

DIVIDED GOVERNMENTS: EXAMPLES & PRINCIPAL OF WORK

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to study, explore and skim through the literature available about the processes of public policy-making in a coalition government. The methodology of the study is based on a systematic review of Government coalitions and challenges faced in policymaking. The studies have been searched considering the literature on a coalition government, Solutions to identified issue, delegation and agent issues and challenging ministerial discretion. Out of them, ten studies have been extensively reviewed, three on modelling of the coalition government, four Challenging ministerial discretion and three on delegation and agent issue. The study arrives at two factors which guide decision making in public policy formulation in coalition government. The study concludes that the country with divergent and coalition government is recommended to formulate an agreement at the very beginning to reduce the future impact of divergent preference of political parties in policy formulation.

Keywords: Agents, Challenges, Identified solution, and political party.

INTRODUCTION

Most commonly, a coalition government is a form of government which includes several political parties who cooperate to arrive at unanimous decision primarily to form a government or to conceptualise different public policies, in the recent years, there has been an increase in the number of coalition governments in the parliament. Owing to this, in parliamentary democracies, the coalition's transform the public policy making on the party platforms into uncertainty because of inter-party differences in ideologies and functioning aspect. Hence, it becomes imperative to understand the challenges and address the issues by suggesting corresponding solutions to public policy making by these coalition governments. In the face of clear and potential

divergent interests and preferences of participating parties in the coalition governments, it raises questions about the manner in which the multi-party governments arrive at unambiguous decisions regarding policy agenda. This form of government is generally considered weak because there is no majority party. This results in following problems like Red-tapism in policy formulation and underhanded deals as more political parties engage in deals in order to get things accomplished. 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. 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.

COALITION GOVERNMENT IN INDIA

Historically it has been seen that Indian National Congress has been the single largest party in India since its inception in 1885. A coalition government was experienced in India as early as 1937 when Congress and the Muslim League formed a coalition government in Uttar Pradesh at the time of operation of the government of India Act, 1935. However, in free India, a coalition government was first formed in 1977 where Congress and Janta government united under the leadership of Morarji Desai. The formula of uniting all the opposition parties into a single party so that non-Congress votes do not get divided amongst the opposing parties was proposed by Dr Ram Manohar Lohia (Bisla, 2016). The four-party Janta government was in power from 1977 to 1979 due to the power struggle within the parties which led to the resignation of Mr Desai as well as the departure of the prominent group leaders like George Fernandes, H.N. Bahuguna, Biju Patnaik and Mudhu Limaye. The second coalition government in India was formed in 1979 with Mr Charan Singh being the prime minister, who had the support of CPI (Communist Party of India) and CPI (M) (Communist Party of India Marxist). However, he could not face the house due to his

failure to secure the vote of confidence in the house within three weeks' time.

The third coalition was formed in 1989 under the leadership of V.P. Singh which was supported by the BJP, which was the second largest party in the country at that time. The fourth coalition government was formed in 1990 under the leadership of Chandra Shekhar. The fifth coalition was formed under the leadership of H.D. Deve Gowda under the banner of united front government which was unison of 13 parties including Congress, CPI, Samajwadi Party, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, and Asom Gana Parishad amongst others. The sixth coalition was formed in 1997 under the leadership of I.K. Gujral, and seventh was formed in 1998 led by A.B. Vajpayee which was supported by AIADMK, BJD, Akali Dal, Shiv Sena and others. The eighth coalition was formed in 1999 which was led by A.B. Vajpayee under National Democratic Alliance (NDA) which was led by BJP (Bhartiya Janta Party) and supported by 24 political parties including AIADMK (*All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam*), Telgu Dasam Party, NC, Trinamool Congress and others. The ninth, as well as a tenth coalition, was formed in May 2004 and 2009 respectively under the leadership of Dr Manmohan Singh under the party named United Progressive Alliance supported by Nationalist Congress Party, Rashtriya Lok Dal, and others including left parties. Though in 2014 election, National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won the highest seat in parliamentary election. And perception was that NDA did not make any coalition with any other political parties. But in reality, NDA was in coalition as many as 40 small political parties, which was so far struggling at district and zonal level. Hence, the eleventh coalition was formed in 2014 by the (NDA) led by the BJP with Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister. Hence, considering Indian coalition context in mind, where coalition is present in every general election. Even, currently, there is huge clamour in India about "Third Front" before 17th general election in 2019. Third front stand for

major political parties coming together to win the election against NDA government.

DELEGATION AND AGENCY PROBLEMS

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 stands 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 agency 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. The amount and extent to which policy decisions are influenced

by diverse political views of equally diverse political parties will determine the probable implementation of an electoral promise. Though it becomes imperative to arrive at some common ground; it becomes necessary for parties to compromise. Such compromise would depend on the issue under discussion and the preference of the involved parties as to which policy is more important to them.

SOLUTION TO THE IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

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. Additionally, this also hinders the autonomy of the senior minister to some extent thus, effectively reducing the ministerial discretion.

In the real-world democracies, the coalition practice does not give complete autonomy to the individual heads or cabinet ministers. The individual heads have to work within the ambit of rules imposed by the coalition, and this helps in overcome the problem of decision making and delegation. Holding a particular portfolio gives power to the respective party to influence decision making, but on the other hand, it also gives the power to other parties to challenge the decision. Another solution that can be considered is the formulation of a coalition agreement or a contract. It can have a

significant effect on the performance of cabinets in public policymaking. Such drafts can reduce the negative impact of the differentiation in individual preferences. It will also assist in limiting the ministerial discretion of cabinet ministers in their respective ministries.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the present research was to study the challenges and the solutions of the policy making in coalition government. On the basis of the systematic review, the researcher identified three major challenges that are faced by coalition government. These are first, modelling of coalition government, second, delegating and agency issues and third is, challenges of ministerial discretion. It has been observed that coalition government has more or less failed to serve the purpose of governing the country. Modelling of the coalition government has represented the complex structure of the coalition government. This complex structure involves several parties belonging to different background and culture coming into contact to form coalition government. Another identified challenge is delegation and agency issue where delegation of power, authority and responsibilities among different parties forming coalition government was an issue. Finally, ministerial discretion where the parties wanted to exercise the power of their ministries under their jurisdiction. As per the literature review, it can be recommended to Coalition government to adhere to the control mechanism to prevent delegation problem within the working of Parliament. Bargaining power through control mechanism results in converging of views. Another identified solution is assigning junior ministries an overseer will help in effective policymaking because the juniors can then focus on their individual assigned tasks. The results of this study can be generalised on other democracies to the extent to which the political systems are similar. If the coalition governments share characteristics, the results can be applied, but a comparative research design needs to conduct to arrive at more specific conclusions.

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