Examining the Influence of Political Coalition Strategies on Democratic Values in India

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Original Research Articles

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Sourasis Chattopadhyay[1], & Kaustav Mukherjee[2]*

Abstract

Following the common pattern, coalition parties in governance typically operate with an eye on upcoming elections, leading to potential conflicts as they compete for support. Additionally, ministers and their affiliated political entities often maintain personal stances on crucial matters. The willingness of these parties to compromise on these individual preferences is crucial for the formation of a coalition government. India's political landscape, influenced by regional parties, has seen increased interconnectivity. Recent trends suggest that a coalition, particularly one dominated by a single party, tends to function in a monopolistic manner when making significant decisions within the federal system. This puts the integrity and sustainability of the coalition under constant scrutiny. Given the close intertwining of a democratic nation's ethics and political values with public sentiments, moralities, and political perspectives, this study seeks to explore this area and provide tangible evidence supporting India's ongoing transition in political coalition strategy. Through comparative analysis, the research concludes that India's current democratic ethics are undergoing a distinct transformation, primarily leaning towards dominant party rule rather than collective coalition decision-making—a notable departure from past coalition instabilities. The current coalition led by NDA is often perceived as Modi Doctrine, implying a command under a dominant party. The research highlights instances of decisions made by the Narendra Modi-led government, justifying them to enhance regional and national image and integrity. However, as outlined in this article, these culturally motivating conservative decisions, while controversial and dramatic, do not contribute to India's democratic image and secular objectives in a sustainable manner, irrespective of the perceived impact on economic growth under the current nation-first strategies of the NDA government. Consequently, the dimensions and stability of a coalition remain volatile and transitional within the context of India.

Keywords: Political Coalition; India Coalition; NDA Coalition; UPA Coalition

Introduction

The English word "coalition" originates from the Latin root, meaning "to grow together." This etymology implies that, in the political context, various groups unite to exert dominance by forming alliances or temporary unions. Professor A. Ogg, in the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences (Singh, 2019a), defines a coalition as a cooperative framework where political organizations and their supporters combine to establish a government or Ministry. The formation of coalition governments involves unique dynamics. While parties traditionally compete for votes during elections, effective negotiations may lead to the establishment of a coalition government, sharing power until the next election or dissolution of the coalition. Under this arrangement, once-rival political groups collaborate to formulate and implement public policies. However, the shadow of impending elections often leads to potential friction as parties, previously in competition, now work together. The success of a coalition government hinges on the willingness of parties to compromise on their preferences (Whitaker & Martin, 2022).

Coalition politics in India has a rich history dating back to 1937, with the Congress and other parties forming collaborations. Since 1989, coalition politics has become commonplace at the national level, while consistently appearing in state-level elections since the fourth general election (PSIR, 2023). Notably, the maturity of coalition politics differs between federal and state levels, with Kerala and West Bengal serving as examples of established coalition cultures. Negotiations, often formalized in a coalition agreement, are crucial for reaching consensus among members of a coalition government in multi-party systems. The agreement outlines shared goals and acknowledges that certain interests may align temporarily. Coalition governance is a dynamic process, subject to the formation and dissolution of coalitions, with internal and external coalitions involving individuals within and outside an organization, respectively (UPSE, 2015).

Regional political groups in India have gained prominence over the past 40 years, leading to a more politically plural Parliament. The Lok Sabha's inability to be dominated by a single national party has compelled national parties to collaborate with their state counterparts. The resulting interconnected party system has facilitated accommodations at the Centre to address regional needs (IAS, 2019). Despite these developments, the impact of frequent coalitions on the structure, democratic ethics, and public perspectives in India remains underexplored.

Objective

This research aims to delve into the ethical and democratic implications of the prevalent coalition strategy in Indian politics. By examining existing research, the study seeks to provide initial insights into the significance and purpose of this research, emphasizing the need for a thorough exploration of the intersection between democratic values, public sentiments, moralities, and political outlook in India's evolving political landscape on the research bjectives;

1. To analysis India's political coalition strategies impacting its fundamental democratic ethics.

2. To analysis a transformation in India's fundamental democratic ideals due to the trends of political coalitions

3. To present India's political coalitions that is sustainable for the country's advancements and its image within its territorial margins and beyond.

Literature Review

The research titled "Examining the Influence of Political Coalition Strategies on Democratic Values in India" operates within a robust conceptual framework that integrates various key concepts to comprehensively analyze the intricate relationship between political coalition strategies and democratic values in the Indian context.

Bellamy (2012) posited that collaborations, often deemed unprincipled and anti-democratic, could be understood differently. Despite criticism asserting that concessions should align with policies rather than principles for practicality, the author argued in favor of the democratic and principled nature of compromise. The conflict between anti-democratic criticism and the role of coalition politics was justified through three key points: the inevitability of principle-based compromises, the democratic spirit's embedded duty to compromise despite differences, and the need for regulations allowing representatives to make profound sacrifices for constituents during coalition formations.

