinamool Congress which had hardly anything to show as concrete achievements. Hence the change of Eastern Railway Headquarter from Calcutta to Hajipur in Bihar brought about a predictable election plank for Trinamool.26

Thus, power sharing took various forms. The difference now in the power sharing model that the BJP-led coalition was involved in was that no such grand association was possible, the type which was prevalent in the Congress system, whose internally strong federal organization ensured proper participation in the spoils and mutual discipline. As such no section or group remained outside of the sharing of power. Hence each small party, group had larger than itself ambitions and expectations and with a greater capacity for blackmail and manipulation of the government at the Centre. The Vajpayee government had to accommodate the various constituents of the NDA and practice many cabinet reshuffles to maintain its status quo. The strategic position of George Fernandes Samata Party chief in the cabinet and as the chief firefighting man of the Vajpayee coalition was unquestioned. His aspirations to the top post of Prime Minister had to be curtailed by induction of L.K. Advani as the Deputy PM. Mamta Baneijee of the Trinamool Congress periodic threats to the coalition to walk out over gaining the high moral group over a lot of issues, the Shiv Sena’s spasmodic utterances against the central government over grievances or perceived grievances or seeming neglect of

26 Ibid, pp. 111-112.
Bal Thackeray and Maharashtra etc., were tolerated by the coalition government. There were constant demands from constituents that they had been neglected or that their state was by passed in fund allocation such as the demand by the Samata Party, the Biju Janata Dal that the Central government was negligent in giving grants to them in normal course of time and during the time when calamities struck them like the Orissa super cyclone of 1999 or the periodic floods that deserted Bihar. There had been demands from the Akalis and Chautala’s INLD who wanted to play to their constituencies by offering them subsidies, grants, electricity etc. These were conceded to at times, especially when Surjit Singh Barnala was the Agriculture Minister (fertiliser prices were reduced, electricity over dues were waived for rich farming lobbies in Punjab and Haryana).

One witnessed infighting between ministers belonging to various constituents where the BJP had to play a definite role in bringing peace. For example the spat between Trinamool Congress chief Mamta Banerjee and Samta Party functionary Nitish Kurnar over regaining the Railways portfolio on the eve of a cabinet reshuffle in early 2002; or over the relocation of the Headquarters of Eastern Railways to Bihar from Calcutta.27 The infighting between Menaka Gnadhí and C.P. Thakur, both ministers, the ego clash between Arun Jaitley and Sushma Swaraj etc. wherein the BJP and its close allies had to step in and redraw the lines. The consistent support to Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of Gujarat by the BJP in the post-Godhra incident in February 27, 2002 had drawn some of its constituents in direct confrontation with the BJP, especially the Telegu Desam. Yet these had cast no threats to the continuation of the alliance at the Centre.

Power sharing which was prevalent in the Congress system was not available, yet the BJP and its allies had managed a different variant of

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power sharing. The second BJP-led coalition National Democratic Alliance had since the 1999 elections endured for the longest period of coalition history in India since independence. It was though not admirable, but quite successful management of various interstices of the complex and conflicting and even confounding realities of Indian politics. Indian politics is a mesh of dialectical perspectives on caste, religion, creed, language, factitious regional aspirations and developmental issues and these get articulated in political activities of parties. Apart from the management of intricacies by political bargaining, sharing of power, resolution of intra-coalition spats, offering of sops or otherwise to parties withdrawing or threatening to withdraw support and other seemingly irreconcilable intractable issues that cropped up almost daily with bewildering frequency and periodic regularity and which were contributing factors for the longevity of this government, perhaps the most important reason why the BJP-led coalition survived was due to the acceptance and preparation for it (the coalitional situation) with adequate groundwork by the BJP if not by its allies, to alter its politics, its priorities and ideological baggage for the new reality of Indian politics, namely the age of coalitions.28

It has been mentioned that this had become possible on the part of the BJP, in a large measure because of the moderate line of the party, brought about by the stewardship or leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Though a party man, who was almost wedded to the Sanghathan and had espoused the philosophy of the founding fathers of the Jana Sangh, BJP’s predecessor: Shayama Prasad Mookherjee, Deen Dayal Upadhya etc. Vajpayee had brought in an element of liberal toleration and moderation in the BJP which even hawks like L.K. Advani, Jana Krishnamurthy and others have acquiesced to. Moreover, it has also been recognised that this

moderation and policy of co-existence, as it were of the party, was a strategic necessity for the party at that juncture. BJP realised that its organizational base was still in infancy in many states and to accord the status of a national party it still had a long way to go. Therefore, it deliberately decided to extend a power-sharing offer to all regional parties engaged in state level contests with the Congress or with other parties, so that these could come up to the level of the centre and support the BJP. In fact, this was the main philosophy guiding it and so at the Political Resolution passed at the New Delhi session in May, 1999 it was stated that India's interests can be served best by involving regional parties in the process of governance.29

If one saw the situation in the states where the regional parties fought and won the seats (and they could claim to have bagged the bulk of the seats), it would be clear that the BJP’s stand had been vindicated. The various regional outfits had the preponderance of the seats in their respective states. In states like UP, for example, where the BJP fought the elections by fielding candidates, it did not register much success, nevertheless, as these states were domains of the regional parties. Almost all states had shown preference for regional and state based outfits that had historical linkages with their states and in every state there was a new set of parties, which were state-specific and region-centred. For example, it was Biju Janata Dal for Orissa, the Trinamool Congress for Bengal, Akali Dal in Punjab, Kerala Congress and IUML for Kerala, National Conference in Jammu & Kashmir etc. The state based parties were able to get the preponderance or the major portion of the votes in their states. For example, the Telugu Desam Party had secured 29 out of the 42 Lok Sabha seats in Andhra Pradesh; the National Conference got 4 out of the 6 Lok

Sabha seats; the Indian National Lok Dal managed 5 out of the 10 seats from Haryana. This showed clearly that regional and smaller state parties had made significant presence in almost 16 states out of the 25 states of the Indian Union; it was in the North-East that they had traditionally been the dominant force. In Northern India, however there was a balanced spread in the strength of the regional parties. In the Western part of India they had doubled their strength in this Lok Sabha.\(^{30}\)

