CHAPTER - IV

COALITION POLITICS IN THE CENTRE - A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE
CHAPTER - IV

COALITION POLITICS IN THE CENTRE - A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter an attempt is made to discuss with the historical perspective of coalition politics in the centre which included briefly the coalition process of India before 1977 because for proper understanding of history of coalition politics in India and to the extent, a coalition government is a partnership of several distinct political parties or organizations here is confidence built up in the federal units of the federations among the parties from different states that are represented there. Infact, the coalition government becomes more acceptable than a single party government.

Coalition politics is older than the constitution of India (1950) itself. The Indian National Congress which spearheaded the freedom struggle was a coalition force. Undivided India had its first experiment with coalition in 1937 when elections to the provincial legislatures under the Government of India Act-1935 were held in 1937. The Congress obtained a clear majority in Madras, United provinces, Bihar, central provinces and Orissa. In Bombay it won only half the seats and could count-upon the support of some members of other parties. The Congress had a tacit electoral understanding with the Muslim League. But after the elections the Congress refused to form a coalition with the Muslim League. Later in 1946 Muslim League joined the interim Government and that interim Government of Hindu, Muslim and Sikhs were
broadly given representation in governance. This interim coalition Government formed on October 25, 1946 and lasting nine months. This coalition between a party opposing partition of the country, and the other bent upon the partition of the country, lacked political homogeneity. Therefore, doomed from the start and at last Prime Minister Nehru demanded the resignation of the League members.

Thus just after independence, the Indian National Congress was the only party which commanded popularity and respect of the people with a mass base and grassroots in India. The Congress party which remained in power both at the centre as well in the states from 1947 to 1967 with its monolithic character. But it also had a coalition character. It was a party of the centre with a bias towards the left- adhering to a set of ideas which were shared by other parties and groups, right or left. The coalition character of the Congress formed a predominant model, that provides both intra and inter party competitive cum-coalition model without allowing for the alteration of power as far as possible.

Hence a deeply heterogeneous country with multiple cleavages like India should have entered the coalition era much before. But after independence, the credit for having the first ever coalition under the present constitution goes to what was then Patiala and the East Punjab States Union (PEPSU). As no party could get a majority in the State assembly in the first election of 1952, a coalition of non -Congress parties was formed in April 1952.¹
From the very beginning independent India's experiments with coalition began with state governments which were headed by some non-Congress parties. In state assemblies elections in 1952 the Congress won a clear majority in all the states except Orissa, where the Ganatantra parishad scored some successes, in PEPSU where sikh political groups were strong in Travancore, Cochin, Madras and Andhra communists scored heavily. In West-Bengal communists dominated the city of Calcutta. After the creation of Travancore-Cochin as a separate state in 1954's assembly election minority party PSP formed government on the support of the Congress. This coalition government continued till spring 1956. In the second general election of 1957, opposition parties of undivided Bombay formed a united front called the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, it pressed the demand for a separate state of Maharashtra. In 1957 elections the CPI formed its government with the support of five independents. This was the turning point in democratic India where on of its state was headed by the Communist. From 1957-61 Orissa was run by a coalition government of the Congress was run by a coalition government of the Congress and Ganatantra Parishad and from 1960-69 a coalition of PSP, Muslim League and the Congress ruled Kerala. Till 1967, the centralising force in India from the inception of the federal system was the Indian National Congress, occupying its place as the dominant party at the centre and in nearly all the states formed a Congress led coalition with the major opposition parties, from 1957-61 in Orissa and from 1960-64 in Kerala.
The year 1967 turned out to be a watershed in Indian politics. In that year, after the four General election political process in the Indian states culminated in the breakdown of the 'One-party dominant' system or sometime called the Congress system.

Thus, the era of coalition politics started in 1967 in so far as state governments are concerned and since 1967 large-scale experiment with coalition politics occurred when the Congress lost power in half the states and in eight states of India that is in Bihar, Haryana, Kerala, Madras, Punjab, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and West-Bengal, non-Congress coalitions of diverse parties came to power.

The coalition experiment in India was a product of the fourth general election held in 1967, and that first experiment of coalition politics was confined to the state level on non-Congress models during 1967-1972 owing to diversity amongst parties, lack of ideological cohesion, lack of strong leadership and shifting loyalties of different fractions through splits mergers and alignments it failed.

Coalitional politics in India is a direct legacy of the period of one party dominance in the country. The end of this one party dominance has resulted in a situation of political change in which political parties are at one and the same time, trying to enter into coalitions with a view to fill jointly the political vacuum created by the Congress (I) eclipse and also to forge a viable independent identity to avail themselves singly of the newly created prospects of alteration of power.
One of the important developments of the 1967 General Election was the emergence of a new concept, that is Regionalism. Congress and the caste system contributed more to the emergence of regionalism in India.

The fourth general elections of 1967 was the final turning point because this election changed the course of politics in India. The elections led to the replacement of dominant party system by the multiparty system in which no particular party claimed absolute majority at any level of the political structure with the result of that model of intra party (tacit or implied) coalition was replaced by the inter-party (express of formal) coalition system.  

The 1967 election marked an advent of a new era in Indian politics. The dominant Congress lost power in most of states of the Indian Union and this resulted into the lowering of its earlier stream roller position in the centre. The break-down of the one party dominant system, to the dismay and surprise of many a western political analyst of the Indian political system did non lead to the collapse of the system although it gave way to the emergence of the coaltional politics in the technical sense of the term.

The Fourth General election marked the emergence of a new leadership with the disappearance of the old guards of the ‘Great Tradition’. The spirit of nationalism retreated and regional aspirations started gaining ground during this period. Regional groups like the Akali Dal in Punjab and the DMK in Tamil Nadu articulated their respective regional demands and came to exist as contenders for power. The Congress was unable to withstand the pulls and
pressures that emerged from the base of the polity. Though it remained a ‘national’ party but lost its roots in regional politics. The 1967 elections gave a severe blow to the Congress. The party was not only ousted from power in a number of states but also the mass base was lost to it, because the scheduled castes, backward classes and the minorities who constituted the traditional ‘vote bank’ for the Congress were alienated from it for the first time since independence. These events were unexpected and as such the party failed to absorb the shocks. Constant conflicts defections came to engulf the whole party. The result was a vertical split in the Congress between the old guards called the ‘Syndicate’ and the young Turks in 1969.

The split of the Congress was a major personal triumph for Mrs. Gandhi thought her government was reduced to minority and survived only with the outside supports from the Left. But it was a great loss for Congress party as well as for democracy and the country.