Peters et al. (2009) addressed the lack of attention to how coalition governments influenced the development of civil service institutions. They focused on Central and Eastern European states, where coalition governments were prevalent, investigating how novel governance structures impacted traditional frameworks. The study explored the transformation of politico-administrative interactions and emphasized the intriguing challenge these states faced in concurrently establishing stable civil service institutions while constructing political democracies. Russell (2014) highlighted the dominance of sociological and rational choice theories in explaining legislative voting patterns. Acknowledging the limited application of social psychology in party studies, the article presented psychological theories related to party unity and used survey data from the House of Lords to explore social identity's role in political parties, emphasizing the need for interdisciplinary cooperation between psychology and politics.

Chakrabarty (2006) delved into India's coalition politics, tracing its roots to the independence movement and the revival of regional politics in the 1970s. The article explored how federalism evolved in response to complex processes, strengthening India's pluralist character. Ruparelia (2015) discussed leading theories explaining coalition governments in India, challenging the notion that power maximization, policy accomplishment, and vote capturing were mutually exclusive. The study called for a deeper examination of power-sharing strategies employed by party leaders. Singh (2019) explored the historical context of coalition politics in India, emphasizing the diversity within alliances and the positive impact of cross-cutting

affiliations on stable democratic governance. Kumar (2021) analyzed the shift to coalition governments in Indian politics since 1989, examining the NDA's role and stability factors post-1999. McMillan (2023) argued that coalition governments, with a regionalized party structure, contributed to effective governance in India.

Whitaker & Martin (2022) asserted that opposition parties play a crucial role in exposing internal conflicts within coalition governments. Using a dataset from the British House of Commons, the study demonstrated how parliamentary democracies rely on opposition parties to maintain transparency and accountability. Rapport & Rathbun (2021) investigated how political philosophy influenced security agreements and argued for the inclusion of domestic political variables when studying ideological contestation within nations. Khaitan (2020) provided an analytical framework for understanding liberal democratic republics, emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between acts violating constitutional democracy and those legal under an elected government. Vaishnav (2019) focused on the rise of nationalist groups with religious affiliations in India, highlighting their impact on political agendas and the country's democratic landscape.

In summary, these scholarly works contribute to the understanding of coalition politics, civil service development, legislative voting patterns, psychological aspects of party unity, and the impact of political philosophy on security agreements within various national contexts. They collectively emphasize the complexity and significance of coalition governance in shaping political systems and governance outcomes.

The conceptual framework of the research titled " Examining the Influence of Political Coalition Strategies on Democratic Values in India" draws from a data-based analysis and addresses the problem statement and motivation.

Problem Statement and Motivation

1. Centralization of Power and Erosion of Democratic Values The research identifies a historical shift in Indian politics following the Congress Party split in 1969, leading to the rapid centralization of power. The subsequent erosion of democratic values is attributed to harsh totalitarian methods employed during this period.

2. Shift to Coalition Administrations The years 1980 and 1984 are highlighted as critical points reflecting the insensitivity of the government to public concerns, leading to a loss of trust. The subsequent emergence of minority or coalition administrations in 1989 is seen as a response to the perceived failures of single-party rule.

3. Social Dynamics and Rise of BJP The study emphasizes the significant role of social dynamics, including the renaissance of Modern Hinduism and the Mandal Commission, in shaping political allegiances. The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) rise, starting in the 1990s, is analyzed with attention to its appeal across various castes and economic classes.

4. Regionalization and Coalition Politics The research acknowledges the increasing significance of regional political fronts, surpassing national parties in importance during the 1999