It is a matter of great importance that none of the regional parties, except the Shiv Sena, has adhered to the philosophy of *Hindutva* that BJP espouses, which has expressly stated its agreement and connivance with the fundamentalist agenda of the BJP. Though not expediently and openly, yet other parties retained their identities and openly maintained a distance from the agenda of the BJP. They had extended support, shared power and expressed commitment to the BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee who was broadly considered a moderate leader. Moreover, they had coalesced into a Coalition only because the BJP prepared a moderate agenda for governance with the Common Minimum Programme. Hence, the BJP was practically obliged to follow moderate path in order to retain their continuing support and ensure that the allies did not feel alienated. Therefore, there was a great onus on the party to liberalise its strategy, programme and ideology. Thus, the BJP started believing that the issue of federal sharing in political power was an important achievement. It also accepted, for the first time, the reality of coalitions as a response to this growing regionalization of politics.\(^{31}\)

**Weak Organisational Party Structures**

The first central coalition, the national front fell apart primarily due


to a weak party structure that had characterised the Janata parivar of parties. They were top heavy parties with no clear line of command. The party revolved round the various factions that V.P. Singh had brought together when he formed the party in the first instance. The leaders of the party at the state level ran the party at the local level as independent units. The general secretaries appointed to oversee the state units had no control over them. In many cases, the post of party president at the unit level and the Chief Minister were held by a single entity. Besides this, there was constant wrangling between the leaders.\textsuperscript{32} Thus a weak organisational structure of the core party within the alliance would hardly provided any inspiration for stability and effectiveness. The epitaph of this coalition was probably written on the same day V.P. Singh was surreptitiously elected leader of the JD. The architect of the alliance, V.P. Singh himself testified to the fact that the alliance floundered primarily because of internal disharmony rather than the withdrawal of support by the BJP.\textsuperscript{33} The mutual antagonism between the incumbent Prime Minister and Chandeashekar was on full display during the debate on the motion of confidence moved by V.P. Singh after the BJP had withdrawn support.\textsuperscript{34}

The presidential election in the JD, was used by different factions to test their respective factional strengths and consequently the elections itself

\textsuperscript{32} Janata Dal : Circus of Confusion, \textit{India Today} (New Delhi), 15 April, 1990, pp. 34-36.
\textsuperscript{33} V.P. Singh in an interview to N. Ram and Sukumar Muralidharan, opined that the National Front did not fall because of quarrels. Quarrels came later, after the fall. The fall was issue-based as was a very clean thing. We decided not to continue. It’s not so much that they ‘betrayed’ us or anything like that. We simply decided that it was not worth continuing in government on the basis of such sacrifice of principles’. Frontline, June 15-28, 1996. The BJP spokesman, K.L. Sharma also opined that ‘In spite of the staunch support the National Front government has had front supporting parties, it had not been able to manage its affairs property’, quoted in \textit{The Hindu}, 1 August, 1990.
\textsuperscript{34} For V.P. Singh, see pp. 25-26 and for Chandrashekar, see pp. 29-39, in:\textit{Lok Sabha Debates} (English Version) 4th session, 9th Lok Sabah, 9th series, 11(1), (Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 1990).
had to be put off until there was a consensus candidate.\textsuperscript{35} Devi Lal’s dismissal from the Council of Ministers, for his controversial interview in the illustrated weekly of India quickened the pace of disintegration.\textsuperscript{36} The Mandal Commission and the\textit{ Rath Yatra} that led to the fall of the government ultimately, were all the spin-offs from this internal crisis within the party.\textsuperscript{37}

The split in the National Conference in 1999, when the NDA lost a vote of confidence in parliament, could be attributed to the undemocratic manner in which the party was run. Thus lack of internal democracy and transparency in functioning within political parties could therefore trigger problems for coalition management. Similarly, the factional conflict within the Samata party periodically rocked the NDA. The running battle between the warring factions at the state level in Bihar and Nitish Kumar, the Union Agriculture, Minister at that time, quitting and returning to the cabinet.\textsuperscript{38} While these might be internal party affairs, such events did not help to put the government in good light. They only added to the tag of instability that a coalition ministry carries.

Thus, coalitions over a period of time have also established some complex unwritten rules. An alliance between parties in a state does not automatically translate into an alliance across the federation. Secondly, an alliance at one level in constituent unit does not also mean that would be an alliance at another level. In other words, if parties have an alliance for

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{35} The month of May 1990 was full intrigue and suspense for the JD. It lurched from one crisis to another. From Meham (Haryana) to the internal Presidentaial elections, factional wars continued unabated. See coverage in \textit{The Hindu} (Chennai) for the month of May 1990.
  \item \textsuperscript{36} See \textit{Illustrated Weekly of India} (Mumbai), July 29, August 4, 1990.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} L.K. Advani in an interview is reported to have said that when the Prime Minister rang him and A.B. Vajpayee seeking support for the Mandal Recommendations, the PM obscurely referred to the internal crisis within the JD as the reason for not deferring the announcement. \textit{The Hindu}, September 15, 1990.
  \item \textsuperscript{38} \textit{The Hindu}, January 4, 2001.
\end{itemize}
the parliamentary elections it is not necessary that a similar arrangement will be worked out for the state legislative assembly. The alliances are specific and limited depending on the circumstances. Thus while the TCP had an alliance with the BJP during the parliamentary elections in 1999, it left the NDA during the 2001 assembly elections in West Bengal. The BJP decided to go it alone in Gujarat in December, 2002 despite having an alliance with its NDA partners, the JD (U) and the SAP in Uttar Pradesh in March, 2002. What makes it complex is the fact that despite this separation, there are also deep interconnections between the politics at different levels. The Gujarat crisis rocked the federal government and nearly brought its downfall and it was saved primarily because of the stand taken by the TDP. The TDP was aware that a vote against the NDA government would benefit its primary competitor- the Congress. The TDP chose to voice its displeasure with the NDA alliance by not supporting the government in parliament and walking out from parliament at the time of the vote. Through this walkout move and non-acceptance of the Speaker’s post the party was able to bring out its stand on the issue without causing harm to the government. Thus there are unwritten lines of interconnection between the politics at different levels making coalition politics extremely complex.