Opposition parties won electoral victory in several states in 1967. The non-Congress governments in some states were coalitions of several parties based on common agenda. All the non-Congress parties -the Akali Dal, the CPI (M), the CPI, the Jana Sangh, the Akali Dal (Master Group), the SSP and the Republican party formed the popular United Front, which comprised the CPI (M), the Bangla Congress and fourteen other parties, formed its government in West Bengal. In Orissa the Swantantra party, consisting of the Jana Congress and former princes, formed government in Kerala, the United Front of the
CPI(M), CPI, SSP, RSP, KTP, KSP and the Muslim League formed government. Thus, these states experienced coalition governments. However, there were some states where the politics of frequent defections resulted in the making of the coalition, of course, for a very short period. Though non-Congress parties soon failed to hold themselves together as an emerging alternative force to the Congress but their initiatives, efforts and aspirations to challenge the single party dominance certainly played a important role in strengthening the unity of opposition against the Congress in some states. Their failure to emerge as a consolidated coalition force was caused by many defections, leadership conflict and non-implementation of minimum common programme. It has been calculated that whereas in the ten year period between 1957 and 1967 there had been in all of India, a total of 542 legislators changing parties, in a single year following the 1967 elections there were as many as 438 defections.\(^3\)

Defections and gradual declaration of non-Congress parties to emerge as a viable political alternative gave a set-back to the Congress. In the words of Rajni Kothari: “The Congress was a characteristic catch-all party, trying to encompass all the more relevant segments of political reality, including a great many oppositional segments. It was like a Hindu society in miniature, accommodative and agglomerative, given less to specificity and differentiation and more to consensus and Catholicism. The Congress was ‘grand coalition’, with a great historic antecedents and it self representing the Indian nation in most of its essentials” \(^4\)
Immediately after the mid-term elections in March 1971, the Congress (R) made a serious effort to regain control over some of the state Governments which had not fallen in line with the party. It was able to form a coalition government in West Bengal with an unstable majority. Its efforts paid dividends in states of Gujarat, Mysore, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh the SSP led SVD Government and the Congress (O) led Government fell as a result of large scale defections. The coalition governments would have been formed in these two states with Congress (R). On similar grounds State Governments of Gujarat, Mysore and Punjab fell. Presidents rule was clamped in these three states. Uncertain position in the West-Bengal state Assembly forced the coalition government of this state headed by Shri. Ajay Mukherjee to advise the Governor (perhaps with the approval of central Government leaders) to dissolve the Assembly. Accordingly, it was dissolved on June 25, 1971.

Thus coalition experiments at the state level in India are of diverse nature. From the period of 1967-71, there have been more than twenty different coalition governments in the Indian states. In West Bengal and in Kerala, to a lesser extent because these governments have been based on common programmes agreed to by primarily leftist political parties. In Orissa, there has been coalition between ideologically like minded parties of the right and in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and the Punjab the coalitions consisted of parties with disparate ideologies.
Despite the weakening of the Congress party during 1967-71 it continued to be a single dominated party at the centre till the ninth general elections. The split of the Congress in 1969 posed a serious challenge before Mrs. Gandhi. So she responded to this challenge and she adopted the strategy of populism to establish a mass link between the party and the people, and between herself and the masses. And this adopted strategy reap the benefits both for herself and the party. The result was that in the March, 1971 (Lok Sabha) and March, 1972 (Assemblies) elections she established her as the ‘prominent leader of the country’ and settled the struggle for power that had been going on since Nehru’s death. But it is also noteworthy that, the Congress dominance after 1967 was weakened, and according to Kothari “the only non-Congress parties that, proved coalitionable after 1967 were the Marxist Communists in Kerala, the DMK in Madras and Swatantra Jana Congress coalition in Orissa, all of which shared the characteristic of being a cohesive regional force in the respective state, with considerable local support rather than an adhoc alliance of various parties and defecting Congressmen who happened elsewhere.” In the mid-term assembly poll in 1969, coalition emerged as a viable alternative to the Congress in several states like in West Bengal, Punjab, Kerala, Haryana, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Goa and Himachal Pradesh. Here only two states-Kerala and West Bengal will be taken, where coalition governments have been the viable choice of democratic governance. In these two states, coalitional arrangements have facilitated federalisation process and political stability.
There have been many coalition governments in various states after 1967 elections. There was P.C. Ghosh led coalition government in West Bengal in 1967. Presidential Rule was imposed in Feb 1968.

In Bihar Shri Bhola Paswan Sashtri formed coalition in 1969 but it was short lived.

There was Jana Congress - Swatantra coalition in Orissa in 1970 and Presidential Rule was imposed in 1971.

The Achuta Menon coalition government in Kerala and Jyoti Basu leftist front government in West Bengal successfully completed its full term. This is because the coalition parties had contested elections unitedly and so there was unity while governing the state.

1977 Lok Sabha elections and in 1972 Assembly elections Congress party under the leadership of Mrs. Indira Gandhi came back to power. And the major political developments of this phase of Indian politics was that neither the voters gave clear verdict in favour of any party nor the coalitional arrangements were based on any community and of course it was a good sigh of success for future of coalition in a heterogeneous country.

However, the minority Congress Government of Mrs. Indira Gandhi continued the rule with tacit support of CPI and DMK. CPI and DMK were not represented in the government. But after the elections of 1971 Mrs. Gandhi's party was returned to power with an overwhelming majority and provided a strong government till 1977.
It has been rightly said that a tradition of coalitional politics in India in the loose sense of the term earlier than the 1967's election scene. The homogeneous Congress governments in the Centre and in the States were not very effective and purposive since they were led by people who belonged to an 'umbrella party'. In a way, the Congress system has always been a system of coalition, multi group in character and informed by a continuous process of internal bargaining and mobility. 

In sum, there were coalition governments in states, where pre-election electoral alliance resulted into the coalitional governments and in some states coalitional governments were formed on the basis of the post-election results with the help of the Congress defectors.

After 1967, intra-party factionalism and conflicts resulted splinter groups in the form of Jana Congress in West -Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Jana Kranti Dal in Bihar; Jana paksha in Mysore; and the Janata party in Rajasthan. This emergence of splinter groups and their reconciliation with opposition parties created a situation conducive to coalition and competitive multi-party system. Angela Berger described it as a pattern which moved from one party dominance to moderately competitive multi party system.

The period of coalition of 1967-71 however, again goneway to Congress dominance, never theless, this time dominance with a difference. This difference came from the vertical split which the Congress party experienced in 1969, which in turn necessitated a redefinition of the party in terms of cohesiveness
and ideological and programmatic clarity. Added with the opposition became more assertive in that period, it became difficult to carry on with the earlier strategy of factional coalition within the rubric of the “Congress system”. More so, the opposition was getting differentiated between the right oriented B.J.S (Bharatiya Jana Sangh), Swatantra Congress (C) and so on. And the communists -CPI (Communists party of India) CPIM (communist party of India -Marxist) and so on. Besides, there emerged state based parties with middle caste rich peasant following of which charan Singh’s BKD (Bharatiya Kranti Dal) later named BLD (Bharatiya Lok Dal) stands prominent.

