

# Issues and Challenges of Coalition State Governments in India – A Study

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## Abstract

This paper attempts to coalition state governments in india and its developments and providing employment opportunities to the public, study how in parliamentary democracies with proportional electoral systems, the necessity to form coalition governments regularly subjects the translation of party platforms into government policy to the uncertainties of inter-party bargaining. This raises the question as to how parties in coalition governments arrive at a common policy agenda in the face of potentially divergent preferences. Coalition governments pose a challenge to the direct link between a party's electoral mandate and the policy output produced by a government. Divergent preferences between coalition parties and the intra-cabinet division of labour among ministerial jurisdictions increase the potential for agency loss in the parliamentary chain of delegation. Many political scientists and economists have argued that coalition governments tend to accumulate more debt than single-party governments do, but the evidence for this proposition is mixed. This article argues that only some coalition governments are more likely to increase public debt than single-party governments: those in which parties are unable to make credible promises to their partners about future policy. Coalition politics introduces the concept of 'commitment potential' within coalitions and proposes a way of measuring it

*Key words: Coalition government; delegation; agents; challenges; identified solution; and political party*

## Introduction

On the other hand, without caveat, coalitions help in formulating more comprehensive and multidimensional policies owing to the presence of deferent views during policy formulation. Hence, coalitions possess both negative and positive role to play in public policy making . When there is the absence of clean majority during general elections, parties either form coalition cabinets under parliament majority or end up with minority cabinets which has one or more parties. Cabinets supported by parliament are more stable and efficient whereas minority cabinets are prone to internal struggles. Therefore, whether government with clear majority or minority government both is has to burn through the process of policy making for public welfare . Thus, the present study has been conducted to draw inferences from theories on coalition and concerned parties as to how public policy making impacts them and they impact policies process. The study aims to allow a conceptual starting point and to bring the research on public policy making in the coalition governments. Hence, this paper intends to identify the challenges and solution underlying in the formation of public policy in the coalition government. Curiously, the policy output of multiparty governments has not been examined even nearly as extensively as their formation

(Axelrod 1970; de Swaan 1973; Martin and Stevenson 2001; Riker 1962; Sened 1996), the allocation of government portfolios (Browne and Feste 1975; Browne and Franklin 1973; Browne and Fren dreis 1980; Warwick and Druckman 2001, 2006), and their termination (Diermeier and Merlo 2000; Diermeier and Stevenson 1999; Laver 2003; Warwick 1994).

The most notable exceptions are extant studies of legislative output (Bräuning er and Debus 2009; Martin 2004; Martin and Vanberg 2004, 2005, 2011) that have stayed closer to the theoretical framework provided by coalition theory, and some studies on pledge fulfilment in multiparty governments that have come out of the party mandate literature (Costello and Thomson 2008; Kostadinova 2013; Mansergh and Thomson 2007; Moury 2011b; Thomson 2001). Gone are the days when regionalism used to be viewed as a negation of nationalism or nation building. The regional parties have provided a new dimension to the process of national integration and nation building. Regionalism has lost its aggressive form due to the positive role of regional political parties. The leaders of regional parties have started playing an active and even deterministic role in the organisation of the Central government. Since 1996, twenty three regional parties have been sharing power at the national level. Their outlook now appears to be changing from confrontationalist and conflictual orientation to a tendency of co-operative bargaining in respect of Centre-state relations.

### Objective:

This paper intends to explore and analyze **challenges and prospects of coalition governments in Indian political process**. Also **complications of Coalition governments** criticized for sustaining a consensus on issues when disagreement and the consequent discussion

Delegation problem of responsibilities, finance, policy action and other actions in Parliament give rises to Coalition among government . The participating parties in the coalition have their electorates, agenda, ideals and policy concerns for which they go through the whole hog of elections competing with parties who might become their partners in the times to come. Their record as a party in the government becomes more important than their record as a government in general because it determines their electoral fate in the future. It becomes the cause of problems in delegating important portfolios like finance . It stand true in Indian context when President R. Venkataraman was of the opinion that Chandra Shekhar was able to handle parliament competently but was under constant strain from the Congress party which led to his resignation.

This shows that it was the real government and Chandra Shekhar can be merely called a proxy. This problem is referred to as the agency problem in government political parties. Another challenge identified under agent issue by Kostova (2004) is differences in preferences which are the major cause of agency problems in the coalition

governments. When parties with a divergent view of the functioning and condition of the world will join hands, there is bound to be areas where there will be the substantial differences in opinions on policymaking. In the case of H.D. Deve Gowda, the Congress revoked its support to him due to the rising discontent regarding communication over the coalition which led to the loss of a vote of confidence to the united front government. There can almost never be similarity of beliefs and opinions amongst a wide number of people and parties . Therefore, it is a challenge for the leader of a coalition government to make decisions and plan and execute various policies or obtain consensus from all sides.

However, this does not validate the withdrawing of support or compelling a minister to resign due to the difference in opinions . Hazlehurst on the same grounds found out that the participant parties not only have different views on specific issues, they also have a different take on the level of importance of various policies. In case of United Progressive Alliance (UPA 2) government, Trinamool Congress (TMC) Chief Mamta Bannerjee withdrew her support from the UPA because their demands of rolling back of reforms were not met. Their rollback of reforms included issues like FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) in retail, the rise in the price of diesel and limiting the number of subsidised gas cylinders for households.