**PERFORMANCE OF NDA**

In the last four years of the NDA coalition the largest party in the coalition had tried hard that the pulls and pressures in coalition politics are in reality the articulations of the interests of the allies. With the imposition of some contradiction the government was able to survive and manage its affairs successfully. During the entire period the performance of NDA needs detailed examination.
Legislations

The NDA government passed many Acts and Bills like Insurance Regulatory Development Authority Bill and Securities Laws (Amendment) Bill. Several legislations in conformity with government’s policy of globalization and economic liberalization were also passed, for example, Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTO) foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), Trade Marks Act, Copyright Amendment Act, etc. The government successfully introduced Information Technology Bill, 1999 to provide legal recognition for e-commerce. Many innovative schemes were initiated by the government in areas like tourism, civil aviation, agriculture, law and justice, information and broadcasting, railways, power, surface transport and human resource development.

The government was frequently rocked by controversies created either by the hidden agenda of BJP or by the alliance partners as they wanted to retain their position in the government as well as satisfy the home constituencies at the same time.

Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), March 2002: On March 21, 2002 the NDA government had to face a humiliating defeat after some of its allies ditched the government while voting in Rajya Sabha on the controversial prevention of Terrorism Bill. The Bill was defeated by a margin of 15 votes. The Three-member National Conference (NC) and the Loktantrik Congress sole representative, Rajiv Shukla, stayed away during the Rajya Sabha vote. However, the Bill became an Act when 425 members voted for it and 296 against on March 27, 2002 in a joint session of both Houses of Parliament. The position of the NDA vis-a-vis the opposition at the time of voting on POTA is set out in Table 5.1 and 5.2.
Table: 5.1
Party Position in the Joint Session of Parliament –NDA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Lok Sabha</th>
<th>Rajya Sabha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDP</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiv Sena</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMK</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJD</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JD(U)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INLD</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDMK</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JKNC</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lok Jan Shakti</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loktantrik Congress</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akali Dal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HVC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HVP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMK</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIADMK</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>323</strong></td>
<td><strong>109</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total LS+RS=432

*Figures include non-NDA members also who voted in favour of the Bill.*
Table: 5.2
Party Position in the Joint Session of Parliament-Opposition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Lok Sabha</th>
<th>Rajya Sabha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RJD</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ML</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPM</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORWARD BLOC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPI</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JDS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIMIM</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI ML</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>190</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total LS+RS=291

**Joint Strength**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lok Sabha</th>
<th>Seats 545; Vacant 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rajya Sabha</td>
<td>Seats 245; Vacant 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Effective</td>
<td>781</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In-spite of the obvious numerical strength in favour of the government, the issue was debated in the coordination committee meeting of the NDA partners. Barring the Trinamool Congress whose members stayed away from the voting, the allies spoke in favour of the legislation.

*Election of the President and the Vice-President:* In the election of president the NDA government got elected, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam as a consensus candidate of the NDA and the Congress. The Left forced the country to witness an election for the highest office by projectin Lakshmi Sehgal as its candidate. But the victory of A.P.J. Abdul Kalam demonstrated not only the collective strength of the NDA allies but also the
elevation to the highest office of an individual who is a man of distinction, a member of a minority community, and most important, an icon with the assertive middle class. It also helped to restore the credibility of the NDA government after the Gujarat riots.\textsuperscript{39}

The office of the Vice-President has also gone to Bhairon Singh Shekhawat supported by the NDA. Shekhawat was a known hard core RSS man which indicates an upper hand played by the BJP amongst other alliance partners in the selection of a vice-Presidential candidate.

\textit{Constitutional Amendments}

The manifesto commitments of the NDA were extensive in constitutional and legal reforms, as Appendix 5.6. All were not directly related to centre-state relations, some were unconnected and others were tangentially related such as the amendment to prevent the redistribution of seats between the states of the Union, albeit vitally important for centre-state harmony.\textsuperscript{40} Many amendments concerning reservations and qualifications for SCs and STs restored the status quo after Supreme Court judgments challenged elements of reservation policy.

\textbf{The NDA and Reforms}

The NDA’s commitment to good governance in the 1999 election manifestos was to provide honest, transparent, and efficient government capable of accomplishing all-round development. In order to achieve these goals, the manifesto promised time-bound programmes of needed administrative reforms including those for the Police and Civil Services and electoral reforms on the basis of the recommendations of the Goswami Committee, the Inderjit Gupta Committee and the Law Commission Report so as to deal with the malaise of defections, corruption and criminalisation.

of politics, and to prevent electoral malpractices.\textsuperscript{41}

Corruption was to be tackled by enacting the Lok Pal Bill with adequate powers to deal with corruption charges against anyone, including the Prime Minister. In the administration of justice, the NDA coalition promised not to allow discrimination between the rich and the poor, the empowered and the powerless and restore the majesty of law and the objectivity of the state.\textsuperscript{42}


The commission was appointed in 1999 under the chairmanship of M. N. Venkatchallia, it submitted its report in 2002. The issues of corruption and transparency during the tenure of NDA were mainly focused in the report. Despite the controversy surrounding the objectives of the Commission, the report provided sober reflections on the subject with its implications for the working of the Constitution and the political system. In its overall judgment the Commission observed:

“There is pervasive impurity in the political climate and political activities. Criminalisation of politics, political corruption and the politician-criminal nexus have reached unprecedented levels needing strong systematic changes.”\textsuperscript{43}

This emphasis on the subject was evident from the stress on the need to reform the administration, judiciary, the electoral system and the funding of political parties. The nature of these observations is too extensive to summaries here, suffice to say, the general tenor of the analyses can be gauged from the recommendations made (NCRWC 2002)’.

\textsuperscript{44} Among them it included a comprehensive law regulating political parties, including the requirement for transparency in funding and declaration by

\textsuperscript{41} NDA (National Democratic Alliance) \textit{for a Proud, Prosperous India: An Agenda}, 1999.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
candidates for election of assets and pending criminal cases; amendments to the Representation of People’s Act (1951) to prohibit candidates with criminal records from contesting; limits to the size of Council of Ministers to 10 per cent of the total strength of the lower house; removal of parliamentary immunity for corrupt politicians; re-examination of constitutional guarantees for civil servants from the immunity from prosecution (article 311) and oath of transparency; a Freedom of Information Act; Public Interest Disclosure Act (Whistle-Blower) Act; amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act (1988); Central Vigilance Commission Bill; and Lok Pal (Ombudsman) Bill.

