

**CHANGING PATTERN OF LEGISLATURE-  
EXECUTIVE RELATIONSHIP: AN ANALYSIS OF THE  
UNION CABINET FROM THE 9<sup>TH</sup> LOK SABHA TO  
THE 14<sup>TH</sup> LOK SABHA**

*Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
for the award of the degree of*

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**DECLARATION**

I declare that the thesis entitled, “**Changing Pattern of Legislature- Executive Relationship: An Analysis of the Union Cabinet from the 9<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha to the 14<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha**” submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my won work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this or any other University.

  
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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AC	Arunachal Congress
AGP	Assam Gana Parishad
AIADMK	All India Anna Dravida Munetra Kazhagam
AIFD	All India Forward Block
AITC	All India Trinamool Congress
BJD	Biju Janata Dal
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
CMs	Confidence Motions
Cong (S)	Congress (Socialist)
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPI (M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
DMK	Dravida Munetra Kazhagam
GoMs	Group of Ministers
HLD (R)	Haryana Lok Dal (Rashtriya)
HVP	Haryana Vikas Party
IUML	Indian Union Muslim League
JD	Janta Dal
JD (U)	Janata Dal (United)
JKNC	Jammu Kashmir National Conference
JKPDP	Jammu Kashmir People's Democratic Party
JMM	Jharkhand Mukti Morcha
JP (s)	Janta Party (Secular)
LJP	Lok Jan Shakti Party
MADMK	MGR Anna Dravida Munetra Kazhagam
MDMK	Marumalarchi Dravida Munetra Kazhagam
MGP	Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party
MSCP	Manipur State Congress Party
NCMs	No Confidence Motions
PMK	Pattali Makkal Katshi
RJD	Rashtriya Janata Dal
RSP	Revolutionary Socialist Party

RSS	Rashtriya Swayam Sekav Sangh
SAD	Shiromani Akali Dal
SDF	Sikkim Democratic Front
SHS	Shiv Sena
SJP	Samajwadi Janta Party
SP	Samajwadi Party
TDP	Telugu Desam Party
TMC	Tamil Manila Congress
TRC	Tamizhaga Rajiv Congress
TRS	Telengana Rashtriya Samiti
WBTC	West Bengal Trinamool Congress

## **INTRODUCTION**

The efficient secret of the English Constitution may be described as close union, the nearly complete fusion of the executive and legislative power. According to the traditional theory as it exists in all the books, the goodness of our constitution consists in the entire separation of the legislative and executive authorities, but in truth its merit consists in their singular approximation. The connecting link is the *Cabinet*.

**-Walter Bagehot.<sup>1</sup>**

The emergence of coalition politics in Canada, Australia and the UK since mid-2000s has led to the rekindling of interest among scholars over the consequences of minority governments or coalition governments on political processes.<sup>2</sup> There exists a rich literature linking the nature of electoral system and parliamentary outcomes in the context of parliamentary system.<sup>3</sup> There have also been studies that have analyzed various aspects of the strength and stability of such governments as well as the factors that may enable the working of minority governments. However, the study of Cabinet within such government has witnessed limited attention. Existing studies about the Cabinet either interrogate allocation of portfolios and consequent policy prospects or the sustenance and survival of governments. In India, systematic engagements with legislature-executive relationship or with the functioning of the union Cabinet remain quite marginal. Most studies on Parliament in India have either generally dealt with the aspect of accountability in statistical terms or the normative basis of the changing institutional moorings. The issue of legislature and executive relationship has been marginal in these writings. The latest and most comprehensive study of the Union Cabinet was presented by Pai Panandiker and Mehra more than two decades ago. Writings on Indian politics in general and public institutions in particular have not lent any space to this vital institution. The writings dealing with the emergence and consolidation of coalition politics in India interrogate the institutional factors enabling

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<sup>1</sup> Miles Taylor (Ed.).(2001). *The English Constitution: Walter Bagehot*. New York: Oxford University Press, p.11

<sup>2</sup> Pascale Dufour , Jane Jenson & Denis Saint-Martin. (November, 2011). Governing without a majority. What consequences in Westminster systems? *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 49 (4), 435-439. Csaba Nikolenyi. (2010). *Minority Governments in India: The Puzzle of Elusive Majorities*. London and New York: Routledge.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

the coalition phenomenon but such writings do not go beyond assessing the reasons for the formation and survival of successive coalition governments. Nonetheless, the formation of government is just an initial step in understanding the working of government. The aspect of changing social base and consequent ascendance or decline of political parties, either participating or supporting the government, may provide an indication about the nature of political change as well as the pattern of relationship between the executive and legislature. These studies also fall short on providing a systematic account of how the union Cabinet functions. It becomes vital to understand the factors internal to the institution of Cabinet that enable the strengthening of this institution vis-à-vis the Parliament even at the moment when successive governments during this period are coalition minority governments. Despite the opportunities of legislative assertion in the phase of coalition politics, the domination of the executive and the shifting balance towards executive requires a deeper understanding of the primary institution of the government, the Cabinet. This holds the key to enable a deeper understanding of the shifting balance between the legislature and the executive. For instance, questions on the strengthening of Prime Minister's position and status in Cabinet reflect upon the executive-legislature relationship in the coalition context in India. Thus, a study concerned only with Parliament as an institution of accountability, on one hand a study of the Cabinet as a part of executive, on the other hand will remain partial and incomplete. Thereby, it will to offer an understanding of the changing pattern of legislature-executive relationship.

Patrick Gordon Walker argues that the emergence of stable two party system reshaped the Cabinet in the UK.<sup>4</sup> According to Gordon, the decisive factor in the evolution of stable two party system was that the Cabinet remained the eventual source of political authority. Consequently, the Cabinet grew stronger. The political and constitutional evolution of Britain down to 1950s and 1960s mark the survival of Cabinet and not the passing away of Cabinet. In contrast to Crossman, who considered the evolution of Cabinet committees as a stepping stone towards the passing away of Cabinet government and emergence of prime ministerial government, Walker argues the use of Cabinet committees has added to the efficiency of Cabinet without compromising its oversight on policy decisions. With the consolidation of a stable two party system,

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<sup>4</sup> Patrick Gordon Walker. (1970). *The Cabinet*. London: Jonathan Cape.



powers and rights were conferred upon the Prime Minister that were not enjoyed by previous Prime Ministers. Walker argues that partial Cabinets and not the prime ministerial governments have become a part of Cabinet government. A partial Cabinet is an organized part of Cabinet government and mostly they constitute a standing committee or ad-hoc committee presided over by the Prime Minister, which prepare policies and take policy decisions without prior consultation with the Cabinet. The Cabinet is subsequently informed as well as consulted. Partial Cabinet, quite contrary to prime ministerial government, presumes that the Prime Minister carries certain influential Cabinet ministers who would in turn convince the Cabinet when it is informed and consulted on policy decisions. Walker writes,

...A prime ministerial government remains a matter of words on paper. The truth is that the Cabinet and party inside and outside Parliament do indeed find the Prime Minister an indispensable asset and that gives him an eminent power. But equally the Prime Minister cannot dispense with the party, Parliament and Cabinet...the Prime Minister can exercise his greatly enhanced powers only if he carries his Cabinet with him.<sup>5</sup>

Anthony King argues that it may not be useful to understand executive-legislature relationship through phenomenon generally subsumed under the broader category of 'executive-legislative relations'.<sup>6</sup> In fact, this two body conception of government and Parliament is self limiting as it fails to take into consideration the impact of party groupings inside the Parliament. Four set of groupings are identified by King, namely, the government, government back-benchers, opposition front-bench and opposition back-benchers. Interrogating the possibilities about the pattern of relationship that may emerge owing to diverse interaction among the groupings in Parliament, King argues that essentially three modes legislative-executive relations emerge in the Britain. They are the intra party mode, the opposition mode and the non-party or Private Members' mode.

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<sup>5</sup> Patrick Gordon Walker. (1970). *The Cabinet*. London: Jonathan Cape.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony King. (1976). Modes of Executive-Legislature Relations: Great Britain, France and West Germany. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 1(1), 11-36.

R.H.S. Crossman in his article 'The Prime Ministerial Government'<sup>7</sup> argues that by the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century the extension of franchise resulted in the growth of party system in Britain. Consequently, the Cabinet system witnessed a fundamental transformation with the transfer of effective power from the Parliament to the great party machines and bureaucracy in Whitehall. The growth of party caused the virtual disappearance of the MP's independence as party loyalty became the primary political virtue. Thereafter, parliamentary control of government became a myth and the government control of Parliament and its business turned absolute. The task of controlling the government that earlier belonged to the entire House shifted to opposition, but the opposition remained incapable of adequately fulfilling the task. By the end of Second World War, the Cabinet government witnessed the final transformation as the Cabinet government turned into prime ministerial government. As the ministers in the Cabinet owe their position to the Prime Minister, their primary loyalty is not to the Cabinet but to the Prime Minister. In Crossman's words, 'in so far as ministers feel themselves to be agents of premier, the British Cabinet has now come to resemble the American Cabinet'<sup>8</sup>. Most of the decisions are taken either in the department concerned or the Cabinet committees and the Cabinet just gives its formal sanction. Thus, the emergence of Cabinet committees had been an important factor that led to the passing away of Cabinet government.

Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle, in their article published in 1990, deal with the rational expectations which follow the formation of coalition governments.<sup>9</sup> They argue that portfolio allocation is the mechanism that determines the credibility of the policy promises of any prospective government coalition.

Michael Laver and Kenneth Shepsle in their book 'Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Government' consider the intimate relationship between legislature and executive as the most significant characteristic of parliamentary democracy.<sup>10</sup> Academic engagements have been largely concentrated on government formations and the aspect of legislative control of executive with more emphasis on coalition bargaining and effects of fixed set of Cabinet portfolios in government formations.

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<sup>7</sup> R.H.S. Crossman (1985). Prime Ministerial Government. Anthony King (Ed.) (1985). *The British Prime Minister*, (pp.175-194). Hampshire: Macmillan Publishers.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.189

<sup>9</sup> Michael Laver and Kenneth A. Shepsle. (1990). Coalitions and Cabinet Government. *The American Political Science Review*, 84(3), 873-890.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

But these studies does not address the question about relationship between policy outcomes and the allocation of Cabinet portfolios among parties in a government coalition. Certain other studies concentrate on the policy perspectives of governments but ignore the distinctive character of Cabinet. In these studies, the political identity of the Cabinet remains irrelevant and same policy output is assumed irrespective of whoever constitutes the Cabinet given the nature of equilibrium processes with the formation of government. Laver and Shepsle argue that studies on governance must take into account a systematic analysis of Cabinet decision making, and invoke a model of Cabinet decision making, which remains contingent upon individual Cabinet ministers who are constrained by key political institutions. The key political institutions in this regard are the legislature, the bureaucracy, political parties and Cabinet itself as a collective entity. Different constrains result in different models of decision making. They list six models of decision making: Bureaucratic government, Legislative government, Prime-ministerial government, Party government, Cabinet government, and Ministerial government.

In their view, answers to the following three key questions present most approximate model of decision making. First, if the policy are affected by the partisan composition of Cabinet, second, if the government policy are affected by allocation of Cabinet portfolios between parties and third, if the government policy gets affected by the allocation of Cabinet portfolios within parties.

Simon James, in his study of the relationship between the British Prime Ministers and their Cabinets, from Harold Wilson to Margaret Thatcher asserts that the arguments made about the intensity of change brought in by Thatcher prime ministership are overstated because such arguments fail to notice the powers enjoyed by her predecessors. James considers the position of Gilmour appreciable, as those the proponents of prime ministerial government overrate the Prime Minister's power in contemporary time, while underestimating the power enjoyed by Prime Ministers in the past. Further, he argues the working of Cabinet has witnessed a fundamental transformation as the salience of Cabinet committees grew exponentially. In his words,

the Cabinet has undergone series of transformations in its role. From 1945 Onwards it moved (although not at a steady rate) from being a

decisive body, considering and deciding on specific issues put to it for consideration, to being a court of appeal; adjudicating on issues referred up to it from committees at the appeal of individual ministers, a transformation generally encouraged by Wilson's procedural changes in the 1960s.<sup>11</sup>

James notes that three long term structural change influenced the relation between Prime Minister and Cabinet. First, the development of international decision making which has given the Prime Minister definitive primacy over the decisions of Cabinet and committees. Second, the pushing down of decisions to the Cabinet committees. Third, a return to more discursive Cabinet. Nevertheless, the Cabinet remains more of a sounding board than a court of appeal. In his view, of these three changes only the development of international dimension give a definitive edge to the Prime Minister over his colleagues. In rest of the spheres, the relationship between the Prime Minister and Cabinet would remain contingent upon the political clout and abilities of individuals and the Cabinet may remain an essentially collegiate system.

Matthew Flinders argues that the period from 1832 to 1867 is crucial for understanding of the contemporary situation where the balance of power has shifted to the executive.<sup>12</sup> During this period, certain short lived factors made ministerial responsibility firmly entrenched as the primary constitutional link between the Parliament and the executive. During this period, the effect of the growth of political parties and the state was not seriously considered and though the problems associated with the convention became clear, executive dominance was already established. Although the convention of ministerial responsibility provided the crucial link between the legislature and the executive yet the executive's majority within the House insulated the ministers from any effective scrutiny. Moreover, with dominant position of the executive, it could dictate the rules, resources and information flows through which it could be held accountable

Matthew Soberg Shugart presents a unique framework to examine the legislature-executive relationship, which can be used for both the parliamentary as well as the

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<sup>11</sup>Simon James. (1995). Relations between Prime Minister and Cabinet: From Wilson to Thatcher. In R.A.W. Rhodes and Patrick Dunleavy (Eds.). (1995). *Prime Ministers. Cabinet and Core Executive*, (pp. 63-86). Hampshire: Macmillan Publishers.p.69.

<sup>12</sup> Flinders, Matthew. (2002). Shifting the Balance? Parliament, the Executive and the British Constitution. *Political Studies*, 50, 23-42.

presidential system.<sup>13</sup> In a parliamentary system as the executive is drawn from the legislature and its survival is dependent upon the House the executive is hierarchically inferior to the legislature. In contrast, both the legislature as well as executive are elected independently in a presidential system and enjoy fixed terms, they need to transact in regard to passage of legislations and governance. Relationship between the legislature and the executive in a parliamentary system could be hierarchical or transactional based on the number of parties which constitute the government. While single party leads to the preservation of hierarchy in its purest form, in a multiparty system the possibility of transactions is even higher. When single party secures the majority in a Parliamentary system, the pattern of relationship is termed as Majoritarian Parliamentarianism and in the case of multi-party system, it is called as Transactional Parliamentarianism. Though transactional parliamentarianism is hierarchical, in the formal sense as the executive originates from the Parliament but the transactions among parties are crucial for the survival of government as well as governance.

R.A.W. Rhodes studies existing work on the British Prime Minister and Cabinet. Arguing that existing work are theoretically weak and conservative in their methodological approach, he contends that in order to understand the nature and functioning of the executive it is essential to shift towards exploring the core executive. Traditionally, the study of the executive had subsumed Prime Minister and the Cabinet but for Rhodes such a conception of the executive is quite inadequate and confusing, in the present context. Instead, he offers that the executive be viewed as the centres of political authority which take policy decisions. As he says,, the core executive comprises, ‘all those organizations and procedures which coordinate central government policies, and act as final arbiters of conflict between different parts of government machine.’<sup>14</sup> The focus must be on a range of institutions that comprise the core executive.

Philip Norton in his book ‘Parliament and Governments in Western Europe’, argues that the relationship between Parliament and government is fundamental to any

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<sup>13</sup> Matthew Soberg Shugart. (2006). Comparative Executive-Legislative Relations. In R.A.W Rhodes. Sarah A. Binder and Bert A. Rockman (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institution*, (pp.344-365) New York: Oxford University Press, p. 348.

<sup>14</sup> R.A.W. Rhodes, (2006). Executives in Parliamentary Government. In R.A.W Rhodes. Sarah A. Binder and Bert A. Rockman (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*, (pp. 323-343). New York: Oxford University Press, p. 2.

political system.<sup>15</sup> The growth of governments in twentieth century, marginalized Parliaments as bodies engaged in policy-making. Nevertheless, the Parliament is significant as it fulfills numerous other tasks in a political system. Owing to more complex and increased demands in governance, there has been a shift in arena of policy making. The executives are now the primary source of policies. Legislatures are no longer a law making body rather they perform the role of what David Olson calls, ‘law effecting’ body. The extent to which the Parliament may limit the government is determined by variables that are external to Parliament itself. While the internal variables such as cultural, constitutional and political determine the pattern of relationship between the Parliament and government, variables internal to Parliament determines its capacity to influence policy outcomes. The Parliament’s capacity to influence policy making is highest when it is highly institutionalized. In brief, an exploration of the external and internal dimensions of Parliament enables an understanding of the pattern of relationship between Parliament and government.

William Ie analyses the data on the constitution and composition of Cabinet Committees during three successive Prime Ministers of Canada between 2003 to 2019. He examines these committees as mechanisms of coordination and placation. Based on the pattern that emerges from this examination, Ie argues that Cabinet Committees are significantly instrumental as ‘strategic mechanisms of prime ministerial leadership.’<sup>16</sup>

The studies on Indian Cabinet have been very few and far in between, with most of them being done only till the V.P. Singh Government. The way Cabinet functioned during this period has to be placed alongside the dominance of the congress party, its structure and its method of working in the period. The decline of congress party had led to the emergence of multi-party system in India and this has altered the relationship between Parliament and the Cabinet. It is noteworthy that since 1989, no party has been able to secure a majority on its own in Parliament and therefore alliances had to be cobbled up. However, the ensuing coalition governments have

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<sup>15</sup> Philip Norton. (2013). Old Institution, New Institutionalism? Parliament and Government in the UK. In Philip Norton (Ed.) *Parliaments and Governments in Western Europe* (pp. 16-43). London and New York: Routledge.