Similarly, the DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) also withdrew its support due to an issue of a draft resolution at the United Nations Human Rights Council regarding violation of human rights to Sri Lankan Tamils. It shows that the difference of opinions amongst the different parties leads to withdrawal of support from the coalition. Care needs to be taken to ensure that important policies are handled properly despite the difference in opinions amongst the parties . A logical inference garnered from the study is that a specific policy proposal to be implemented is more likely to get support if it is relevant to individual specific parties as well as in the case of UPA 2 government. Stressing certain policies will drive up the perceived competency or credibility of certain parties while the position of other parties remains unaffected. It drives the moves of various parties in the coalition. Further, with the formation of the coalition government, the agreements and the distribution of key areas and policy decisions are all settled through negotiation and mutual agreements. There have been various instances in the Indian politics where the regional parties like Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) have had to collaborate with BJP to avoid bifurcation of their votes against their common enemy, i.e. Congress party. Therefore, they were forced to support BJP to protect their electoral prospects .

A similar study conducted by Herd (2010) found out consensus to be the factor responsible for the agreements among the Coalition Government. But each government has to start with existing policies and regulations to the status quo. If the government desires to alter these, they again will need a consensus. In the absence of the agreement, the status quo remains. In coalition governments, each party tries to block policy changes which either may be adversely affect its quo . Thus, it can be stated that the power equation is more in favour of the party seeking changes to current policy rather than changing the status quo.

## Challenging Ministerial Discretion

There is a control mechanism under work that parties of coalition use which is the bargaining power to keep the coalition and the majority party on to a specific course of action. If it does not work out, support is threatened to be withdrawn. It was found that such challenges to coalition severely threaten the functioning of the government and even constrain or slower down the public policy decisions making by hindering the progress. For example, a few days before the RathYatra was about to end at Ayodhya in 1990, the then-chief minister of Bihar, Lalu Prasad Yadav made L K Advani prisoned in Samastipur. BJP had warned that it would withdraw support if Advani is arrested, so, on his arrest, BJP withdrew support which left the country unstable. R.Venketaraman observed, Gautam; ARJASS, 7(3): 1-8, 2013; Article no.ARJASS.44267 6 “It is my impression that if V.P. Singh had headed a government with a clear majority instead of depending on a conglomeration of parties mutually destructive to each other, he would have given a good administration to the country. Being dependent on parties with different objectives and ideologies, he could not withstand pressures from discordant groups” .

This shows that there are other reasons, besides political, which lead to the withdrawal of support by political parties from a coalition government. Apart from arriving at a policy bargain consensus, the parties involved in the coalition government have to strike a balance on the allocation of ministerial portfolios. Because jurisdiction over a certain portfolio allocates power over agenda setting, it can be regarded as a dominant instrument capable of influencing the enactment or prevention of a specific policy decision . In 1997, Inder Kumar Gujral was selected as a consensus candidate amongst others including Lalu Prasad Yadav, Mulayam Singh Yadav, Indian National Congress, left parties and others. When Inder Kumar Gujral refused to dismiss any DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) leaders from his government, INC (Indian National Congress) withdrew support from the government which led to the resignation of Mr Gujral . Despite this, there is not much freedom to appoint whomsoever to the cabinet as the party considers because it depends on the influence of the participating parties and the candidate’s popularity with the public. Cabinet ministers tend to choose and implement their own party’s policy ideals rather than the collective ideals in the areas under their jurisdictions. It can be started after doing the literature review that there lies an enormous potential for agency loss in the policy delegation from the coalition government as a whole to the ministers as individuals. It happens because the preferences of individuals and collectives are divergent.

## POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS TO THE IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

Hazlehurst (2007) suggested that coalition government may resort to controlling mechanism that will seek to help keep the differences at bay and prevent the ministers of different parties holding different portfolios from drifting away from the popular mandate. Gelder , argued that to restrict future policy actions from sliding away from common coalition ground, a potential solution can be to assign junior ministers from the majority party the job of being an overseer. As it was noted that there are differences in the preferences of individual actors and collective, the allocation of portfolios can be considered as a solution to ensure successful delegation and execution of legislative agenda in policymaking. Ministers are then more likely to implement and continue with tasks assigned

to them as it aligns with their party's policies as opposed to the coalition collective. A coalition is likely to be more successful if the parties moderate their ideologies and programmes along with listening to the point of view of ministers of other political parties as well. It is not necessary that all parties shall have similar beliefs and ideologies which might lead to difficulty in achieving consensus on issues. A considerable literature review has pointed towards using this as a strategic move.

## Conclusion

Finally, ministerial discretion where the parties wanted to exercise the power of their ministries under their jurisdiction. Looking at the growth of the regional parties as a threat to national unity is illogical. Regional parties do not necessarily believe in secessionism; they only want to protect the interests of their regions. The DMK in Tamil Nadu at one stage wanted to separate from India but it soon realised that it would not be in the interests of the state and, therefore, dropped the idea of separation. A regional party is formed only when it is felt that the interests of the region are neglected and ignored by the national party in power at the centre. Focus on the regional interests by the regional parties cannot and should not be considered anti-national.

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