These long-standing reforms were seen as essential to restrict the scope for discretion and unaccountable behaviour by public officials and politicians, while increasing the penalties for transgression. That the report subsequently became embroiled in political controversy is another matter. What is important for us to acknowledge, however, is that many of the recommendations of the NCRWC became the signposts around which the NDA’s initiatives were formulated.

The Lok Pal (Ombudsman) Bill 2003, a key manifesto promise, suffered a worse fate. The institutional needs for an ombudsman were recognized in the early 1960s, but progress was painfully slow as the bureaucrats initially directed the proposal against politicians rather than civil servants. Supreme Court judgment in several cases have repeatedly called for the establishment of an ombudsman to deal with the caseload that is unnecessarily referred to the courts.45 Partly in response to these pressures, the NDA Government first introduced the Bill in 1998, then 2001 and yet again, in 2003. The Bill was drafted to include the Prime Minister’s Office under its purview, a recommendation opposed by the

NCRWC. The Bills progress has followed a well-trodden path. In the need to reach a consensus, they were referred to a Joint Select Committee of the Parliament, which responded so slowly that legislation lapsed due to the lack of parliamentary action on the Bill. Unsurprisingly, the Bill introduced in 2003 became victim of the early dissolution of parliament in January, 2004. Filibusters and engineered delays were the preferred tactics of politicians to regulate themselves. As Rajeev Dhawan has noted, post-colonial India, has evolved virtually no independent mechanism to investigate corruption. Neither politicians nor bureaucrats want to investigate their own corruption. They make sure that no real investigations happen.46

The Freedom of Information Act (2002) is another initiative that arose from court rulings. Several judgments- including the right to information about election candidates- had given broad interpretation to article 19(1) of India’s constitution, which guarantees the right to free expression and speech, including the right to know. Efforts by Ram Jethmalani, then the NDA Minister for Urban Development, to open up his department were opposed by the Cabinet Secretary with a court writ blocking the move a procedure itself challenged by reform activists. In order to deal with the matter, the Government took repeated adjournments and finally submitted the Bill (2000). These delays led to an exceptionally unusual ruling from the Supreme Court in 2002 which directed that if the legislation was not passed before the next date of hearing in January 2003 the court would consider the matter on merits and pass the order. It also added a powerful caveat that even if the legislation was passed, the court would examine whether the legislation was in conformity with the right to information as declared by the court.47

46 Ibid, p.137.
**Formation of new states**

Through the States Reorganization Act, 2000, the Parliament led by the NDA Government formed three new states - Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttranchal. The question still persists for granting separate statehood to some regions not to others. For instance, the demand for Vidrabra in Maharashtra, Telengana in Andhra Pradesh and Kamtapur in West Bengal have also been in existence. While governance and socio-economic development are the stated objectives of new state formation, clearly there are issues of power and political mileage involved in this process.48 Once again one can find contradictions between ideologies of the BJP and its coalition partners: the ideology of social assimilation and a unitary state opposed by one of political decentralization and the assertion of group identities. Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand state came into being due to the compromises with regional groups.

**Budgets**


The broad strategy of Yashwant Sinha budget was six-fold fiscal deficit reduction, reforms in indirect taxes to promote productivity and employment, deepening and widening reforms in all major sectors, reviving exports, strengthening the knowledge-based industries, and finally revitalizing and redirecting public programmes for human development thereby encompassing food security, health care, education, employment and shelter.

The Finance Minister in his second full budget aimed at accelerating fiscal and overall economic reforms with a special stress on human development. His budget proposals reflected economic realism mixed with political sensitivity. The Finance Ministry officials listed out three best

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features of the budget excise duty rationalization focus on human
development and proposals to and facilitate mergers and de-mergers of
corporations.49

The opposition parties, however, termed the budget as lackluster
because of its failure to lift the gloom in the market. Even it could not
succeed in kick starting the economy. Manmohan Singh, former finance
minister and the Congress leader summed up his reactions to the budget.
Thus It is a status quo budget which failed to improve either the business
or consumer confidence.50

Millennium General Budget 2000-2001

The annual presentation of the union budget had evinced lot of
interest and expectations like the finance minister had several complex
issues to deal with in the millennium budget curtailing the mounting deficit
through a greater rationalization of the limited resources, dealing with the
vexing question of subsidies, bringing about a systematic reduction in non-
plan expenditure, widening of the tax-base, initiating measures to improve
tax compliance, bringing down the interest rates, and encouraging
investment in the infrastructure. Inspite of this, the Finance Minister also
had to meet the new challenges in view of the Kargil war, Orissa super-
cyclone, pre-election political uncertainty, tripling of world oil prices and
the continued fragility in world economic recovery. Opposition parties
slammed the budget as anti-poor, anti-farmer and disastrous. The Congress
said budget failed to meet the demands of even the first generation of
economic reforms, leave alone unveiling the promised second generation
package.51 Manmohan Singh said: The budget is long on promise but short
on performance.52 The TDP Chief Chandrababu Naidu termed the budget

49 The Times of India, 28 Feb, 1999.
51 The Hindustan Times, 1March 2000.
52 The Economic Times, 1March 2000.
as moderately good and positive in approach. The Trinamool Congress was dissatisfied at the fact that the budget did not provide much scope for increase in employment opportunities while there already existed freeze on fresh jobs in the government sector. The INLD Chief Om Prakash Chautala said that his party would request the government to reconsider the proposal of cutting down the subsidy in urea as it would lead to an increase in the prices of urea based fertilizers. Madhu Dandavate, Janata Dal (S) exponent added that the general budget ignored the structure of cooperative federalism. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and the DMK chief appreciated several new programmes that would go to improve the lot of rural poors like allocating Rs.2,500 crores, under Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana to provide roads to all villages and an insurance scheme, Janashree for the rural poor. The Major features of Sinha’s Millenium budget were as follows:- Fiscal deficit put at 5.1per cent. Non-plan expenditure increased by Rs.17,461 crores. Plan expenditure increased by Rs.2,395 crores. Defence allocation up from Rs.45,694 crores to Rs.58,587 crores. Fertilizer subsidies rationalized. A total of 69 schemes of eight departments to be discounted or merged as part of zero- based budgeting and proposed a voluntary retirement scheme for government employees. No public sector banks to be restructured. New scheme of group insurance to extend social security cover to poorer sections. Limit of collateral free loans for tiny sector in 1 lakh to Rs.5 lakh. New Rs.5000 crores scheme for basic primary education, health care, drinking water, housing and roads in rural areas. Kissan credit cards coverage to cover additional 75 lakh farmers.