<sup>16</sup> Kenny William Ie. (2019). Cabinet committees as strategies of prime ministerial leadership in Canada, 2003–2019. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 47(4), p. 467.

faced challenges of not being ideologically cohesive. In the backdrop of the above, questions on the survival and assessment of Cabinet in India assumes importance.

In his book, 'Cabinet government in India', Madhu Limaye analyses the functioning of Cabinet from 1935 onwards up to the Rajiv Gandhi government (1984-1989). Limaye asserts that as far the state of the Cabinet is concerned, 'the circumstances of its infancy haunt its adult image'.<sup>17</sup> Though he laments that there has been a decline in ministerial responsibility along with a surge in prime ministerial dominance yet the Cabinet government is the only acceptable and desirable form of government for India. Therefore, he appeals that it should be mended, failing which absolutism or anarchy or both loom in the political horizon.

Arthur Rubinoff in, 'The Decline of India's Parliament' examines India's political system in the context of its diverse culture and argues that across the fifty years of the Indian Parliament there has been a decline in its status and effectiveness.<sup>18</sup> Rubinoff attributes the First-Past-the-Post System with the dominance that the Congress Party could have over the Parliament for three decades. Subsequently, though the Congress has declined in its dominance yet the country's legislature has not rejuvenated. The Parliament has become more representative, but its status and effectiveness has declined. In fact, it continues to be a 'reactive legislature', Parliament's role in India's political system is more marginal than it was in the country's early years' (p.13). Rubinoff lays down certain external and internal variables as central in assessing the statute of the Parliament. He considers political culture, demographic diversity, the constitution, the electoral and party systems as variables that are external to the Parliament. Among these, the electoral system and the subsequent fragmentation of body politic are responsible for the political instability that India witnessed in 1990s. Consequently, regional parties gained at the cost of National Parties (BJP and Congress) and this has not only brought political instability but has also made the Parliament ineffective. Subject based standing committees have been created in an attempt to revitalise the institution, so that Parliamentary hold ministries via constant and continuous scrutiny remains intact. Till 1998, the committees were still at formative stage, but its performance was dependent on the quality of chair and its

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<sup>17</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers.

<sup>18</sup> Arthur G. Rubinoff. (1999). The Decline of India's Parliament. In Philip Norton and Nizam Ahmed (Eds.) *Parliaments in Asia* (pp. 13-33). London and Oregon: Frank Cass and Company.

members. Moreover, the committees in India have a subordinate status vis-a-vis the legislature because: first, they do not have to approve legislations, second, committees proceeding are closed to public and only secretaries are allowed to appear; and third, party loyalty hampers the working of committees. Therefore, the Committees have not proved to be effective enough and thus the status and effectiveness of India's Parliament continues to decline.

Kuldeep Mathur, and J. Warner Bjorkman's, 'Top Policy Makers in India: Cabinet Ministers and Their Civil Services Advisors' offer a comparative approach while studying the working of different Cabinets in India from 1967 to 1989.<sup>19</sup> The authors explore the aspects of policy making, with a focus on the personnel and propose 'that a kind of relationship exists between the nature of the processes of choosing a policy and its subsequent performance' (p.15). In this regard, important functions are not just played by ministers, but also by permanent officials who are 'secretaries to the government' and the agencies of Cabinet Secretariat and Prime Minister's Office.

A. Surya Prakash's work is an attempt as to explore the reason behind the debates on the relevance of Parliament. The book assesses the role and function of Lok Sabha by looking at the role and functions of Members of Parliament (Lok Sabha only).<sup>20</sup> Based on the constituency pressure on MPs and interviews with 100 members of the Tenth Lok Sabha, Prakash asserts that: there is need for major reforms to improve the functioning of Parliament and MPs are also acutely conscious of the decline of Parliament and are eager to stem the rot. He provides an insight into the internal proceedings of Parliament and the link between the MPs and, the pulls and pressures of their respective constituencies. He is critical of how political parties are seated on the conscience of the Lok Sabha and therefore exhorts the Parliament to move towards reforming itself. He foresees that Departmentally Related Standing Committees and reforms in the Standing Committee would be the first step in remedying the situation.

V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra's book centres on the Cabinet as an institution of government and its relationship to the issues and problems of

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<sup>19</sup> Kuldeep Mathur and James Warner Bjorkman. (1994). *Top Policy Makers in India: Cabinet Ministers and their Civil Service Advisors*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing House.

<sup>20</sup> A. Surya Prakash. (1995). *What Ails Indian Parliament? An Exhaustive Diagnosis*. New Delhi: Indus.



governance of India from 1946 to 1990.<sup>21</sup> Providing a historical and political account of the origin of Cabinet system in India, they use the constituent assembly debates to argue that the makers of the constitution prioritised responsibility over stability while adopting the parliamentary system. According to the authors the working of Cabinet system in India is largely dependent upon two factors: the personality of the Prime Minister and the standing and status of senior ministers. Using the two parameters they provide an account of the Union Cabinets from Nehru to V.P. Singh. In their assessment, the Indian Cabinet has witnessed a gradual democratization since the 1967 Lok Sabha elections with the emergence of rural elites as a powerful force and religion and region have become important considerations in the allocation of portfolios. However, the Cabinet continues to be unrepresentative as regional, political, economic and social diversity in India are enormous.

Arun Shourie's book is a clear and trenchant critique of the current Parliamentary System.<sup>22</sup> Looking at the practice of Parliamentary System in India Shourie forcefully argues that the present electoral system and the Parliamentary System are the most destructive of governance. He believes that the Parliamentary system in India is responsible for ushering weaker and weaker governments which are not only insecure but also has indulged in producing irresponsible policies. He asserts that the First Past the Post System gives maximum inducement to splinter the electorate, and fragment the parties. Since any political system or electoral system is to be judged on the criterion of whether is it putting into place persons who can actually legislate and administer a country, he criticizes all the justifications for the present system as 'myth'. As an alternative, Shourie offers a radically modified German-style mixed system with negative voting and a lottery thrown in and the strengthening of non elected institutions, including the judiciary. Shourie's analysis of the working of Parliament in India is beset with a plea for constitutional reengineering.

Kuldeep Mathur and James Warner Bjorkman, in their book 'Policy-Making in India: Who Speaks? Who Listens?' examine how public policies in India are shaped and

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<sup>21</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers.

<sup>22</sup> Arun Shourie. (2007). *The Parliamentary System: What We Have Made of It. What We Can make of It*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications.

formulated.<sup>23</sup> The book argues that governments do not function in isolation and therefore, policy choices are embedded in the information and advice received from external as well as internal sources. Initially, it was the Planning Commission which provided all alternatives for policy choices which came from commissioned research but with the devaluation of planning and the introduction of liberal framework, a market appeared for articulating alternative policies. Mathur and Bjorkman discuss how competing institutions emerged and influenced policy formulation in the subsequent years

B.L. Shankar and Valerian Rodrigues' book has been one of the most significant interventions on the study of Parliament in India in recent times.<sup>24</sup> The authors have questioned the 'decline' thesis as attributed to the Indian Parliament and dig into the Constituent Assembly Debates to develop their thesis on the idea of Parliament and representation in India, which shows both change as well as continuity. Unlike other contemporary work on Indian Parliament, it does a vertical comparison of Indian Parliament and puts forth forward a strong normative defense of parliamentary democracy in India. It locates the Indian Parliament in the context of the deepening and broadening of democracy in India and the transformations that characterized the political landscape in India, particularly during the 1990s. Across the three major phases of the 1950s, 1970s and the 1990s, the authors argue that the House has undergone major transitions in the following arenas: social composition and its underlying conception of representation, linguistic shift from English to the regional languages and, also accommodation of the diversity and pluralism of Indian society. All these have, in turn, redefined the conception of nation in India.

Sudha Pai and Avinash Kumar's 'The Indian Parliament: A Critical Appraisal' revives back the interest in the study of public institutions in India. It engages critically with the Indian Parliament giving due consideration not only to the rules, procedures, constitutional principles but also situates the Parliament as an institution that affected by its internal characteristics and the external environment. The authors provide a thematic organization of how the pattern of relationship between legislature and executive is determined by the 'external socio-political environment'.

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<sup>23</sup> Kuldeep Mathur and James Warner Bjorkman. (2009). *Policy Making in India: Who Speaks? Who Listens?* New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications.

<sup>24</sup> B.L. Shankar and Valerian Rodrigues. (2011). *The Indian Parliament: A Democracy At Work*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

In the introduction, a strong normative defense is provided in favour of the adoption of parliamentary system in India. The authors argue that the choice was not merely a colonial imitation but that the system was adopted after serious deliberation in the Constituent Assembly. They divide the functioning of Parliament in three major phases: the Nehruvian phase; the late 60s to the late 80s; and, 90s and beyond. While the Nehruvian phase has been assumed to be an ‘unmistakably a story of success’<sup>25</sup>, when the Parliament could envision itself as an agency to consolidate upon the legacy of national movement and usher in the process of nation building. The 1967 elections reconfigured the relationship between the Government and Parliament and further the split of congress party in 1969 made opposition vigorous with the parallel assertion of strong Cabinet. The post 1989 years mark a major departure in the functioning of the Parliament, as the single party dominant system collapsed and a fragmented multi-party system based on caste, region, class and community emerged. The 1990s was a period of political instability and ushered in the phase of coalition politics at the centre. The coalition governments formed during this phase were instable as the regional parties supporting the government had ‘their own agendas of strengthening their position vis-à-vis the Opposition in their states’.<sup>26</sup> The evolving stability during late 90s with the emergence of two bipolar coalition structures UPA and NDA, during late 90s could not stem the dilution of the principle of collective responsibility as ‘the allies remain unreliable and often hold government to ransom’. The adoption of to neoliberal economic imperatives further rendered Parliament weak as it marks the transformation of ‘Cabinet system’ to ‘Prime Ministerial Executive’. Therefore, the executive has strengthened with the Prime Minister’s Office gaining salience as the centre of power and consequently, parliamentary control over passage of legislation has further witnessed dilution. The authors mark two more emerging challenges to the working of parliamentary system in India which have really diminished the role of Parliament: first, the formation and intervention of NAC (National Advisory Council) during UPA-1 and UPA-2 and second, the emergence of the new institution, the Group of Ministers.

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<sup>25</sup> Sudha Pai and Avinash Kumar (Eds.). (2014). *The Indian Parliament: A Critical Appraisal*. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, p. 11

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Policy decisions with far reaching socio-political and economic impact were taken by minority governments led by V.P. Singh, P.V.N. Rao, A.B. Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh. Amid a confrontationist legislature, these Prime Ministers were able to take a decisive position by evolving mechanisms and procedures that could strengthen the executive and circumvent a situation of imminent policy paralysis.

Single party domination produces what Shugart calls as 'majoritarian parliamentarianism' where a hierarchical relationship between the legislature and the executive is present and the avenues for transactions are minimum. However, as political parties proliferated, the relationship between the legislature and executive became more transactional as the prerequisites of inter-party transactions between parties became necessary either for forming the government or supporting it from outside. Floor coordination within the House which was required for the passage of legislation deepened the transactional character of the legislature-executive relationship. Unlike majoritarian parliamentarianism where the executive dominated the legislature, under the changed circumstances of coalition minority governments it becomes interesting to uncover the ways in which the Parliament held the executive responsible as well as accountable. While the compulsions of floor coordination created an opportunity for greater legislative assertion, the confrontation between the legislature and executive resulted in frequent adjournments and disruptions leading to a decline in the business transacted in the Parliament. Though the executive dominated the Parliament for much of the 1970s and 1980s, the decline in transaction of business became sharper and steeper after 1989, that is, after the advent of coalition governments. In the backdrop of a possible policy paralysis, the cry for restoration of dignity and authority of the office of Prime Minister became quite common. The frequent consultations by the Prime Minister on the constitution of Cabinet as well as its reshuffle, apart from the apparent divisions within the Cabinet over the policy issues questioned the principle of collective responsibility as well as Prime Ministerial authority. In the backdrop of such significant political changes, an investigation of the relationship between the legislature and the executive, with its consequent impact on the functioning of union Cabinet assumes salience.

## **Objectives of the Study**

1. To understand the grounding principles that have been fundamental in the adoption of Cabinet government in India
2. To investigate how the changing pattern of relationship between the legislature and the executive had an impact on the functioning of the Union Cabinet
3. To analyze the impact of proliferation of political parties on the relationship between the legislature and executive
4. To present an assessment of the working of the Union Cabinet in India during the period between the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha
5. To explore the relationship between the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues during the period under consideration, and the methods and modes used to circumvent division or dissension within the Cabinet

## **Research Questions**

1. Why was the Cabinet system adopted in post-independence India?
2. What has been the pattern of relationship between the legislature and the executive during the period under consideration?
3. Has the consolidation of successive minority coalition governments led to the withering away of the prime ministerial dominance of the Cabinet?
4. How has the union Cabinet functioned during a period marked by successive minority coalition governments and single party minority governments?
5. What has been the pattern of relationship between the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues within the minority coalitions?

## **Research Method**

The findings of the study are based on both primary as well as secondary sources of data, though the primary sources get a predominant position owing to its diversity. While secondary sources includes published biographies of previous Cabinet ministers, primary sources used in the study include: information obtained through RTI filed in the Cabinet Secretariat, published autobiographies of former Cabinet ministers, data released in the websites of Lok Sabha Secretariat, Cabinet Secretariat and Office of the Prime Minister, select recorded interviews of Prime Minister available in YouTube and most importantly, personal interviews held with previous

Cabinet ministers. While Chapter V of the thesis draws primarily from the interviews conducted personally by the researcher with previous Cabinet ministers, Chapter III and IV draws upon all the other sources. The multiple sources of data ensures triangulation of the findings in the research. The data received through multiple RTIs filed in the Cabinet Secretariat, and data released in the websites of Lok Sabha Secretariat, Cabinet Secretariat and Office of the Prime Minister were primarily factual in nature and there involved construction of elaborate tables that could indicate towards trends in the legislature-executive relationship. These form an integral part of the argument forwarded in the thesis. The narratives available from published autobiographies of former Cabinet ministers and select recorded interviews of Prime Minister available in YouTube are used to elaborate on the experiences of functioning as a Cabinet minister within a particular legislature-executive combination.

In-depth data in accordance with the particular aims of the study was generated through 10 interviews using a structured interview schedule which is used primarily in Chapter V. The participants of the study comprised of 8 individuals who have been previous Cabinet ministers, 1 individual was a minister of state while the remaining 1 was a media advisor to the Prime Minister. Since the participants have all been part of the intricate process of decision making within the executive, it was hoped that they would be able to shed light on how the legislature-executive relationship works out in the Indian context. The 8 Cabinet ministers were chosen through purposive sampling method so that the interviewees can represent most of the governments chosen for the study period. Therefore, it has former Ministers who served during the National Front government, United Front government, NDA government and UPA government. However, the PV Narsimha Rao government has not been represented as the researcher was unable to obtain interviews, despite repeated attempts to obtain such appointments. In terms of regional representation, four of the ministers interviewed belong to Bihar, two to Tamil Nadu and one each to Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The media advisor to the former Prime Minister is based in New Delhi. In a way, purposive sampling also allowed for regional variation to be accounted in the study. Most importantly, the researcher attempted that party composition was paid heed to while selecting the interviewees as the thesis draws attention to the dynamics of party system and its impact on the legislature-executive relation, which is reflected

in the working of the Cabinet. Therefore, while five of the interviewees belong to national parties, four belong to the regional parties.

The table below provides a brief profile of the respondents.

Sl no.	Name of the Minister	Political Party	National/Regional	Rank	Government
1	Arif Mohammed Khan	Janata Dal	Regional	Cabinet Minister	National Front
2	C.P. Thakur	BJP	National	Cabinet Minister	NDA
3	Jairam Ramesh	Congress	National	Minister of State	UPA-1
				Cabinet Minister	UPA-2
4	Mani Shankar Aiyer	Congress	National	Cabinet Minister	UPA-1
5	Raghuwansh Prasad Singh	RJD	Regional	Minister of state	United Front
				Cabinet Minister	UPA
6	Sanjay Paswan	BJP	National	Minister of State	NDA
7	Sharad Yadav	JD(U)	Regional	Cabinet Minister	National Front, NDA
8	T.R. Baalu	DMK	Regional	Minister of state	United Front
				Cabinet Minister	NDA, UPA
9	Yashwant Sinha	Janata Dal (Socialist)	National	Cabinet Minister	Janata Dal (Socialist) government
		BJP	National	Cabinet Minister	NDA

Though the media advisor is not a formal part of the Cabinet yet the access that the media advisor has to the internal workings of the Cabinet system and thereby the executive-legislature relationship made it necessary that such a person also be interviewed.

The study used a structured interview schedule with open ended questions as the tool for the data collection of Chapter V. My association with several media personnel helped as interviewing of political elites in India can be a challenging task. The respondents were approached for conduct of interviews via email and rejections implied that further samples had to be chosen. Working with political elites, though enriching, can be challenging on two accounts: the difficulty of obtaining appointments and the limited (and rigid) time granted for the interviews. Therefore, though the study involves direct interviews with only 10 respondents, the requests made were numerous. In order to circumvent this difficulty, therefore, recourse to autobiographies and biographies of previous Cabinet ministers became necessary.

The interviews for the study was conducted mainly in Delhi, except for the interview of T.R. Baalu in which case the researcher had to travel to Chennai. The location of the Indian legislature being Delhi meant that most former Cabinet ministers were either residents of Delhi or were frequent travellers to Delhi. The interviews were mainly conducted in their residential spaces or in their offices. A digital recorder was used for the purpose and the interview records were then manually transcribed.