presidential election. Coalition politics is seen as a response to the need for local representation and a check on central disorder.
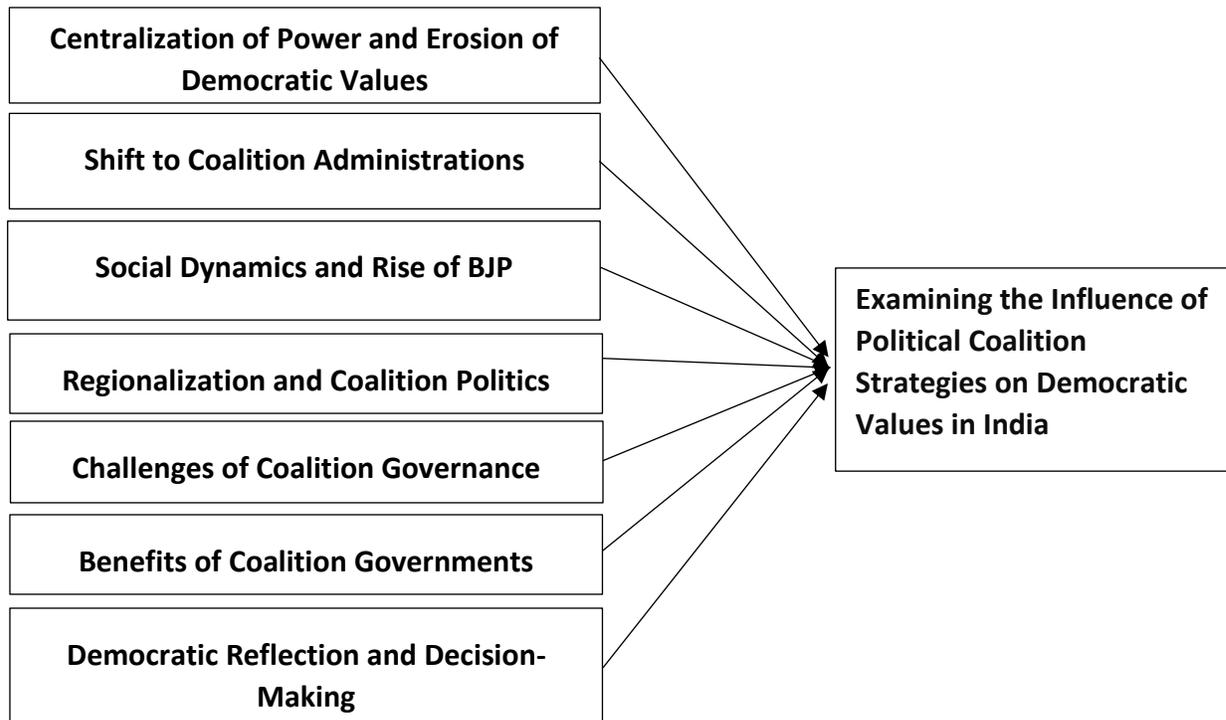
5. Challenges of Coalition Governance The study sheds light on the challenges posed by coalition governance, highlighting the difficulty of forming alliances, internal conflicts within coalitions, and the uncertainty surrounding the duration of coalition administrations. The fragmented and localized nature of politics is underscored, contributing to frequent conflicts and compromises.

6. Benefits of Coalition Governments Despite challenges, the research acknowledges certain benefits of coalition administrations. It argues that regional political groups find fair representation in the Lower House, ensuring a broader segment of the population's participation in decision-making. The research contends that coalitions act as a check against undemocratic measures, reflecting the diverse interests of the electorate.

7. Democratic Reflection and Decision-Making Coalition governments are presented as a true reflection of popular will, fostering dialogue among diverse parties with varying philosophies. The study suggests that the need for consensus-building in coalitions ensures careful consideration of public image and prudence in decision-making. It contends that coalitions encourage political parties to soften extreme stances, promoting cooperative problem-solving.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the research integrates historical and socio-political dynamics, emphasizing the shift to coalition politics in India, analyzing the challenges it presents, and recognizing the democratic reflections and decision-making advantages it offers.

Centralization of Power and Erosion of Democratic Values
Shift to Coalition Administrations
Social Dynamics and Rise of BJP
Regionalization and Coalition Politics
Challenges of Coalition Governance
Benefits of Coalition Governments
Democratic Reflection and Decision-Making

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Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework provides a comprehensive lens through which to systematically examine the intricate interplay between political coalition strategies and democratic values in the Indian political landscape. The integration of diverse dimensions ensures a holistic understanding of the subject, facilitating nuanced analysis and contributing to the existing body of knowledge in political science and democratic studies.

Materials and Methods

Research Approach

The research adopts an exploratory approach to conceptualize its observation and analysis procedure. This approach is deemed appropriate for investigating the impact of India's political coalition strategies on its fundamental democratic ethics.

Study Scope

The research focuses on two major national-level coalitions, namely the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). A comparative analysis is conducted using factual evidence to assess the impact of these coalition approaches on India's democratic ethics.

Research Design

The study employs content analysis and quantitative data assessments for a comprehensive comparative analysis. These methods are chosen to facilitate the exploration of trends, patterns, and transformations in India's democratic platform resulting from political coalitions.

Data Collection

Data is gathered from secondary resources, including past researches, official statements, reviews, and statistical documents. The choice of secondary data allows for a broad and historical perspective on the impact of political coalitions on India's democratic ideals.

Comparative Analysis

The research involves a comparative analysis of the UPA and NDA coalitions. Factual evidence is utilized to identify any transformation or refinement in India's democratic platform. The outcomes and sustainability of these transformations are evaluated in the context of India's domestic and international image.

Research Validation

To ensure the credibility of the findings, the research includes authentic analysis and deduction. The data collected from various sources is subjected to rigorous scrutiny and interpretation.

Presentation of Findings

The results and insights derived from the content analysis and quantitative assessments are presented in the succeeding sections. The presentation aims to provide a clear understanding of the impact of political coalitions on India's democratic ethics and their implications for domestic and international perceptions.

Ethical Considerations

The research adheres to ethical standards in the use of data, ensuring the proper citation of sources and maintaining the confidentiality of sensitive information.