**General Budget 2001-02**

The main features of 2001-02 budget were growth rate targeted at

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53 Ibid,
7 per cent, fiscal deficit at per cent, inflation below 8 per cent. Ten-year tax holidays for roads, highways, waterways, airports, ports, industrial parks, power generation and distribution projects. CENVAT set at 16 per cent on most items, custom duties rationalized. More services brought under the tax net. FII allowed 49 per cent equity in Indian firms. Power Reforms 2001 Bill to be introduced soon. 10 per cent job cuts in government in next five years. Controls on production, movement and stocking of food grains lifted.

The former finance minister P. Chidambaram welcomed the budget and said “The budget is good yet not adequate. It is bold not courageous. It is growth oriented, yet not aiming high”. Manmohan Singh said that the budget was “long on rhetoric and less on deliverance. The opposition debunked the budget as rudderless, directionless inflation oriented, anti poor, anti people, and the like. Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh said it is like spider web of statistics in which the poor and the working class are fatally struck. The RJD criticized the budget by saying that it would deal a serious blow to the common people and the poor. Jayalalitha of the AIADMK said that the budget was anti middle class and anti-labour. The CPM politics termed the budget as a calculated onslaught on workers, farmers and salaried employees as it would lead to the destruction of the country’s self-reliance and food security. The CPI saw in the budget an undue haste in the liberalization and globalization process. The Akali Dal was happy with the bold budget as it largely addressed the farmers concerns. The BJD appreciated the government’s decision of changing the procurement policy, enhanced powers to the states and raising the custom duties. The southern allies, particularly the DMK and the MDMK, were pleased to have the balanced budget as the government had taken into account their concerns and refrained from any strong measures despite making pre-budget announcements.

56The Times of India, 1 March, 2001.
The Main feature of 2003-04 budget was that the government introduced number of Schemes for Rozgar like- Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana, Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, other features are rural housing, drinking water supply, fertilizers production targeted, elementary education and literacy, information technology, power generation targeted, telecommunication installations, social justice and empowerment, tribal affairs, small scale industries, science and technology etc.  

The Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) criticized the Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh's budget as not so attractive. It purported to reflect a soft image but if one read the fine print it was not so, said the all-India convener of the Manch, P. Muralidhar Rao. He said that the budget had failed to come up with adequate policy measures to address the challenge of unemployment. This was the biggest inconsistency between the Economic Survey and the budget, which had not been attended to on the issue of unemployment, but for textiles, the Finance minister was able to generate anything.

The Chief Minister, Jayalalitha, hailed the Union budget as growth-oriented, but called for a reconsideration of a proposal to increase price of fertilizers. The Janata party president, Subramanian Swamy said the Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, had failed to address the core problems of declining investment rates, rising inefficiency in resource allocation and growing unemployment. The budget had been prepared for short term political advantage at the cost of long–term economic revival. Opposition came from within the government to the hike in fertilizer prices announced

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60 Ibid.
in budget with the Agriculture Minister, Ajit Singh, terming it improper and inappropriate.\textsuperscript{61}

The Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, described it as a unique budget of its kind which attempted to find solutions. The five areas of priorities outlined by the Minister gave details of requirements of Indian economy and expectation.

The TDP leader, Yerran Naidu, said the Government could not achieve a higher growth rate by keeping the budgetary allocation for agriculture at last year level. The congress MP, Jyotiraditya Scindia, saw fault in the form of insignificant rise in public investment and lacking in any road map to revive the economy. The former Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar, said that one could not expect anything more from them, the Samajwadi Party chief, Mulayam Singh said that there was nothing for the farmers and poor in the budget.

The NCP president, Sharad Pawar said, this was an election budget, the budget did not take any steps to improve farm production, while there would be additional burden of rise in fertilizer prices. Very little support had been extended to the textile and sugar industry. Three new areas of taxation were opened in milk cooperatives, Agriculture produce marketing committee and saving of small unorganized sector. For the middle class basically there was statue quo.

The Left parties came out strongly against the Union budget proposals and expressed strong opposition to the anti-people, anti-farmer and pro-rich provisions. The Janata Dal-Secular too echoed similar views.\textsuperscript{62} The CPI (M) politburo said that the budget carried forward the pro-imperialist agenda of the government and like the previous exercises it had been explicit in being pro-rich, providing major fiscal concessions to

\textsuperscript{61}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{62}\textit{The Hindu}, 2 March, 2003.
big businessmen and the rich. It did nothing to address the two most crucial problems of the Indian economy that day, that was the crisis in agriculture aggravated by severe drought and the collapse in employment and corruption. The party said that the budget opened the way for the de-Indianisation of the banking sector and the privatization of nationalized banks. The proposals offered nothing to the peasantry reeling under the impact of price-crashes.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF NDA

Production and Development, Welfare Services and Human Welfare are the three divisions of NDA government achievements.

1. Production and Development Sphere

In this division numbers of achievements were there. Agriculture is the most crucial sector of our economy. It accounts for almost 24.7 per cent of our GDP and provides employment to about 65 per cent of the total workforce. National Agriculture Policy, National Co-operative Policy, New National Seeds Policy, Cold Storage Scheme and Self employment Scheme was launched. *Kisan credit card* holders to have Rs.20,000 in case of permanent disability operationalised.