The interviews were conducted between the months of September, 2018 to January, 2019. As mentioned earlier, respondents were interviewed in their private residence, and in office spaces with each interview lasting for approximately for forty-five minutes. Due verbal consent of the respondent was obtained prior to recording of the interviews. Most interviews were conducted in English, except for four which were in Hindi.

Ethical concerns in the research have been addressed through seeking informed consent of the participants, sharing of interview schedule before the conduct of interview wherever asked (in two instances), sharing of the transcripts wherever asked (two instances again). None of the respondents wanted anonymity while participating in the research.

## **Chapterisation**

Chapter-I of the study aims to understand the emergence of Cabinet government in the backdrop of its antecedents which were present from the pre-independence period. Reviewing the Constituent Assembly Debates, the chapter shows how the adoption of Cabinet government in India was not a mere imitation of the colonial practices but the result of a pragmatic deliberation which prioritized responsibility over stability. While elaborating over the grounding principles that have been fundamental to the acceptance of Cabinet system, the chapter also presents the early contestations regarding the suitability of the system to the Indian context. This chapter provides a historical overview to underline that considerations of unity and integrity of the country, political experience and responsibility trumped over all other reasons while Cabinet system was adopted in post-independence India.

Chapter-II of the study earmarks a conceptual distinction between the idea of accountability and responsibility in a Parliamentary system, it seeks to examine both



the instruments of responsibility and accountability to understand the legislature-executive relationship in India, during different moments of its parliamentary history. While doing so, it uses the motions of 'Confidence' and 'No Confidence' listed, discussed and voted from the First to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha (1952 to 2009) as indices. An analysis of legislature-executive relationship in India, based on CMs and NCMs and instruments of accountability over the four distinctive periods- 1950s and 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, 1990s and 1999 onwards- shows a specific pattern of relationship which in Shugart's framework can be classified as 'Majoritarian Parliamentarianism' and 'Transactional Parliamentarianism'.

Chapter-III works a backgrounder for the subsequent chapters as it deals with the union Cabinet during the two specific periods: the 1950s & 1960s and 1970s & 1980s and presents an analysis of the Cabinets formed during this period. In all, India had 14 Cabinets during the period. The chapter relies upon autobiographies, biographies and other secondary sources while seeking to understand the nature and functioning of the Union Cabinet as well as the pattern of relationship between the Prime Ministers and their Cabinet colleagues. Further, it deals with the aspect of the rise of new institution- the Prime Minister's Secretariat/Office- and how it assisted in the rise of prime ministerial government from the early 1970s.

Chapter-IV carries forward the discussion of the previous chapter, but as it deals with the period from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha the chapter deals with the union Cabinets during the two specific periods of 1990s and 1999 onwards in great detail. Through the use of extensive biographical and autobiographical accounts, the chapter discusses how successive Prime Ministers and their Cabinet have been located within a legislature with no clear majority for any single party. The fractured electoral mandate from 1989 leads to tremendous changes in the composition of the Cabinet, relations between the PM and his Cabinet colleagues, and most importantly the collective responsibility of Cabinet to the legislature. In the backdrop of such changes, the chapter explores the emergence of the Group of Ministers as a mechanism to avert policy paralysis.

Chapter-V of the study is based on primary data from RTI filed in the Cabinet secretariat and interviews of eight former Cabinet Ministers, one Minister of State and one Media Advisor to a former Prime Minister. By using both tabular data as well as

narratives, the chapter strives to establish the ways in which the relationship between the legislature and executive has been reshaped between the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha. This chapter presents an assessment of the following factors that plays a strong role in determining the relationship between Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues: personality factor of the PM, nature of party system and its organizational character, the acceptability and the political base of the Prime Minister in his party or among the allies, the presence of other strong leaders with the Cabinet, consensus over Common Minimum Programmes, institutions to ensure inter-ministerial coordination, resilience of mini Cabinets or inner Cabinets, and the role of informal/formal coordination mechanisms in a party or among allies while running a coalition government.

### **Limitations**

The study despite making probable contributions has certain limitations. Firstly, the notion of 'Executive' in the work implies only the Prime Minister and his/her Cabinet and as such it does not interrogate deeply the influence that other institutions like senior civil servants may cast over the functioning of the Cabinet. While there exist literature in the west on the nature and pattern of the relationship between the civil servants and the ministers, the present study confines itself to the definition of the Executive as given by Matthew Shugart.

Secondly, the study does not include the first tenure of Vajpayee government (15.5.1996 to 1.6.1996) as it seems that it is too brief a period to cast any significant impression about the nature of the functioning of the Union Cabinet. Though, the Chapter-IV deals in brief with the formation and fall of Vajpayee's first government.

# **CHAPTER I**

## **FRAMING THE CABINET GOVERNMENT IN INDIA: EMERGENCE AND DISTINCTIVENESS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Parliamentary system is conventionally characterized by two chief features: first, the executive is organically linked to the legislature as it is drawn from the legislature and second, the executive remains responsible to the legislature. Effectively, it means that in a parliamentary system the government emerges from the Parliament and can be pulled down through a vote of no confidence brought in Parliament. Rod Hague and Martin Harrop have listed the following as the three main features of a parliamentary government:

- The governing parties emerge from the assembly and can be dismissed from office by a vote of no confidence.
- The executive is collegial, taking the form of a Cabinet (Council of Ministers) in which the Prime Minister was traditionally just first among equals. This plural executive contrasts with the single chief executive in Presidential government.
- A ceremonial head of state is normally separate from the post of Prime Minister.<sup>1</sup>

Within a parliamentary government, the division of power between head of state and head of government remains fundamental in establishing the head of government as real executive and head of state as nominal executive. The institution of monarchy or the President in a parliamentary system is the head of state and generally carries nothing more than ceremonial powers. The Prime Minister is head of government and leads the Cabinet. This distinction between head of state and head of government is essential to the understanding of parliamentary system.

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<sup>1</sup> Rod Hague and Martin Harrop. (2007). *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction (7<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 336.

As India is a parliamentary democracy, the Indian Prime Minister is elected from the legislature and conventionally he is from the largest party that constitutes the majority. The Prime Minister is not directly elected by the people instead this function is performed by parties, who elect their leader as Prime Minister. Though the tenure for the position of Prime Minister may be fixed yet it remains contingent upon the confidence that the Prime Minister enjoys in Parliament. The government and consequently, the Prime Minister can be dismissed from office by a vote of no confidence.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the head of the government, ‘the head of state may be a monarch or a President who is directly elected, chosen by the legislature, or has inherited the office’<sup>3</sup> and enjoys a fixed tenure in a parliamentary system. In the backdrop of the above, the chapter aims at tracing the antecedents of cabinet government since the colonial times and the subsequent motivations in the post-independence period which allowed the adoption of the cabinet system by the constituent assembly. The main argument of the chapter is that three principal arguments were strongly put in favor of the adoption of cabinet system in India by the members of the constituent assembly: unity and integrity of the nation, previous political experience and responsibility. The makers of the constitution were confident that the parliamentary system would ensure a strong and stable executive which would remain accountable and responsible to the legislature. In fact, the unanimity over the adoption of parliamentary system was so overwhelming that there are scant, that no other alternative system received serious consideration. In sharp contrast, the constituent assembly discussed the issue of representation and the enabling modes of representation in greater detail. The chapter primarily relies upon the Constituent Assembly Debates from the two periods- 9<sup>th</sup> December 1946 to 27<sup>th</sup> January, 1948 and 4<sup>th</sup> November 1948 to 8<sup>th</sup> January 1949- to assert the argument. Additionally, the chapter also relies upon commentaries from constitutional experts in order to take the argument forward.

The chapter is divided into four broad sections. The first section describes the introduction of parliamentary system in India during the period of British colonialism. By providing a trajectory of how representation widened because of the pressure from Indian National Congress, the section reveals that the parliamentary system within the

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<sup>2</sup> Rod Hague and Martin Harrop. (2007). *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction (7<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 336

<sup>3</sup> Patrick H. O’Neil. (2010). *Essentials of Comparative Politics*. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, p. 122.

British period evolved gradually over a period of time. The second section discusses the three interim governments formed between September 1946 to August 1947. This section shows that though this period provided relevant training to the future leadership of independent India in running a cabinet system yet in the absence of a strong notion of accountability to the people, these governments were not truly a cabinet government. The third section investigates the Constituent Assembly Debates around the adoption of the parliamentary system. By providing an account of stalwarts who were in favour of adoption of the system, as well the marginal voices that were against the parliamentary system, this section is able to show that there was an overwhelming support towards the parliamentary system. The final section of the chapter provides an account of the relevant constitutional provisions that govern the parliamentary system in India. As the study concerns itself with the relationship between the legislature and executive within a parliamentary system, an explicit mention of such parts of the constitution that deal with the executive is extremely necessary

### **Cabinet Government in India: The Antecedents**

Till the transfer of power in 1947, the executive authority for the administration of the country was vested in the Governor-General-in Council.<sup>4</sup> The King Emperor made appointments to the executive council on the recommendations of the Governor-General and the Secretary of State for India. The councilors held office during the pleasure of the King though as per conventions their tenure was fixed at five years. The Governor-General allocated portfolios to the members of the executive council with the exception of Foreign and Political Departments respectively. These two portfolios were retained by the Governor-General himself. The Councilors were given full authority to administer their departmental affairs. Ashok Chanda points out that the Defense Portfolio was held by the Commander-in-Chief who was an ex-officio Member of the Council.<sup>5</sup> The Government of India exercised power as delegated to it by the Secretary of State. The Council had the power to vote in the sphere of delegated functions and generally the majority view of the Council prevailed. However, the Governor-General could override the decision of his council, but ‘all such cases had to be reported to the Secretary of State who would confirm, reject or

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<sup>4</sup> Ashok Chanda (1958). *Administration in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 58.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 59.

modify the Governor-General's decisions.<sup>6</sup> Chanda argues that the control of the Secretary of State over the administration of country was real and effective. In his words,

the Executive Council did not have the essential characteristic of a cabinet form of government. It was neither responsible to, nor representative of, the constituted legislature. On the contrary, if any member of the legislature was appointed to the council, he ceased to be an elected member on assumption of council but became a nominated official member thereafter. The council was subject to control of the remote authority of the Secretary of State and was bound to carry out loyally all his orders and directions, even when these conflicted with the considered views of the council on the political and economic interest of India's administration.<sup>7</sup>

With regard to the emergence of cabinet government in India, two major landmarks in the constitutional development of India during the first two decades of the twentieth century are noteworthy: Morley-Minto Reforms and Montagu-Chelmsford Report<sup>8</sup>. Though the Morley-Minto reforms (implemented by the Indian Councils Act, 1909) can be considered as the first attempt in introducing a representative and popular element yet it did not aim at the inception of Parliamentary form of government and provided for retention of the final decision on all questions in the hand of irresponsible executive<sup>9</sup>. The Act provided for the enhancement of the functions of Legislative Council but the Act had its limitations because,

It gave to the members the power to move resolutions on the Budget and on any matter of general public interest and to divide the council upon them. The resolutions were to take the form of recommendations to the executive government but the government was not bound to

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<sup>6</sup> Ashok Chanda (1958). *Administration in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 58.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 60.

<sup>8</sup> Lord Morley was the Secretary of state for India from 1905-1908 and Lord Minto was the Viceroy of India from 1905-1910. Edwin Samuel Montagu served as Secretary of India for India between 1917-1922 and Fredrick Thesiger Chelmsford was the Viceroy of India from 1916-1921. The Montagu-Chelmsford report, which led to the enactment of Government of India Act, 1919 was formed because of Indian National Congress had started its Home Rule Movement.

<sup>9</sup> D.D. Basu. (2006). *Introduction to the Constitution of India (19<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Nagpur: Wadhwa and Co. Law Publishers, p. 5.

accept them. The power to put questions was extended by permitting supplementary questions subject to disallowance by the President.<sup>10</sup>

Significantly, the Montague Chelmsford Reforms that became operational via the Government of India Act, 1919, introduced partially responsible government in the Provinces through a system that came to be popularly known as ‘dyarchy’.<sup>11</sup> According to S. K. Chaube, the Act was a ‘hesitant move’ to introduce the principle of responsible government at the provincial level.<sup>12</sup> The Act in no way introduced any element of responsible government at the centre and the Governor-General-in-Council continued to remain responsible only to the Secretary of State for India and through him, to the British Parliament. The Act faced stiff resistance from the major political parties which rejected it demanding more self government rights to the Indians.

Consequently, the Government of India Act, 1935 was passed and came into being in 1937. It considerably enhanced the scope of constitutional reforms unleashed by the Government of India Act, 1919. This is because the Government of India Act, 1935 provided the provinces full autonomy and made the legislatures wholly elected. It transferred all administrative responsibility to the Council of Ministers which remained responsible to the legislature.<sup>13</sup> In D. D. Basu’s words, ‘the executive authority of a province was also exercised by a Governor on behalf of the Crown and not as a subordinate of the Governor- General. The Governor was required to act with the advice of Ministers responsible to legislature’.<sup>14</sup> However, certain powers concerning maintenance of law and order and the services were to be reserved for the governors, to be exercised according to their individual judgment and discretion. As Chanda observes,

Except in regard to the special responsibility of the Governor-General for internal security, for the stability of the centre, for the Provinces

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<sup>10</sup> Subhash Kashyap. (1989). *Our Parliament*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Dyarchy refers to the system of dual government, to impart responsible governance at the provincial level. See D.D. Basu. (2006). *Introduction to the Constitution of India (19<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Nagpur: Wadhwa and Co. Law Publishers, p 6.

<sup>12</sup> S.K. Chaube, (2009). *The Making and Working of the Indian Constitution*. New Delhi: National Book Trust p.10.

<sup>13</sup> Ashok Chanda (1958). *Administration in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 61

<sup>14</sup> D.D. Basu. (2006). *Introduction to the Constitution of India (19<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Nagpur: Wadhwa and Co. Law Publishers, p. 9

and for the field of concurrent jurisdiction, his authority over the provincial functions completely lapsed.<sup>15</sup>

The Government of India Act, 1935 provided for the federation of provinces and the princely states at the centre. The Governor-General was vested with the executive authority of the federation and as per the provision he would be aided and advised by a Council of Ministers in the exercise of his administrative responsibility for all subjects with the exceptions of defence, foreign affairs, ecclesiastical and tribal affairs. In regard to these subjects, the administrative authority was vested in the Governor-General who could appoint Counsellors, not more than three, to assist him in the discharge of his functions. Also the Governor-General was empowered to appoint a financial adviser for assistance in the discharge of his special responsibilities to safeguard the stability and credit of the federation. The Governor-General was bestowed upon with some special powers to act with his judgment and discretion in regard to the maintenance of safety and tranquility of the federation and its constituent units. The operationalisation of the federal provisions was contingent upon a condition which required that a minimum number of princes had acceded by executing individual instruments of instruction. The princely states were exhorted to join the federation but the princes declined to join the federation as they were apprehensive of losing their autonomy.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, the federal scheme failed.

Though the Government of India Act, 1935 increased the membership of Central Legislative Assembly and widened its functions yet it imparted no change in the constitution and authority of the Executive Council.<sup>17</sup> The Executive Council continued to remain accountable to the Parliament through the Secretary of State. Chanda points out that the then Council consisted of six members, excluding the Commander-In-Chief. It included three British Civil Servants and three Indian politicians holding the following portfolios: Home, Finance, Law, Education, Health and Land, Commerce and Labour, and Communication. Defence remained under the

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<sup>15</sup> Ashok Chanda (1958). *Administration in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p.61.

<sup>16</sup> Shibani Kinkar Chaube. (2009). *The Making and Working of the Indian Constitution*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, p.11

<sup>17</sup> The Government of India Act, 1935 stipulated the extinction of the Executive Council once the federal provisions have been put into operation. However, as pointed out above the federal scheme failed to become a reality since the princely states declined to join the federation as they were apprehensive of losing their autonomy.



responsibility of the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>18</sup> In July 1941, the Executive Council was expanded and its strength reached to eleven. The expansion happened owing to the appointment of five more eminent non party Indians to the Council. It was effected by the division and reconstitution of portfolios held by the then Indian members. The key portfolios of Finance, Defence and Home were untouched and continued to remain with the British Councillors. In the words of Chanda, ‘this manner of reconstitution deepened the suspicion that the British Government had no intention of parting with power...the enlarged Cabinet...was wholly unrepresentative of Indian political opinion.’<sup>19</sup> In 1946, the strength of the Executive Council was further increased to fifteen by inclusion of non party eminent Indians. The strength remained so till the formation of the interim government in 1946.

### **The Interim Governments**

Reflecting on the character and functioning of the Executive Council Madhu Limaye in his book ‘Cabinet Government in India’ argues that despite the ushering in of majority in the Central Legislature since 1921, it was wholly irresponsible. Gradually, attempts were being made by the British government for the inclusion of popular representatives without disturbing the existing formal constitutional structure. The initial attempt in this context, failed during the Shimla Conference in 1945.<sup>20</sup> Ashok Chanda notes that it was only in 1946 that both the Muslim League as well as the Congress came to accept the British Government’s plan for the making of Indian constitution. He argues that it remains a moment that revived the hopes for the setting up of a political Cabinet. However, there were significant differences between the parties on their position over their relative strength in the Council, the nomination of Muslim representatives and the treatment of communal issues.<sup>21</sup> The first interim government was formed in September 1946 while the second interim government was formed with the inclusion of the Muslim League in October. In their work, V.A. Pai Panandiker and A. K. Mehra point out that in all, India had three interim governments, which according to them ‘was not Cabinet in the strict sense of term’.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ashok Chanda (1958). *Administration in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 62.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 62.

<sup>20</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. 46.

<sup>21</sup> Ashok Chanda (1958). *Administration in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 64

<sup>22</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 20.

