Coalition Government

Why in news?

Recently, Coalition politics has made a comeback at the national stage after 10 years of a de facto one-party rule.

What is a coalition government?

- **Coalition** - The term 'coalition' is derived from the Latin word '_coalitio-' which means 'to grow together_'.
- Thus, technically, coalition means the act of uniting parts into one body or whole.
- Politically, coalition means an alliance of distinct political parties.
- **Coalition government** – When several political parties join hands to form a government and exercise political power on the basis of a common agreed programme or agenda.
- **Basis of coalition** – It is a direct descendant of the exigencies
- of multi-party system in a democratic set-up.
- It is a _phenomenon of a multi-party government_ where a number of minority parties join hands for the purpose of running the government.
- **Forms of alliance** – It can be formed in two ways
    - Pre-poll alliance
    - Post-election alliance
- **Power Sharing** - Power is distributed among the coalition partners, with key positions such as the Prime Minister or Chief Minister and various ministerial roles shared according to pre-agreed terms.
- **Features** - Coalitions are formed for the _sake of some reward, material or psychic_.
- It implies the existence of _at least two partners_.
- The underlying principle of a coalition system stands on the simple fact of _temporary conjunction of specific interest_.
- It is not a static but _a dynamic affair_ as coalition players and groups dissolve and form new ones.
- The keynote of coalition politics is _compromise_, and rigid dogma has no place in it.
- A coalition government works on the _basis of a minimum programme,_ which may not be ideal for each partner of the coalition.
- _Pragmatism_ and not ideology is the hallmark of coalition politics.
- The purpose of coalition adjustment is _to seize power_.

	Majoritarian democracy	Consensus democracy
1. Executive	Concentration of power in one-party and bare-majority cabinet	Power-sharing in broad coalition cabinet
2. Relations between government and parliament	Cabinet dominance	Balance of power
3. Political parties	Two-party system	Multi-party system
4. Electoral system	Majoritarian and disproportional	Proportional representation
5. System of interest groups influence	Pluralism	Corporatism
6. Government structure	Unitary and centralised	Federal and decentralised
7. Parliament	Concentration of legislative power in unicameral legislature	Strong bicameralism
8. Type of Constitution	Flexibility, simple procedure of amendment or unwritten constitution	Rigidity, complex procedure of amendment
9. Judicial review	Absent or weak	Strong
10. Central bank	Controlled by executive	High degree of autonomy

What are factors for emergence of coalition government in India?

- **Decline of single-party dominance** - The decline of the Indian National Congress's dominance in the late 1960s and 1970s led to a *more fragmented political landscape*, requiring coalition arrangements to form governments.
- **Rise of regional parties** - The emergence of strong regional parties with significant voter bases contributed to the fragmentation of national parties, making coalition necessary to achieve a majority.
- **Diverse electorate** - India's diverse electorate, with varying regional, linguistic, and cultural interests, led to the formation of coalitions to address the interests of different groups and regions.
- **Internal party fragmentation** - Fragmentation within major parties, often results in the formation of splinter groups that align with others to form a coalition.
- **Strategic political alliance** - Strategic alliances between parties, either *to counter common rivals* or to leverage shared interests, have led to the formation of coalition governments.
- **Post-Emergency political landscape** - After the Emergency period (1975-1977), there was a push for more inclusive and representative governance, leading to the rise of coalition politics as a way to reflect a broader spectrum of political views.
- **Electoral system** – At times, the first-past-the-post electoral system may ensure that no single party wins an outright majority thus prompting for coalition partnerships.

HISTORY OF COALITION GOVERNMENT

PERIOD	COALITION	PRIME MINISTER	PARTY IN SUPPORT
1977-1979	JANTA PARTY	MORARJI DESAI	CONGRESS PARTY (O)
1979-1980	JANTA PARTY	CHARAN SINGH	JANTA (S)
1989-1990	NATIONAL FRONT	V P SINGH	JANTA DAL
1990-1991	SAMAJWADI JANTA PARTY	CHANDRA SHEKAR	JANTA DAL (S)
1996-1997	UNITED FRONT	H.D DEVEGOWDA	JANTA DAL
1997-1998	UNITED FRONT	I.K GUJRAL	JANTA DAL
1998-1999	BJP-LED COALITION	A.B VAJPAYEE	B.J.P
1999-2004	NDA	A.B VAJPAYEE	BJP
2004-2009	UPA-I	MANMOHAN SINGH	CONGRESS
2009-2014	UPA-II	MANMOHAN SINGH	CONGRESS
2014-2019	NDA	Narendra Modi	BJP
2019-2024	NDA	Narendra Modi	BJP
2024-current	NDA	Narendra Modi	BJP

What are the implications of coalition government?

Coalition Government	
Merits	**Demerits**
• Diverse and _inclusive government._ • Strengthens centre-state relations and _federalism_. • Promotes _deliberations and discussion_ in decision making. • Develops unified agendas and ensure more _balanced policy making_. • Regional and minorities parties _can have a say_. • It can _enhance accountability_ by ensuring that different viewpoints and interests are represented and scrutinized.	• Holding multiple parties together are prone to _unstable government_. • Competing interests and agendas can _affect national aspirations_. • Shifting political alliances can _impact policy decisions_. • Negotiations can lead to _delayed decision making_ process. • Reconciling to different parties can result in _policy gridlock_. • It can sometimes _dilute the core ideologies_ of participating parties.

Reference

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