The culmination of the post-coalition political process in the 1970’s was the coming together of major non-Communist opposition parties to combine into a party called Janata Party. This ‘combine’ consisted of five major parties- Congress (O), Bharatiya Lok Dal, Socialist party, Bharatiya Jans sangh and CFD (Congress for democracy). So it is appropriate to treat ‘Janata’ experiment as a “Combine coalition” rather than a party with broader agreement on goals and principles. The internal behaviour whereby all tried to protect their goals separate from any collective objective. The disintegration of the Janata party and emergence of the BJP the Lok Dal the JNPCSC (Janata party secular charn singh) retrospectively by the coalitional nature of the Janata party. Nonetheless the 1977 Janata experiments has given rise to what has been termed as “a highly competitive two party situation” While in Bihar the Janata coalition (Harry Blair designates the Janata party as Janata coalition) got -66% of seats and the
largest opposition, the Congress got 17.6% in U.P they got 82.8% and 11.05% respectively. This shows emergence of a two party "situation" as well as electoral benefit of oppositional unity.

The installation of coalition Government led by Janata Front in Gujarat in June, 1975 confirmed the polarization of all non-Congress parties rather than anti-Congress plank. It was to provide an alternative to the Congress but it could not succeed due to declaration of national emergency in June, 1975.

After the emergency in 1975, different coalition governments came into power but, they did not complete their tenure as they were in fragile conditions on account of peculiar developments like, the misuse of Article 356 and the office of the Governor, due to political defections, the crisis of political leadership and the interference of bureaucracy. Here important to note that all the coalitional governments that installed till 1977's elections were at the state level and a more decisive and exemplary phase of Indian politics began with the formation of the Janata party coalition government at the centre in 1977.

According to Mr. B.G. Deshmukh and Mr. V.M. Gadgil out of 138 State Governments since 1977. Forty were coalition government with an average life of 26 months each. But it is not understood why Mr. Gadgil and Mr. Deshmukh started counting coalitions only from 1977 because the phenomenon of coalitions on a large scale started in 1967. However, according to Bruce Baeno de Mesquita (strategy Risk and personality in coalition politics (CUP 1975) there were 20 coalitional between 1967-75. So in all there were about 60 coalitions, since 1967.
THE FIRST COALITION GOVERNMENT AT THE CENTRE (1977-1979):

The turning point in the history of coalition in India can be identified with the Janata party rule (1977-79) which brought, for the first time, a group of non-Congress parties to power at the centre. This was a very historic movement for opposition parties which succeeded in providing an alternative to the Congress at the national level. This is to recall here that opposition parties had first experimented with coalition government at the state level 1967. Ten years later this democratic development occurred at the national level. All these experiments became catalysts in the democratization process strengthening the multi-party system, policy-making and power-sharing processes.

In the elections to the sabha held in March 1977, the Congress faced its worst rout, and for the first time the Congress lost its power at the centre giving room to the government of the Janata party. Though Janata party was apparently a single party, but in reality it was a combination of socialist party, Bharatiya Jan Sangh, Congress (O), BLD (Bharatiya Lok Dal) and the group of dissident Congressmen led by Jagjivan Ram and H.N. Bahugwia. And they came together to contest the election with a common symbol and common manifesto. The manifesto of this Janata party was 'Bread with Freedom' which had caught the imagination of the people and had roused their hopes and aspirations. In this election Janata party obtained 43.17% of the popular votes and captured 295 seats out of 540 (55.4% per cent seats). So this electoral victory was an outcome of the unity of opposition leaders and parties.
So this was the first coalition government at the centre led by Janata party and the election of 1977 was described as a watershed and political earthquake in Indian politics. The Janata leaders declared victory of democracy over dictatorship or in other words the one party dominance rule of Congress in India.

Thus the coalition era which started in India since 1967 at the state level reached its height and captured the power of the centre in 1977’s Lok Sabha election. Hence India experienced its first coalition government at the centre formed by Janata party.

According to some scholars the Janata government of 1977 was a sort of coalition government in so far five political parties with different ideologies constituted this party with a view to provide an alternative to the Congress party. The coalition character of the Janata Government further welcomed members of Akali Dal and All India, A.D.M.K. parties to join the Government. In actual working the five components of the Janata party always projected the image that they were separate entities and often levelled charges against each other. Any how, the Janata government achieved its main purpose of reestablishing the basic structure of the parliamentary regime that Mrs. Gandhi had began to dismantle. The leaders of the non-Congress parties knew and practiced, if not so well: that no leader party, or coalition could remain in power in Delhi without maintaining effective control over most state governments.
Hence the sixth Lok Sabha election held in 1977 has been rightly described as a second turning point in the history of coalition in India. The inherent contradictions, conflicting personal interests not only split the Janata party but brought down the government also. Morarji Desai who became the Prime Minister of the first non-Congress government at the centre was chiefly due to the infighting in the Janata party that ultimately Morarji government was forced to tender resignation. Because the Janata party split into two parts and a power struggle broke out between the two strongest Janata party constituents, the Baratiya Lok Dal (BLD) and the Jan Sangh. The BLD got Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Orissa and Bihar, the Jan Sangh got Rajasthan, M.P, Himachal and Delhi. While parties like the former Jan Sangh shed their identity to form the Janata conglomerate and abided by the cabinet decisions. Morarji Desai resigned from the office of Prime Minister on 17 July, 1977.

Later Charan Singh government which succeeded Morarji government for a while was a pure coalition government consisting of Janata (S) and Congress (U), while the Congress (I) extended support to this coalition government from outside. After sometime Congress (I) withdrew its support and Charan Singh's Lok Dal and George Fernande's faction of the socialists could not adjust themselves to the new situation that resulted in collapse of Janata coalition in July 1979.

SECOND COALITION GOVERNMENT AT THE CENTRE (1979-80):

A new coalition government was formed with Mr. Charan Singh as Prime Minister in October, 1979. This coalition included leaders and groups from the
entire spectrum of Indian politics, CPI (M) on the one hand and those who were close to big business groups on the other. The party leaded by Mr. Charan Singh was a party of defectors and was not recognised as a party in the Lok Sabha and did not enjoy absolute majority. However, Charan Singh tendered his resignation to the president because of the withdrawal of support by Congress (I) to his government. The Charan Singh government advised the President to dissolve the Lok Sabha which was accepted and the mid-term election was announced.

Failure of the Janata party coalition caused personality clashes, ideological differenced and defections. The Janata party coalition showed that there can be two dominant parties in multi party democracy. Its failure gave warning to coalition oriented parties to work out their difference first and then got prepared for governance. The Janata party rule also showed the force and bargaining power of the coalition against the dominant Congress at the centre which had never been challenged before.

The Janat party experiment with coalition of 1977 came to an end in 1979 and Mrs. Indira Gandhi who had again split the Congress in 1978, came back to power with a majority of seats in the Lok Sabha and in 1980, she also brought the Congress party back to power.

It was for all practical purpose a coalition government which came down within two years under the pressure and tensions of the opportunism of some of the senior leaders and the irresponsible behaviour of others which resulted
that fresh elections had held in January 1980 in which Congress (I) under Mrs. Gandhi came back with a resounding majority.