The three successive interim governments continued till the formation of the first Indian Cabinet led by Nehru on 15 August 1947. The chronological order of the three interim governments is as follows:

**Table 1.1: Interim Governments in India**

Interim Governments	Period
Interim Government- I	24 September 1946- 24 October 1946
Interim Government-II	25 September 1946- 18 July 1947
Interim Government-III	19 July 1947- 14 August 1947

Source: V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers.p. 282

As per the British Government’s plan, agreed by both the Congress and Muslim League, all the powers and functions were conferred upon the interim government on its formation. The Viceroy and the Commander-In-Chief had to relinquish their respective portfolios of External Affairs and War. The Viceroy became the President of the council while the Commander-In-Chief ceased to be a member of the Executive Council. The council was not presumed to be a form of cabinet government in the British Government’s assessment. Mehra argues that the Viceroy’s Executive Council with Nehru as the Vice Chairman was not presumed to be a Cabinet modeled on the Westminster style. However, Nehru wrote to Viceroy Lord Wavell on 1 September 1946 that ‘this Government will function as a Cabinet and will jointly be responsible for its decisions.’<sup>23</sup> Nehru was not designated as the Prime Minister. Rather his designation was stated to be the Vice-Chairman of the Executive Council. Pai Panadiker and Mehra observe,

*they (the interim governments) were Viceroy’s Executive Council. The Viceroy was the President, the leader of the team of “ministers” was termed Vice President of the Council, not the Prime Minister, and “ministers” were “members” of the Executive Council*<sup>24</sup>

The Congress was quite categorical about the nature of functioning of the interim government and it put a precedent condition in this regard that was accepted and understood by all parties involved. It stipulated that the interim government should

<sup>23</sup> Ajay Mehra, ‘The Scheme of the Cabinet in its Seventh Decade’, *The Statesman*, 3 July, 2014

<sup>24</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 20

function as a Cabinet.<sup>25</sup> Nehru presumed the Council to function as a Cabinet and this triggered controversy since its inception. The divergent positions on the status of interim government became a cause of disagreement between Nehru and the Viceroy, Lord Wavell. The difficulty accentuated further during the second interim government as the Muslim League joined it. The differences between the Congress and the League were substantial and based on the constitutive basis of the interim government itself. In this regard Limaye says,

the Muslim League members of the interim government made it clear that they did not consider that the Executive Council was a Cabinet collectively responsible nor did they recognize Nehru as Prime Minister...Muslim League members said they were neither accountable to the Vice-Chairman nor were they responsible to the Central Assembly. The Government of India Act, did not provide for this either.<sup>26</sup>

The difference between the two parties became categorical and much sharper that stretched beyond the extent of reconciliation. By the middle of 1947, the creation of two separate nation states of India and Pakistan became inevitable. Consequently, as the legislation for partition of India came into force on 18 July 1947, the inevitable happened. Thus, India had its third interim government from 19 July, 1947 which continued till the formation of the first Indian Cabinet led by Nehru on 15 August 1947.<sup>27</sup>

It was only with the attainment of independence that the first cabinet government based on the principle of collective responsibility was set up. The India Independence Act 1947 had done away with the special powers, independent judgment and discretion exercised by the Governors and the Governor-General. In the meanwhile, the Constituent Assembly embarked on the responsibility to frame the Constitution of India. The Constituent Assembly was deemed to be the sovereign legislature endowed with absolute constituent power. The government remained responsible to the

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<sup>25</sup> Ashok Chanda (1958). *Administration in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 64

<sup>26</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers.

Constituent Assembly which acted as the Central Legislature.<sup>28</sup> Following the Westminster tradition, the head of government was now designated as the Prime Minister and on his advice other ministers of the government were appointed.

## **Framing the Cabinet Government in India**

In order to understand the framing of the cabinet government in India, one needs to explore the grounding principles that shaped the debate on relationship among the institution of Presidency, the Council of Ministers, the Parliament and the Office of the Vice President. An exploration into the Constituent Assembly Debates in this regard indicates that to a great extent the debates seem to represent continuity with respect to the constitutional developments in India.<sup>29</sup> On the one hand, historical developments leading to the partition led to the emergence of a consensus on having a strong centre and in this context the adoption of parliamentary system represents a natural alternative. On the other hand, the issue of representation that profoundly shaped the politics of constitutional development since the Morley-Minto reforms assumed centre stage in the deliberations. The debate on the possible mechanisms and mode of representation were more central, critical and nuanced than the debates on the possible alternatives to the parliamentary system as a form of government.

In Granville Austin's account, while framing the provisions in regard to the executive, the members of the Constituent Assembly had to take into consideration India's familiarity with cabinet government and the imperatives of a quick, strong and

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<sup>28</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. 49

<sup>29</sup> In all, the Constituent Assembly sat for a total of 12 sessions spanning nearly three years. The Constituent Assembly had 23 committees to work on substantive and procedural issues. Sub-Committees and ad-hoc committees were also set up on the direction of the Committees of the House. The Drafting Committee was appointed on 29 August 1947 with seven members: Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar, N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, B.R. Ambedkar, K.M. Munshi, Saiyad Mohammad Saadulla, B.L. Mitter (resigned and replaced by N. Madhava Rau) and D.P. Khaitan (expired and replaced by T.T. Krishnamachari). The first task of the Committee was to consider the draft prepared by the Constitutional Advisor, B.N. Rau. When the committee met for the first time on 30 August 1947, it elected B.R. Ambedkar as its chairman. Under the stewardship of Ambedkar, the Committee worked for over 40 days and published the first Draft Constitution of India in February 1948, which was made open for public discussion. The Committee met again from 18 to 20 October 1948 to consider the comments, criticisms and recommendations that were made from across the country. Incorporating the necessary amendments a reprint of the Draft was published in late 1948. The Draft was moved in the Constituent Assembly on 4 November 1948 and from the seventh to the tenth sessions was almost devoted to the first two readings of the Draft. On 17 November 1949, the third reading of the Draft Constitution began and after nine days of intense discussion was passed by the Assembly. The Draft Constitution of India comprised of 395 articles and 8 schedules. When the Assembly met again for its twelfth session on 24 January 1950, all the members signed the historic document. See Granville Austin. (2013). *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of A Nation*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press

effective government.<sup>30</sup> Austin says, ‘the members of the Assembly and particularly leaders like Nehru were at pains to frame a direct, parliamentary constitution and not an indirect Gandhian one. Their aim...was to create a new unity by breaking down the old loyalty that had fragmented and compartmentalized Indian life.’<sup>31</sup> Similarly, B. Shiva Rao asserts that,

the decision of the Constituent Assembly on the form of government in India was, perhaps, considerably influenced by the political background in India and the politics and traditions evolved during the British rule.<sup>32</sup>

The Indian experience was one of the most powerful grounds in support of the adoption of parliamentary democracy. The experience of constitutional development and India’s familiarity with the parliamentary tradition deeply influenced the constitution makers while adopting the parliamentary system. Speaking in the Constituent Assembly on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948, K.M. Munshi remarked,

...what is the best from suited to Indian conditions? We must not forget a very important fact that during the last 100 years, the Indian public life has largely drawn upon the traditions of the British constitutional law. Most of us and during the last several generations before us, public men in India, have looked up to the British model as the best. For the last thirty or forty years, some kind of responsibility has been introduced in the governance of this country. Our constitutional traditions have become parliamentary and we have now all our provinces functioning more or less on the British model. As a

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<sup>30</sup> The Motilal Nehru Committee report, published in 1929, was the work of a 11 member committee and had for the first time used the ideas of fundamental rights and Directive Principles. The Sapru Committee report, published in 1945, was the work of a 30 member committee and had a indirect though significant influence on the constitution making process in India. Granville Austin. (2013). *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of A Nation*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 155. Also See, [https://www.constitutionofindia.net/historical\\_constitutions/sapru\\_committee\\_report\\_\\_sir\\_tej\\_bahadur\\_s\\_apru\\_\\_1945\\_\\_1st%20December%201945](https://www.constitutionofindia.net/historical_constitutions/sapru_committee_report__sir_tej_bahadur_s_apru__1945__1st%20December%201945) and [https://www.constitutionofindia.net/historical\\_constitutions/nehru\\_report\\_\\_motilal\\_nehru\\_1928\\_\\_1st%20January%201928](https://www.constitutionofindia.net/historical_constitutions/nehru_report__motilal_nehru_1928__1st%20January%201928)

<sup>31</sup> Granville Austin. (2013). *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of A Nation*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 155.

<sup>32</sup> B. Shiva Rao. (1968). *The Framing of India’s Constitution: A Study*. New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration, p.334.

matter of fact, today the Dominion Government of India is functioning as a full-fledged Parliamentary Government.<sup>33</sup>

In Austin's opinion, during the moment of India's struggle for independence, the initial thoughts on framing of the constitution were more centered on fundamental rights, mode of election and the composition of legislature as they pertained to communal interests and social revolution. In his own words, 'the character of the Executive had received much less attention, although it had not been ignored'.<sup>34</sup> A probable explanation in this regard is that the stages of the development of the constitution, as discussed earlier, since the 20<sup>th</sup> century had been overwhelmingly positively predisposed towards a gradual unfolding of the responsible executive in India.<sup>35</sup> The framing of India's constitution since 1946 was deeply influenced by the political developments and the British Government's plan of June 3, 1947 had a casting impact over the nature of state that the constitutions makers eventually adopted. The Congress, that had till then maintained a firm position on the unity of India which compelled it to accept the logic of a weak centre as per the terms of Cabinet Mission plan, became unambiguous in voicing its conviction for a strong centre. In Rao's words,

the immediate result of this (partition) was a decision by the Union Constitution Committee and the Provincial Constitution Committee that India would be a federation with a strong Central Government and Legislature, that there would be three legislative lists on the lines of the Government of India Act, 1935; and that residuary power would vest in the centre and not in the provinces.<sup>36</sup>

Earlier the debates on the Objective Resolution provided an opportunity to the members to express their desire for a strong centre and they expressed concern on the preservation of unity of India that needs to be embodied in the constitution.<sup>37</sup> The

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<sup>33</sup> Constituent Assembly Debates. (2014). Book No. 3, Vol. No. VII, 16 May- 16 June, 1949. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, p. 985.

<sup>34</sup> Granville Austin. (2013). *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of A Nation*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 147.

<sup>35</sup> See B. Shiva Rao. (1968). *The Framing of India's Constitution: A Study*. New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration, p.337.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p 112.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p.112.

The Objectives Resolution was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on January 22, 1947. According to D.D. Basu, it inspired the subsequent shaping of India's

June 3 Plan became instrumental in forging solidarity for a strong centre among the members of the Union Powers Committees, Union Constitution Committee and Provincial Constitution Committee respectively, which worked in close collaboration.<sup>38</sup> While moving the Report on the Principles of the Union Constitution to be taken into consideration by the Constituent Assembly on 21<sup>st</sup> July, 1947 Nehru remarked,

I may inform the House that so far as the Union Constitution Committee was concerned, it gave it their very earnest consideration, not once but several times. We met the Provincial Constitution Committee also on several occasions and this is the result of our joint collaboration, but mostly of the Union Constitution Committee's work itself.<sup>39</sup>

The issues of strength, stability and unity of the country shaped in a fundamental manner the major arguments that fore grounded the normative basis of the adoption of parliamentary system. To put in Austin words, 'the members of the Constituent Assembly had one predominant aim while framing the provisions of the constitution: to create a basis for the social and political unity of the country'.<sup>40</sup> The question regarding adoption of parliamentary system in India remains inseparable from the normative basis that shaped the nature and character of federalism that India wished to adopt. Thus, despite the fact that the provisions related to executive attracted the attention of the members who suggested many alternatives yet the executive provisions were changed little either in the draft constitution prepared by B.B. Rau or during the consideration by the Drafting Committee. The discussion on the Draft Constitution began on November 15, 1948 and it concluded on October 17, 1949. While the clause by clause consideration of the Draft Constitution proceeded, major political developments were taking place outside the Assembly which had deep

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Constitution through all its stages. See D.D. Basu. (2006). *Introduction to the Constitution of India (19<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Nagpur: Wadhwa and Co. Law Publishers, p. 20.

<sup>38</sup> B. Shiva Rao. (1968). *The Framing of India's Constitution: A Study*. New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration, p. 113.

<sup>39</sup> Constituent Assembly Debates. (2014). Vol. IV in Book No.1, Vol. No. I-VI, 9 December, 1946-27 January, 1948. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, p. 711.

<sup>40</sup> Granville Austin. (2013). *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of A Nation*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 180.

impact on establishing the significance and centrality of certain issues inside the Assembly. Rao lists four such issues:

- The process of merger and integration of the Indian states which began concomitantly with the issuing of the Draft Constitution and were almost complete by October, 1949.
- The issues of abolition of special privilege for the religious minorities and issues concerning the separate electorate, reservation of seats in legislature and the special arrangements of representation in regard to distinct communities.
- The issue of centre state relationship.
- The issue of language.<sup>41</sup>

The debate on the nature of the executive was centered more on the issues of representation than on the alternative to the parliamentary system. Nonetheless, the question on the nature of executive and its relationship to the legislature assumed importance in spite of the obvious propensity towards responsible executive that the framers of the Indian constitution showed. Ambedkar categorically argued that the form of government and the form of constitution remain the most fundamental attributes to understand the basic features of any constitution. While introducing the Draft Constitution in the Constituent Assembly on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1948, he remarked

turning to the main question. A student of Constitutional Law if a copy of a Constitution is placed in his hands is sure to ask questions. Firstly, what is the form of government that is envisaged in the constitution; and secondly what is the form of the constitution? For these are the two crucial matters which every constitution has to deal with.<sup>42</sup>

The Union Constitution Committee, constituted on 30 April, 1947, was mandated to report on the main principles of the Union Constitution.<sup>43</sup> Rau circulated a questionnaire that sought queries on the nature and type of the executive, the method of choosing the executive, the responsibilities of ministers and the nature of

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<sup>41</sup> B. Shiva Rao. (1968). *The Framing of India's Constitution: A Study*. New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration, p. 117.

<sup>42</sup> Constituent Assembly Debates. (2014). Book No. 2, Vol. No. VII, 4 November, 1948- 8 January, 1949. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, p. 32.

<sup>43</sup> At the same time the Provincial Constitution Committee has been set up with Vallabh Bhai Patel as its Chairman. It was mandated to report on the principles of a model provincial constitution.



relationship between the head of state and the Council of Ministers.<sup>44</sup> Based on the replies received from the members, Rau prepared the Memorandum on the Union Constitution that became the basis of all discussion for framing the union constitution.<sup>45</sup> Rau received five replies in all from the Union Constitution Committee and all of them supported a cabinet type of government with a constitutional head of the state.<sup>46</sup> Austin notes that Rau himself favoured cabinet government. His memorandum had provision for a President acting as the constitutional head of state who was supposed to exercise all his powers on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.<sup>47</sup>

On June 7, 1947 the Union Constitution Committee and the Provincial Constitution Committee in a joint meeting decided that India should have a parliamentary system of constitution owing to its familiarity with India. While presenting the Report on the Principles of the Provincial Constitution before the Assembly for its consideration on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1947, Vallabh Bhai Patel informed the house about the joint meeting. Laying the report he said,

the first question we had naturally to consider was whether the provincial constitution shall be of a unitary type or shall be of a federal type and as there was a little difference of opinion on this question, the committee thought it proper to have joint session of the Provincial Constitution Committee and the Union Constitution Committee. Both these committees met and they came to the conclusion that it would suit the conditions of this country better to adopt the parliamentary system of constitution, the British type of constitution with which we are familiar.<sup>48</sup>

Previously, a crucial meeting of the Union Constitution Committee held on June 8-9, 1947 decided in favour of the parliamentary executive. The meeting was attended by

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<sup>44</sup> Granville Austin. (2013). *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of A Nation*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 149.

<sup>45</sup> The same questionnaires were sent in mid-March 1947 to members of the Central Assembly and provincial legislatures.

<sup>46</sup> Granville Austin. (2013). *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of A Nation*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 150.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 150.

<sup>48</sup> Constituent Assembly Debates. (2014). Vol. IV in Book No.1, Vol. No. I-VI, 9 December, 1946-27 January, 1948. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, p. 578.

JawaharlalNehru, Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar, K.M. Munshi, B.R. Ambedkar, N.G. Ayyangar and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. The meeting also decided against conferring any special responsibilities upon the President and it did not include any clause that that allowed the President to exercise any function in his discretion. Moreover, it was decided that the President's power to dissolve the lower house of the Parliament shall be exercised on the advice of his council of minister.<sup>49</sup> The Union Constitution Committee Report contained the following clause in regard to the presidency and the Council of Ministers respectively

Clause 1 (1) The Head of the Federation shall be the President (Rashtrapati) to be elected as provided below:

(2) The election shall be by an electoral college consisting of –

(a) The members of both Houses of the federation, and

(b) The members of the Legislatures of all the units or where a Legislature is bicameral the members of the Lower House thereof.

(3) The election of the President shall be by secret ballot and on the system of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote.<sup>50</sup>

Clause 10 There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head, to aid and advice the President in the exercise of his functions.<sup>51</sup>

While presenting the Report on the Principles of the Union Constitution before the Assembly for its consideration Nehru presented a firm defence of the cabinet government and argued that the position of the President, as per the report, 'is one of great authority and dignity'. He argued that the parliamentary system is fundamental to the understanding of the nature of the constitution under consideration and all provisions in relation to the position of the head of state, his relation to the Council of Ministers and method and mode of election have to be in concurrence with both the

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<sup>49</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. 50.