Limitations

The study acknowledges limitations inherent in the use of secondary data, potential biases in official statements, and the dynamic nature of political landscapes, which may impact the generalizability of findings. In summary, the research employs a robust methodology, combining content analysis and quantitative assessments, to explore the impact of political coalitions on India's democratic ethics. The focus on two major national-level coalitions and the use of factual evidence contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Results

Impact of India's Political Coalition Strategies on Fundamental Democratic Ethics

Evolution of Coalition Politics: The research highlights the transition from a single-party dominant system to a coalition-based political landscape in India, emphasizing the significant role of regional political parties.

Shifts in Electoral Dynamics: The study reveals a shift in electoral patterns, demonstrating how coalition politics has become the norm. The alliances and realignments over different election cycles indicate the complexity and fluidity of political relationships.

Effects on Democratic Values: The research underscores that coalitions are both a reflection and a challenge to democratic values. The need for alliances has been driven by regional aspirations, but it has also raised concerns about political stability and the effectiveness of governance.

Transformation in India's Fundamental Democratic Ideals Due to Political Coalitions

Divergence in Coalition Approaches: The comparative analysis between UPA and NDA provides insights into the institutional and idealistic differences. The study emphasizes the ideological contrasts between the coalitions, such as the NDA's conservative approach and the UPA's broader umbrella encompassing diverse views.

Coalition Dynamics and Stability: The research suggests that the UPA's reliance on left-wing support and diverse opinions within the coalition poses challenges to stability, while the NDA's pragmatic approach involves concessions for power.

Shifts in Governance Framework: The study notes structural and strategic changes in governance styles, with the BJP-led NDA emphasizing a powerful Prime Minister's Office and a streamlined decision-making process.

Sustainability of India's Political Coalitions for Advancements and Image

Foreign Policy and Economic Strategies: The research indicates that coalition dynamics influence India's foreign policy and economic strategies. The Modi Doctrine, unbound by coalition politics, emphasizes economic collaboration and strengthening India's global position.

Achievements and Failures: The study evaluates the achievements and failures of both UPA and NDA, highlighting the challenges faced by each coalition. It suggests that while the UPA embraces diversity, the NDA faces criticism for divisive policies.

Impacts on Democracy and Image: The research discusses the impact of coalitions on democracy, with coalition politics becoming integral to India's political landscape. It also touches upon the changing dynamics in recent elections, where chemistry is considered as crucial as mathematics.

The findings collectively portray a dynamic political landscape in India shaped by coalition strategies. While coalitions have become instrumental in representing diverse regional interests, they also pose challenges to stability and effective governance. The ideological contrasts between UPA and NDA illustrate the complexities of coalition politics, influencing foreign policy, economic strategies, and democratic values. The research suggests that the sustainability of political coalitions is a nuanced issue, impacting India's image domestically and internationally. The evolving nature of coalition politics requires continuous analysis and adaptation to ensure democratic ideals are upheld while addressing the diverse needs of the nation.

Discussion

UPA vs NDA: Institutional and Idealistic differences

In May 1998, thirteen political parties came together to establish what is now known as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The Bharatiya Janata Party serves as the alliance's leader. George Fernandes was the NDA's coordinator, while Atal Bihari Vajpayee was its ceremonial chairman. The AIADMK's withdrawal from the coalition led to its collapse within a year. In 1999, when the BJP and its allies gained more seats and formed new alliances, they formally established themselves as the NDA. They worked together on the campaign, yet they each maintained their own insignia. The NDA, led by the BJP, ran in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections on a shared platform because it had come to terms with the fact that it would form a coalition government.

In the 1999 elections, the BJP was backed by a number of parties that weren't in the NDA alliance in 1998. Out of a total of 303 seats, the NDA received 60 from the following smaller parties: Telugu Desam Party (TDP), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Janata Dal-U (JD-U), Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), Himalaya Vikas Congress (HVC), and the remaining four. Not all parties in the BJP-led alliance remained till right before the 1999 elections. The Janata, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), and the Haryana Vikas Party (HVP) were among those that left (Mansoor, 2023).

What this means is that the make-up of the parties and individuals that back the NDA has changed significantly. There were 182 BJP seats, with 108 representing one of the five states (Madhya Pradesh with 29, Uttar Pradesh with 29, Gujarat with 20, Rajasthan with 16), plus the capital territory. New Delhi - 7. Alliances with other parties accounted for the remaining seats, with 115 seats won by its allies in 10 states. The BJP's partnership with regional parties located in different states was advantageous for all parties involved.

Both the Congress and their coalition partners and the BJP and its allies were major players in the 2004 Lok Sabha election. The BJP participated in the elections as a member of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), although it had seat-sharing deals with powerful regional parties that weren't part of the NDA, like the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh and the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu. It was the first time that Congress formed partnerships at the regional level in a number of states. Independently, the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (CPI-Marxist) faced up against the Congress and the NDA in the states of West Bengal, Tripura, and Kerala. Through seat sharing arrangements, they were able to gain representation in other states, including Punjab and Andhra Pradesh.