In 1980 when the general elections were held it was widely felt, that no single political party shall be able to get clear cut majority in the parliament and an era of coalition politics would down at the centre. But these doubts were belied and Congress (I) returned to the Lok sabha with an overwhelming majority in the general elections of 1980. After the resounding victory of Congress (I) in the elections of 1980 it got the Uttar Pradesh Assembly dissolved before the expiry of its normal term and held fresh elections in June 1980. As a result of these elections the Congress (I) captured 306 seats in a house of 425 members.\(^6\) with this absolute majority Congress (I) formed a government on its own without the support of other parties. With this ended the temporary era of coalition politics at centre for about further nine years.

The year 1980, however again witnessed the disintegration of the Janata “Coalition” into its constituent units. The Congress party as Congress (Indira) came back a more majority specially in two major states of India that were Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. It got -52.2% and 72.7% of seats in Bihar and U.P. respectively and the largest opposition, the Janata party (Secular) of Charan Singh got -13% and 13.9% of seats in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. This shows that the Congress party returned to dominant a position both at the all -India and at the state level. Nevertheless while some observers call it “restoration of Congress dominante”\(^7\) Others argue that given certain changes in Congress “regional distribution of the party support base and shift in the support base of minorities and the sc’s 1980 cannot be seen as restoration”\(^8\)
However, 1980's witnessed various changes in Indian political scene. The main changes came in Indian party system both at the central and state level. The rise of the BJP with its “Hindutva” agenda and simultaneous shift of the Congress to the centre in order to neutralise the erosion of upper caste Hindu vote has been, paralleled with the rise of parties competing to represent various sections of the OBC and the Dalits. It is also important to note that from 1980's onwards the party system is also characterized be “Regionalisation” and “Federalisation” whereby National parties get limited to certain regions and states.

In the Eighth General elections held in December 1984 the Congress (I) again secured an unprecedented victory and captured 401 seats, surpassing its earlier record of 371 seats in the Lok Sabha elections held in 1957 under Jawaharlal Nehru. Inspite of unexpected atmosphere, the assassination of Indira Gandhi on 31st October, 1984 and subsequent pro-Congress wave in the December election, Congress achieved landslide victory by obtaining highest ever percentage of votes. And in the Assembly elections held in March 1985 Congress (I) once again secured absolute majority.

However, signalled a return to the earlier politics of conciliation and consensus, when the new Prime Minister announced his commitment to the essential values of democratic politics in his address to the Congress centenary session in December 1985 at Bombay. However the period from 1980 to 1989 was the period of Congress because Indira Gandhi came back on Jan 14, 1980 and ruled until she was gunned down by her own sikh security guards. Sworn
in that evening itself, her son Rajiv Gandhi, quickly called the elections that were due to win a massive mandate for the Congress in December 1984. Rajiv, who had entered the Lok Sabha from Amethi after the June 1980 death of younger brother Sanjay, retained the seat in 1984, 1989, and 1991. The last victory coming after his May 21 assassination at Sriperumbudur. At the age of 41, India's youngest Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi dreamt of leading the country into the 21st century. He stayed in office for 1,859 days.\textsuperscript{21}

During the Congress rule between 1980-89 coalition government had disappeared for some time but again it came into picture with more power after 1989's general elections.

The Sixth General Elections of 1977 brought to at end the "Congress system\textsuperscript{22} under which one party made up of conflicting factions, had dominated the National Government of India and most of the states for thirty years. The numerous opposition groups with factions of the governing party shared their power at the individual states but they had never shared power at the national level. But the 1977 Elections were the first success story of anti-Congressism. Thus India experienced first coalition government at the centre in 1977. But unfortunately this coalition experiment collapsed in 1979 and the Congress party came romping back to power in 1980. Following the assassination of Smt. Indira Gandhi and the wide-spread corrupt allegations against Rajiv Gandhi Government the elections of 1989 again brought back the non-Congress coalition Government at the centre. Hence, the coalition
governments evolved slowly and the Congress rule which had enjoyed a virtual monopoly of power both at the centre and in the slates came to an end after 1989's general elections.

THIRD COALITION GOVERNMENT AT THE CENTRE (1989-90):

After the ninth Lok Sabha election in 1989, no political party could get a majority to form the government. Though the Congress party emerged as a single largest party in the election, it did not stake its claim to form a government. The National Front, which emerged as the second largest party, elected V.P. Singh its leader and was invited to form the government by the President R. Venkataraman with the outside support of the Left-parties and the BJP. Thus the ninth general elections of 1989 witnessed coalition (minority) government which had emerged as Third Force strengthening the multi party system, though it was supported by a majority of MP's. As a Prime Minister V.P. Singh said his is a minority coalition government with majority backing of the BJP and CPM. So after the ninth general elections of 1989, situation changed dramatically in favour of a coalitional arrangement at the centre. Infact since 1989, coalition governments have been formed on democratic principles.

Certainly the coalition government of 1989 appeared again as an electoral revolt against the Congress which faced dual threats from the rightists and non communal forces. The elections of 1989 were held in as environment charged with emotions variously aroused by anti corruption campaign, anti Babri Masjid movement of BJP and the Sangh and terrorist threat to national
unity. Bofors issue was raised by non-Congress parties to seek. But mandate for a clean government it is important to note that, most of the efforts of the BJP and the National Front coalition were aimed at defeating the Congress which had grown stronger under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi who despite some failures had initiated market economy, revolution in communication technology, a new era in regional groupings (SAARC), disarmament at the global level and more prominently his success in peaceful negotiations and autonomy agreement with regional rebel leaders in Panjub, Assam and in Northeast, there were other factors which signalled resentment against the Congress. Weaker sections particularly the Muslims were dissatisfied with the Congress over its pseudo commitment to secularism and the security of the minorities. Lower and backward castes were emerging as an assertive force. On the other hand, regional parties and Left groups were maintaining distance from the Congress for its centrist attitude towards non-Congress ruled states. Thus all these factors had encouraged and motivated opposition forces National Front, the BJP and the Left parties to corner the Congress.

Although there were deep differences among the National Front, Left parties and BJP, but their common goal was to defeat the Congress at the centre. In this connection, the National Front stood at the axis with the strong support of BJP and the Left. There were also some seat adjustments between the NF and the BJP. V.P.Singh played a crucial role in uniting opposition parties viz, the Janata party, Lok Dal (A), Lok Dal (B) and others to merge under the label Janata Dal to fight against the Congress. The National Front which included
the Janata party, DMK, CPI, CPI (M), Congress (S), AGP and other small parties agreed on a common platform to defeat the Congress but they had retained their own identify. Thus, the emergence of this mammoth coalition against the Congress which had promised constitutional reforms, anti corruption drive, secularism, social justice and federal solution for Kashmir and Punjab, indicated polarization of voters with the maximum possibility of the coalition government.

This was the minority coalition and thus had the great risk of its premature collapse. The National Front coalition was, therefore, compelled to take precautions before making any important policy decision.

It was also under the tremendous pressure of the BJP to pursue soft pedalled policy towards the militant rightist forces on the Ayodhya issue. As a result the BJP gained significant strength and widened its base by mobilising sections of the Hindus towards the Ayodhya (temple) movement. Besides this, the BJP and the National Front had some internal contradictions particularly at the personality level.

