International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

Coalition Politics in India: Challenges and Opportunities

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UGC NET December 2025 Qualified in Ph.D., Political Science

Abstract:
Coalition Politics has emerged as a Significant Feature of India's Democratic System, reflecting the Country's Social, Cultural, Linguistic and Political Diversity. The rise of regional parties and the decline of single-party dominance after 1960's-70's have contributed to the formation of coalition governments at both the national and state levels in India. This Research Paper examines the Challenges and Opportunities associated with Coalition Politics in India. It explores issues such as ideological differences among coalition partners, political instability, power-sharing conflicts, policy-making delays, and the influence of regional interests on national governance. At the same time, coalition politics provides opportunities for inclusive governance, broader political representation, democratic participation, and the accommodation of diverse regional aspirations. It also encourages political negotiation, consensus-building, and cooperation among different political parties. The study adopts a qualitative and analytical approach, drawing on historical developments and contemporary political trends to understand the changing nature of coalition governments in India. It further analyses the impact of coalition politics on governance, policy implementation, political accountability, and federal relations. The paper argues that, despite its inherent complexities, coalition politics can strengthen Indian democracy when supported by mutual trust, ideological flexibility, transparent decision-making, and a commitment to constitutional values. Ultimately, coalition politics represents both a challenge to political stability and an opportunity to promote participatory and inclusive democracy in India.

Keywords: Coalition Politics, Indian Democracy, Regional Political Parties, Political Instability, Inclusive Governance, Federalism, Regional Representation, Political Negotiation, Consensus Building, Democratic Co-operation, Common Minimum Programme, Compromise, Power-Sharing.

Introduction:

In the last 7 decades, Coalition Politics has become an important aspect of the Indian Political System, reflecting the Diversity and Complexity of the World's Largest Democracy. India is a multicultural, multilingual, and multi-religious country where political preferences vary across regions, communities, and social groups. In this context, coalition politics provides a mechanism through which different political parties come together to form governments and represent diverse interests of the nation. A coalition Government is generally formed when no single political party secures a clear majority in the legislature, or when parties voluntarily join hands to achieve common political objectives. It can be Pre-Alliance i.e. before the elections or Post-Alliance i.e. after the election results. The development of Coalition Politics in India gained momentum after the decline of the Congress party's dominance in several states during the 1960s and the emergence of Non-Congress Governments. At the National Level, the formation of the

Janata Party Government in 1977 marked a significant phase in the evolution of alternative political arrangements. The 1989 general elections further strengthened the coalition era, which continued through the 1990s and the early 2000s. Governments led by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) demonstrated the importance of regional parties and political alliances in national governance. Although single-party majority governments have also emerged, coalition-building remains relevant to India's electoral and parliamentary politics. Coalition Politics presents both Challenges and Opportunities for Democratic Governance. Major challenges include ideological differences among alliance partners, political instability, disagreements over power-sharing, policy-making delays, and competing regional interests. These factors can complicate administrative decisions and affect the continuity of government policies. However, Coalition Governments can also promote inclusive representation, strengthen cooperative federalism, encourage consensus-building and provide regional parties with a greater role in national decision-making. This Research Paper examines the Evolution, Functioning, and Significance of Coalition Politics in India. It seeks to analyse the major challenges faced by coalition governments while exploring their potential to strengthen democratic institutions and political participation. The study argues that effective coordination, mutual trust, and respect for constitutional principles are essential for ensuring Stable, Accountable and Inclusive Governance in India.

Evolution of Coalition Politics in India:

Coalition Politics in India has evolved significantly since independence, reflecting changes in the party system, electoral preferences, and regional aspirations. In the initial decades from 1947- 1966, the Indian National Congress dominated the National and State Politics in India. However, the political landscape began to change during the last few years of 1960s due to growing opposition unity and the emergence of regional parties. A Major Turning Point came in 1967, when the Congress lost power in several states and Non-Congress Parties formed Coalition Governments. In 1977, following the Emergency (1975–77), the Janata Party came to power at the Centre under Prime Minister Morarji Desai, thereby, challenging Congress dominance under the leadership of Indira Gandhi. Although this government collapsed in 1979. However, it established an important precedent for alternative political alliances in Indian Politics. The 1989 General Elections marked the Beginning of a Sustained Coalition Era at the National Level. The National Front Government, supported by different political parties, highlighted the growing influence of regional and smaller parties. During the 1990s, successive governments depended on coalition arrangements, including the United Front governments of 1996–1998. The formation of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government under Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1999 brought greater stability to Coalition Governance in India. Subsequently, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), led by the Congress, governed from 2004 to 2014. In the 2014 and 2019 General Elections, the BJP secured a Parliamentary Majority independently, reducing its dependence on coalition partners. However, the NDA remained an important political alliance in the Indian Politics. The 2024 General Elections renewed the significance of coalition politics, as the BJP relied on its allies to form the Government at the centre. Thus, the Evolution of Coalition Politics demonstrates India's transition from one-party dominance to a Competitive Multi-Party System, highlighting the growing importance of Regional Representation, Political Negotiation and Democratic Co-operation.

Nature and Characteristics of Coalition Governments in India:

- **Multi-Party System**: Coalition Governments emerge from India's Multi-Party Political System, in which several National and Regional Parties compete for electoral support.
- **Sharing of Political Power**: The Political power is distributed among the Coalition Partners according to their electoral strength, political influence, and negotiated agreements.
- **Common Minimum Programme**: Coalition Partners often develop a Common Minimum Programme (CMP) to establish shared policy priorities and guide government activities.
- **Ideological Differences**: Coalition Partners may have different ideologies, political objectives, and electoral interests, requiring compromise and mutual adjustment.
- **Role of Regional Parties**: Regional Parties play an important role by representing state-specific interests and influencing national-level decision-making.
- **Consensus-based Decision-Making**: Major Policy Decisions generally require consultation, negotiation, and agreement among coalition partners.
- **Political Compromise**: Parties may compromise on certain policies and demands to maintain unity and ensure the continuation of the government.
- **Dependence on Coalition Partners**: A coalition Government may depend on the support of its partners to maintain a Parliamentary Majority and remain in power.
- **Possibility of Political Instability**: Disagreements, withdrawal of support, or internal conflicts may threaten the stability and survival of coalition governments, leading to political instability in the country.
- **Inclusive Representation**: Coalition governments can provide Representation of Diverse Social Groups, Regions and Political Interests.
- **Strengthening of Federalism**: The participation of Regional Parties can strengthen Centre–State Relations and bring state-level concerns into national politics.
- **Negotiation and Co-ordination**: Effective coordination mechanisms are necessary to resolve disputes and maintain co-operation among coalition partners.
- **Dynamic Political Alliances**: Coalition arrangements may change over time due to elections, shifting political interests, leadership changes and new alliances.