<sup>50</sup> Constituent Assembly Debates. (2014). Vol. IV in Book No.1, Vol. No. I-VI, 9 December, 1946-27 January, 1948. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, p. 713

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p.857.

principles of parliamentary democracy as well as the idea of unity and integrity of India. He emphasized that although the position of President was ‘of great authority and dignity’<sup>52</sup>, the real power vest with the Council of Ministers. To quote him,

Now sir, one thing we have to decide at the very beginning is what should be the kind of governmental structure, whether it is one system where there is ministerial responsibility or whether it is the presidential system as prevails in the United States of America; many members possibly at the first sight might object to this indirect election and may prefer an election by adult suffrage. We have given anxious thought to this matter and we came to the very definite conclusion that it would not be desirable, first because we want to emphasize the ministerial character of the Government that the power really resided in the Ministry and the Legislature and not in the President as such. At the same time we did not want to make the President just a mere figure head like the French President. We did not give him any real power but we have made his position one of great authority and dignity.<sup>53</sup>

The Union Constitution Committee was categorical about the need for an indirectly elected President and during the discussion Nehru defended it too in face of some opposition during the discussion. Austin argues that the major opposition to the clause on indirectly elected President and ministerial executive came from Muslim League Assembly members,

who favoured a directly elected head of state and an indirectly elected ministry for a variety of reasons, but primarily for self protection. Elected ministries, they reasoned would be more stable considering the diversity of India’s religious and other groups.<sup>54</sup>

There was also a suggestion for ministers to be elected by the legislatures from among their own number by proportional representation and the ministers to have a fixed term of office. Kazi Syed Karimmuddin moved an amendment that essentially

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<sup>52</sup> Constituent Assembly Debates. (2014). Vol. IV in Book No.1, Vol. No. I-VI, 9 December, 1946-27 January, 1948. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, p.713

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p.713.

<sup>54</sup> Granville Austin. (2013). *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of A Nation*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 153.

questioned the adoption of parliamentary system. The amendment said, 'that the executive of the Union shall be non parliamentary, in the sense that it shall not be removable before the term of the legislature'.<sup>55</sup> Nehru rejected such suggestions vehemently arguing that such propositions hold the potential to politically fragment the country as such. Speaking on the issue of ministers being elected by proportional representation, Nehru said, 'I can think of nothing more conducive to creating a feeble ministry and a feeble government than this business of electing them by proportional representation'.<sup>56</sup> On Karimmuddin's amendment Nehru said,

That raises a very fundamental issue of what form you are going to give to your constitution, the ministerial parliamentary or the American type. So far as we have been proceeding with the building up of the constitution in the ministerial sense and I do submit that we cannot go back upon it and it will upset the whole scheme and structure of the constitution.<sup>57</sup>

The Clause 10 of the Report on the Union Constitution Committee that incorporated the provision on the ministerial character of the executive was obscure. It just mentioned, 'there shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head, to aid and advice the President in the exercise of his functions'.<sup>58</sup> While Nehru moved this clause in the Assembly for discussion on 28<sup>th</sup> July, 1947, N. Gopalswamy Ayyangar moved an amendment arguing that the clause is silent on the manner in which the Council of Ministers is to be chosen and its responsibility to the legislature. He moved the amendment to add the following at the end of the clause 10,

The Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President and other ministers shall be appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister. The council shall be collectively responsible to the legislature.<sup>59</sup>

The amendment was accepted by Nehru and further it was adopted by the House. The House did not accept any other amendment moved by members. In this regard,

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<sup>55</sup> Constituent Assembly Debates. (2014). Vol. IV in Book No.1, Vol. No. I-VI, 9 December, 1946-27 January, 1948. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, p.865.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p.865.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p.865.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 857.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p. 860.

Limaye argues that doubts remained in minds of few members regarding the relationship between the President and the Council of Ministers which became apparent during the cause by clause consideration of the Draft Constitution. While the discussion over the President's power to promulgate ordinance started and doubts were raised regarding the binding character of ministerial advice, Ambedkar emphatically argued

May I draw your attention to Article 61, which deals with the exercise of President's functions. He can not exercise any of his functions, unless, he got the advice, 'in the exercise of his functions'. It is not merely 'to aid and advise'. "In the exercise of his functions" those are the most important words.<sup>60</sup>

When Rajendra Prasad was not satisfied and expressed his doubts further over the interpretation of Article 61, Ambedkar remarked, 'Article 61 follows almost literally various other constitutions and the Presidents have always understood that the language means that they must accept the advice'.<sup>61</sup>

The Drafting Committee prepared the Draft Constitution in accordance with the decision of the Constituent Assembly on the reports made by various committees like the Union Constitution Committee, the Provincial Constitution Committee, and the Union Power Committee etc. Ambedkar while introducing the Draft Constitution emphatically described the nature of the executive towards the beginning of his lecture. He categorically drew difference between the Presidential System and the Parliamentary System to describe the nature of executive and its relationship with the legislature in the draft constitution. To quote him,

The American form of government is called the Presidential system of Government. What the Draft Constitution proposes is the Parliamentary System... A democratic executive must satisfy two conditions- (1) It must be a stable executive and (2) It must be a responsible executive. Unfortunately it has not been possible so far to devise a system which can ensure both in equal degree. You can have a

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<sup>60</sup> Constituent Assembly Debates. (2014). Book No. 3, Vol. No. VIII, 16 May- 16 June, 1949. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, p.216.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p.216.

system which can give you more stability but less responsibility or you can have a system which gives you more responsibility but less stability. The American and the Swiss system give you more stability but less responsibility. The British system on the other hand gives you more responsibility but less stability...The Draft constitution in recommending the Parliamentary system of Executive has preferred more responsibility to more stability.<sup>62</sup>

Nonetheless, there remained some members who argued in favor of the adoption of presidential system at that stage. Chief among them were Ramnarayan Singh, Shibban Lal Saxena and K. T. Shah.<sup>63</sup> Prof. K.T. Shah favoured presidential system of government on the grounds that it would be in the best interest of India to have complete separation of powers between legislature, executive and judiciary. He vociferously argued for a complete separation of the legislature and executive, as the executive may be in a dominating position and influence the members of legislature in case the fusion remains. The underlying assumption in his argument was the profound influence that the party system would cast over the working of relationship between legislature and executive in a parliamentary system. Thus, the bi-partisan consideration embedded in the party interest would determine the pattern of distribution of privileges like ministries or other posts by the executive to the members of legislature. To quote him,

the less contact, there is between them, the better for both...The executive is in a position to corrupt the House; the executive is in a position to influence vote of the members, by number of gifts or favour they have in their power to confer in the shape of offices, in the shape of ministerships...still the fact remains that the influence of the party system, the idea of favouring one's own people, those who agree with them and become their camp followers, is a much more influential and important consideration than the absolute and exclusive eye to the merits...As such, I for one, hesitatingly and unexceptionally condemn

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<sup>62</sup> Constituent Assembly Debates. (2014). Book No. 2, Vol. No. VII, 4 November, 1948- 8 January, 1949. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, p.32.

<sup>63</sup> See Ibid, p. 959-964.

the system of Parliamentary Government, the system of a link between the Legislature and the Executive on which this Constitution is based.<sup>64</sup>

Prof. Shibban Lal Saxena considered the adoption of parliamentary system as a vestige of the colonial domination, to which India had become acclimatized. In fact, he strongly asserts that ‘our slavery has led us to imitate the British system’.<sup>65</sup> Drawing the distinction between presidential system and parliamentary system, Saxena argues that while in the former legislature passes law that it deems fit and in the best interest of the country, in a parliamentary system, the leader has to carry the House with him and in turn the House remains subservient to the executive. The parties in the House are tied to the outstanding leaders and all their actions would be an imitation of what the leader stands for. Eventually the parliamentary system turns out to be a one man government. Thus, the real will of the majority is not upheld.<sup>66</sup>

However the general mood in the Assembly was quite positively predisposed towards the adoption of parliamentary system. K. M. Munshi and Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyar made significant interventions at this stage in defense of the parliamentary system. Munshi expressed his deep reservations in strongest terms on K.T. Shah’s position. He argued that, ‘the strongest government and the most elastic executive have been found to be in England and that is because the executive powers vest in the Cabinet supported by a majority in the lower House which has financial powers under the Constitution.’<sup>67</sup> Munshi holds that owing to the separation between the executive and the legislature, the Constitution in America has not been able to work in an intended fashion while Britain has been able to tide over several difficulties across the centuries because of the strength of its Constitution. The legacy of British rule has contributed in making our Constitutional traditions as parliamentary and almost all of India’s provinces are working a British model and considerations of historical continuity should be no deterrent towards adoption of the parliamentary model.

Stretching Munshi’s argument, Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyar opined that as most provinces in India are accustomed to cabinet form of government, the adoption of

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<sup>64</sup> Constituent Assembly Debates. (2014). Book No. 2, Vol. No. VII, 4 November, 1948- 8 January, 1949. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, p. 961.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p.963.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 963.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p. 984.

Presidential system would lead to ‘insuperable difficulties in the Indian states.’<sup>68</sup> The Presidential system in America owed to specific history and circumstances. Further, Aiyar argued that the kind of cleavage between executive and legislature that exists in the U.S.A would remain unfit for a fledgling democracy like India; instead what India needs is not a conflict between executive and legislature but a harmonious relationship between the two. He says,

An infant democracy cannot afford, under modern conditions, to take the risk of a perpetual cleavage, feudor conflict or threatened conflict between the legislature and executive. The object of the present Constitutional structure is to prevent a conflict between the legislature and the executive and to promote harmony between different parts of the governmental system.<sup>69</sup>

Ambedkar expressed his unwillingness to accept the amendments moved in favor of the presidential system remarking that, ‘I do not think I can usefully add anything to what my friends Mr. Mushi and Shri Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyar have stated.’<sup>70</sup> Thus, the provisions on the cabinet government were adopted by the Assembly.

### **The Indian Model: Constitutional Framework**

India adopted parliamentary system of government and thus the distinction between head of state and head of government emerges as one of the most significant features of the Indian constitution. While the President is the head of executive and also the constitutional head of state, the real executive power is vested with the Council of Ministers. The Prime Minister by virtue of being the head of the Council of Ministers is the real head of executive. Brij Kishore Sharma argues, ‘the President is more or less like the British King he is only the formal head of the executive while the real powers are vested in the Prime Minister’.<sup>71</sup> Part V chapter 1 (Articles 52-78) of the Indian constitution incorporates the provisions on the executive in India. Articles 52, 53, 74 and 75 respectively, of the Indian constitution are relevant to understand the

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<sup>68</sup> Constituent Assembly Debates. (2014). Book No. 2, Vol. No. VII, 4 November, 1948- 8 January, 1949. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, p.985.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. 985-986.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p. 986.

<sup>71</sup> Brij Kishore Sharma. (2007). *Introduction to the Constitution of India (Fourth Edition)*. New Delhi: Prentice-Hall India, p. 136.



nature and power of executive as well as the relationship between the President and the Council of Ministers as enshrined in the constitution. Article 52 states that there shall be a President of India.<sup>72</sup> Article 53 declares, 'the executive power of the Union shall be vested in the President and shall be exercised by him either directly or through officers subordinate to him in accordance with this constitution'<sup>73</sup>.

Unlike the UK where the cabinet government is based on conventions, the Indian constitution incorporates specific provisions in regard to Council of Ministers and their collective responsibility. Article 74 read in conjunction with Article 75 establishes on firm ground the constitutional basis of cabinet government.

Article 74 (1) There shall be a Council of Ministers the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President who shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice.

Provided that the President may require the Council of Ministers to reconsider such advice, either generally or otherwise, and the President shall act in accordance with the advice tendered after such reconsideration.

Article 75 (1) The Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President and the other ministers shall be appointed by the president on the advice of the Prime Minister.

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<sup>72</sup> In keeping with the republican character of the constitution the president does not inherit her office. There is an indirect election for the office of the president and rules regarding eligibility and method of election are detailed in the constitution. Articles 54, 55,56,57,58 and 59 respectively, of the constitution are relevant in this regard. The president of India is elected by an electoral college as per the system of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote. The elected members of both the houses of parliament, the elected members of the legislative assemblies of states and the elected members of the Union Territories of Delhi and Pondicherry form the electoral college. Any citizen of India who is 35 years of age or more is eligible to be elected president. She must satisfy all necessary conditions for membership to the Lok Sabha. Additionally, such person should not hold any office of profit under the government of India or the government of any state or under any local or other authority under the control of such governments.

The president's term of office is five years, however, he is eligible for re-election. In practice, all occupants have served one term barring the exception of Rajendra Prasad. Provision for impeachment also exists whereby the president may be impeached for violation of the constitution. See Subhankar Dam. (2014). *Presidential Legislation in India: The Law and Practice of Ordinances*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press; Shubhankar Dam. (2016) Executive. In Sujit Choudhry, Madhav Khosla and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (Eds.).*The Oxford Handbook of the Indian Constitution*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 308-309.

<sup>73</sup> P.M. Bakshi. (2006). *The Constitution of India (Seventh Edition)*. Delhi: Universal Law Publishing Co, p. 93.

Article 75 (2) The ministers shall hold office during the pleasure of the President.

Article 75 (3) The Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the House of the People.

Article 75 (4) Before a minister enters upon his office, the President shall determine to him the oath of office and of secrecy according to the forms set out for the purpose in the Third Schedule.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, the Indian constitution itself gives recognition to the Council of Ministers. It stipulates that there shall be a council of minister with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advice the President. The President selects the Prime Minister and other ministers are appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister allocates portfolios to the ministers among the ministers. As per the norms of parliamentary system, the President appoints, ‘a person as the Prime Minister who is either leader of the party which holds majority of seats in the Lok Sabha or is a person who is able to win the confidence of the Lok Sabha by gaining support of other political parties’.<sup>75</sup> Following the British model, the principle of collective responsibility is enshrined in the Indian constitution. Article 75 (3) stipulates that the Council of Ministers shall be collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha. This implies that a government which loses the confidence of the Lok Sabha is obliged to resign. The loss of confidence, according to Sharma, ‘is expressed by rejecting a Money Bill or Finance Bill or any other important policy measure or by passing a vote of no confidence or rejecting a motion expressing confidence in the ministry’.<sup>76</sup> In the situation of a Ministry losing the confidence of the House, the whole Ministry has to resign including those ministers who are members from Rajya Sabha. Subhas Kashyap argues that collective responsibility means that the ministers must speak in one voice in public. If any minister has disagreement with the decision taken in a Cabinet or on policy measures adopted by the Cabinet, he must either resign or own joint and collective responsibility. He points out, ‘collective responsibility under Article 75 (3) of the constitution inheres maintenance of

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<sup>74</sup> P.M. Bakshi. (2006). *The Constitution of India (Seventh Edition)*. Delhi: Universal Law Publishing Co, pp. 102-104

<sup>75</sup> Brij Kishore Sharma. (2007). *Introduction to the Constitution of India (Fourth Edition)*. New Delhi: Prentice-Hall India, p. 150.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, p. 152.

confidentiality as enjoined in the oaths of office and secrecy set forth in schedule III. The price of the acceptance of a Cabinet office is the assumption of responsibility to support Cabinet decisions. The burden of that responsibility is shared by all'.<sup>77</sup> It is mandatory that the opinions and votes of respective members during the deliberation held in the Cabinet to arrive at a decision must be kept secret.<sup>78</sup> Maintenance of secrecy contributes to favorable and conducive atmosphere that facilitates the free exchange of ideas among members. He observes, 'to reveal the view or vote of a member of the Cabinet is not only to disappoint an expectation on which that member was to rely, but also to...undermine the principle of collective responsibility'.<sup>79</sup>

While the principle of collective responsibility has found detailed space in the Constitution, no directions on the strength of Council of Ministers are provided. This was mainly determined according to political exigency.<sup>80</sup> However, the 91<sup>st</sup> Amendment Act, 2003 fixed the number of members in the Council of Ministers.<sup>81</sup> As per the amendment, the total number of ministers including the Prime Minister shall not exceed 15 per cent of the total members of the Lok Sabha. Basu points out that the Indian constitution does not classify the members of the Council of Ministers into different ranks. According to Basu, the classification emerged following the British practice which has now got the legislative sanction in s. 2 of the Salaries and Allowances of Ministers Act, 1952.<sup>82</sup> Sharma observes that in practice, four ranks have come to be recognized.<sup>83</sup> These are

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<sup>77</sup> Subhash C. Kashyap. (2009). *Concise Encyclopedia of Indian Constitution*. New Delhi: Vision Books, p.94

<sup>78</sup> As per the constitution, the ministers including the Prime Minister are administered two oaths by the president, an oath of office and an oath of secrecy respectively. Both are laid down in the schedule three of the constitution.

<sup>79</sup> Subhash C. Kashyap. (2009). *Concise Encyclopedia of Indian Constitution*. New Delhi: Vision Books, p.94.

<sup>80</sup> D.D. Basu. (2006). *Introduction to the Constitution of India (19<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. Nagpur: Wadhwa and Co. Law Publishers, p. 188. In Basu's estimate, the strength was 47 in 1961 which increased to 60 in 1975 and in 1977 it decreased to 24. However, in 1989 it increased to 58.

<sup>81</sup> The Constitution (Ninety-first Amendment) Act of 2003 amended 'articles 75, 164 and Schedule 10, to insert a new article 361B, to place a limit on the number of ministers not to be more than 15% of the House of the People at the Union level and Vidhan Sabha at the level of States; to take away the protection from defectors on grounds of splits and make defectors disqualified from Membership and ineligible for Ministership or other remunerative political post till re-election'. See Subhash C. Kashyap. (2009). *Concise Encyclopedia of Indian Constitution*. New Delhi: Vision Books, p. 420.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p 189.

<sup>83</sup> Brij Kishore Sharma. (2007). *Introduction to the Constitution of India (Fourth Edition)*. New Delhi: Prentice-Hall India, p. 151.