To begin with, chinks first appeared from within when the National Front cabinet adopted a new industrial policy in July 1990. Like the Congress several coalition leaders also criticised this new policy as one calculated to please the world Bank and the multinationals.

On the other hand the Mandal Commission Report became the last nail in the coffin, V.P.Singh accepted it as the fullfilment of its commitment towards
social justice by securing job reservations for other Backward Castes. On the contrary, the outside supporter of the NF, the BJP took it as political opportunism to polarise the society and BJP openly collaborated with upper caste Hindus whose agitations had posed law and order problems. It also took a long driven Rath Yatra (chariot shaped vehicle journey) aimed to mobilise the Hindus for demolishing the Babri mosque. The coalition government headed by V.P. Singh in order to remain in power had to give a free hand to the Rath-Yatra. The Advani’s arrest led to the withdrawal of the BJP’s support from the National Front coalition government. Simultaneously the National Front coalition suffered another defeat when Chandra Shekhar engineered a split in the Janata Dal for becoming the Prime Minister that too on the support of the Congress.

V.P Singh position of Prime Ministership in the multi-party National Front coalition Government in 1989 was followed by a dramatic decline the following year when he became the first Prime -Minister, to lose a vote of confidence on the floor of the Lok Sabha in November 1990. V.P. Singh’s government was supported by both the left parties and BJP, but BJP withdrew its support after its senior leader L.K. Advani, leading a ‘Ratha yatra’ on Ram Janam Bhoomi issue was arrested in Bihar. Thus coalition headed by V.P.Singh broke up in 1990.

On the working of V.P.Singh’s coalition government, President R. Venkataraman observed that his government being dependent on parties with different objectives and ideologies could not withstand pressures from
discordant groups. The V.P. Singh led coalition government was based on absolute contradictions, because the CPM, BJP and the Janata Dal were ideologically opposed to one another and as a result government collapsed.

FOURTH COALITION GOVERNMENT AT THE CENTRE (1990-91):

After the fall of the V.P. Singh led coalition government, the dissident leader Chandra Shekhar staked his claim to form the government with the outside support of Congress led by Rajiv Gandhi, AIADMK, BJP, Muslim League, National conference, Kerala Congress and a few independent members on November 10, 1990. This coalition government was like a small party supported by a very large one from outside. After the formation of the Chandra Shekhar government, the Congress and AIADMK mounted pressure for the dismissal of the DMK government. But the then Tamil Nadu governor declined to recommend the dismissal of the DMK ministry and therefore he was transferred and later he resigned.

There was a thaw in the relationship between Chandra Shekhar and Rajiv Gandhi withdrew support accusing the government of keeping his 10, Janpath residence under surveillance and therefore the Chandra Shekhar government resigned and President Venktarman dissolved the Lok Sabha on 13 March, 1991.

So the National Front government which was a minority coalition showed that there is an alternative to both Congress and the BJP which can provide democratic governance. But its strength was rooted in alliance and coalition which were not impossible but very difficult tasks.
The result of National Front government was Janata Dal sought to consolidate its base among the backward castes while the BJP sought to gain support among upper caste Hindus by inciting anti Muslim feelings. It was during this process of competition between these two non Congress forces, concentrated mostly in north India and Congress was reduced to third place.

The Tenth Lok Sabha elections were held in 1991 and the Congress party formed a government under the leadership of P.V.Narasimha Rao because it was the single largest minority political group in the Lok Sabha. The Narasimha Rao government began with a minority support in the Lok Sabha and used legal loopholes of the Anti Defection Law to convert its minority into a majority in the Lok Sabha.

The history of Tenth Lok Sabha elections was Congress (I) improved its standing by winning 226 of 507 declared seats, 26 short of the 254 needed for a majority and remaining 10 short even with the 16 seats of allies. The National Front partners won 76 seats a loss of almost half their strength in 1989. The Front's communist and Left allies won 55 seats. The National front and Left combined strength (131) was nowhere close to a majority. The BJP (117) and its Shiva Sena allies (4). Together these two group of parties would have had 252 seats or majority if they had worked together as they did in 1989. But in 1991 they were political enemies. It showed no party or combination of parties could aspire towards a majority. Hence Congress (I) was only the single largest party, accepted the offer of the President to form a government and it could
get majority support through cooperation with other parties. And Congress (I) won the vote of confidence in parliament on July 15 with the support of National Front and Left Front combine. Theoretically this was a coalition government. This minority government was from 1991 to December 1993. During this period Narasimha Rao created a majority and sought the support of BJP and the Left V.P. Singh who himself favoured an anti BJP Front soon after the elections, was rebuffed by his party. There after the Janata Dal became totally disoriented and failed to pursue a coherent policy. Rao took advantage of the confusion in the Janata Dal. This augmented the strength of the Congress party in the parliament. Other smaller parties were also splintered and Rao succeeded in putting together a majority in the Lok Sabha and he remained as India’s Prime Minister till 1995. the 10th Lok Sabha lasted the full term (1991-1996) even though, to begin with the Congress party was not enjoying a majority at the centre.

The parliamentary elections held in May 1996, threw up a hung house with the BJP emerge as the single largest party. President Shankar Dayal Sharma invited the BJP to form the government, but party leader A.B. Bajpayee could survive for only 13 days, as Prime Minister. The resignation of Vajpayee culminated in the formation of a Janata Dal government under H.D. Deve Gowda as a Prime Minister with the support of Congress.
The Eleventh Lok Sabha elections resulted in a hung parliament. No political party got a clear verdict from the electorate to form its own government. The Congress (I) which was in power at the centre for the full term of 5 years was defeated. Its strength was reduced by half. It could get 136 seats out of 537 seats. The BJP emerged as the single largest party with 161 seats and National Front and Left Front allies own in 120 constituencies. The remaining seats were won by other parties like TDP (17), DMK (17), TMC (20), BSP (10), Indira Congress (4), Independent and others (18). Thus the 1996 general elections had, given scope for another coalition government. The main contenders for a single party government were the BJP, Congress (I) and the Janata Dal, the left parties and the regional parties formed the third entity. Following the constitutional precedent the President invited Mr. Vajpayee, the leader of the BJP to form the government. But despite a two-week margin the BJP parliamentary party could not get any other party to join hands with it or offer its support from outside. This was indeed an extra-ordinary situation. The moment of its high water mark, success at the polls, has also been the BJP’s moment of cold isolation. The communal stand of BJP which reached its climax with the destruction of the Babri Masjid in December, 1992 followed by a series of communal programmes in different parts of country was the main reason for the alienation of the BJP not only from the Muslims but also from the most of the parties in India.
The Congress (I) preferred to extend support to a group of parties in the name of keeping the communal forces out of power. When the BJP failed to win the vote of confidence, there should have been a coalition of the Congress (I), the Janata Dal and the regional parties but this move could have thrown P.V. Narasimha Rao out of the Congress holding him fully responsible for the worst debacle. The Congress (I) party had also been found to be studded with a numbers of mega-size corruption charges. The Congress (I) therefore, joined the band a wagon of secular forces and decided to support a coalition.

As many as 13 parties with diverse ideological and political positions chose to form a United Front irrespective of their differences and contradictions. This was an important feature of the political layout in the country. The United Front came out because throughout the campaign that preceded the poll, the largest was the communal stand of the BJP and the corrupt rule of the Congress (I). Deve Gowda was chosen as the Prime Minister after V.P. Singh and Jyothi Basu declined the offer. He formed the government on June 1 and got the vote of confidence on June 11, 1996. In fact this was a grand coalition government at the centre which India never had experienced before because it consisted of 13 parties to form the government which ran in the name of the United Front (UF) and the CPI (M) and its Left Front was an integral constituent of this front and TDP, DMK, JD, CPI (M), CPI, TMC, AGP and SP were the main players. Thus there were 13 heads of this government and the tail (Congress-I) that wags any time because before the election of 1996 it-self Congress became the victim of internal cleavages caused by personality factor, defections and
splits. Until Mrs. Sonia Gandhi took over the Congress leadership, Rao-Kesari rivalry had divided the chain of command, the result was that three new groups had emerged. They were the Congress (Tiwari), Tamil Mannila Congress (Moopanar) and Madhya Pradesh Vikas Congress (scindentia). Therefore the Congress adopted a new strategy of supporting parties which were against the BJP, Shiv Sena and Hindu Mahasabha. Under this strategy the United Front of regional parties and others which were major constituents of the National Front, were offered external support by the Congress.

It is said that the National Front gave way to the United Front which consisted of 13 parties even the small party of two members in the parliament. It should be noted that CPM though a part of United Front refused to join the Ministry. They even turned down the offer of Prime Minister post to Jyoti Basu. After the refusal of V.P. Singh, Jyoti Basu and G.K. Moopnar to adorn the post of Prime Minister their choice fell on Deve Gowda of Janata Dal having 44 MPs only. He was fourth choice.

The another important feature of the UF coalition was that there was no pre-election alliance or adjustment among the constituents rather they contested elections against one another as bitter enemies. This coalition has been dubbed as an opportunistic alliance only for the lust of power devoid strong ideological bases and commitments at best the bundle of contradictions. On the other it has been termed as a rainbow of real India representing all the social, cultural and political colours based on social justice and secularism whose sole endeavor is to banish the hunger, disease, illiteracy, unemployment and so on. However,
the 1996’s coalition government was a post election programmatic coalition where every coalition partner had compromised on some points or other and at the same time some gave up their programmes.

The United Front which had come together on the slogan of ‘Secularism’ made some achievements in providing more legitimacy and importance to regional parties in federal governance. It could not achieve its desired goal because of pressures and instability created by the Congress party whose support was necessarily required for the very existence of the UF government. The lack of coordination between the UF and Congress leaders on the one hand and the assertive role of the UF at the centre on the other, caused tensions within the Congress which resulted in lack of cohesion and the Congress pressurised the UF to change its leadership from Deve Gowda to I.K. Gujral. Finally the Congress withdrew its support to UF in 1997. The Congress was said to be unhappy over its failure to get share in governance and to exclude the DMK from the coalition, due to DMK’s indictment in the Jain Commission Report probing into Rajiv Gandhi assassination. Thus the UF government could govern for only 19 months and as a result the eleventh Lok sabha was dissolved on 3 November, 1997. Although the UF minority coalition remained united in its commitment to ‘shared rule’ but it remained vulnerable to the Congress and UF government was basically cobbled together with the sole objective of keeping the BJP out of power.

Subsequent development after the untimely collapse of the UF coalition affected three major forces in different terms. The BJP and its allies became the
greatest beneficiary. Two important players the Congress and the Janata Dal representing secular values remained weak, disorganised and divided. The Congress suffered further splits, Manipur state Congress (Manipur), Loktantrick Congres (U.P) Congress (U.P), Trinamal Congress (West-Bengal), Himachal Vikas Congress (Sukhram), Karnataka Vikas Congress.\textsuperscript{28} and very recently the National Congress party of Sharad Pawar. Similarly the Bahujan Samaj party and Samajwadi party had suffered splits. The Janata Dal suffered multiple splits and it finally lost its original shape and values. Only a tiny group led by Deve Gowda -JD (Secular) exists as a replica of the JD. On the contrary, the Biju Janat Dal, JD (led by Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan and Lok Shakti of R.K.Hegde, Samata of Nitish Kumar popularly known as JD (U) - all the splinter groups of the JD, sided with the BJP in later 1998 and 1999 elections. Last but not the least, regional parties secured 174 seats in parliament. Out of 42 groups in 124 Lok Sabha, there were 36 regional groups.\textsuperscript{29} Thus after 11\textsuperscript{th} Lok Sabha elections regional parties became more strong of political scene of Indian coalition politics is concerned.

However, 1996's coalition government again failed within less than two years period. Mr. H.D. Deve Gowada remained as a Prime Minister from 1-6-96 to 21-04-1997 and he had to resign due to the pressure of the Congress party on the United Front.

It is important to note that this was the first time where a coalition was not formed against the Congress party. The BJP singled out as a non-secular
party and the member parties of the coalition clearly denounced the BJP as a communal party which has to be kept out of power. Thus, the first coalition with the Congress party support has been formed against the BJP.

SIXTH COALITION GOVERNMENT AT THE CENTRE (APRIL 1997-MARCH 1998):

With the fall of the Deve Gowda government and to make an adjustment with Congress, another United Front coalition government led by I.K Gujral assumed power at the centre. Except for the TMC ministers initially, the Gowda team itself became the Gujral team. The Congress further extended its support to the Gujral government also from outside. However the Gujral Government, also did not last long and in the wake of the Jain Commission Report on Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination, Congress demanded the dropping of DMK members from government and when its demand was not accepted it withdrew support to the government, and Gujral resigned form the office of the Prime Minister in March 1998. This led to another mid-term poll for the country. Vijay Sandhvi observes that “Prime Minister I.K Gujral found himself in a tight position in spite of his intellect and political insight as far as taking any decisions on his own is concerned. He in turn was governed by the steering committee of the UF government”. Any how the experiment of coalition government of the United Front had, came to an end in 18 months.

SEVENTH COALITION AT THE CENTRE (FROM MARCH 19, 19998-OCT 10,1999)

The Twelth Lok Sabha Elections of 1998 once again gave a fractured mandate with no party or combination getting a clean majority in the
parliament. However, the BJP led 17 parties combination emerged as the largest group than the Congress and United Front. Though the BJP led coalition also could not touch the majority mark till the vote of confidence. The Telugu Desam in the last minute decision supported the government on the floor of the house.

Before the poll, the Congress, the United Front and the Bharatiya Janata party and the SJP presented before the electorate of India a series of promises in their poll manifestos and the BJP led coalition shared ministerial portfolio with its coalition partners who were mostly satisfied with the BJP.

However the leader of BJP-led coalition government at the centre Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee became the Prime Minister and sworned in on 19th March 1998.

The coalition partners of the BJP led government were the Samata party in Bihar and AIADMK in Tamil Nadu. Biju Janata Dal in Orissa was also coalition partner of BJP led coalition government. All these coalition partners primarily want to pursue an agenda in their States, because their political opponents like the RJD (before imposition of president rule in February 1999), DMK and Congress party were in power. Hence forth except BJP, all other allies of the government were not seriously committed to the national agenda for governance of this coalition government. The initial watch-word of consensus of the BJP led coalition is finding difficult from its own ally (the recent withdrawal of support by the INLD group of Om Prakash Chautala). This has resulted in threat of suspension of support to the government and
absence from attending the coordination committee of coalition partners and even parliament has become a phenomenon to be handled by the government.

Any how the 1998 coalition gave chance to the emergence of a bipolar situation at the Centre supported by regional parties and in this election the BJP leadership tried, not to use its Hindutva platform. In fact at the party's April 1998 National Executive meeting in New Delhi, Advani asked party members to shelve the core idea of Hindutva in the interests of producing a stable coalition government and creating a 'new', softer BJP.31

The history of 1998's twelfth Lok Sabha election was, BJP became a substantial beneficiary of the splits in the Janata Dal and the nation-wide decline of the party particularly in two states in which the JD had a substantial presence- Karnataka and Orissa. In some states in 1998's election the BJP benefitted directly from the disunity among the forces opposed to it. This was the case, most importantly in Uttar Pradesh and in Gujarat also.

In establishing electoral alliances the BJP was in a class of its own. In its bid for government, it decided that it would not be constrained by any inhibitions of principles with regard to whom it chose as allies. Thus in Tamil Nadu, it allied with the leader of what was arguably the most corrupt state government, in independent India. In Karnataka it allied with a person who was conducting concurrent negotiations with the Congress.

These alliances did however bring immediate electoral advantage to the BJP. In the Southern States, out of 50 seats won by the BJP and allies, any 20
were won by the BJP itself. The alliance’s vote-share in these states was 33.9 percent and the BJP’s individual vote-share was 16.6 percent. In the East (Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar) of the 53 seats won by the BJP alliance only 27 were won by the BJP of them 19 were won in Bihar alone. The vote share of the BJP and its allies in this region was 37.4 percent the individual vote share of the party was 16.6 percent.

The most extraordinary gain for the alliance came of course in Tamil Nadu, where it won 30 out of 39 seats. At the national level, the seats of the BJP won through alliances in the South and east were crucial compensation for its losses in Maharashtra and Rajasthan and its relative stagnation in Uttar Pradesh. Apart from gains in terms of seats for the alliance as a whole, the alliances brought other political gains for the BJP, the party had established political and organisational support in new regions, particularly in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal.

The decline of the JD at all India level had of course weakened the UF and the BJP had moved into benefit from this decline in Karnataka and Orissa.

In Madhya Pradesh although the BJP improved its position in terms of its share of the vote and seats. It won 27 seats in 1996 and in 1998 it won 30 seats.

In Gujarat, despite split from its ranks of the Rashtriya Janta party, the BJP vote share fell only by one percent. In 1996, vote-share was 48.5 percent and in 1998 it was reduced to 47.7 percent.
The strength and weakness of the BJP was visible in Uttar Pradesh. It was its strength because it had 55 MPs from the state nearly one-third of its total strength in Lok Sabha. It was its weakness too because first despite all its efforts and the decline of the Congress, its vote-share was relatively stagnant-33.4 percent in 1996 and 36.4 percent in 1998.

The vulnerability of the BJP was evident in Bihar too. In Bihar the BJP could not have the support of JD votes unlike in Orissa and Karnataka. The BJP's vote-share was stagnant- 20.5 percent in 1996 and 21.3 percent in 1998. The performance of its ally Samata party was also the same-14.4 percent in 1996 and 14.6 percent in 1998.

The Congress party which was primarily responsible for the mid-term poll, had very little to show by way of electoral gains. The party had bagged 140 seats. it's vote share had once again fallen to a historical low of 25.4 percent.

The Congress party which hit a high of 434 seats in mid-80s had plunged into an all time low in 1996 and 1998. In the beginning of Feb 1998 the Sonia wave was at its apex, but each successive round of the election campaign saw people less likely to vote for the Congress and the swing to the BJP getting larger.

In Uttar Pradesh the decline of the Congress party was such that it could not even hold on Amethi, the Nehru-Gandhi bastion in the state. Like other parties the Congress suffered in the states where it was in power, loosing in Himachal Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. And this decline of
the Congress had been identified as a major factor in the BJP's electoral gains of the 1996's and 1998's elections.

As far as the UF was concerned, the Left-parties came out of the elections as the largest block. It had bagged 48 seats. In 'West Bengal' the party saw a 3 percent fall in its share of votes. The defection of Mamata Banerjee meant that the opposition, was divided, and the BJP-Trinamul Congress gained mainly at the expense of the Congress party. Thus the 1998 election results showed that it was not just the influence of dramatic political events that could swing the result over the multiple stages of the election, but a more gradual change in the national mood.

THE MAIN FEATURES OF 12TH LOK SABHA ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. In the 12th Lok Sabha the number of member parities in the coalition government who joined the government and those who supported from outside, was all time greater.

2. The coalition with majority of members was formed before election.

3. Before forming the government the coalition had its first shaking not from any outsider but from one of its main ally AIDMK.

4. The coalition has alliance with a number of 'One Man Demolition squad who will remain as never ending threat to the coalition.

5. The BJP, first largest political party having the highest individual strength in respect of Lok Sabha seats, has led the coalition.
6. Political bargaining by the regional parties would always exert pressure and tension on the coalition.

7. Both co-operation and conflicts would exist amongst the members of the coalition on different issues and the same would be continued till a climax is reached.

The issue of federalism is gaining importance after a long period of ups and downs and for the first time, the BJP accepted the reality of growing regionalization in Indian politics. Thus after 12th Lok Sabha, the BJP and its allies both (pre-poll and post-poll ones) formed the coalition government of about seventeen political parties under the prime Ministership of A.B. Vajpayee. This BJP-led coalition remained in power for about 18 months which also included five months as a BJP-led caretaker coalition government at the Centre. This coalition government faced a rebel partner-AIADMK of Jayalalitha who had withdrawn its support, the BJP succeeded in securing the support of the DMK in parliament. Haryana Vikas party of Bansi Lal was replaced by the Haryana Lok Dal of Chautala in the BJP-led coalition government. However, this coalition failed to win the vote of confidence in Feb 1999 due to the opposition of the Congress and other parties, and their opposition certainly ruined the coalition and the Vajapayee Government resigned but was asked to continue as a care-taker government.

After the dissolution of the 12th Lok Sabha fresh Lok Sabha elections were announced.
EIGHTH COALITION GOVERNMENT AT THE CENTRE OCT 11, 1999....

The opposition from the Congress and other including AIADMK parties had also withdrawn support from BJP led coalition government were said to be responsible for dissolution of the BJP led coalition government at the centre, but they failed to provide an alternative to the BJP-led coalition government. As a result, the image of the BJP improved in the sense that it appeared far more inclined towards alliance and coalitional arrangement. Because after 13th Lok Sabha election which began in September and the last phase of which was held on Oct 3, 1999, concluded with a decisive victory for the 24-party National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition led by the BJP which with 296 seats commanded an absolute majority Atal Beihari Vajpayee. Leader of the BJP who was elected parliamentary leader of the NDA on October 10, 1999 was sworn in as a Prime Minister on October 13,1999 of 70 members coalition government.

Failure of the Congress leadership and other secular forces to replace the BJP caretaker government, split in Congress and Janata Dal, on the one hand and strengthening of ties between the BJP and 23 parties and BJP's claim to have achieved victory against Pakistan in the Kargil war on the other, prepared a more conducive environment to the BJP alignments which finally resulted into their victory in 1999's elections with more then 300 seats in the parliament.

There was intense speculation about the difficulties Vajpayee would face in constituting his council of Minister, given the pulls and pressures was
inherent in a 24 party coalition. In 1998, as the main alliance partner, AIADMK leader Jayalalitha could keep the government on tenterhooks with just 18 MPs. This time the biggest coalition partner is N. Chandrasekhar Naidu’s Telugu Desam party (TDP) with 29 MPs. The arithmetic is such that even if the TDP withdraws support, the government will not fall. Infact, there is little danger to the NDA government unless a group of alliance partners groups as to bring it down. But potential conspirators will be cautious because the opposition is neither strong nor cohesive enough to form an alternative government. In 1998, Jayalalitha jumped coalitionship because she perceived an emerging alternative. This time, the alternative to Vajpayee’s collapse is fresh elections.

Since most of constituents are state based, any problem in their voices of influence could cast its shadow, at times disproportionately dark, over the centre. The DMK, one of the southern constituents, left the NDA because of compulsions in Tamil Nadu, on the eve of the Assembly polls. Later, the Trinmol Congress and its leader, Ms. Mamata Banerjee, parted company with the NDA because of the factors connected with the poll in West Bengal.

Any how NDA which is giving a positive hope of building a coalition government in 13th Los Sabha has asserted its coalitional character in national governance. On the other hand, the Congress may now be regretting its failure to compromise with some parties on a minimum common programme to head a Congress led coalition. Therefore, the coalition government now seems to have become a practical and political necessity to avoid political instability and frequent elections. Assertion of various social segments and their
manifestation in political formations are now existing realities which need further democratization, federalisation and consociationalism in governance.

India appears to have entered a fairly long season of coalition governments, fragile or enduring. Only Janata party government a one party majority coalition lasted a bit longer for about two and a half years. Formed in March 1977, it prematurely fell in July 1979. Others lasted for less than a year, their life was short lived so that they survived for four months to two weeks. Barring the minority regimes of Indira Gandhi (1969-1970) and P.V. Narasimha Rao (1991-96) which survived either through artful manipulation of the political agenda or through questionable techniques of floor-crossing, minority government led by Charan Singh, V.P. Singh, Chandrashekhar, A.B.Vajpayee, H.D. Deve Gowda and I.K.Gujral have gone down in fiery spectacles of backroom infighting and betrayal.

However, some cite the success stories of coalition governments in Western Europe to buttress their thesis that coalition in India can be a solution to India’s heterogeneous polity. They argue that even during the era of Congress dominance, the ruling party represented a coalescence of diverse ideological, economic and territorial interest. But this cannot be ignored that there is the stark of difference between party systems in Europe and India. In Finland and Belgium, heterogeneous coalitions have long lasted as their political parties are compact, disciplined structures but in India, except for the left and, to some extent the BJP, most political parties have witnessed continued fragmentation.
As coalitions are becoming more inevitable, they are gaining more acceptability. The BJP's search for allies reveals how its own much emphasised political theory of two party system had become obsolete. Remember, the BJP now has the distinction of being a coalition partner in the largest number of states than any other political party. Even at the eve of 1995 Lok Sabha elections, it forged alliances with the Shiv-Sena in Maharashtra, Haryana Vikas party in Haryana and the Samta party in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Now power seekers will have to reach Delhi via Hyderabad, Lucknow, Mumbai, Calcutta or Chandigarh.

The Congress (I) took nearly five long years in political wilderness to realise the inevitability of coalitions for its return to office. The Congress (I) clarified “that, taking into account the present political scenario, the party would be prepared to enter into appropriate electoral or coalition arrangements which secular parties on the basis of mutual understanding but always without compromising its basic ideology”

Thus, fragmentation of political parties create unhappy electoral situation in which hung parliaments become the norm rather than an exception. Political parties have demonstrated a shocking lack of ability to create enduring coalitions. The Congress party, even while sitting in the opposition, as it did briefly thrice since independence, had enough power and clout to disrupt non-Congress coalitions. Indeed, Indian democratic politics so far has been lacking in the talent and the culture of coalition making and coalition maintaining. A succession of unstable coalitions of minority governments has made its own contribution to the crisis of the states as the state is inextricably mixed with the webs of government.
But it is not ignored that there are many advantages in the coalition system like accommodation of diverse interests, consensual decision making and so on. A coalition system is also more sensitive and responsive to regional concerns. There are strengths and there are weaknesses, but ultimately India has reached the stage of coalition governments. One has to live in that. It is true that coalition may remain vulnerable but now it has also become inevitable in Indian political panorama. An attempt has been made in next chapter to prove this only and the following tables shows the formation of coalitional government at the state and central level.

**TABLE NO-1**

**COALITION GOVERNMENT IN STATES 1967-71**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>No. of Government</th>
<th>Average life of Governments</th>
<th>No.of times of President Rule</th>
<th>Average period of Presidents Rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pradesh</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.P</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West-Bengal</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**TABLE NO-2**

**COALITION GOVERNMENT AT THE CENTRE 1977 to 1997**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sri Morarji Desai</td>
<td>24-03-1977 to 28-07-1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Sri Vishwanath P.Singh</td>
<td>2-12-1989 to 10-11-1990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The ruling coalition today is as different from that of 1998 as fish from fowl. The NDA is a coalition formed not after but before an election. What is more this is not the first but second election that the NDA was fought on a common platform. Even more important, this is a coalition that has with the exception of the NDA stayed together not only in power but also in defeat.
REFERENCES


3. Ibid., P.142,

4. Ibid., P.143.


8. Ibid.


15. Ibid.


24. Ibid., P-146.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., P-147.
27. Ibid., P-148.
28. Ibid., P-220.
29. Akhtar, Majeed., Coalition politics and power sharing, Manak publications, New Delhi, PP-164, 2000
30. Ibid., P-164.
34. Arun, Kumar., The Tuning Point, 1996, Poll story, Delhi,1996.