They were a member of the Democratic Progressive Alliance, which was led by the DMK, in Tamil Nadu. The Bhujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party were the two factions that flat-out refused to align with the Congress or the BJP. Both of them call Uttar Pradesh home. Congress failed miserably in its multiple attempts to forge partnerships with these groups. Congress won 145 seats in this election, an increase of 31 over the previous election in 1999. Its proportion of the vote, however, fell from 28.3% to 26.21%. In contrast, the BJP's tally dropped from 182 seats in 1999 to 138 seats this time around. A decrease from 23.75% to 21.48% was also seen in its vote-share.

When looking at the performance of two separate combinations on a national level, it becomes clear where the coalition system is heading in India. Coalitions are now the norm in India. Both the establishment and operation of governments are heavily influenced by regional political parties. Negotiation frameworks impact coalition stability. A cloud has been thrown over the coalition government's ability to function because of opportunism. Another factor that has weakened coalition rule is the increasing prevalence of outside backing.

The UPA differs sharply from the NDA on foreign and economic policy, and it is not a super majority coalition; rather, it is a majority coalition that relies on support from the left. The fact that the NDA coalition's members used both cooperative and competitive tactics shows that the BJP will make concessions in order to gain power in the government, while the Congress is taking its time to come to this realization. It was believed by the Congress that its secular program would be more popular and would not necessitate coalition partners to gain power. Many have noted that the UPA alliance needs skilled political leadership in order to be stable because of how precarious it is(Bellamy, 2012).

The reason behind this is that the Congress Party faces stiff opposition from left-wing parties like West Bengal, Kerala, and Tripura, and these parties also hold differing views on

economic policy. Finding common ground between state-level inconsistency and national support for the Congress-led UPA will be a formidable task for the UPA. Concurrently, it must ensure that the UPA remains united.

Despite their long-standing animosity, the left-wing parties in several states have decided to lend their support to the Congress-led UPA government in the center. Since the various parties in the UPA cannot agree on basic matters like economic reforms, the coalition's precariousness is, in a sense, comical. However, when it came to realizing India's potential and developing its infrastructure, the NDA alliance outperformed the present government.

In the electoral context coming to Narendra Modi era, there are noticeable structural, strength, and strategic changes between the 2009 Congress-led government and the 2014 BJP-led one in terms of governance. The BJP is building small collectives, in contrast to the Congress's support for a scattering of ministers.

The BJP is preparing for a powerful Prime Minister's Office (PMO), in contrast to the Congress, which relied on ministerial committees for major decisions. The Congress party did not have the necessary parliamentary majority, but the BJP party does.

Narendra Modi campaigned on the platform of "minimum government, maximum governance ". With his inclusion, the NDA's council of ministers has 46 members, which is 35% fewer than the previous one led by Manmohan Singh. However, with an expansion on the horizon, its membership is likely to dip below the 55 that Atal Bihari Vajpayee's NDA administration had from 1999 to 2004. However, there are three key distinctions regarding the governing framework (Mukhopadhyay, 2023).

Modi has streamlined the functioning of various ministries by merging their respective portfolios. Secondly, in contrast to UPA-II, which allocated more portfolios to senior ministers, Modi has shifted more authority to the middle tier, namely to the ministers of state with independent charge, a large number of whom are his supporters. This brings us to our third point: a robust PMO.

It was clear that UPA-II preferred to form ministerial groupings to handle problems. One type of group, the group of ministers, may make non-binding recommendations, while the other, the empowered group of ministers, might make binding recommendations. In addition to their respective duties, key cabinet ministers actively participated in these matters.

During UPA-II's second half in office, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) began to make its voice heard in policymaking. With Modi at the helm, the PMO is poised to take center stage as the driving force behind government. To make a good impression, it plans to make bold statements and give subtle nudges. A large majority could bring down UPA-II in the Lok Sabha due to the lack of parliamentary numbers. This continued throughout significant portions of UPA-II's second term in office, contributing to its dismal performance in parliament.
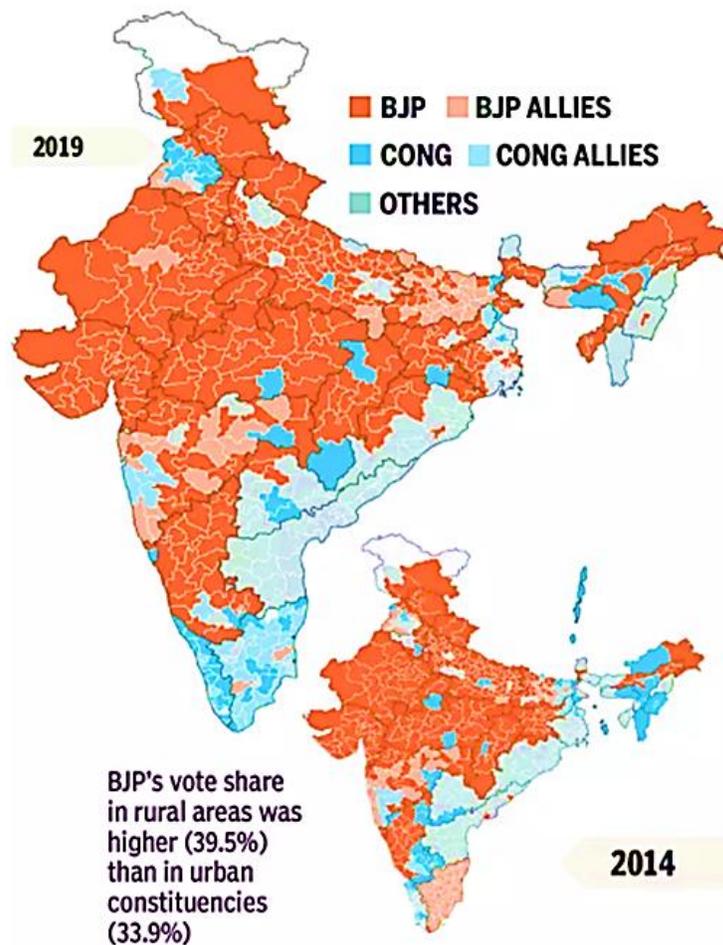
Figure 2 Comparison on UPA-NDA vote distribution in 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha Election (Source: TNN (2019))

Pending and new laws would be sought after by the NDA, which has the numbers in the Lok Sabha. Although it lacks the necessary quorum in the Rajya Sabha, it can circumvent this problem with astute floor management and steady progress. There may be public outcry and less amenable political opponents for the BJP to overcome if it interprets its strong mandate as permission to pursue more divisive agenda items (ET, 2014).

Achievements and Failures of UPA and NDA

The following are some key points from a comparison of the NDA and UPA coalitions (Appaiah, 2019). Coalitions like the NDA (1999) and the UPA (2004) were formed through pre-election alliances, mutual understanding, and seat distribution. Nevertheless, unlike the NDA in 19992, the INC has kept most of the important ministry jobs held by the UPA coalition.

The NDA was a loose alliance of 24 closely affiliated parties, with the BJP at the helm.(with the backing of three democratically elected lawmakers). Four powerful left-wing groups have offered outside support, weakening their standing within the UPA, a loosely bound coalition of fourteen major parties. Nonetheless, the Common Minimum Programme has been embraced by both of these alliances as a framework for national administration.

One ideologically conservative party, the BJP, which has some very divisive policies in its platform, was the leader of the NDA coalition. Coalition demands necessitated a watering down of its ideas. The BJP toned down its unique philosophy in order to keep the alliance together and made a measured approach on their fulfillment.

Actually, it had to put three controversial matters that on which the party has to strategically proceed to maintain its dominance: the construction of the Ram temple, the adoption of a uniform civil code, and the repeal of Article 370 (In 2019, the BJP-led NDA administration repealed Article 370, which had been in the Indian constitution for 70 years and granted the state of Jammu and Kashmir special status.)

In fact, BJP faced a lot of public and political displeasure and objections on its decision of demonetization. The process visualized infrastructural flaws despite the previous government's initiatives, lack of public awareness and apathy of regional government to stand by the decision (Khanna & Mukherjee, 2020).

Meanwhile, the Congress-led UPA has always been more of an umbrella party, welcoming a wide range of views, rather than a party with a clear ideological stance. Therefore, it does not contain any controversial subjects that could be put on hold forever. But the UPA CMP's plan all along been to fight back against the BJP.

Compared to the NDA, UPA faced greater resistance and challenges from left-wing parties, particularly over the nuclear accord with the USA. Because the RSS, VHP, and other Sangh Parivar adherents opposed NDA policies more than its coalition partners, the NDA did not have a crisis like the UPA. Despite the NDA's best efforts and numerous compromises, they were unable to garner the backing of roughly 320 Lok Sabha MPs, a number that the UPA was able to secure.

However, the left-wing parties mostly function as an opposition force and pressure group rather than a coalition partner, even though they do provide external support to the UPA government. Even if the UPA's foreign policy aims, as outlined in its CMP, are merely a continuation of those of the NDA government, the coalition nonetheless faced fierce opposition from within, with the left partners being a greater threat than the BJP or the NDA.

With Mrs. Sonia Gandhi's rejection of the prime ministerial role, the UPA gained a strong moral position in their opposition to the BJP. She is now the head of the UPA's coordination committee. Even more encouraging for a democratic government is the fact that Man Mohan Singh is a member of a minority community (the Sikhs). The Congress was successful in maintaining unity among the secular factions. In contrast, the NDA's credentials as a secular alliance were bolstered when they supported and succeeded in electing Abdul Kalam, a minority candidate, to the presidency.

But the NDA had pushed the policy of saffronization of academia, culture, and scientific inquiry with all its might. Many steps have been taken to desaffronise these areas by the UPA, which was created and brought to power in the cause of secularism. This meant that the UPA represented the center-left and the NDA the center-right.