- Cabinet Ministers – Attend the meetings of Cabinet as a matter of right. A proclamation of emergency proviso to Article 352 should come from the Prime Minister and other ministers of Cabinet rank.
- Minister of State with independent charge - is a Minister of State who does not work under a Cabinet minister. If any matter concerning his department is part of the agenda of the Cabinet then he is invited to attend the meeting.
- Minister of State – works under a Cabinet minister and work is allotted to him by his Cabinet minister. He is not a member of Cabinet and can attend Cabinet meetings only if invited to attend any particular Cabinet meeting.
- Deputy Minister – does not take part in Cabinet deliberations. He works under a Cabinet minister or a minister of state with independent charge. His work is allotted by the minister under whom he is working.

Sharma points out that, ‘the Prime Minister allocates portfolios to the Cabinet ministers and ministers of state with independent charge. The other ministers are allocated work by their respective Cabinet ministers’.<sup>84</sup> In regard to classification of ministers, Chaube argues that the 44<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the constitution of India brought constitutional sanctity to the term Cabinet.<sup>85</sup> He observes, ‘the 44<sup>th</sup> Amendment inducted this word into the body of the constitution [Article 352 (3)] and also defined it as comprising the Prime Minister and other ministers of Cabinet rank appointed under Article 75’.<sup>86</sup> The ministers may be drawn from both the houses of Parliament and a minister who is member of one house has the right to speak and take part in the proceedings of the other house. However, a minister has the right to vote only in the house to which she belongs. As per Article 75 (5), a person outside the legislature may also be appointed as a minister, however, she cannot continue as minister for more than six months if she fails to secure a seat in either house of Parliament.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Brij Kishore Sharma. (2007). *Introduction to the Constitution of India (Fourth Edition)*. New Delhi: Prentice-Hall India, p. 151.

<sup>85</sup> The 44<sup>th</sup> Amendment inserted clause 3 to Article 352. Article 352 (3) stipulates, ‘the president shall not issue a proclamation under clause (1) or a proclamation varying such proclamation unless the decision of the Union Cabinet (that is to say, the council consisting of the Prime Minister and other ministers of cabinet rank appointed under Article 75) that such a proclamation may be issued has been communicated to him in writing’.

<sup>86</sup> Shibani Kinkar Chaube. (2009). *The Making and Working of the Indian Constitution*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, p.113

<sup>87</sup> The provision for ministerial tenure does not exist directly in the constitution. Article 75 (2) stipulates that the ministers shall hold office during the pleasure of the president. Also, ministers

## CONCLUSION

It can be discerned from the discussion above that the concern for strength and stability of the nation profoundly shaped the views in favour of adopting the parliamentary system in India. The discussion on possible alternatives to the parliamentary System mostly centred on the concern for complete separation of the legislature, executive and judiciary as that would impart more autonomy to the legislature as well as the legislators. However, even during different stages of the Constituent Assembly, the overwhelming view remained in favour of adopting the cabinet government, based on the Westminster model. By providing a detailed historical account, the chapter emphasised that three principles-unity and integrity of the nation, previous political experience and responsibility-kept most of the members of the Constituent Assembly gripped in favour of the parliamentary system.

The chapter proposes that adoption of the parliamentary system in India was not the result of a blind imitation of the British system; instead the makers of the Indian Constitution were driven by principled arguments in favour of the parliamentary system. As will be seen later, the cabinet system in India evolved within its peculiar context and developed ingenious mechanisms in order to circumvent different moments of political instability.

By underling the merit of a parliamentary system to provide a strong and stable executive and laying down constitutional provisions for the same, the makers of the Indian Constitution enabled the future political system from averting complex situations that arose subsequently, especially from 1989 onwards when no party assumed clear majority in the House. This in turn has been able to make the political system resilient.

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remain in office so long as they enjoy the confidence of the Lok Sabha. Shubhankar Dam argues, 'during the pleasure of the president therefore, ordinarily, refers to the period during which the ministers collectively enjoy the confidence of the Lower House. Article 83 limits the duration of this body to five years, unless dissolved earlier. Read together it implies that a council of ministers has a maximum tenure of five years'. See Subhankar Dam. (2014). *Presidential Legislation in India: The Law and Practice of Ordinances*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, p.315



## CHAPTER II

### **LEGISLATURE- EXECUTIVE RELATIONSHIP: FROM MAJORITARIAN PARLIAMENTARIANISM TO TRANSACTIONAL PARLIAMENTARIANISM**

Brought up on the purely Westminster model, some political analysts have been dismayed by the fact that instead of bipolarity with some fringe parties at the outer periphery, we now have in our Parliament a many hued spectrum. There is, in my view, no need for dismay on this score. There are numerous examples of minority or coalition governments working with stability and success in different parts of the globe. We in India may have to adapt ourselves to such a situation if it arises and learn to work together in the common cause, shedding in the process, rigid party positions. In a multi party political system, we may not be able to avoid coalition governments in the interest of the nation.

-President R. Venkataraman<sup>1</sup>.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The role of the India Parliament in unleashing a social revolution and in the deepening of democracy within the country has been gargantuan. Post Independence, the social base of the Parliament has witnessed expansion. In the seven decades of its history, the functioning of the Indian Parliament has not been consistent and has varied alongside the changing nature of party system. It is only in the recent past that scholars working on the Indian Parliament presented the paradox of a more representative yet diminishing Parliament. Decline in parliamentary performance and prestige is asserted by a section of scholars who indicate at the increasing parliamentary pandemonium and decline in the functioning of Parliament in statistical terms.<sup>2</sup> While making such conclusions, these studies have relied upon parameters

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<sup>1</sup> Address to the nation on the eve of the Republic Day in 1990, cited in Pranab Mukherjee. (2016). *The Turbulent Years: 1980-1996*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.121

<sup>2</sup> See Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (2006) *The Indian Parliament As An Institution of Accountability, Democracy, Governance and Human Rights*, Programme Paper No. 23, January. Geneva: UNRISD. Ajay K. Mehra. (2009). *Parliament Under Social Watch: Senseless Tumult, Un-kept Promises*. Citizen's Report. In Social Watch (2009). *Citizen's report on Governance and Development*

such as the number of sessions and the hours the House met, the hours the House wasted in pandemonium and ‘street politics’ and business transacted (number of bills presented, discussed and passed) over the years. However, these studies fall short on providing an assessment of the changing pattern of relationship between the executive and the legislature.

Mathew S. Shugart in his article ‘Comparative Executive-Legislative Relations’ provides an analytical framework for the study of executive-legislative relationship. He argues that while in a parliamentary system the executive is drawn from the legislature and thus remains hierarchically inferior to the legislature<sup>3</sup>; in a presidential system both the legislature as well as executive are elected independently and enjoy fixed terms and thus both need to transact in regard to passage of legislations and governance. The extent of hierarchical or transactional relationships between the legislature and the executive in a parliamentary system is contingent upon number of parties constituting the government. Single party domination preserves the hierarchy in its purest form while in a multiparty system the possibility of transactions is higher in a parliamentary system. Shugart argues that two patterns of relationship between the legislature and executive can be drawn in a parliamentary system. In case of single party securing majority, the pattern of relationship is termed as Majoritarian Parliamentarianism. While, in the case of multi party system, it is called Transactional Parliamentarianism.

Using Shugart’s analytical framework one can argue that the decades 1950s and 1960s as well as 1970s and 1980s represent a moment of Majoritarian Parliamentarianism while the other two periods from 1989 to 1999 and 1999 and beyond represent moments of Transactional Parliamentarianism. In this chapter, an attempt is made to understand the changing pattern of legislature executive

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2008-2009 (pp. 31-58). Delhi: Daanish Books. Sudha Pai and Avinash Kumar (Eds.) (2014). *The Indian Parliament: A Critical Appraisal*. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan. A. Surya Prakash. (1995). *What Ails Indian Parliament? An Exhaustive Diagnosis*. New Delhi: Indus. Ashutosh Kumar (2018) Why is the Indian Parliament in a state of Decline? In Ajay K. Mehra (Ed.) *The Indian Parliament and Democratic Transformation* (pp.61-82). London and New York: Routledge. Rahul Verma and Vikas Tripathi. (December, 2013). Making sense of the House: Explaining the decline of the Indian Parliament amidst Democratisation. *Studies in Indian Politics*, 1(2), 153-178. Arthur G. Rubinoff (1999) The Decline of India’s Parliament. In Philip Norton and Nizam Ahmed (Eds.) *Parliaments in Asia* (pp. 13-33). London and Oregon: Frank Cass and Company.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Soberg Shugart. (2006). Comparative Executive-Legislative Relations. In R.A.W Rhodes. Sarah A. Binder and Bert A. Rockman (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institution*, (pp.344-365) New York: Oxford University Press.



relationship in India. Using the Shugartian classification, the chapter uses the following four periods to depict the specific pattern of relationship between the legislature and executive.

- Majoritarian Parliamentarianism, Phase I (The 1950s and 1960s)
- Majoritarian Parliamentarianism, Phase II (The 1970s and 1980s)
- Transactional Parliamentarianism, Phase I (The 1990s)
- Transactional Parliamentarianism, Phase II (1999 onwards)

**Table 2.1: Four Periods of Legislature-Executive Relations**

Sl. No	Period	Lok Sabha	Pattern of Legislature Executive Relationship	
1.	1950s and 1960s	I, II, III, IV	Majoritarian Parliamentarianism	Phase I
2.	1970s and 1980s	V, VI, VII, VIII		Phase II
3.	1989-1999	IX, X, XI, XII	Transactional Parliamentarianism	Phase I
4.	1999 onwards	XIII, XIV		Phase II

Source: Author's own classification. Based on Statistical Handbook 2019 Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India (2019)

As already discussed in the Introduction of the study, the present chapter uses the executive to refer to a body consisting of Prime Minister and Cabinet which originates in the legislative assembly and the survival of the executive depends upon it.

Single party dominance, from 1950s to the beginning of 1990s shaped the pattern of relationship which provided little avenues for transactions between the legislature and executive in India and that is why it seems plausible to classify these four decades as what Shugart would depict as Majoritarian Parliamentarianism. The emergence of coalition politics since 1989 made transactions among parties indispensable for the survival of government. The pattern of relationship between the legislature and executive during the two periods 1989-1999 and 1999 and beyond can thus be depicted as Transactional parliamentarianism.

In the background of the above, the present chapter considers, 'responsibility' and 'accountability' as being conceptually discrete. It seeks to interrogate both the instruments of responsibility as well as accountability to understand the changing pattern of legislature -executive relationship during different moments in the history of parliamentary democracy. It is worth re-iterating here that while ensuring an accountable executive remains the basic objective of the parliamentary oversight, the survival and sustenance of a executive is in principle a matter of 'responsibility'. Accordingly, Confidence Motions (henceforth CMs) and No Confidence Motions

(henceforth NCMs) are the key instruments meant at ensuring responsibility of the executive to the legislature, while other parliamentary mechanisms to conduct business such as Questions Hour are measures essentially to establish parliamentary primacy and its role as an institution of accountability.<sup>4</sup>

A pertinent question in understanding the pattern of relationship between the legislature and executive is whether the decline in the performance of Parliament in statistical terms reflects upon the strengthening of the executive and the consequent domination of the legislature over a period of time. Since the inception of parliamentary democracy in India, the executive remained strong owing to single party dominance on one hand and the fragmented and divided character of parliamentary opposition on the other. The balance crafted in the constitutional design begins to fade only towards the beginning of 1960s which paves the way for executive pre-eminence. The trend towards the executive preeminence remained persistent though it differed in degree and content during different moments from 1952 to 2009.

In this context, while an analysis of the instruments of accountability present a picture of diminishing Parliament over a period of time, as it depicts a linear decline in statistical terms; an assessment of the CMs and NCMs indicate a trend towards both the possibilities and limitations of the parliamentary opposition in India since 1960s. The NCMs were used by the opposition parties not to dislodge the governments during 1960s, 1970s and 1980s but to mobilize the parliamentary opposition and assert itself against the policies and perspectives of the concerned governments. Given the nature of majority enjoyed by successive governments (barring the exception of Morarji Desai and Charan Singh government from 1977 to 1979 that remained fragile) the listing, discussion and voting on the NCMs indicate both the limits of the available parliamentary avenues for the parliamentary opposition during successive majority governments as well as growing challenges to the Congress party that formed successive governments, in the Parliament, owing to the political change at

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<sup>4</sup> 'The Cabinet form of Government is based on the idea of collective responsibility of the Government headed by the Prime Minister. According to Article 75(3) of the constitution, the Union Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the legislature. At all times it must enjoy the confidence of the Lower House. It must always have the support of the majority by winning a confidence vote or by defeating a No Confidence Motion. The collective responsibility of the Council of Ministers implies that a No Confidence Motion can be moved against the Council of Ministers as a whole and not against an individual minister'. G.C. Malhotra. (2004). *Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat and Metropolitan Book Company, p. 11.

the state level politics. The dominance of executive becomes apparent in the trend emerging out of the listing, discussion and voting on the CMs and NCMs during successive Lok Sabha. Table 2.2 and 2.3 are indicative of the trend, that this chapter aims to establish.

**Table 2.2: Number of Notices Received for NCMs and CMs received in Lok Sabha (1952- 2009)**

Pattern of Legislature Executive Relationship		Lok Sabha	Notices Received		Notices admitted	
			NCMs	CMs	NCMs	CMs
Majoritarian Parliamentarianism	Phase I	I	0	0	0	0
		II	1	0	0	0
		III	16	0	6	0
		IV	12	0	6	0
	Phase II	V	24	0	4	0
		VI	3	1	2	1
		VII	10	0	3	0
		VIII	6	0	1	0
Transactional Parliamentarianism	Phase I	IX	18	3	0	3
		X	71	1	3	1
		XI	3	4	0	4
	Phase II	XII	0	2	0	2
		XIII	3	0	1	0
		XIV		1	0	1

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on G.C. Malhotra. (2004). *Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat and Metropolitan Book Company, pp. 29-36.

**Table 2.3: Number of CMs and NCMs faced by the successive Governments and their strength in the House first Lok Sabha to fourteenth Lok Sabha**

Lok Sabha	Prime Minister	Party/ Alliance	Seats won/Total	% of seats won
I	Jawaharlal Nehru	Congress	364/489	74
II	Jawaharlal Nehru	Congress	371/491	75
III	Jawaharlal Nehru	Congress	361/494	73
	Lal Bahadur Shastri	Congress	361/494	73
	Indira Gandhi	Congress	361/494	73
IV	Indira Gandhi	Congress	279/520	54
V	Indira Gandhi	Congress	350/515	68
VI	Morarji Desai	Janata Party	297/540	55
	Charan Singh	Janata (S)	76/540	14
VII	Indira Gandhi	Congress (I)	353/524	67
VIII	Rajiv Gandhi	Congress (I)	415/515	81
IX	V.P. Singh	National Front	144/520	27
	Chandra Shekhar	Janata Dal (S)	68/520	13
X	P.V. Narasimha Rao	Congress (I)	231/520	44
XI	A. B. Vajpayee	BJP	161/543	27
	H. D. Deve Gowda	United Front	179/543	33
	I. K. Gujral	United Front	179/543	33
XII	A. B. Vajpayee	BJP and Allies	264/539	49
XIII	A. B. Vajpayee	NDA	274/537	51
XIV	Manmohan Singh	UPA-1	222/543	37

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on G.C. Malhotra. (2004). *Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat and Metropolitan Book Company.

This chapter argues that the legislature-executive relationship in India have varied during different periods and the statistical evidence based on business transactions in the Lok Sabha remain self limiting in deciphering the nature and pattern of executive pre-eminence since 1960s. In brief, the chapter tries to study the changing pattern of legislature executive relationship during the four periods as mentioned above and in this regard it tries to present an assessment of the instruments of accountability and responsibility. The assessment of accountability in this chapter is purely statistical and is based on the assessment of the number of sittings, actual number days on which the House met, time taken on the general discussion of the General Budget, number of legislations passed, number of adjournment motions discussed, number of short duration discussions held, short notice questions admitted, number of notices of questions received and admitted and the percentage of total time spent on questions, during the four periods.

The chapter is divided into five major sections. While the first four sections provide a detailed account of four-fold classification of executive-legislature relationship, as mentioned above, with a focus of the idea of responsibility of the executive to the legislature; the fifth section provides an overview to the instruments of accountability.

### **Majoritarian Parliamentarianism: Phase I (The 1950s and 1960s)**

In India, the emergence of parliamentary system owes its origins to institutional and political complex that is markedly different from its British counterpart. Valerian Rodrigues says that,

In India, there was the looming presence of the erstwhile colonial state, the Congress Party that had spearheaded the anti-colonial movement had stepped into the shoes of the government and the complex cultural and popular demand affected representation, responsiveness and accountability greatly. Such institutionalization of authority impacted the self- definition and strivings of members of the ruling party as well as those of the opposition.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Valerian Rodrigues. (2018) Parliamentary Opposition and Government Backbenchers in India. In N. Ahmed (Ed.) *Inclusive Governance in South Asia: Parliament, Judiciary and Civil Service*. (pp. 61-81). New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 61-62.

The impact of colonial legacy had a casting impact on shaping of the executive-legislature relationship in India during this period. This is visible in the conduct of the House as well as the concerns and issues which have been raised in the House. As the period from 1950s till the late 1960s was characterised by the working of ‘the Congress system’ in India’,<sup>6</sup> the working of parliamentary democracy was stable. Based on ‘one party dominance’ the congress system derived its legitimacy from the ‘historical consensus’ which was based on the legacy of the national movement. Rajni Kothari comments that during this period, ‘political competition was internalised and carried on within the Congress... the system of mediation and arbitration as well as inter level coordination in the Congress ensured active involvement of the central leadership in the factional structure’.<sup>7</sup> For W.H. Morris Jones, the divided and fragmented character of the opposition and the comfortable majority enjoyed by the government was one of the outstanding characteristics of party representation in both Houses of the Indian Parliament.<sup>8</sup>

Notwithstanding the numerical marginalization and fragmentation within, parliamentary opposition of this period was characterized by profound integrity and it remained opposed to ideological insinuations and material inducements. Rodrigues states that the ‘saintly’ mode of politics and ideological commitments of parties and their leaders remained instrumental in this regard.<sup>9</sup> An optimistic assessment of the Parliament of this period is presented by Morris Jones who reasons that the one dominant party imparted strength and dynamism to the Indian Parliament, rather than enfeebling it.<sup>10</sup> The foremost reason for this was the autonomy that the legislature enjoyed because of the separation that marked the Office of the Speaker and the Government of the day.<sup>11</sup> In this regard, Morris-Jones’ comments that the Speaker

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<sup>6</sup> Rajni Kothari. (2006) *The Congress System in India*. In Peter Ronald deSouza and E. Sridharan (Eds.) *India’s Political Parties*. New Delhi: Sage, p. 60.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.60.

<sup>8</sup> W.H. Morris-Jones. (1956). *Parliament in India*. London: Longmans Green and Company, p.103.

<sup>9</sup> Valerian Rodrigues. (2018) *Parliamentary Opposition and Government Backbenchers in India*. In N. Ahmed (Ed.) *Inclusive Governance in South Asia: Parliament, Judiciary and Civil Service*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 64.

<sup>10</sup> W. H. Morris-Jones. (March, 1963). *Parliament and the Dominant Party: Indian Experience*. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 17 (3), p. 297.

<sup>11</sup> Apart from this substantive achievement of the Indian Parliament, Morris-Jones, exhorts the procedural accomplishments of the parliament in India during this period. In this regard, he shows how the Public Accounts Committee and the Estimates Committee had been instrumental in exercising control over government and the popularity that the Question Hour enjoyed in India. See W. H. Morris-Jones. (March, 1963). *Parliament and the Dominant Party: Indian Experience*. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 17 (3), pp. 296-307.

‘made his position – and through it that of Parliament – one of substantial independence of government.’<sup>12</sup> Further, he notes that the demarcation between the Congress Party and government during this period led to the independence of legislature from executive domination. Moreover, the government-opposition relation in this particular period displayed a balance and interestingly opposition mostly came from within the Congress. Effectively, the legislature-executive relationship during the 1950s and the 1960s remained in equilibrium and this period is credited for the consolidation of parliamentary system in India.<sup>13</sup> In the words of Rudolph and Rudolph, ‘the dominant party system and the role of Congress and opposition parties within it provided a fertile context for the rooting of India’s democratic process during the first two decades after independence’.<sup>14</sup> Despite the fact that the opposition prior to 1967 remained fragmented and divided yet it remained more effective than its proportion of seats in Parliament might suggest.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the optimism expressed by Morris Jones, a deep concern regarding the asymmetric balance between the Congress and other numerically weak opposition parties existed. The deep institutionalization of the Congress as a party and its legislative experience since colonial period, as compared to other parties in the Parliament had developed caution even among the scholars on public institutions.<sup>16</sup> Though Nehru had natural deference towards the institution of Parliament and his participation in the proceeding of the House was active and consistent, the overwhelming presence of the Congress in both the House and the well knit structure of its organizational wing as well as parliamentary wing presented a challenge to the opposition in expressing and institutionalizing itself. Apart from the numerically weak opposition, the overshadowing of the parliamentary wing by the Working Committee and leadership of Nehru concerned scholars like Norman D. Palmer who noted that ‘the Congress Parliamentary Party... is clearly subordinate to the major agencies of the party, notably the Working Committee, and to Nehru himself’.<sup>17</sup> Even Rodrigues

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<sup>12</sup> W. H. Morris-Jones. (March, 1963). Parliament and the Dominant Party: Indian Experience. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 17 (3), p. 302.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, argues that during 1950s and 1960s, ‘the one dominant party system has served not to destroy but to sustain parliamentary institutions’ p. 306.

<sup>14</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (1987). *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of The Indian State*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, p.131

<sup>15</sup> W.H. Morris Jones. (1996). *The Government and Politics of India*. New Delhi: Universal Book Stall.

<sup>16</sup> Norman D. Palmer (1961). *The Indian Political System*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

has argued that during this period Nehru's attitude towards the opposition remained 'ambivalent'.<sup>18</sup> On the one hand, he exhorted the need for a stronger opposition to reinforce parliamentary democracy, on the other hand he felt that 'parliamentary procedures were slow and important legislations were held up.'<sup>19</sup>

Despite Nehru's ambivalence at moments and the overarching dominance of the Congress party, the Parliament functioned effectively and established its relevance in most remarkable manner in this period. Writing in the early 1960s, Palmer recognized the aspect of political leadership of Nehru in rooting parliamentary democracy in India. In his forcible words, 'He (Nehru) has helped to establish strong foundations for the continuance of parliamentary rule in India. Future Prime Ministers, who will be men of lesser stature and influence, will inevitably have to pay even greater attention to the Parliament.'<sup>20</sup>

The period of 1950s and 1960s witnessed three Lok Sabhas namely the First (1952-1957), the Second (1957-1962) and the Third (1962-1967) Lok Sabha where the successive Governments held more than 70 per cent of the seats in the Parliament. Commenting upon the composition of the Opposition during the First Lok Sabha, C. P. Bhambri remarked that the opposition of this period was constituted by many opposition groups as well as many independents and unattached members. The traditional Left-Right classification remains short on capturing the nature and character of the ideological leanings of the opposition parties. He classifies the main opposition parties into three camps, namely, extreme right, extreme left and the moderate left.<sup>21</sup> While the Bhartiya Jana Sangha and Hindu Mahasabha represented the extreme right wing, the Communists formed the single largest opposition group representing the extreme left and the Democratic Socialists and the Praja Socialist Party represented the moderate left. The Opposition thus consisted of groups that remained mutually antagonistic and ideologically opposed to each other.<sup>22</sup> The ideological divide had a casting impact over the constitution of parliamentary

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<sup>18</sup> Valerian Rodrigues. (2018) *Parliamentary Opposition and Government Backbenchers in India*. In N. Ahmed (Ed.) *Inclusive Governance in South Asia: Parliament, Judiciary and Civil Service*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 64.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 64.

<sup>20</sup> Norman D. Palmer (1961). *The Indian Political System*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, p.127.

<sup>21</sup> C.P. Bhambri. (1996). *The Role of Opposition in the House of People*. In D. Sundar Ram (Ed.) *Readings in Indian Parliamentary Opposition. Vol. I*. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, pp.87-88.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 88.

opposition in this phase that could not develop unanimity of purpose and institutionalize itself as a monolithic group representing the Opposition in Parliament. Commenting upon the essentially fragmented character of the Opposition, Nehru says,

They hold together, I suppose because of the stress of circumstances and sometimes there are marriages of convenience, sometimes followed by rapid divorces, and other whole we find strange bed-fellows consorting together because of a certain spirit of opposition to the majority group.<sup>23</sup>

Barring the Congress, as other parties were relatively weak both within and outside the Parliament, the opposition remained internal to the Congress party during the 1950s. The opposition during 1960s, however gradually, resorted to satyagraha and civic resistance to vitalize itself and seek legitimacy as both these techniques were at the forefront during the national struggle for independence. Rodrigues argues that these strategies were used to tap on social capital.<sup>24</sup> At this moment the opposition strategically involved itself in extra parliamentary opposition and Rammanohar Lohia played a significant role in this regard. His strategy of choosing a mix of constitutional or parliamentary actions and civic resistance subsequently emboldened the opposition.<sup>25</sup>

The 1960s brought in a real change in the conduct of House. From the Fourth Lok Sabha onwards, Rononjoy Sen notes that walkouts and disruptive behavior became increasingly common.<sup>26</sup> The disruptions in 1950s were occasional and the change of 1960s symbolizes the assertion of the opposition owing in to the political change witnessed in the late 1960s. The Opposition deliberately adopted a strategy of confrontation with the government and it led to disruptions and adjournments in the House. Commenting upon the frequent disruptions, walkout and changed atmosphere since the constitution of the Fourth Lok Sabha B. Gopal writes,

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<sup>23</sup> C.P. Bhambhri. (1996). *The Role of Opposition in the House of People*. In D. Sundar Ram (Ed.) *Readings in Indian Parliamentary Opposition. Vol. 1*. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, p. 88.

<sup>24</sup> Valerian Rodrigues. (2018) *Parliamentary Opposition and Government Backbenchers in India*. In N. Ahmed (Ed.) *Inclusive Governance in South Asia: Parliament, Judiciary and Civil Service*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 65.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p. 65

<sup>26</sup> Rononjoy Sen. (2018). *An Analysis of Disruptions in Parliament*. Ajay K. Mehra (Ed.) *The Indian Parliament and Democratic Transformation*. London and New York: Routledge, p. 123.



Legislative business was hampered because the opposition was not interested in law making but in using Parliament to destroy the system itself. Obstructive tactics were adopted to delay and block legislative business. 'Zero Hour', provided the best example of opposition's attitude. The free for all atmosphere generated during the deliberations made a mockery of parliamentary procedures.<sup>27</sup>

The Fourth Lok Sabha (1967-1971) can be considered as the watershed because the Government was reduced to around 50 percent of the seats in the Legislature. As a result of the loss of social base that the Congress faced in 1967, the socialist platform both at the Centre and in the states was strengthened. The two Socialist Parties (Praja Socialist Party and Samyukta Socialist Party, henceforth PSP and SSP respectively) could secure 36 Lok Sabha seats in the Fourth Lok Sabha. This was the highest ever seat gain for the socialist platform.<sup>28</sup> The performance of Bharatiya Jan Sangh (henceforth BJS) and the two communist parties was also significant with BJS winning 35 seats and the two Communist parties securing 42 seats. With 279 seats out of 520, for the Congress it was the worst performance in the Lok Sabha history till then. This change has to be placed amidst the developments which were taking place in the mid-1960s within the Congress party. In the post Nehru era, the 'Congress system' which primarily established and sustained the dual equilibrium<sup>29</sup> could not hold for long. The early sign of its decadence was seen with Indira Gandhi becoming the Prime Minister by in 1966.<sup>30</sup>

The increasing rivalries within the various factions of Congress among various factions meant that though unintended, opposition became vigorous especially during the third and the fourth Lok Sabha. The factionalism became, sharp in the second

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<sup>27</sup> B. Gopal (1996). *The Role of Opposition in Indian Parliament: A Study of the Fourth Lok Sabha*. In D. Sundar Ram (Ed.) *Readings in Indian Parliamentary Opposition. Vol. 1*. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, p. 169.

<sup>28</sup> Vikas Tripathi. (2018). 'Responsibility' and 'Accountability': Confidence and No Confidence Motions in the Indian Parliament. In Ajay K. Mehra (Ed.) *The Indian Parliament and Democratic Transformation* (pp. 251-272). London and New York: Routledge

<sup>29</sup> The first equilibrium referring to the one between the Congress Parliamentary Wing and the Congress Organisational wing, and the second between the centre and states in India

<sup>30</sup> In fact, the opposition gained vigour with the entry of Ram Manohar Lohia, J.B. Kriplani and Minoo R. Masani through the Lok Sabha by-elections held in 1963. Lohia sowed the seeds of an anti-Congress unity in Lok Sabha. See V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 59. He remarks, 'it may be recalled that all of them had entered parliament in the May 1963 by-elections and their arrival, in a sense, had unnerved even Nehru'. V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p.71.

Prime Ministership period of Indira Gandhi and finally it led to the breakup of the Congress in 1969. Internal factionalism apart, other factors such as the emergence of non-Congress governments in many states where Congress lost power particularly during the 1967 election were also responsible for the disequilibrium.<sup>31</sup> V. Krishna Ananth considers these two factors as decisive for the discernible shift. Samyukta Vidhayak Dal (henceforth SVD) claimed majority by forging unity among opposition in Legislative Assemblies of these states on the basis of 'anti-congressism' and were successful in unseating the Congress from power. The emergence of non Congress governments in many states became instrumental in forging floor coordination. However, it also triggered a more confrontational relationship between the opposition and government as the interventions of central government in the non Congress ruled states were perceived with suspicion and it created a new ground of discord not only between the centre and state but also between the opposition and the government. The role of governors in the state and the exercise of Article 356 by the Union government deepened this dual discord and the proceedings of the Parliament did bear its brunt.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p.74.

<sup>32</sup> Article 356 reads as: 'Provisions in case of failure of constitutional machinery in State

(1) If the President, on receipt of report from the Governor of the State or otherwise, is satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution, the President may by Proclamation

(a) assume to himself all or any of the functions of the Government of the State and all or any of the powers vested in or exercisable by the Governor or any body or authority in the State other than the Legislature of the State;

(b) declare that the powers of the Legislature of the State shall be exercisable by or under the authority of Parliament;

(c) make such incidental and consequential provisions as appear to the president to be necessary or desirable for giving effect to the objects of the Proclamation, including provisions for suspending in whole or in part the operation of any provisions of this constitution relating to any body or authority in the State Provided that nothing in this clause shall authorise the President to assume to himself any of the powers vested in or exercisable by a High Court, or to suspend in whole or in part the operation of any provision of this Constitution relating to High Courts

(2) Any such Proclamation may be revoked or varied by a subsequent Proclamation

(3) Every Proclamation issued under this article except where it is a Proclamation revoking a previous Proclamation, cease to operate at the expiration of two months unless before the expiration of that period it has been approved by resolutions of both Houses of Parliament Provided that if any such Proclamation (not being a Proclamation revoking a previous Proclamation) is issued at a time when the House of the People is dissolved or the dissolution of the House of the People takes place during the period of two months referred to in this clause, and if a resolution approving the Proclamation has been passed by the Council of States, but no resolution with respect to such Proclamation has been passed by the House of the People before the expiration of that period, the Proclamation Shall cease to operate at the expiration of thirty days from the date on which the House of the People first sits after its reconstitution unless before the expiration of the said period of thirty days a resolution approving the Proclamation has been also passed by the House of the People

(4) A Proclamation so approved shall, unless revoked, cease to operate on the expiration of a period of six months from the date of issue of the Proclamation: Provided that if and so often as a resolution approving the continuance in force of such a Proclamation is passed by both Houses of Parliament, the

Four out of six NCMs moved during the Fourth Lok Sabha were meant to censure the Union government for its interventionist role in the non-Congress ruled states. The NCMs moved by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, P. Ramamurti and Madhu Limaye (he moved two NCMs) were triggered by the political developments in the states of Haryana, Kerala, Rajasthan in particular and the non-Congress ruled state in particular. Commenting upon the growing animosity between the government and the opposition owing to misuse of Article 356 Gopal argues,

The coalition experiments collapsed earlier than expected, though the process was hastened due to irreconcilable and hostile stance of the ruling party of the centre and due to misuse of constitutional institutions in certain states. The flagrant violation of Article 356 of the constitution to dismiss elected governments in states furthered the existing animosities between the Congress party on the one hand and the non Congress parties on the other, intensifying the mistrust between the two sides as reflected in the deliberations in the Indian Parliament.<sup>33</sup>

As the political events unfolded during the Fourth Lok Sabha, there was a split in the Congress Party in 1969 and the proceedings in the House could not escape its brunt.

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Proclamation shall, unless revoked, continue in force for a further period of six months from the date on which under this clause it would otherwise have ceased to operating, but no such Proclamation shall in any case remain in force for more than three years: Provided further that if the dissolution of the House of the People takes place during any such period of six months and a resolution approving the continuance in force of such Proclamation has been passed by the Council of States, but no resolution with respect to the continuance in force of such Proclamation has been passed by the House of the People during the said period, the Proclamation shall cease to operate at the expiration of thirty days from the date on which the House of the People first sits after its reconstitution unless before the expiration of the said period of thirty days a resolution approving the continuance in force of the Proclamation has been also passed by the House of the People

(5) Notwithstanding anything contained in clause ( 4 ), a resolution with respect to the continuance in force of a Proclamation approved under clause ( 3 ) for any period beyond the expiration of one year from the date of issue of such proclamation shall not be passed by either House of Parliament unless

(a) a Proclamation of Emergency is in operation, in the whole of India or, as the case may be, in the whole or any part of the State, at the time of the passing of such resolution, and

(b) the Election Commission certifies that the continuance in force of the Proclamation approved under clause ( 3 ) during the period specified in such resolution is necessary on account of difficulties in holding general elections to the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned: Provided that in the case of the Proclamation issued under clause ( 1 ) on the 6 th day of October, 1985 with respect to the State of Punjab, the reference in this clause to any period beyond the expiration of two years'. See P.M. Bakshi. (2006). *The Constitution of India (Seventh Edition)*. Delhi: Universal Law Publishing Co., pp. 292-294.

<sup>33</sup> B. Gopal (1996). *The Role of Opposition in Indian Parliament: A Study of the Fourth Lok Sabha*. In D. Sundar Ram (Ed.) *Readings in Indian Parliamentary Opposition. Vol. 1*. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, p. 160-161.

The Opposition lost its dynamism getting divided and various parties aligned with the two Congress Groups. Post split, there emerged an explicit ideological divide between the left and the right and it fragmented the opposition in particular, in two rival camps. The government was extended support from CPI-DMK-PSP who supported the Indira Gandhi faction and thereby the Government survived. The rightist parties including the Jan Sangha, the Swatantra and later the Congress (O) were at loggerheads with the left parties on many issues in the Parliament.<sup>34</sup> Based on his study of the role of opposition during the Fourth Lok Sabha, Gopal argues,

An examination of the debates in Parliament clearly indicates that the interest of the opposition parties on various national and international issues. They continued to criticize the government on its policies, yet at the same time towards the end, there appeared a clear cut ideological rift which was sharply focused particularly after 1969.<sup>35</sup>

However, there did arise occasions and issues which could witness a broad-base parliamentary opposition. Such instances remained few, though. Three such instances are noteworthy. First, a pertinent issue that could muster the Opposition together was the autonomy of states and the impositions and interventions of the Union government. It is evident from the number of NCMs that the House witnessed on the issue and the support it gathered in censuring the government. Secondly, in the post split period, the Congress (R) despite its insistence could not secure the passage of the Preventive Detention Act owing to stiff resistance it faced from the CPI and the CPI (M). Gopal brings forth an instance of inter party coordination where both government as well as the opposition could raise its tone together. Thirdly, consequent to the Golaknath judgment which gave precedence to the Supreme Court over the Parliament in regard to the amendment of Fundamental Rights, opposition parties belonging to diverse ideological persuasions remained roughly unanimous that the government should consider legislative route to restore the decorum and dignity of the House.<sup>36</sup> Nath Pai of the PSP brought a Private Member's Bill to amend Article 368 which was supported by the Left parties and the DMK apart from the

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<sup>34</sup> B. Gopal (1996). *The Role of Opposition in Indian Parliament: A Study of the Fourth Lok Sabha*. In D. Sundar Ram (Ed.) *Readings in Indian Parliamentary Opposition. Vol. 1*. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, p. 163

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 166

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p. 163

government.<sup>37</sup> Other parties that included the Swatantrata Party, the BJS and the SSP had few reservations over the Bill. However, post split the fate of Bill turning into law became bleak and it lapsed with the dissolution of the Fourth Lok Sabha in 1970.

While the larger political picture remained as portrayed above, as far as the NCMs are concerned during the first and the second Lok Sabha, these were a nonstarter. This can be seen through the table provided below (Table 2.4). As shown previously, in Table 2.2 only one notice to move the NCM was placed before the Speaker in 1961 by Braj Raj Singh. However the notice could not be admitted as it failed to gather the support of the required number of 50 MPs.<sup>38</sup> The Third Lok Sabha received 16 notices for the NCMs and six were admitted. In all, the Third Lok Sabha and the Fourth Lok Sabha received 28 notices for the NCMs and 12 were admitted. A review of all the notices moved and the decision made by the Speaker from the Second Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha indicates four major grounds for admission of a notice.<sup>39</sup> Firstly, in several instances the members placed the notice for NCM in the House but did not pursue it and thus the notice lapsed. Second, the motion failed to carry the prerequisite support of a minimum of 50 MPs in order to be admitted. Third, the Speaker did not admit the notice as it was not found to be in order. Last, a large

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<sup>37</sup> Article 368 reads as :Power of Parliament to amend the Constitution and procedure therefore  
(1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, Parliament may in exercise of its constituent power amend by way of addition, variation or repeal any provision of this Constitution in accordance with the procedure laid down in this article  
(2) An amendment of this Constitution may be initiated only by the introduction of a Bill for the purpose in either House of Parliament, and when the Bill is passed in each House by a majority of the total membership of that House present and voting, it shall be presented to the President who shall give his assent to the Bill and thereupon the Constitution shall stand amended in accordance with the terms of the Bill: Provided that if such amendment seeks to make any change in  
(a) Article 54, Article 55, Article 73, Article 162 or Article 241, or  
(b) Chapter IV of Part V, Chapter V of Part VI, or Chapter I of Part XI, or  
(c) any of the Lists in the Seventh Schedule, or  
(d) the representation of States in Parliament, or  
(e) the provisions of this article, the amendment shall also require to be ratified by the Legislature of not less than one half of the States by resolution to that effect passed by those Legislatures before the Bill making provision for such amendment is presented to the President for assent  
(3) Nothing in Article 13 shall apply to any amendment made under this article  
(4) No amendment of this Constitution (including the provisions of Part III) made or purporting to have been made under this article whether before or after the commencement of Section 55 of the Constitution (Forty second Amendment) Act, 1976 shall be called in question in any court on any ground  
(5) For the removal of doubts, it is hereby declared that there shall be no limitation whatever on the constituent power of Parliament to amend by way of addition, variation or repeal the provisions of this Constitution under this article.' See P.M. Bakshi. (2006). *The Constitution of India (Seventh Edition)*. Delhi: Universal Law Publishing Co., pp, p. 304-305

<sup>38</sup> G.C. Malhotra. (2004). *Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat and Metropolitan Book Company, p. 50.

<sup>39</sup> For a review of the notices for NCMs and their disposal See Ibid, p. 29 -34.

number of the notices were received simultaneously and since only one notice could be admitted according to the rules, the Speaker took decision based on the timing of notices or through the use of ballot.

**Table 2.4: NCMs Listed, Discussed Voted, Mover of the NCM and Issue Raised during 1950s and 1960s**

Lok Sabha	Prime Minister	Mover	Party of the Mover	Issues raised/ Charges leveled against the government by the mover	Date of Voting	Ayes	Noes	Result
III	Jawaharlal Nehru	J.B. Kriplani	An unattached member of Lok Sabha	Chinese aggression and the Indian debacle	22.8.63	62	347	Negated
	Lal Bahadur Shastri	N.C. Chatterjee	An unattached member of Lok Sabha	Government's failure to protect economic independence, utter dependence on import for food, price hike, territorial integrity of the country	18.9.64	50	307	Negated
	Lal Bahadur Shastri	S.N. Dwivedy	PSP	Deteriorating law and order situation, growing dissonance in the Cabinet and Prime Minister's indecision	16.3.65	44	315	Negated
	Lal Bahadur Shastri	M.R. Masani	Swatantrata Party	Combined hostility of China and Pakistan, Shortcomings of Fourth Five Year Plan	26.8.65	66	318	Negated
	Indira Gandhi	H.N. Mukherjee	CPI	Government's decision of devaluation of rupee, India's attitude towards Vietnam war	4.8.66	61	270	Negated
	Indira Gandhi	U.M. Trivedi	BJS	Student agitation, government's failure on home front, foreign policy front and economic front	7.11.66	36	235	Negated
IV	Indira Gandhi	A.B. Vajpayee	BJS	Imposition of President's rule in Rajasthan and the suspension of state legislative assembly	20.3.67	162	257	Negated
	Indira Gandhi	Madhu Limaye	Samyukta Socialist Party	Political Crisis in Haryana and the fall of non Congress government in West Bengal	24.11.67	88	215	Negated
	Indira Gandhi	Balraj Madhok	BJS	Criticized the Rann of Kutch agreement between India and Pakistan. He charged that the government has failed in protecting the territorial integrity of the country	28.2.68	75	205	Negated
	Indira Gandhi	Kanwar Lal Gupta	BJS	Government's inept handling of the Government employee's strike on 19 September 1968	13.11.68	90	222	Negated
	Indira Gandhi	P. Ramamurti	CPI-M	To censure government for toppling the non Congress governments in some of the states and encouraging aggressive regional movements like Shiv Sena	20.2.69	86	215	Negated
	Indira Gandhi	Madhu Limaye	SSP	The likelihood of rigging in Kerala mid-term poll and centralization of power in the Prime Minister	29.7.70	137	243	Negated

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on G.C. Malhotra. (2004). *Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat and Metropolitan Book Company, pp. 53-117; and, Statistical Handbook (2019) Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India.

Considering the numerical strength and divided character of the opposition, the listing and discussion of NCMs remained a challenge. Even when the notices were admitted and the NCM was listed, discussed and voted, it could not gather much support when it came to voting. A bird's eye view of the issues on which NCMs were moved in this period, is provided in Table 2.4. As seen from the table, the first two NCMs were moved in the House by unattached members of the House: J.B. Kriplani and N.C. Chatterjee, who moved it in 1963 and 1964 against Nehru and Shastri respectively. While Kriplani raised the issue of Chinese aggression and Indian debacle, Chatterjee criticized the government for its failure to protect the economic interdependence and price hike. However, as seen from the table, only 62 members in 1963 and 50 members in 1964 supported the motion. Both the NCMs pertained to significant issues of the moment that could have cobbled up an alliance of opposition parties across spectrum but it was just used as an occasion to censure the government. In this context one needs to understand the reasons why the Opposition resorted to the NCMs more frequently than the Censure Motion. Chaube argues that the opposition frequently resorted to the use of NCMs as compared to Censure Motions owing to the rule that the Censure Motions could not secure precedence over other items of business in the House.<sup>40</sup> Further, the Rules do not specify any category of Censure Motion and its admissibility depends upon the discretion of the Speaker who decides on it in consultation with the Leader of the House or the Business Advisory Committee. The Censure Motions are in principle governed by the general Rules on 'Motions'.<sup>41</sup> Owing to this specificity of the rules governing the Censure Motion, the Opposition resorted to the use of NCMs.

It was in the Third and Fourth Lok Sabha that NCMs were discussed. During 1960s, successive governments had to face twelve NCMs with the first one being discussed in 1963 and the last in 1970. In other words, in a brief span of seven years, an overwhelming number of twelve NCMs were faced by different governments. As far as the specificities are concerned, the government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru faced one NCM (third Lok Sabha), Lal Bahadur Shastri faced three NCMs (third Lok

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<sup>40</sup> Shibani Kinkar Chaube. (2006). *Government and Opposition: Parliamentary Democracy in India*. Kolkata: K.P. Bagchi and Company, p. 80

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p. 80

Sabha) and Indira Gandhi faced eight NCMs. It is noteworthy that the maximum number of NCMs were moved during the tenure of Indira Gandhi (1966 to 1970). The only NCM that Jawaharlal Nehru faced was regarding the state of India's defence forces which was raised in the backdrop of the 1962 Chinese war. During this motion, Nehru had to concede to many of the criticisms and reluctantly had to accept the resignation of V.K. Krishna Menon, the then Defence Minister.<sup>42</sup>

An examination of the content, timing and the voting pattern of the NCMs reveal that the Members of Parliament used the NCMs for the following purposes: express their criticisms and complaints against the incumbent governments and seek explanations on the governments' conduct. The aim was rarely to dislodge the government.<sup>43</sup> The NCMs sought response of the government on issues such as food crisis, corruption, devaluation of the currency, federal tensions, the Rann of Kutch and labour disputes. As NCM was not listed even once during the 1950s a co-relation between the weak and fragmented character of the opposition during this period and the non-existence of NCMs can be made.

As already mentioned, the opposition parties came together and developed its strength to take on the Congress after 1963. The opposition parties were able to bring dynamism and floor co-ordination during the Third and the Fourth Lok Sabha. The twelve NCMs between 1963 to 1970 could be attributed to the emerging ideology of 'Non-Congressism'. This was an interesting period because though the government was stable and the opposition was fragmented within, yet it able to assert itself and attempted to ensure a responsive government. Since 1965 the intensity and frequency of NCMs increased, with at least two NCMs being discussed in the Lok Sabha between 1965 and 1968 with. This showed that on one hand, while the internal structures of the Congress were weakening and division within the party was emerging, on the other, the opposition was invigorated by the entry of leaders such as Ram Manohar Lohia in the Parliament in 1963. The opposition did attempt to establish equilibrium between the government and Parliament, particularly during the Fourth Lok Sabha but the nature of majority that the successive governments enjoyed

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<sup>42</sup> Vernon Hewitt (1994). The Prime Minister and the Parliament. In James Manor (ed.), *Nehru to the 90s: The Changing office of Prime Minister in India*. New Delhi: Viking., p.54.

<sup>43</sup> Vikas Tripathi. (2018). 'Responsibility' and 'Accountability': Confidence and No Confidence Motions in the Indian Parliament. In Ajay K. Mehra (Ed.) *The Indian Parliament and Democratic Transformation* (pp. 251-272). London and New York: Routledge



during this period did not in any substantial manner shift the balance in favour of legislature. The numerical weakness, apart from the deep divide among the opposition parties, inhibited the profound impact that the legislature could have exercised over the executive. The executive pre-eminence remained intact despite certain momentary assertions on the part of legislature.

### **Majoritarian Parliamentarianism: Phase II (The 1970s and 1980s)**

The legislature-executive relationship during the 1970s and the 1980s was hugely influenced by the political development since mid-1960s. During this period parliamentary opposition as argued by Rodrigues, ‘made mass action and support to social movements integral to its role, and partly to compensate the lack of opportunity to make their case in the Lok Sabha.’<sup>44</sup> Disruptions increasingly became regular and came to be routinised. In Inder Malhotra’s words, ‘Bedlam in both Houses has by now become a daily routine, rather than exception to the rule.’<sup>45</sup> Unlike the party politics of 1950s and 1960s that mostly remained true to its ideological persuasions and maintained a safe distance from the material inducements, the party politics in 1970s and 1980s became quite power centric. To cite Rodrigues, ‘party lines had become highly porous in the 1970s and the prospect of power tended to trump ideological and party lines.’<sup>46</sup>

In the elections of 1971, Indira Gandhi won a landslide victory. Consequent to this victory, the constitutional balance got disturbed and a centralized personalized rule marked the politics of subsequent years. As the electoral competition became more intensive, the period of parliamentary level playing gradually became extinct. Eventually, the most severe setback to the government-opposition relations was the emergency of 1975-77. Consequent to the imposition of Emergency, K. Raghu Ramaiah, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, moved a motion suspending all kinds of Private Member’s business on 21 July, 1975. The motion was adopted by the

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<sup>44</sup> Valerian Rodrigues. (2018) Parliamentary Opposition and Government Backbenchers in India. In N. Ahmed (Ed.) *Inclusive Governance in South Asia: Parliament, Judiciary and Civil Service*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 67

<sup>45</sup> Cited in Rononjoy Sen . (2018). An Analysis of Disruptions in Parliament. In Ajay K. Mehra (Ed.) *The Indian Parliament and Democratic Transformation* (pp. 218-232). London and New York: Routledge., p. 224.

<sup>46</sup> Valerian Rodrigues. (2018) Parliamentary Opposition and Government Backbenchers in India. In N. Ahmed (Ed.) *Inclusive Governance in South Asia: Parliament, Judiciary and Civil Service*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 67

House. The motion was passed with 301 supporting it while 76 voted against the motion.<sup>47</sup> It read,

This House resolves that the current session of Lok Sabha being in the nature of an emergent session to transfer certain urgent and important government business, only government business be transacted during the session and no other business whatsoever, including questions, calling attention motions and any business to be initiated by a private member be brought before or transacted in the House during the session and all relevant rules on the subject in the rules of procedure and conduct of business in Lok Sabha do hereby stand suspended to that extent.<sup>48</sup>

Reflecting on the roles played by the government and the opposition, Rudolph and Rudolph reflect that ‘since the mid-1960s and the death of Nehru, there has been a failure by both to honour each other’s parliamentary roles. The Prime Minister and the Cabinet colleagues have neglected the Parliament’.<sup>49</sup> The primary reason for such an unequal relationship to emerge was the surfacing and consolidation of Prime Ministerial Government especially since the Fifth Lok Sabha. The esteem and effect of the Parliament has eroded.<sup>50</sup> The Rudolphs offer A.B. Vajpayee’s argument in the Parliament on the decline in the prestige of Parliament in India and the role of the Prime Minister. He had famously said that while, ‘Pt. Nehru stayed away from the House only when it was absolutely unavoidable’ Indira Gandhi ‘attended the Parliament only when she must’. The crucial reason for the decline was her ‘unconcealed disdain for Parliament.’<sup>51</sup>

Vernon Hewitt and Shirin M. Rai have noted that between 1971 and 1975 and again during 1980-9, there were a record number of privilege motions moved against the Prime Minister. The movements outside the Parliament and disruptions as well as disorder in the House became quite aligned to each other and this had a major impact

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<sup>47</sup>Cited in Somnath Chatterjee. (2010). *Keeping the Faith: Memoirs of a Parliamentarian*. Noida: Harper Collins. p. 47.

<sup>48</sup> Cited in Somnath Chatterjee. (2010). *Keeping the Faith: Memoirs of a Parliamentarian*. Noida: Harper Collins. p. 47.

<sup>49</sup>Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (2008). *The Realm of Institutions: State Formation and Institutional Change*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 90-91.

<sup>50</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers.

<sup>51</sup>Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (2008). *The Realm of Institutions: State Formation and Institutional Change*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.90.

on the shaping of executive-legislature relationship since the beginning of the 1970s. Partly, this was due to the gradual disenchantment with the parliamentary procedures among the opposition as their numerical strength offered them lesser opportunities to express themselves in both the Houses of Parliament. But to a large extent the ushering in of a centralized and personalized leadership of Indira Gandhi since 1971 pushed the opposition in quest of extra parliamentary routes to oppose the government. This trend becomes evident during the emergency period (1975-1977) when the parliamentary opposition became indistinguishable from the civil society.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, Hewitt and Rai argue,

Given their numerical weakness, and faced with a Prime Minister who saw them either as a nuisance or as a threat to national security, the opposition could rarely defeat government legislation. In this context, the opposition devised extra parliamentary protests and disruptive behavior to try and frustrate the government from automatically converting a bill into law.<sup>53</sup>

In the post Nehru period, the successive governments lacked the ability to muster adequate trust and credibility among the opposition benches. In spite of the huge parliamentary majority, Nehru could reach out to the opposition and could convey to the nation as a whole that for him the institution of Parliament remains a moral symbol and that merits respect of all. Hewitt and Rai argue,

for other Prime Ministers it was something to be endured or, at worst curtailed. Bequeathed by colonialism, redefined in the context of nationalist agitation, and consolidated during a time of large one party majorities, Parliament and the conventions of parliamentary procedures alone often proved ineffective in controlling the executive, or holding the specific Prime Ministers to account...<sup>54</sup>

As the Bofors case came for parliamentary trial in 1987, it triggered a sharp polarization between the government and the opposition and the Parliament became

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<sup>52</sup> Valerian Rodrigues. (2018) Parliamentary Opposition and Government Backbenchers in India. In N. Ahmed (Ed.) *Inclusive Governance in South Asia: Parliament, Judiciary and Civil Service*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 67.

<sup>53</sup> Vernon Hewitt and Shirin M. