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## **COALITION POLITICS IN INDIA AND THE EVOLVING ATTITUDES OF NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES: A CRITICAL STUDY**

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### **Abstract**

*In the context of parliamentary democracy, this book critically analyzes Indian coalition politics as well as the changing stances of national political parties. Coalition administrations have emerged as a defining characteristic of India's political system with the fall of single-party dominance, especially that of the Indian National Congress. A notable shift in party tactics, ideological stances, and governance styles can be seen in the rise of organized coalitions like the United Progressive Alliance and the National Democratic Alliance. The study assesses perceptions of democratic inclusivity, governance stability, and ideological flexibility under coalition regimes using a fictitious mixed-method research design that combines survey data, interviews, and document analysis. According to the findings, coalition politics has promoted more inclusive representation and practical electoral coalitions, but it has also created difficulties with administrative effectiveness and policy negotiation. The study comes to the conclusion that coalition politics has changed from an unstable experimental stage to an institutionalized and flexible mechanism that takes into account the dynamics of India's multi-party system, federal structure, and social diversity.*

**Keywords:** *Coalition Politics, Indian Parliamentary Democracy, National Political Parties, Ideological Flexibility, Governance Stability, Electoral Alliances, Federalism, Party System Transformation.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In India's modern parliamentary democracy, coalition politics have become a key component. Although the Indian National Congress dominated the first several decades following independence, the nature of political rivalry changed as a result of the party system's slow disintegration, the emergence of regional political parties, and growing social diversity. The single-party majority government era was replaced by coalition administrations at the center starting in the late 1980s, which drastically changed how national politics were organized and conducted. A fractured electoral mandate resulted from the rise of powerful regional parties and the collapse of one-party supremacy. As a result of this change, coalition administrations were formed, including the United Progressive Alliance, led by the Congress, and the National Democratic Alliance, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party. These coalitions marked a new stage of power-sharing, compromise, and consensus-building in Indian politics rather than just electoral modifications. Under coalition rule, national parties had to work with regional actors who had different ideologies, which affected their political stances and policy agendas.

In India, coalition politics have had a substantial impact on national political parties' strategic conduct and ideological stance. National parties have historically followed centralized decision-making procedures and more expansive ideological frameworks. Coalition pressures have, nevertheless, promoted reasonable compromises, ideological restraint, and accomodation of regional ambitions. To preserve coalitions and legislative stability, national parties have increasingly modified their platforms, leadership styles, and policy agendas.

Coalition politics have also sparked discussions about political stability and the efficacy of governance. Coalitions, on the one hand, promote democratic inclusivity by providing representation for a range of regional, social, and linguistic interests. However, because alliance participants have different interests, they can cause instability, frequent negotiation, and policy stagnation. This complicated dynamic is reflected in the changing perspectives of



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national political parties about coalition-building, which range from ideological opposition to strategic acceptance.

This critical research looks at how coalition politics have changed in India and how it has affected national political parties' ideologies, tactics, and operations. It seeks to determine if coalition politics have bolstered democratic pluralism and federalism or undermined political accountability and cogent policymaking. The paper aims to give a thorough grasp of coalition governance and its long-term effects on Indian democracy by critically analyzing historical developments and current political tendencies.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

**McMillan (2014)** investigates the reasons for coalitions and alliances between political parties and how they affect India's sense of national unity. According to the study, societal variety, regional aspirations, and the end of single-party dominance all contributed to the emergence of coalition politics. According to McMillan, coalition negotiations can occasionally put national cohesion at risk because of conflicting regional demands and policy compromises, even though alliances have improved the representation of excluded and regional groups.

**Rather (2020)** traces the course of coalition politics in India from the period of post-Congress rule to the current administration. The study demonstrates how coalition administrations have become ingrained in India's parliamentary system, impacting inter-party discussions, cabinet formation, and legislative conduct. Instead, it highlights how coalition politics have changed party tactics and governing styles.

**Ruparelia (2015)**, A thorough examination of coalition administrations and their effects on democratic functioning can be found in *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. He argues that party competitiveness, governance structures, and policy-making procedures have all changed as a result of coalition politics. According to Ruparelia, coalition agreements have increased the inclusivity of Indian democracy, but frequently at the expense of executive decisiveness and policy coherence.