Impacts of Coalition on Democracy and India's Political Image in Domestic and International Domains

Between 1989 and 2014, Indian politics was all about coalition politics. This was because, after decades of Congress Party dominance at the national level, no single party could secure a parliamentary majority on its own. Instead, dozens of allies were formed before and after elections to form governing coalitions. So, after the BJP's 2014 success, political scholars anticipated somehow that India had finally moved past its multipolar, fragmented, and coalition-based political past and into a new, dominant-party system where the BJP played the role of the Congress's center pole.

It is true that India's political development has entered a new phase since 2014. Political scientists term it as the fourth party system because it brings up significant problems and likewise need more extensive analysis and evaluation. As a first question, how do economic indicators influence people's decisions to vote? There was a long-held belief in India that strong economics did not necessarily translate into effective politics.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha Voting, the NDA took power with 282 seats won by the Bharatiya Janata Party. With a resounding 303-seat majority, the party achieved the same result in the 2019 Lok Sabha Elections. After Mr. Narendra Modi was inaugurated as prime minister, India's foreign policy became known as the Modi Doctrine, and it was unbound by coalition politics (Vaishnav & Hintson, 2019).

The doctrine's most striking feature is the way it moves away from India's non-aligned power legacy, which was left behind by Nehru. He has already begun to do this by forging new connections with influential people and other developing nations. Economic interests and the advancement of India's position and ties with neighbouring and faraway nation states, particularly on matters of security, are central to the doctrine (Singh, 2019b). Following Mr. Modi's 2014 election, there were clear and enduring problems with the scope of foreign relations that needed fixing; some of these problems are still relevant to the NDA's second term in office.

Early trends, conservatives intended to put all of the power to lie under industrial discretion, while traditionalists on the left wanted the government to micromanage every aspect of business. Both of these are rejected in NDA policies. To improve the market's dynamism through efficient and effective regulatory procedures, the government and industry must collaborate to accomplish critical goals. Neither socialism nor capitalism nor the market nor less government is the crux of the matter (BJP, 2023).

Like his predecessor, Vajpayee, Modi has placed an emphasis on strengthening India's reputation abroad and on developing domestic skills. One area where the BJP under Modi has

made strides is in incorporating civilizational values into Indian foreign policy. This is evident in their efforts to promote solidarity among developing economies in the lead-up to the 2015 Paris Climate Change Conference, where they used Hindu sociocultural terms and Buddhist diplomacy.

Even though the BJP has good intentions, the interpretation suggest that the party's domestic social agenda could betray its declared foreign policy goals. This would be particularly true if Hindu majoritarianism were to undermine economic prosperity and social stability, which would run counter to the party's declared foreign policy objective.

When it comes to Indian elections, there are essentially two schools of thought. The first is that mathematics, or the capacity of political groups to get enough support from different tribes or castes to form a minimal winning coalition, is essentially what drives elections.

The second idea is that, instead of numbers, it's all about chemistry in elections. That is to say, when determining a party's popularity, factors such as leadership, messaging, coalition dynamics, etc. take precedence over identity-based calculations, which only consider the vote banks that have historically backed the party.

The 2019 election results unquestionably lend credence to the second viewpoint. However, this does not mean that caste is not an important factor in Indian politics; in fact, several analysts have claimed that it is very much so.85 The bigger picture is that India's electoral volatility would be significantly lower if identity concerns were the only determinant and the core demographic constituents of each party were widely known.

The 2019 Uttar Pradesh election is a good case in point because it witnessed the unusual alliance of the BSP and SP, two parties that had previously been at odds with each other, in an attempt to counter the BJP. The BSP and SP seemed to be on track to share the 80 seats in the state with the BJP if one were to just add up their vote shares from the 2014 general elections, as many pundits did.

In 2014, the NDA received 43.6% of the vote, while the BSP-SP received 43.2% (the combined total of their vote shares plus the RLD, a minor third ally). Combined BSP-SP support fell short of 2014 levels, and the BJP easily won 62 seats. The opposition alliance received barely 38.9% of the vote in 2019, while the NDA received 50.6%.

Since its 2014 election victory, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), headed by Narendra Modi, has controlled nearly all national political debate. When it comes to public debates, the party has utterly outfoxed the opposition parties by setting and controlling narratives.

Now, though, the status quo appears to be in jeopardy. The party that was so sure it would rule the nation for the next half-century appears to be seriously rethinking its strategy in light of recent political events, such as Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra and the establishment of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) (Sharma, 2023).

After suffering crushing setbacks in the highly contested state assembly elections in Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka, the party is understandably embarrassed. Evidently, it seems that Modi just rechristened the years leading up to India's 100th Independence Day as Kartavya

Kaal, which means the age of duty. Amrit Kaal, meaning "the era of elixir," has been proclaimed for these years before.

Some say that the 3,500-km Bharat Jodo Yatra did more than energise Congress troops; it also brought disqualified Lok Sabha MP Rahul Gandhi to the attention of opposition leaders. Unfortunately for the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, rumours regarding an opposition front that is not affiliated with the Congress have been put to rest for the time being, for Congress's who formally stated that it is not interested in the prime ministerial position and the Trinamool Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party's display of amicability towards Rahul during the joint opposition meet in Bengaluru.

The BJP has been building social partnerships with quantitatively significant caste groups in the run-up to the 2024 election rather than depending only on an ultra-nationalist sales-pitch. For example, the party that is in power has reestablished relations with the Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) in an effort to appeal to the Rajbhar (non-Yadav OBC) society as a whole which may have an impact on the outcome of the 32 Lok Sabha seats in Purvanchal, following a decline in its vote share in eastern Uttar Pradesh in the 2022 State Assembly election.

In a joint resolution, India pledges to uphold the Constitutional concept of India and addresses the rights of economically, socially, and educationally disadvantaged groups. The resolution places considerable emphasis on caste census, a topic that the BJP has been apprehensive about because it could establish a new narrative for elections. Over the last nine years, the BJP has campaigned under Modi's name in a variety of electoral contexts, including local civic bodies, state assemblies, and parliamentary elections. There was much less distance between the group and its head honcho now. Another first for the ruling party will be seeking votes under the name of NDA in the upcoming general election.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion sheds light on the political culture of coalition governance, offering insights into the current Indian scenario. A convergence of diverse political traditions, each molded by its historical context and ethnocentric assumptions, has coalesced to form what is commonly recognized as the Indian political culture, evolving through the BJP-led NDA. Historical imperatives, including the decline of one-party dominance and a collective shift towards parliamentary solutions, have shaped the current political power dynamic around two predominant idealistic objectives: a collaborative, somewhat compromising umbrella organization (followed by the UPA) and a coalition with idealistic alignment (embraced by the NDA). While the former ideal is adopted by the UPA, it may not find unanimous acceptance across all states.

On the contrary, the NDA's approach considers shared cultural values as a potential catalyst for shaping stable political systems nationwide. However, the practical application of coalition politics in terms of vote distribution and overall public reactions remains a dynamic attribute, particularly concerning the coalition's performance with respect to the two ideals. As discussed,

the current Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) has made significant strides in bolstering the welfare state, driving stable coalitions, and garnering public support for the nation's democratic principles—a stance criticized by Modi. Conversely, the present administration, empowered by the BJP's "full majority," has utilized similar strategies to fortify itself, albeit at the expense of weakening the nation's democratic fundamentals, such as balanced participation and active ally roles validated for a coalition government.

The current trend, as outlined in this article, suggests that major national, economic, or foreign policy shifts might benefit from establishing a dominant party-led ideally aligned coalition as a political insurance policy and a strategy to build broad consensus. However, considering upcoming election planning and the reluctance to force an early election, a collaborative and democracy-compatible coalition emerge as a viable alternative in the Indian context, aligning with the nation's core constitutional principles. While coalitions have proven effective under the dominance of a single party so far, the alternative collaborative approach remains valid and potentially more inclusive and stable. The success of either approach largely hinges on the coalition's attitude and interests. In essence, people's sentiments or the coalition's integrity may fluctuate or turn adverse under a single-party command within a coalition, risking eventual loss of trust or reluctance to support. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of these two approaches is essential to ensure stability and enhance India's image both domestically and internationally.

Suggestions

For the Public and Civil Society

1. Citizens should advocate for publicly accessible coalition frameworks.

2. Civil society organizations and academia should monitor coalition performance and publish independent assessments.

3. Public opinion must reinforce the importance of state-level autonomy within national coalition frameworks.

For Future Research

1. Study how coalition models function differently across Indian states, where ideological acceptance varies.

2. Analyze how media framing influences public perception of coalition stability.

3. Assess whether coalitions led by a party with a "full majority" evolve into hybrid dominant-party systems.

4. Investigate how cultural and ethnocentric diversity influences coalition durability across regions.

Declaration of Interests

Sourasis Chattopadhyay and Kaustav Mukherjee, declare our interests in examining the influence of political coalition strategies on democratic values in India. Our academic backgrounds and areas of expertise contribute to a comprehensive and multidisciplinary analysis. With a background in international relations, my research endeavors revolve around the diplomatic, geopolitical, and international dimensions of political coalition strategies. I aim to explore how these alliances shape not only domestic policies but also India's standing in the global arena, with a specific focus on democratic principles.

Ethical Considerations

The research adheres to ethical standards in the use of data, ensuring the proper citation of sources and maintaining the confidentiality of sensitive information.

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Definition of Conflicts of Interest

I have no conflicts of interest. Managing conflicts of interest typically involves disclosure of relevant relationships or interests, recusal from decision-making processes where a conflict exists, and establishing transparent procedures to mitigate the impact of conflicting interests. Effectively addressing conflicts of interest is crucial for maintaining integrity, trust, and ethical standards in various professional and organizational contexts.

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