In industrial sector a number of measures were taken by the Government to boost industrial production. Some of them included revival of growth in exports; boost investments and revive capital market; credit policy by Reserve Bank of India; Create demand for basic and other goods; Six lane 7000km highway; and exemption of 7 inputs used in steel manufacturing from 5 per cent special custom duty.\(^{63}\)

The field of Petroleum and Natural Gas witnessed hectic activity during the recent past when many vital decisions were taken which had a direct bearing on the oil-security of the country. Phasing out by 2001-02,

administrative pricing mechanism was initiated. Refining sector was delicensed. Private and joint sector refineries were allowed to import crude oil for actual use in their refineries. Environment friendly fuel ‘LPG’ was allowed to be used in automobiles. Petroleum Regulating Board proposed to protect consumers, encourage healthy competition etc. in the deregulated market. Petroleum Regulating Board Bill 2002 was introduced in Lok Sabha.64

In Power sector, the government took steps to attract large investments, rationalize the tariffs and remove the bottlenecks. The major steps taken include-Blueprints for power sector development All villages to be electrified by 2007 and all households by 2017. Village electrification is included in the Prime Minister’s Gramodaya Yojana’. Acceleration Power Development Programmes (APDP) was initiated from 2002-2003. It provided financial assistance to states for renovation, modernization, strengthening, transmission and distribution of works.

In Science and Technology, Prime Minister Vajpayee emphasized the importance of making scientific temper an integral part of life by giving the slogan Jai Vigyan. The Government stressed on developing cost effective technologies, freedom from bureaucratization and using science for economic problems and encouraging youth to opt for a carrier in science. The NDA government took a number of far-reaching decisions in 1999 to give a fillip to science and technology. Significant decisions were also announced in bio-technology, with a focus on developing new vaccines and on plant biology genomics including human genome. Five underground nuclear tests were successfully conducted in May, 1998. India thus proved that it was a full-fledged atomic weapon state. Investment in R and D was to be hiked from 0.8 per cent in 2001-2002 to 2 pre cent of GDP. Jai Vigyan Mission projects numbering 21 were under successful

64 Ibid, p.139.
implementation and National Innovation Foundation had also been set up. The outlay plants for atomic energy was fixed up at about four times more than the initial year 1998-99, the year of the formation of the NDA government. World’s highest astronomical observatory was built up in Ladakh. The Centre for development of advanced computing unveiled its super computer PARAM, 10,000 and simple hand held computer Simputer was developed. Many awards for young scientists and for school children were instituted. Technology Business Incubator’s Scheme and mission for Application of Technology to Urban Renewal with HUDCO was launched. Many projects with foreign collaboration were taken up such as Indo-US Science and Technology forum; Indo-US Meteorological Data Centre; US patents for surgical techniques; cow urine distillate; long term co-operation with Russia in science and technology 146 Indo Russian Collaborative projects and Laser Technology Centre were set up with the help of France; Indo-Russian Centre for Biotechnology was established; and an agreement on Indo–Japan joint research on efficient coal production technology was made. Pollution-free battery powered electric car was developed.

In the field of Steel, Ministry of Steel took many fresh initiatives to revitalize the Steel sector to increase the use of steel particularly in non-traditional areas like rural and agro-machinery. Steps were imitated to frame National Steel Policy and chalk out vision -2020 for the steel sector. National Steel Institute was established at Puri in Orissa for training, consultancy and, Research and Development facilities for Steel production in Southern and Eastern regions.

Similarly, the last but not the least is Water Resources which occupied a prime place in the NAG (National Agenda for Governance). It was a guiding star for the NDA government with a commitment to make drinking water available to all villages in the five years ending in 2004. Revised National Water Policy was approved by the National water
Resources Council (NWRC) in April 2002. 1,344 tube-wells were constructed under Accelerated Ground Water Exploration in drought affected states and 2,225 exploratory tube-wells were constructed in various hydro-geological environments to generate scientific data.65

2. Achievements in Welfare Services Sphere

These were further divided into number of divisions. The first priority was given to Civil Aviation, especially for modernization along-with a host of other facilities under the regime. Five airports were approved for corporatization and five cities for construction of state-of-the-art international airports. Modern air traffic service system was installed at New Delhi airport and three airports were upgraded to facilitate operation of international flights. It introduced domestic holiday packages, Desh-Videsh, Flexi fare, Apex fare, Bharat Darshan wings of freedom schemes.66

The second one was External Affairs, and in this sector, India tested nuclear devices in 1998 and asserted its position in the global forum. India while committing itself to disarmament and no-discriminatory non-proliferation categorically ruled out rolling back its weapons and missile capacities. Dialogues were held with all big powers, particularly America. Initiatives were taken to improve relations with neighboring countries, ASEAN and Far-East countries and encouraging results were seen. Some of the steps taken were Composite Dialogue held with Pakistan at India’s initiatives in 1998. P.M. visited Lahore in 1999. General Pervez Musharraf came in July 2001 for summit level talks in Agra. Bus to Lahore, which was suspended earlier, resumed in January 2004. Strategic partnership and 17 agreements were signed with Russia in October, 2002. Mutual cooperation with US was increased in counter-terrorism, defense, science and technology, investment and trade. In September 2001 US lifted unilateral

sanctions imposed on India after *Pokhran* -II. Political interaction with Afghanistan’s Hamid Kaezia government was started and financial assistance was given.\textsuperscript{67}

In *Finance sector*, the NDA government deepened and broadened the reforms process. Focus was on improving the quality of life for the rural poor and underprivileged to improve national economy. Some of the main steps taken were: *Voluntary Retirement Scheme* (VRS) implemented in public sector banks Insurance sector opened up to the private sector, many tax rates were reduced, double taxation avoidance was adopted.