Regional Parties and their Role in Coalition Politics in India:

- **"Regional Party"** is a commonly used **Political Term**, whereas **"State Party"** is the **ECI's Formal Recognition Category**.
- However, a Party may have a regional focus without necessarily being officially recognised as a State Party.
- **Under Paragraph 6A of the Election Symbols Order, a Party** qualifies for recognition as a **State Party,** if it fulfils **any one of the following conditions:**

1. Secures **6% of the Valid Votes in State Assembly Elections** and **Wins at least Two Seats in its Legislative Assembly**.
2. Secures **6% of the Valid Votes in the state in a Lok Sabha Election** and **Wins at least One Lok Sabha Seat from that State**.
3. **Wins at least 3% of the Total Seats in the State Legislative Assembly** or **at least Three Seats**, whichever is greater.

4. **Wins at least One Lok Sabha Seat for every 25 Seats** or fraction thereof, allotted to that State.
5. **Secures at least 8% of the Total Valid Votes Polled in the State in a Lok Sabha or State Legislative Assembly Election.**

- **Role of Regional Parties in Coalition Politics:**
- **Government Formation:** Regional Parties supports the National Parties or sometimes, the National Parties supports the Regional Parties to secure the required majority and to form the Government.
- **Representation of Regional Interests:** They bring the specific needs, demands, and aspirations of their respective states to the national political agenda.
- **Power-Sharing:** Regional Parties negotiate Ministerial Positions and other responsibilities within Coalition Governments according to their political strength and alliance agreements.
- **Influence on Policy-Making:** They influence National Policies by advocating measures that address the economic, social, and developmental priorities of their states.
- **Strengthening Federalism:** Regional Parties strengthen India's Federal Structure by highlighting the importance of State Autonomy and effective Centre–State relations.
- **Consensus-Building:** Regional Parties encourage Dialogue, Negotiations and Compromise among Coalition Partners with Different Ideologies and Political Objectives.
- **Demand for Financial Assistance:** They advocate Greater Central Financial Assistance, Infrastructure Investment and Development Programmes for their respective states.
- **Acting as Kingmakers:** When No Single Party has enough seats to form a Government independently, the Regional Parties can become decisive in determining which Alliance forms the Government.
- **Checking Centralisation of Power:** Regional Parties can challenge excessive concentration of political authority at the Centre and advocate Greater State Participation in the decision-making process.
- **Ensuring Political Accountability:** They can question government decisions and seek policy changes when national measures conflict with the interests or priorities of their states.
- **Contributing to Democratic Pluralism:** Regional Parties provide alternatives to National Parties and reflect the Diversity of Political Opinions within India's Democratic System.

Case Studies: Major Historical Coalition Governments in India since Independence:

- **Case-1: Janata Party Government (1977–1979):**

The Janata Party Government was a landmark in the Evolution of Coalition Politics in India as it ended the Congress Party's uninterrupted rule at the Centre and demonstrated the possibility of forming the Government at the Centre through Opposition Unity.

It was India's 1st Major Non-Congress Coalition Government at the Centre, formed after the Emergency imposed by the Indira Gandhi Government from June 1975 to March 1977.

Jayaprakash Narayan (J.P.) and his Sampoorna Kranti (Total Revolution) Movement played an important role in mobilising opposition forces by demanding sweeping political, social, economic & moral freedoms across India, so as to restore the Democracy back in India.

As a result, Several Opposition Parties such as Congress (O), Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Bharatiya Lok Dal and the Socialist Party united and merged to form the Janata Party to challenge the Congress in the 1977 General Elections.

In the 1977 General Elections, the Janata Party won 298 Seats in the Lok Sabha, while Congress suffered

a major electoral defeat, which led to the formation of the 1st Non-Congress Government at the National Level in the Independent India.

Morarji Desai became the Prime Minister, Jagjivan Ram served as the Deputy PM and Defence Minister, Ch. Charan Singh served as Home Minister and later Deputy Prime Minister & Finance Minister and Atal Bihari Vajpayee served as External Affairs Minister.

Major Achievements of the Government:

- Restoration of Democracy by reversing the restrictions imposed during the Emergency.
- It sought to restore the Individual Freedoms, Press Freedom and the Rights of Political Opponents.
- 44th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1978 that introduced Safeguards against the Misuse of Emergency Provisions and restored Important Constitutional Protections.
- Judicial Independence.
- It sought to improve Relations with Neighbouring Countries, including Bangladesh, Pakistan and China.
- Rural Development by emphasising on Agriculture, Rural Development, Decentralisation and Small-Scale Industries.

Major Challenges faced by the Janata Party Government:

- Leadership Conflicts and Rivalries among Morarji Desai, Charan Singh, and Jagjivan Ram, that weakened the Coalition's Internal Unity.
- Ideological Differences due to which the constituent groups disagreed over economic policies, social priorities and the direction of governance.
- Disputes over former Jana Sangh Members' continuing association with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) intensified internal divisions among the Coalition.
- Competing Groups prioritised their own political interests, making collective decision-making difficult.
- Limited Socio-economic Outcomes by the Government.
- Declining Public Support
- Defections and Withdrawal of Support from Parties.

When the Conflicts among the Major Factions became increasingly difficult to resolve, Morarji Desai resigned as the Prime Minister on 15 July 1979 after losing the support needed to sustain his government and Ch. Charan Singh became Prime Minister with outside support from Congress, but resigned before facing a confidence vote after Congress withdrew its support.