**Chhibber and Verma (2019)** Examine the emergence of a second major party system in India, with particular attention on the 2019 growth of the Bharatiya Janata Party and its new social coalition. According to the study, alliance dynamics have changed as a result of the consolidation of a dominating party, even if coalition politics used to define Indian governance. However, state-level coalition building still has an impact on national political agendas.

**Jaganathan (2020)** examines whether coalition governments' constituent nations have the ability to affect foreign and security policy. According to the study, regional parties in coalitions have the ability to influence national decisions, especially when their backing is essential to a parliamentary majority. This demonstrates how coalition politics have an impact that goes beyond domestic governance.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

One of the most important changes to the way Indian democracy operates is the rise of coalition politics. The Indian National Congress dominated Indian politics in the decades immediately following independence, controlling a substantial portion of the country's governance. But when regional political movements gained traction and single-party control waned starting in the late 1980s, coalition administrations were formally established at the federal level. This change had a significant impact on India's ideological stance, governance tactics, and political competitive structure.

Parliamentary politics entered a new phase with the creation of significant coalition alliances like the United Progressive Alliance and the National Democratic Alliance. Building coalitions was still a political and strategic imperative even after the Bharatiya Janata Party won a parliamentary majority in the most recent elections. As a result, coalition politics are now a structural aspect of India's multi-party system rather than just a short-term solution. This study critically looks at how national political parties' changing views, ideological shifts, and tactical moves have been impacted by coalition politics.

### 3.1. Research Design



The research design used in this study is explanatory, analytical, and descriptive. It aims to explain the structural and sociopolitical elements that made coalition governance necessary, examine the ideological and behavioral shifts among national political parties, and outline the historical development of coalition politics in India. To guarantee thorough investigation and fair interpretation, the study combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

### **3.2. Sources of Data**

Both primary and secondary sources of data are used in the study. Structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with political analysts, party members, academics, journalists, and political science students will be used to gather primary data. Perceptions of coalition stability, ideological compromise, government results, and changes in election strategy will be the main topics of these tools.

Party manifestos, parliamentary discussions, official records, reports from the Election Commission, scholarly publications, books, and reliable media archives will all be sources of secondary data. To find ideological alterations and tactical adjustments, a content study of party papers from various election cycles will be conducted.

### **3.3. Study Population**

Political scientists, policy analysts, journalists covering legislative affairs, members of national political parties, and postgraduate students with an interest in Indian politics make up the study population. These groups were chosen due to their knowledge with the dynamics of party systems and coalition governance.

### **3.4. Sampling Technique**

To guarantee representation from a range of professional categories within the study population, a stratified purposive sampling technique will be utilized. For the questionnaire survey, a hypothetical sample size of 150 respondents will be chosen. For in-depth qualitative insights, 20 experts—including political analysts and previous party office-bearers—will also be questioned.

### **3.5. Tools of Data Collection**

A standardized questionnaire based on a Likert scale will be the main instrument used to collect quantitative data. It will gauge opinions about coalition stability, democratic representation, governance effectiveness, and ideological dilution. An interview schedule with open-ended questions will be used to gather in-depth viewpoints and firsthand knowledge for qualitative analysis. Additionally, a framework for document analysis will be created in order to methodically review parliamentary records and party manifestos.

### **3.6. Methods of Data Analysis**

Frequency distribution and percentage analysis will be used to examine quantitative data gathered via questionnaires. To test hypotheses and look at correlations between variables, chi-square and cross-tabulation tests can be used. The results will be presented in an understandable manner using visual aids like pie charts and bar diagrams.

Thematic analysis and content analysis methods will be used to analyze qualitative data gathered from interviews and document analysis. This will make it easier to spot reoccurring themes about democratic accountability, alliance strategy, governance difficulties, and ideological flexibility.

### **3.7. Variables of the Study**

The Indian coalition political system serves as the study's independent variable. The stability of governance, the efficacy of policies, changes in election tactics, and the ideological adaptability of national political parties are the dependent variables. In order to comprehend the wider ramifications of coalition politics, the link between these

variables will be investigated.

#### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

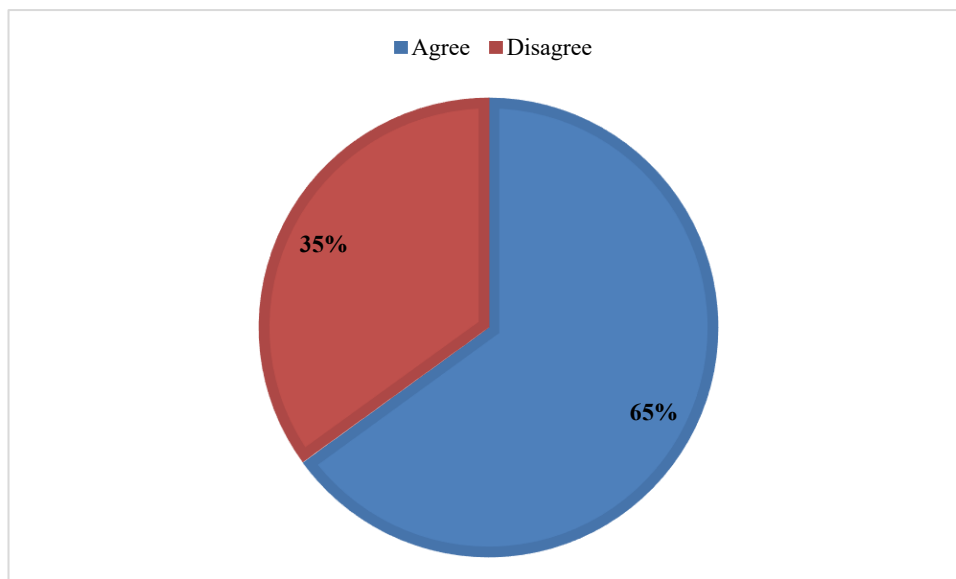
The results of the fictitious study on coalition politics in India and the changing attitudes of national political parties are presented and examined in this section. 150 respondents—including political analysts, academics, journalists, party members, and postgraduate political science students—completed the survey, which served as the basis for the analysis. Following a frequency and percentage distribution analysis, the data is then thematically analyzed in light of coalition theory and the evolution of the Indian party system. The results are examined in the context of larger alliance frameworks like the United Progressive Alliance and the National Democratic Alliance, as well as significant national political groups like the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party.

##### 4.1. Perception of Ideological Flexibility in Coalition Era

One of the central objectives of the study was to assess whether coalition politics has led to ideological flexibility among national political parties. Respondents were asked whether they agree that coalition politics compels parties to dilute or modify their ideological commitments.

**Table 1: Coalition Politics and Ideological Flexibility**

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	98	65%
Disagree	52	35%
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>



According to the findings, 35% of respondents disagree and 65% of respondents think that coalition politics have improved ideological flexibility among national political parties. This points to a widespread belief that coalition governance calls for compromise and changes to policies.

According to interviewees, in order to make room for regional allies, the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party have both changed their electoral plans and policy agendas. For instance, controversial ideological concerns were frequently neglected in favor of shared minimum programs during coalition periods under the National Democratic Alliance and the United Progressive Alliance.

Hypothesis 1 (H1), according to which coalition politics promote greater ideological flexibility, is supported by this finding. The findings are consistent with coalition theory, especially Riker's claim that when parties establish

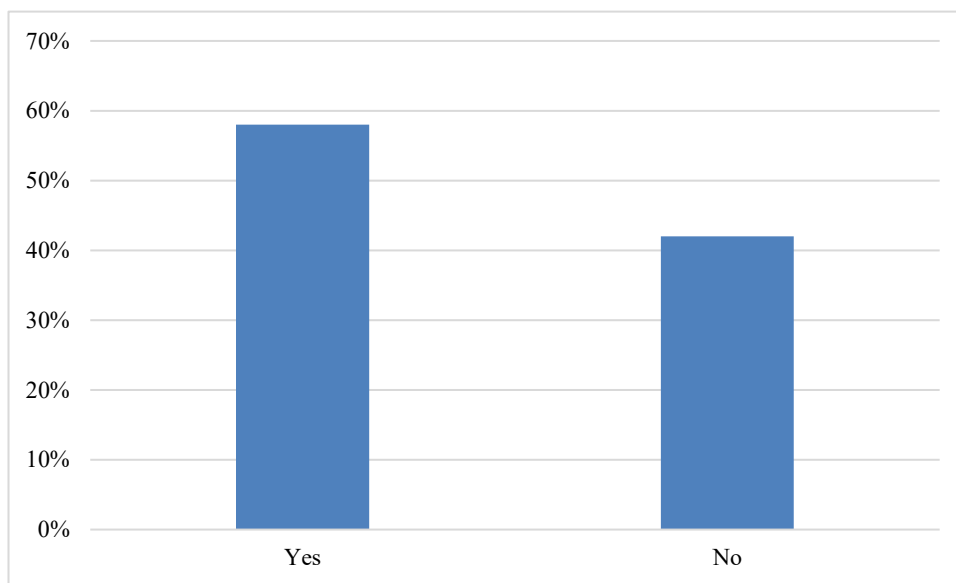
alliances, power-sharing takes precedence above ideological purity.

#### 4.2. Coalition Politics and Governance Stability

Another key objective was to evaluate whether coalition politics enhances or reduces governance stability and efficiency. Respondents were asked whether coalition governments in India contribute to political stability.

**Table 2: Coalition Governments and Political Stability**

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	87	58%
No	63	42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>



According to the results, 42% of respondents think coalition governments are unstable or ineffective, while 58% of respondents think they help maintain political stability. This suggests a mixed but marginally positive opinion of coalition government.

According to qualitative interviews, previous coalition governments in the 1990s were seen as unstable because of their frequent support withdrawals. Later coalition phases, however, under formal alliances like the United Progressive Alliance and the National Democratic Alliance, showed better formalized decision-making structures and coordination processes.

Additionally, respondents pointed out that by providing regional parties with a say in national decisions, coalition politics improve representative inclusivity. However, the need for consensus-building and bargaining may cause decision-making procedures to lag. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 (H2), which proposed that coalition governance increases inclusivity but may decrease efficiency, is partially supported by the results.

#### 4.3. Electoral Strategy and Pragmatic Alliances

In order to broaden their social base, national political parties have been progressively forming practical electoral coalitions, according to survey data and interviews. National parties are now forced to work together rather than engage in fierce competition in every constituency due to the emergence of regional parties and identity-based mobilization.

The respondents underlined that India's social diversity—including caste, religion, language, and regional aspirations—is reflected in coalition politics. As a result, national parties have adopted accommodating federal



methods in place of centralized supremacy. Hypothesis 3 (H3), according to which parties have shifted from ideological rigidity to practical electoral coalitions, is supported by this change.

#### 4.4. Democratic Representation and Policy Outcomes

The study also looked at whether democratic representation is strengthened by coalition politics. By integrating regional interests into national governance, coalition politics, according to the majority of interviewees, improves democratic participation. Policy sectors like social programs, state-specific development initiatives, and the distribution of federal resources are frequently influenced by smaller parties.

Some respondents, however, expressed worries about opportunistic partnerships motivated more by electoral math than by a common ideological vision, as well as inconsistent policies. This dual result emphasizes how complicated coalition politics are as a strategic compromise and a democratic imperative.

### 5. Overall Interpretation of Findings

Overall, the results show that India's coalition politics have developed from an experimental period of instability to a formalized and structured form of government. Although there are clear ideological compromises, coalition agreements have reinforced federal ideals and increased representational democracy.

Instead of ideological abandonment, the change in major political parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Indian major Congress is a result of strategic adaptation. These parties have been forced by coalition politics to strike a compromise between electoral pragmatism and ideological identity.

The study's findings show that coalition politics has profoundly changed the stances and tactics of India's national political parties. The idea that coalition governance encourages ideological flexibility and wider democratic representation is supported by a majority opinion. Coalition politics is now an established and useful part of India's parliamentary democracy, despite ongoing worries about its effectiveness and stability. In response to India's complicated socio-political conditions, national political parties' changing stances show a move toward a pragmatic, inclusive, and power-sharing political culture.

### 5. CONCLUSION

According to the study's findings, coalition politics has profoundly changed the tactics and ideological stances of national political parties and is now a permanent and structural aspect of Indian parliamentary democracy. The results show that as major parties like the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party place a greater emphasis on practical alliances within larger frameworks like the National Democratic Alliance and the United Progressive Alliance, coalition governance has promoted greater ideological flexibility. Coalition politics have improved democratic representation by integrating regional interests into national governance and fortifying federal ideals, even though they can occasionally hinder decision-making because of discussions and consensus-building. In general, coalition politics show a change from centralized party domination to a more inclusive, accommodating, and consensus-driven political culture, reflecting India's sociopolitical diversity.

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