In the field of *Information and Broadcasting*, the ministry took several steps in national interests for advancing technology and changing requirements. National interests were given supreme importance in the field of satellite broadcasting, telecasting, films and media. Some of the main decisions are: Six regional languages satellite channels of Doordarshan were launched and 24 hours’ satellite channels in 10 states. DTH (Direct to Home) television transmission was opened up in the KU band. DD Bharati channel was launched by Prasar Bharati to focus on children, health, art and culture.\textsuperscript{68}

In the context of Information Technology, the achievements of department of Electronic and the NIC are: e-commerce and information security was initiated during 2001-02. E-commerce, e-governance, e-education, information security and cyber crimes and collaboration among universities were established. Atal Behari Vajpayee Centre for Excellence in Information Communication Technology was set up in Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia).\textsuperscript{69}

In Planning sector, the ninth five year plan (1996-2001) was approved by National Development Council in February 1999. The focus

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
on the 9th plan was on “Growth with Social Justice and Equality” ensuring food and nutritional security for all, and providing the basic minimum safe drinking water, primary health care facilities, universal primary education, shelter and connectivity to all in a time bound manner. Empowerment of women Component Plan was introduced for the first time, promoting and developing people’s participatory institutions like Panchayati Raj, cooperatives and self help groups, and strengthening efforts to build self-reliance.  

In Road Transport, the economy of the country depends heavily on the transport sector. National Highways Authority of India was to implement the National Highways Development Project (NHDP), comprising of Golden Quadrilateral (phase I), and North-South and East-West corridors (phase II) involving development of about 13,150km of world class highways at a cost about Rs.54,000 crore. NHDP was to provide direct employment to 2,50,000 workers (skilled and unskilled and 10,000 supervisory staff per day. NHDP to generate annual requirement of 30 to 40 lakh metric tones of cement and 3 lakh metric tones steel during 2001-04.  

Telecommunication is one of the prime support services needed for the rapid growth and modernization of various sectors of economy. Policy for grant of licence for Global Mobile Personal Communications by Satellite (GMPCS) was announced. Cellular Mobile Telephone Services (CMTS) were opened for full competition and fresh licenses granted. About Rs.1663.57 crore received as entry fee so far. MTNL inaugurated Dolphin Cellular Mobile services.  

In the field of Tourism and Culture the NDA Government took

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70 Ibid.  
72 Ibid.
several decisions and organized events during its first tenure to promote Tourism and Culture. Year 1999-2000 was declared ‘Visit India year’ to coincide with the 50th Anniversary of Indian Republic millennium mahayatra package, consisting of various incentives, to attract Indians living overseas during this period.\(^{73}\)

3. In Human Welfare Sphere

The achievements of NDA included various issues. New initiatives in Defence with far-reaching impact were taken by the Government in the year 1998. *Pokhran-II* in May, 1998 took India into the select band of nuclear weapon states. The constitution of the National Security Council fulfilled the Government’s priority to National Security. The Government developed different missiles like *AGNI, PRITHVI, TRISHUL, AKASH* and *NAG*. Some had been inducted while others were in the final stages. *DHANUSH*, the naval version of Prithvi surface to surface missile had been successfully flight tested. Russian Sukhoi -30MKI aircraft *AKSHYA* was inducted into the Indian Air Force. Pilotless target aircraft *LAKSHYA* was inducted into the Air Force and Navy. New tank MBT-Ex had been developed by integrating features of T-72 and MBT Arjun Tank.\(^{74}\)

The government has given prime importance to Education and commitment has been made in the National Agenda for qualitative improvement in education and for universalisation of elementary education, eradication of illiteracy and making primary education free and compulsory upto 5th Standard. A new scheme for providing free education for girls upto college level launched, support cells for women entrepreneurs were set up and National Plan of Action drawn up to combat trafficking and commercial exploitation of women. Right to Education Bill


\(^{74}\)Ibid.
to guarantee education to all children in 6-14 age group was passed by Parliament.

In *Food and Consumer Affairs* the Ministry did the gigantic task of managing the country’s food economy, procuring food-grains from farmers and distributing them enough Public Distribution System. Measures adopted in this regard like: A new scheme to provide 10kg of food-grains to senior citizens was proposed. *Antyodaya Anna Yojna* (AAY) was introduced for providing highly subsidized foodgrains to the poorest of the poor. Each below Poverty Line (BPL) family was given 35 kg food-grains per month at subsidized prices. Public Distribution System (Control) Order 2001 was issued to ensure timely supply of ration at fair price shops around the country. Food for Work Programme (FWP) was introduced in January 2001.

Similarly, the ministry of Home Affairs aimed to achieve the goal of ensuring the safety and security of all citizens within the country. Prevention of Terrorists activities (POTA) Bill was passed in joint session of Parliament and 32 organisations were declared unlawful under POTA. New states of *Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttaranchal* came into being after bifurcating bigger states of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh respectively. Urgent steps were taken in close co-operation with state authorities to contain violence in post Godhra train episode and Ahmedabad riots in Gujrat in 2002.

In the field of *Law and Justice* the NDA Government took initiatives to usher in electoral reforms. A set of 24 proposals for electoral reforms was identified by the Government for discussion with leaders of various political parties. National Commission to review the working of the Constitution submitted its report recommending 58 amendments. First ever

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75 *Ibid.*.
76 *Ibid.*.
National Judicial Pay Commission Report was implemented in the Union Territories. Marriage law was amended to provide interim relief in divorce cases and cases maintenance for children and old parents by courts within 60 days from serving of the notices.

In Rural Development, construction of rural roads for better connectivity, rural housing and drinking water programmes and restructure self-employment programmes continued to be implemented. ‘Sampoorna gramin Rozgar Yojna’ was launched in September 2001, tones of foodgrains released and thousands of man days were generated. Swarnajayanti Gram Rozgar Yojna (SGRY) was launched in April 1999 and Self Help Groups were formed. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sevak Yojna (PMGSY) was launched in December 2000 and Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojna, Gramin Awaas Yojna was launched in 2000-2001 and about 3 lakh houses were constructed for the BPL families. Annapurna Scheme was launched on April 01, 2000 to provide food security to senior citizens.

Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry was entrusted with the welfare and empowerment of S.C/S.T., Minorities, Backward Classes and the Disabled. A few new schemes were launched for the development of Backward Classes, such as Pre-examination Coaching, Pre-Matric scholarship, Hostels and Aid to voluntary organizations for the welfare of OBCs. A new scheme of Rs.25 crore was launched for rehabilitation of tribals, education of tribal girls, upkeep of national parks and wild life sanctuaries.

For Tribal Affairs the charge of full-fledged Cabinet rank Minister was constituted in October 1999 to give focused attention to the socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribes. Adivasi Mahila-Sashaktikaran Youjna through NSTFDC was launched for financial assistance upto Rs.50,000 to eligible Scheduled Tribe women at maximum interest of 4%
only. A scheme of setting up of *Gram Banks* was extended which provided Rs. twenty crore in 2002-03 against Rs. one crore only in 1999-2000.

Last but not the least, under *Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation*, the NDA Government provided shelters to people. The Urban law (Ceiling and Regulation) Act 1976 was repealed by an ordinance on 11th February 1999. This released more than 2 lakh hectares of land for developing housing and urban infrastructure in 64 cities. The work for 53.5 kilometer long Delhi Mass Rapid Transit system, popularly known as Metro railway, was started on October 2, 1998. The Shahdra to Tees Hazari Sector started functioning in 2002-2003. Vijayveer Awas Housing Complex for Kargil Heroes, Mortgave credit Guarantee Scheme, *Swarna Jayanti Shahri Rajgar Yojna* were started, and Urban Reform/Incentive Fund, City Challenge Fund, State Level Pooled Finance Development scheme and Good Urban Governance Campaign were launched.\(^7\)

The NDA government was the first national coalitional government in India to complete a full five year term in office. It went a step ahead of UF government by using the institutional mechanism of coalition maintenance for effective working. It used most extensive and elaborated mechanism to coordinate between parties within and outside the government. The NDA had a two dimensional coordination mechanism, which was not restricted merely in the political sphere, but also it formed the National Agenda for Governance (NAG) and the Coordination Committee (CC). Besides this, the alliance began to use extensively the all-party meetings and Chief Minister’s conferences for consultation. At the governmental level, it used the device of Group of Ministers (GOM) not only for administrative reasons and formulation of policy matters but also to settle the issues of political significance.

The National Agenda for Governance (NAG) like the Common Minimum Programmes (CMP) of the UF formed the first base on which the alliance revolved. The NAG reflected a commitment from the main alliance partner, the BJP adhered to a moderate agenda not confirming to religious programmes only. This commitment removed the untouchability tag that the BJP carried, and enabled the allies to join hands with the party to form the alliance. Thus the NAG continued to be an important part of daily political discourse and crucial torchbearer for the alliance. At the second level, the NDA had a Coordination Committee (CC). Unlike the Steering Committee of the UF, the CC met more regularly and frequently. Considering the fact that the smaller parties held the key to the stability of the alliance, the CC played a key role in the maintenance of the alliance. The CC made it a point to meet before each parliamentary session to ensure floor coordination among the allies. The institution of all-party meetings brought together all political parties on a common platform. The all-party meeting route was used by government to elicit the opinion or make some clarifications to political parties on some legislation or proposed legislative measures, and to discuss matters of national and international importance among other things. The advantage of this mechanism was that it gave the government a sounding board and most importantly enabled discussion to take place in a relaxed and informal manner as compared to parliament or any other such formal forum. This enabled parties to freely express their opinion and reach compromises, which was not possible in parliament, where winning and losing, are recorded and publicized.

The NDA coordination machinery was not limited to political level alone but also took place at the governmental level. The NDA federal coalition began to make use of inter-ministerial groups, which like the all-party mechanism, served multiple purposes. The GoM’s served the purpose
of coordination within a coalition ministry, it helped to minimise differences of opinion and conflicts within the cabinet. It also helped in making important policy decisions and vetting other policy and programme recommendations. This mechanism was also used for the purpose of looking into matters of concern to different allies of the coalition. These groups popularly called Group of Ministers (GoM) usually composed of three to four members of the union cabinet. Thus coalitions evolved newer and sturdier mechanisms of coordination.

Though there is no single cause that has led to the breakdown of federal coalitions, there were many factors responsible. Competition at the state level the main reason for the breakdown of an alliance. Another reason for the breakdown of alliances could be traced to the absence of a proper institutionalized consultation mechanism within the coalition. The game of power sharing was also responsible for breakdown of coalition. In the Indian system, this process of power sharing is largely done by the allocation of portfolios such as that of Cabinet Ministers, Ministers of State, Deputy Ministers; arrangement of important positions of authority, Constitutional posts of Governors, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Legislative posts such as headship and membership of parliamentary committees, consultative joint committees and others where nominations made by the Prime Minister such as appointing the Chairman and members of Indian Council of Cultural Relations, Lalit Kala Akademi, Indian Council of Social Science Research, etc. A weak organisational structure of the core party within the alliance was also a source of breakdown of coalition. But the NDA coped up efficiently with all these barriers responsible for breakdown of the coalition and provided a good performance during its tenure.

Besides all pulls and pressures, the NDA performed well in the areas of controversial legislations and reforms. It passed many Acts and Bills
like Insurance Regulatory Development Authority Bill and Securities Laws (Amendment) Bill. Several legislations in conformity with government’s policy of globalization and economic liberalization were also passed, for example, Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), Trade Marks Act, Copyright Amendment Act, etc. The government successfully introduced Information Technology Bill, 1999 to provide legal recognition for e-commerce. Many innovative schemes were initiated by the government in areas like tourism, civil aviation, agriculture, law and justice, information and broadcasting, railways, power, surface transport and human resource development. Though, the government was frequently rocked by the controversies created by the hidden agenda of the BJP or the alliance partners as they wanted to retain their position in the government and were to satisfy the home constituencies as well.

It efficiently managed to elect A.P.J. Kalam for the office of the President of India as a consensus candidate of the NDA and Congress which reflected the collective strength of the NDA allies. The office of the Vice President also went to Bhandar Singh Shekhawat supported by the NDA. It also demonstrated its strength by making reforms. It successfully formed three new states-Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttranchal. It introduced four budgets including the millennium budget for 2000-2001.

Thus NDA made commendable achievements to its credit in the fields of Production and Development. In the sphere of Production and Development number of achievements were recorded in the sectors of agriculture, industry, petroleum and natural gas, power, science and technology, steel, and water resources. Various welfare schemes were also initiated. In the fields of social justice and employment, tribal affairs, urban development and poverty alleviation, the achievements were up to the mark during the tenure of NDA.