This Political breakdown led to Fresh General Elections in January 1980, in which Congress returned to power under Indira Gandhi.

However, it is to be noted that the Janata Party Government (1977–79) was a Major Turning Point in the Indian Political History, since, it demonstrated the potential of opposition unity to challenge one-party dominance and opened the way for Coalition Politics in India.

- **Case-2: National Front Government (1989–1991):**

The National Front Government was a Coalition Government that came to power in 1989 after the Congress Government led by Rajiv Gandhi lost its majority. It marked an important phase in the

development of coalition politics, social justice, and the Mandal–Mandir Controversies in the Indian Politics.

V. P. Singh, the then Congress Leader had gained prominence by raising corruption-related issues, particularly the Bofors Scandal associated with the Rajiv Gandhi led Congress Government and launched the Jan Morcha Party in 1987 after falling out with the Congress leadership over the Bofors Scandal.

He co-founded the Janata Dal in 1988 by merging Jan Morcha with Other Political Groups such as: Janata Party, Lok Dal and Congress (S).

Following this, in the 1989 Lok Sabha Elections, the Janata Dal won 143 Seats, Congress won 197 Seats and the BJP won 85 Seats leading to Hung Assembly.

Finally, the National Front was formed after the BJP and the Left Parties supported the Janata Dal from outside without joining the Coalition and the Congress suffered a major electoral setback.

On 2nd December, 1989, V.P. Singh became the Prime Minister of India and led the National Front Government till 10th November, 1990 and Chaudhary Devi Lal served as the Deputy PM of India.

Major Achievements of the V.P Singh Government:

- **Mandal Commission Report**: The Government announced the implementation of the Mandal Commission Report in 1990, introducing a 27% Reservation in Central Government Jobs for Other Backward Classes (OBCs).
- **Inter-State Council**: The Government also established the Inter-State Council in 1990 to promote Co-ordination between the Centre and the States.
- **Cauvery Water Dispute**: It established the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal in 1990 to address the Water-sharing Dispute involving Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- **Foreign Relations**: The Government adopted a more Conciliatory Approach towards India's Neighbours in the Subcontinent.

However, the V.P. Singh Government lasted for only 343 Days and fall on 7th November, 1990, due to the following reasons:

- Since, it was **a Minority Government dependent on outside support**, differences developed among its leaders, which led to the fall of the Government.
- The **implementation of the Mandal Commission Report was a central catalyst in the fall of the Government** as the decision sparked a massive, violent anti-reservation protests and student self-immolations across the Northern India, which intensified the political divisions among the ruling Janata Dal and its allies
- Also, the **BJP supported the The Ram Janmabhoomi Movement**, that demanded the Construction of a Ram Temple at Ayodhya and organised a Rath Yatra, which was led by L. K. Advani. On 23rd October, 1990, Advani was arrested at Samastipur in Bihar while leading the Rath Yatra, due to which the BJP withdrew its outside support to the V. P. Singh Government.
- As a result, the V.P. Singh Government subsequently lost the confidence vote in the Lok Sabha on 7th November 1990 and V. P. Singh resigned as the Prime Minister of India.

After V. P. Singh resigned, Chandra Shekhar, who led a breakaway faction called Janata Dal (Socialist) became the Prime Minister of India on 10th November, 1990, with the outside support from the Congress Party led by Rajiv Gandhi.

However, within few months only, political differences developed between PM Chandra Shekhar and the Congress Leadership and finally, On 6th March 1991, Chandra Shekhar resigned from the Office and recommended the Dissolution of the Lok Sabha.

But he continued as the Caretaker Prime Minister of India from 6th March 1991 and remained in office until 21st June 1991, when Congress Government came to power and P.V. Narasimha Rao was sworn in as the next PM of India, after the General Elections of 1991.

- **Case-3: United Front Governments (1996–1998):**

The United Front Governments were the Coalition Governments in India that ruled from **June 1996 to March 1998** under 2 Prime Ministers: H. D. Deve Gowda and I. K. Gujral. They were formed after the 1996 General Election in which no single party secured a majority, thus leading to Hung Parliament.

In the 1996 General Election, the BJP won 161 Seats, Congress won 140 Seats, Janata Dal won 46 Seats, CPI (M) won 32 Seats, TMC (M) won 20 Seats, Samajwadi Party & DMK won 17-17 Seats, TDP won 16 Seats, Shiv Sena won 15 Seats, CPI won 12 Seats, BSP won 11 Seats, Independents and Other Parties won 27 Seats, which shows a clear fractured mandate, thereby leading to Hung Parliament.

Since the BJP emerged as the Single Largest Party for the first time in the history, it formed a short-lived Minority Government on 16th May 1996 under PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee without the support of any other party and hence, collapsed within 13 Days and Atal Bihari Vajpayee resigned on 28 May 1996, right before facing a mandatory trust vote on the floor of the House.

Following the fall of the Vajpayee led BJP Government, 13 Opposition Parties came together to form the United Front (UF) Coalition with the aim to keep the BJP out of power.

The Coalition was officially managed by N. Chandrababu Naidu of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), who served as the Convener of the United Front.

The Core Parties forming the United included: Janata Dal (The Leading Party) (46 Seats), Tamil Maanila Congress (TMC) (20 Seats), Samajwadi Party (17 Seats), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) (17 Seats), Telugu Desam Party (TDP) (16 Seats), Communist Party of India (CPI) (12 Seats) and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) (5 Seats).

To keep the BJP out of power, the Congress, holding the second-largest share with 140 Seats, though declined to lead a new government, agreed to extend crucial outside support to the proposed United Front Coalition. The CPI also agreed to support the Front from outside.

After V.P. Singh and Jyoti Basu declined, H.D. Deve Gowda, the then Chief Minister of Karnataka was chosen as a Consensus Candidate to lead the Government.

Finally, On 1 June 1996, H.D. Deve Gowda was sworn in as the 11th Prime Minister of India, with Mulayam Singh Yadav (Samajwadi Party) as Defence Minister, I.K. Gujaral (Janata Dal) as External Affairs Minister and P. Chidambaram (Tamil Maanila Congress) as Finance Minister.

However, H.D. Deve Gowda's Tenure lasted for less than 10 Months and he resigned from his office on 21 April 1997, after the Congress led by Sitaram Kesri withdrew its support due to growing friction, poor communication and unresolved political demands between the Coalition and the Congress Party.

Now, rather than going for a Fresh General Election immediately, the United Front with backing from senior leaders decided to select a New Consensus Leader as the Congress agreed to extend outside support to a Re-organized United Front Ministry under the condition of leadership change and specific policy understandings.

As a result, I.K. Gujral, who was serving as the Minister of External Affairs in the Deve Gowda Cabinet was sworn in as the Prime Minister of India on 21 April 1997.
However, the United Front Government led by Prime Minister I.K. Gujral collapsed within 10 Months and 26 Days on 28 November 1997, after the Congress withdrew its support from the alliance as the demands of Congress were not fulfilled.
Later on, when the Major Political Groups failed to form a Viable Re-aligned Coalition, President K.R. Narayana dissolved the Lok Sabha on 4 December 1997, paving the way for General Elections.
However, I.K. Gujral continued as Caretaker Prime Minister of India until the 1998 General Election and the formation of the Next Government.

- **Case-4: Atal Bihari Vajpayee led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) (1998-2004):**

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) was a Coalition of Political Parties that was formed in 1998 under the leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). It governed India from 1998 to 2004 under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
After the fall of I.K. Gujral led United Front Government, Fresh Elections to the Lok Sabha were held in 1998, in which No Single Party of Alliance got the Majority, resulting again in a Hung Parliament.
Since, BJP emerged as the Single Largest Party, winning 182 Seats in the Lok Sabha, to cross the majority threshold, it build a Coalition known as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) on 15th May 1998.
The Alliance brought together over 20 National and Regional Parties, including: BJP (182 Seats), AIADMK (18 Seats), Samata Party (12 Seats), Biju Janata Dal (9 Seats), Shiromani Akali Dal (8 Seats), All India Trinamool Congress (7 Seats), Shiv Sena (6 Seats), PMK (4 Seats), Lok Shakti (3 Seats), MDMK (3 Seats), Haryana Vikas Party (1 Seat), Manipur State Congress Party (1 Seat), Janata Party (1 Seat), Sikkim Democratic Front (1 Seat).
Although, the Alliance formally won 259 Seats, it crossed the Majority threshold with 272 Seats to form the Government with the outside support of TDP (12 Seats) and also with the support of Independents like Maneka Gandhi, Satnam Singh Kainth and V.K. Ramamurthy.
Finally, Atal Bihari Vajpayee was sworn in as the Prime Minister of India on 19th March 1998.
However, the 1st NDA Government lasted for only 13 Months and collapsed in April, 1999 after J. Jayalalitha withdrew AIADMK's Support, leading to a Trust Vote that the Government lost by a Single Vote, which led to Fresh General Elections in 1999.
After the 1999 General Elections, Atal Bihari Vajpayee formed the NDA Government as a Broad 20-Party Coalition that won 303 Seats in the Lok Sabha, while the BJP alone winning 182 Seats.
The Alliance expanded to include New Post-election Allies such as the DMK (39 Seats), Janata Dal (United) (21 Seats) and Indian National Lok Dal (5 Seats).
Atal Ji was sworn in as the Prime Minister of India for his 3rd term on 13th October 1999 and this administration became the 1st Non-Congress Government in India to complete a Full 5 Year Term at the Centre.

Major Achievements of the Vajpayee led NDA Government:

- **Nuclear Tests**: India conducted 5 Underground Nuclear Tests at Pokhran, Rajasthan on 11 & 13 May 1998. These Tests were known as Pokhran-II or Operation Shakti, after which India declared itself a Nuclear-Weapon State.

- **Lahore Declaration (1999): V**ajpayee pursued Diplomatic Efforts to improve Relations with Neighbouring Countries. In February 1999, he travelled to Lahore, Pakistan along with a delegation by the Delhi–Lahore Bus Service and met Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, after which both the countries signed the Lahore Declaration (1999), which aimed to reduce tensions and promote peace and nuclear confidence-building measures between both countries.
- **Kargil War (1999):** The Kargil Conflict took place between India and Pakistan in May–July 1999 after the Pakistani soldiers and armed infiltrators occupied strategic positions on the Indian side of the LOC in the Kargil Region of Jammu and Kashmir. As a result, India launched Operation Vijay to recapture the occupied positions and The Indian Air Force conducted Operation Safed Sagar in the support of the Army. Finally, The Indian Armed Forces successfully recaptured the occupied positions and the conflict ended on 26th July 1999 after Pakistan withdrew its forces. This War strengthened India's focus on Border Security, Intelligence and Defence Preparedness.
- **Creation of 3 New States:** Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand in 2000.
- **Golden Quadrilateral Project:** Launched in 2001 as part of the National Highways Development Project (NHDP), it aimed to Connect India's 4 Major Metropolitan Cities: Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata. The Project involved constructing and upgrading approximately 5,846 km of National Highways to reduce travel time and transportation costs and improve trade and connectivity.
- **86th Constitutional Amendment, 2002:** Made Education a Fundamental Right for Children aged 6–14 years under Article-21A.
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003.**

- **Case-5: United Progressive Alliance (UPA) 1 (2004-2009) and 2 (2009-2014):**

In the 2004 General Elections, the Congress Party emerged as the Single Largest Party with 145 Seats, while the incumbent BJP led NDA won 181 Seats, but it failed to reach the 272 Seat Majority Mark.

Then Congress President Sonia Gandhi worked swiftly to bring together Regional Parties and Pre & Post election Allies to form a Collective Block. As a result, a Formal Alliance known as United Progressive Alliance (UPA) was announced on 6th May 2004 and finalized around 16th May 2004.

The Alliance included the following Parties: Congress (145 Seats), RJD (23 Seats), DMK (16 Seats), NCP (9 Seats), PMK (6 Seats), TRS (5 Seats), JMM (5 Seats), MDMK (4 Seats), LJP (4 Seats), Kerala Congress (2 Seats), IUML (1 Seat), RPI(A) (1 Seat) and AIMIM (1 Seat), while outside support was given by the Left Front (59 Seats), Samajwadi Party (39 Seats) and BSP (19 Seats).

In order to govern with the backing of Left Partners, the UPA drafted a National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP), which guided the Centre-left Coalition.

Though, Sonia Gandhi was the face of Congress and the Alliance, she stepped aside from the Prime Minister's Post and Dr. Manmohan Singh was chosen to lead the UPA Government and was sworn in as the Prime Minister of India on 22nd May 2004.

Major Achievements of UPA-I Government:

- **India–United States Civil Nuclear Agreement (2005-08)**
- **Right to Information Act, 2005 (RTI)**
- **National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (NREGA)**
- **Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005**
- **National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), 2005**

- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005**
- **Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2006**
- **National Food Security Mission, 2007**
- **National Investigation Agency Act, 2008**

In the 2009 General Elections, the UPA Government again came to power that too with improved numbers by winning 262 Seats collectively, while the Congress alone won 206 Seats.

Also, the UPA-II was far less dependent on Left Parties and enjoyed a more stable position due to the improved performance of the Congress.

It was joined by several key Political Parties that were not the part of the UPA-I, such as: All India Trinamool Congress (19 Seats), J&K National Conference (3 Seats), Bodoland People's Front (1 Seat) and Sikkim Democratic Front (1 Seat).

Dr. Manmohan Singh was re-appointed as the Prime Minister of India on 22nd May 2009 and completed the full 5 Year Term and 10 Year Term combined (UPA-I and UPA-II) as the PM of India.

Major Achievements of UPA-II Government:

- **Right To Education (RTE) Act, 2009**
- **Aadhaar Programme, 2010**
- **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012**
- **National Food Security Act, 2013**
- **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013**
- **National Green Tribunal Act, 2010**
- **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013**
- **Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), 2013**

Major Controversies during the UPA Government:

- **2G Spectrum Scam (2007–08; controversy exposed in 2010)**
- **Coal Block Allocation Scam (Coalgate) (2004–09; exposed in 2012)**
- **Commonwealth Games Scam (2010)**
- **Adarsh Housing Society Scam (2010)**
- **AgustaWestland VVIP Helicopter Deal (2010–2013)**
- **Robert Vadra–DLF Land Deal Controversy (2012)**

As a result, the AITC Party led by Mamata Bannerjee officially withdrew its support from the UPA-II Government on 18th September 2012 on the issue of mishandling of the Coalgate Scandal by the Government.

Later on, the DMK, whose former Telecom Minister A. Raja and MP Kanimozhi were arrested and implicated in the 2G Spectrum Scam, withdrew its ministers from the UPA Government on 20th January 2013 and later, completely snapped its electoral ties with the Congress on 15th December 2013, citing unaddressed grievances over the 2G Case and the Sri Lankan Tamils Issue.

All such series of high-profile corruption scandals and financial & institutional irregularities led to the downfall of the Congress Party in the 2014 General Elections.

- **Case-6: The Return of National Democratic Alliance (NDA) under PM Narendra Modi (2014-2019):**

Just before the 2014 General Elections, the BJP officially announced Narendra Modi, the then Chief Minister of Gujarat as its Prime Ministerial Candidate on 13th September 2013.

This decision set the stage for the 2014 General Elections since Narendra Modi effectively weaponized public anger against the high-profile corruption scandals, inflation and the Anti-Corruption Movement led by Anna Hazare at Delhi during the Congress led UPA-II Rule.

The BJP framed the 10 Years of the UPA Rule (2004-2014) as a "Decade of Decay" and projected Narendra Modi as an Administrator of Clean and Decisive Governance, building on his "Vikas Purush" Image from Gujarat as against the indecisive UPA Leadership and PM Manmohan Singh.

Modi gave the "Ache Din" Slogan as a forward looking promise of economic growth, fast track development, employment and modernization, capturing the aspirations of India's youth and middle class.

The strategy of BJP and Narendra Modi resulted in the defeat of UPA at the 2014 General Elections, with the BJP winning 282 Seats on its own, thus securing the 1st Single Party Majority in the Lok Sabha since 1984 and the NDA combined securing 226 Seats, while the Congress dropped to an all time low of 44 Seats in the Lok Sabha.

Narendra Modi was sworn in as the Prime Minister of India on 26th May 2014, marking the beginning of the Modi Era in the Indian Politics.

Major Initiatives & Achievements of PM Modi led NDA Government in its 1st Tenure (2014-2019):

- **MyGov, 2014**
- **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, 2014**
- **Make in India, 2014**
- **Namami Gange Programme, 2014**
- **National AYUSH Mission, 2014**
- **India's Act East Policy, 2014**
- **Mangalyaan (Mars Orbiter Mission), 2014**
- **Yoga Diplomacy, 2015 (21 June to be observed as International Day of Yoga every year on India's plea)**
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), 2015**
- **Digital India Mission, 2015**
- **Skill India, 2015**
- **Smart Cities Mission, 2015**
- **International Solar Alliance (ISA), 2015**
- **Surgical Strikes, September 2016 (following the Uri Terror Attack)**
- **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), 2016**
- **Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM), 2016**
- **Demonetisation, 8 November 2016**
- **Raisina Dialogue, 2016 onwards**
- **India–US Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), 2016**
- **India's entry into the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as a full time member, 2017**
- **Goods and Services Tax (GST), 1 July 2017**
- **QUAD revival and strengthening, 2017**

- **National Testing Agency (NTA), 2017**
- **Ayushman Bharat Yojana, 2018**
- **102nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2018 (Constitutional Status to the National Commission for Backward Classes.)**
- **Balakot Air Strike, February 2019 (following the Pulwama Terror Attack)**
- **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN), 2019**

Also, during this period the BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) rapidly expanded its footprint across India. While the NDA held a Clear Majority at the Centre, its State Level Presence grew through Direct Majorities and also through Multi-Party Coalition Governments, such as:

- **Punjab (May 2014 – March 2017)** between **SAD & BJP** with Parkash Singh Badal from SAD as the Chief Minister.
- **Andhra Pradesh (May 2014 - March 2018)** between **TDP & BJP** with N. Chandrababu Naidu from TDP as the Chief Minister.
- **Maharashtra (December 2014 – May 2019)** between **BJP & Shiv Sena** with Devendra Fadnavis as the Chief Minister.
- **Jharkhand (December 2014 – May 2019)** between **BJP & AJSU** with Raghubar Das from BJP as the Chief Minister.
- **Jammu & Kashmir (March 2015 – June 2018)** between **PDP & BJP** with Mufti Md. Sayeed and later Mehbooba Mufti from PDP as the Chief Minister.
- **Assam (May 2016 – May 2019)** between **BJP+AGP+BPF** with Sarbanada Sonowal from BJP as the Chief Minister.
- **Manipur (March 2017 – May 2019)** between **BJP+NPP+NPF+LJP** with N. Biren Singh from BJP as the Chief Minister.
- **Goa (March 2017 – May 2019)** between **BJP+GFP+MGP+Independents** with Manohar Parrikar from BJP as the Chief Minister.
- **Bihar (July 2017 – May 2019)** between **JD(U) & BJP** with Nitish Kumar from JD(U) as the Chief Minister.
- **Nagaland (March 2018 – May 2019)** between **NDPP & BJP** with Neiphiu Rio from NDPP as the Chief Minister.

However, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) formally exited the NDA on 16th March 2018 because the Central Government refused to grant Special category Status to Andhra Pradesh, while the PDP exited NDA when the BJP withdrew its support from the Coalition Government in Jammu & Kashmir in June, 2018.

Then, in the 2019 General Elections, the BJP led NDA won a landslide victory with the BJP securing 303 Seats on its own and the broader NDA Coalition capturing 353 Seats in the Lok Sabha.

Major Initiatives & Achievements of PM Modi led NDA Government in its 2nd Tenure (2019-2024):

- **Abrogation of Article 370 from Jammu & Kashmir (August, 2019) and Reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir i.e. Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh became 2 Separate Union Territories.**
- **Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019**
- **Triple Talaq Law (2019)**
- **Vande Bharat Express, 2019 onwards**

- **Central Vista Redevelopment Project in National Capital, 2019 onwards**
- **CoWIN Platform (2020): World's Largest Vaccination Drive during the Covid-19 Pandemic.**
- **103rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2019 (Introduced 10% EWS Reservation.)**
- **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (2020)**
- **India's $4 Trillion Economy Milestone: India became the World's Fifth-Largest Economy in Nominal GDP Terms in 2022.**
- **New Parliament Building in New Delhi (2023)**
- **Women's Reservation Act (2023): Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam**
- **3 New Criminal Laws (2023): Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA).**

Also, during the 2nd Tenure of PM Modi led NDA Government, we have seen a lot of changing dynamics in the Indian Politics, which are as follows:

- After the 2019 **Maharashtra** Assembly Elections, the long-standing BJP and Shiv Sena Alliance broke down and Shiv Sena formed the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) with the NCP and Congress and formed the Government in the State and Uddhav Thackeray became the Chief Minister. However, in June 2022, a major rebellion in Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde brought down the MVA Government and Shinde became the Chief Minister in coalition with the BJP and BJP's Former CM Devendra Fadnavis became the Deputy CM of the State. Later, in July 2023, Ajit Pawar's Faction of the NCP also joined the BJP-Shinde Group NDA Government in Maharashtra.
- Following the 2019 **Haryana** Assembly Elections where the BJP fell short of a majority, it formed Coalition Government with Dushyant Chautala's Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) and Independent MLA's with BJP's Manohar Lal Khattar as the CM and Dushyant Chautala as the Deputy CM of the State. However, the BJP-JJP Alliance later concluded in early 2024, just before the assembly elections.
- In **Bihar**, BJP was in Coalition with JD(U) and Other Smaller NDA Partners and formed Government after the 2020 Assembly Elections and despite having the highest seat in the Coalition, BJP made JD(U) Leader Nitish Kumar the Chief Minister of the State. In August 2022, JD(U) exited the NDA and Nitish Kumar formed the Government with the Congress-RJD led Mahagathbandhan, but rejoined the BJP led NDA in January 2024 and Nitish Kumar again became the Chief Minister.

Coalition Politics in India in the Context of the 2024 General Elections:

The 2024 Lok Sabha Elections witnessed a New Competition between 2 Major Political Coalitions:

- **The BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA).**
- **The Congress led Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA).**

The BJP won 240 Seats and emerged as the Single Largest Party but failed to achieve the required 272 Majority Mark on its own, which was a shock for all the Political Analysts since the BJP's Seat tally declined from 303 Seats in 2019 to 240 Seats in 2024.

At the same time, the Congress improved its performance from 52 Seats in 2019 to 99 Seats in 2024 and the INDIA Coalition secured approximately 234 Seats.

However, the BJP led NDA secured 293 Seats and crossed the Majority Mark of 272, with the support of Major Partners:

- **Telugu Desam Party (TDP)**: Won 16 Seats under the leadership of N. Chandrababu Naidu.

- **Janata Dal (United)**: Won 12 Seats under the leadership of Nitish Kumar.
- **Shiv Sena**: The Eknath Shinde-led faction won 7 Seats.
- **Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas)**: Won 5 Seats under Chirag Paswan.
- **Janata Dal (Secular)**: Won 2 Seats under H. D. Kumaraswamy.
- **Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD)**: Won 2 Seats under Jayant Chaudhary.
- **Nationalist Congress Party**: The Ajit Pawar-led faction won 1 Seat.
- **Apna Dal (Soneylal)**: Won 1 Seat under Anupriya Patel.
- **Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular)**: Won 1 Seat under Jitan Ram Manjhi.

Thus, TDP and JD(U), with 28 Seats collectively, became particularly significant to the BJP-led NDA Coalition, which once again highlighted the Growing Importance of Regional Political Parties in the Indian Politics.

Narendra Modi was sworn in as the Prime Minister of India for his 3rd Consecutive Term on 9 June 2024, that marked the Return of a Coalition Government at the Centre after 10 Years of Single-Party Majority Governments.

As a result, the Coalition Partners received Representation in the Modi Cabinet, such as:

- **From TDP**: Ram Mohan Naidu (Cabinet Minister- Civil Aviation) & Chandra Shekhar Pemmasani (MOS).
- **From JD (U)**: Lalan Singh (Cabinet Minister- Panchayati Raj, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairy) & Ramnath Thakur (MOS).
- **From JD (S)**: H.D. Kumaraswamy (Cabinet Minister- Heavy Industries and Steel).
- **From HAM**: Jitan Ram Manjhi (Cabinet Minister- MSME).
- **From LJP (R)**: Chirag Paswan (Cabinet Minister- Food Processing Industries).
- **From Shiv Sena**: Prataprao Jadhav (MOS-IC).
- **From RLD**: Jayant Chaudhary (MOS-IC).
- **From Apna Dal (S)**: Anupriya Patel (MOS).
- **RPI (A)**: Ramdas Athawale (MOS).

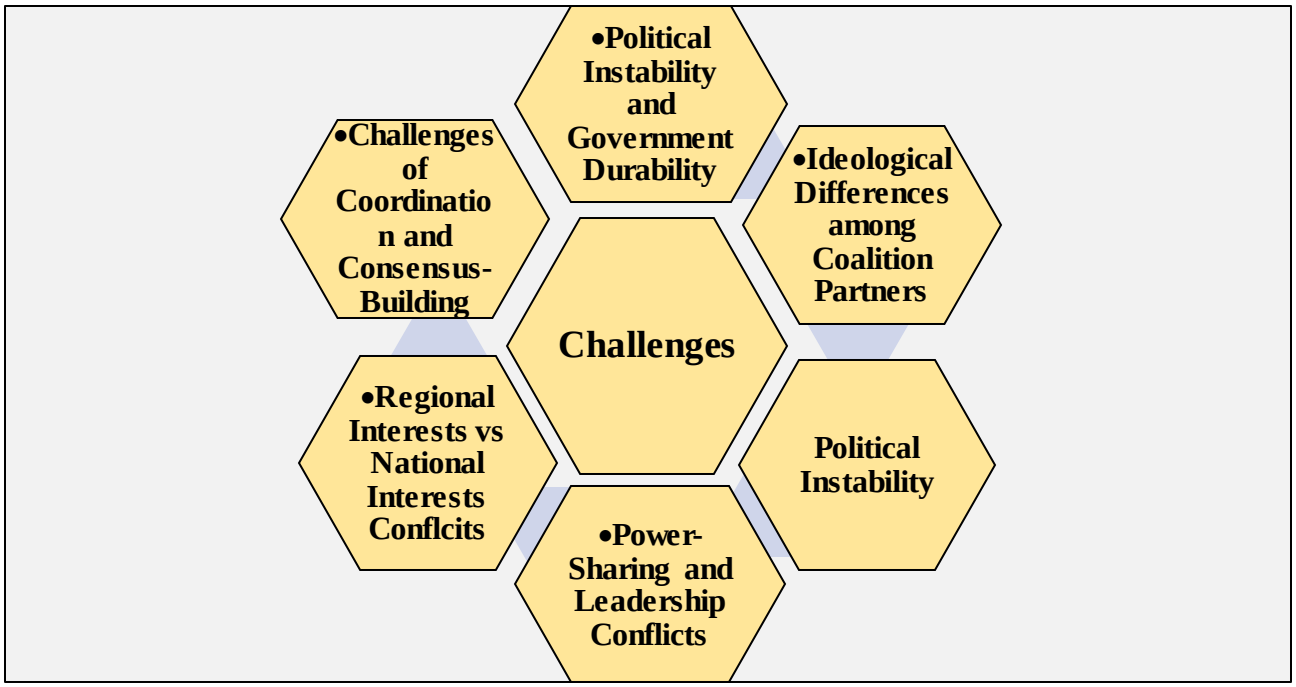
As of October, 2026, the BJP has 241 Seats in the 18th Lok Sabha and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has 319 Seats in total and therefore, has Majority in Both the Houses of Parliament.

Comparative Analysis of Coalition and Single-Party Majority Governments:

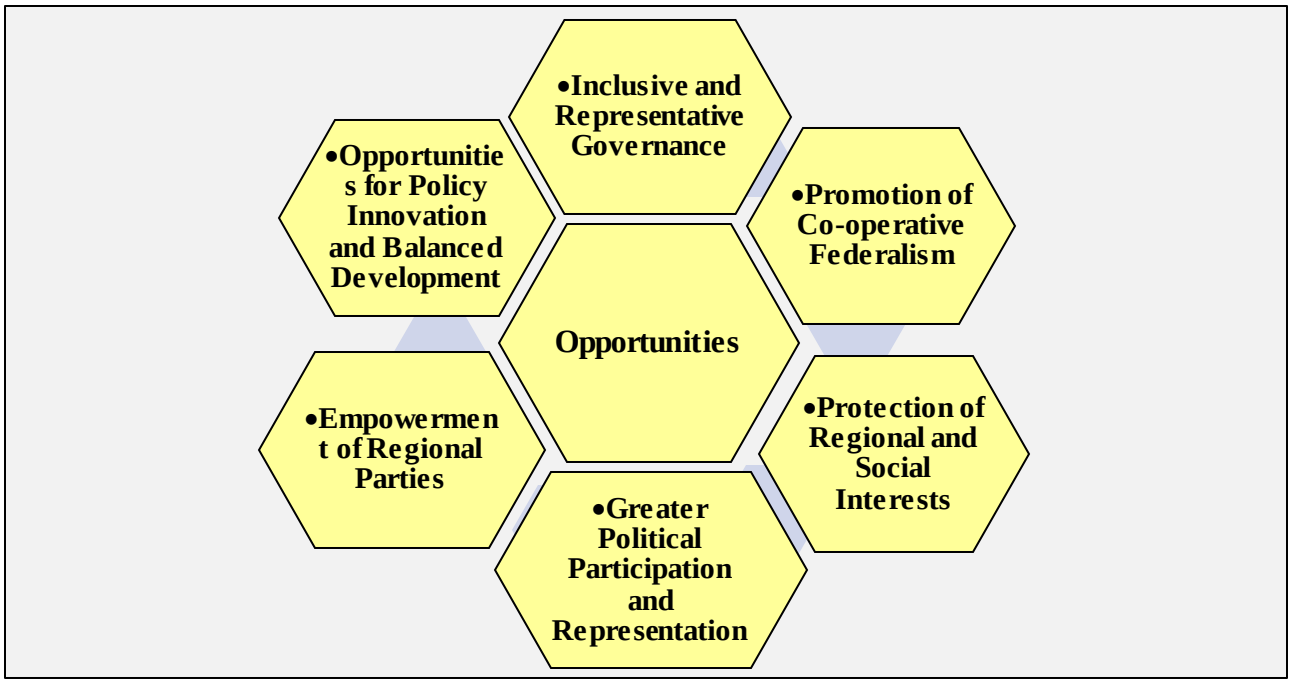
Single Party Majority Governments	Coalition Politics
Decisions are generally taken by the Ruling Party only.	Decisions involve Consultation and Negotiation among the Coalition Partners.
Not Dependent on the Support of Other Parties.	May face Instability, if Coalition Partners withdraw their Support.
Consistent and Long-term Policy Planning.	Policies are often based on Compromise and requires Consensus among the Coalition Partners.
No Role of Regional Parties in the Government.	Important Role of Regional Parties in Government Formation and Policy-Making.
Quick Decisions are taken.	Decision-making may take longer time due to Negotiations and Consultations.

Concentration of Political Power within One Party.	Distribution of Power among Different Parties.
Generally follows the Broad Ideological Framework of One Party.	Accommodates Different Ideologies and Political Viewpoints.
Ministers are generally selected from the Single Ruling Party.	Ministerial Positions may be distributed among the Coalition Partners.
National Policy Priorities may receive greater emphasis from the ruling party.	Regional Interests may receive Greater Representation through Coalition Partners.
Less Role and Position of Opposition Parties in Parliament.	Opposition Parties may have Greater Opportunities and Influence in the Parliamentary Proceedings.
No Common Minimum Programme.	Often adopted to establish Common Policy Objectives among the Coalition Partners.
Leadership generally rotates around 1-2 Important Party Leaders of the Ruling Party.	Leadership involves the Viewpoints of Main Leaders of different Coalition Partners.
Conflicts may arise mainly due to Internal Party Disagreements.	Conflicts may arise both within the Parties and between the Coalition Partners.
For Example: BJP Governments in 2014 and 2019.	For Example: UPA-I & II Governments from 2004-2014 and NDA Government from 2024 onwards.

Coalition Politics in India: Challenges



Coalition Politics in India: Opportunities



Suggestions for Strengthening Coalition Governments in India:

- **Common Minimum Programme (CMP):** Coalition Partners should develop a Clear Common Minimum Programme to establish Shared Goals, Policy Priorities and Governance Objectives.
- **Mutual Trust and Co-operation:** All Coalition Partners should maintain Mutual Trust, Respect and Co-operation to ensure Political Stability and Effective Governance.
- **Effective Co-ordination Mechanism:** A Permanent Co-ordination Committee should be established to resolve differences and facilitate communication among the Coalition Partners.
- **Respect for Regional Aspirations:** The Union Government should give due importance to Regional Interests, State-specific Demands and the Concerns of Regional Political Parties.
- **Consensus-based Decision-Making:** Major Policy Decisions should be taken through Consultation and Consensus rather than Unilateral Action.
- **Transparency in Power-Sharing:** There should be Transparency in the Distribution of Ministerial Positions, Responsibilities and Decision-making Powers among Coalition Partners.
- **Strengthening Federalism:** Cooperative Federalism should be promoted by ensuring Meaningful Consultation between the Centre and State Governments.
- **Avoidance of Political Opportunism:** Coalition Partners should prioritise National Interest, Constitutional Values and Public Welfare over narrow political interests.
- **Constructive Conflict Resolution:** Institutional Mechanisms should be developed to peacefully resolve disagreements and prevent minor disputes from threatening Government stability.
- **Accountable and Inclusive Governance:** Coalition Governments should ensure Transparency, Parliamentary Accountability, Policy Consistency and Inclusive Development for All the Sections of the Society.

Conclusion:

Coalition Politics has emerged as an integral feature of India's Parliamentary Democracy, thereby, reflec-

ting the Country's Political, Social, Cultural and Regional Diversity. The evolution of Coalition Governments highlights the growing significance of Regional Parties, power-sharing arrangements and consensus-based decision-making in Indian Politics. While Coalition Politics offers several opportunities, including wider political representation, strengthening of federalism, decentralisation of power and inclusive governance, it also faces challenges such as political instability, ideological differences, leadership conflicts, policy delays and competing regional interests. The 2024 General Elections have further reinforced the Importance of Coalition Politics in India, as the BJP under PM Narendra Modi formed the Government at the Centre with the Support of its Alliance Partners. This development demonstrates that Regional Parties continue to play a significant role in shaping national political outcomes and Government formation. However, the Success of Coalition Governments depends upon Mutual Trust, Political Maturity, Effective Co-ordination, Transparency and a Shared Commitment to Constitutional Values. A Strong Common Minimum Programme and institutional mechanisms for resolving differences can further strengthen Coalition Governance. Hence, Coalition Politics should not merely be viewed as a necessity for securing a Parliamentary Majority but also as an opportunity to promote Participatory Democracy, Co-operative Federalism and Inclusive National Development. Thus, the Effectiveness of a Coalition depends upon Balancing the Regional Aspirations with Broader National Interests.

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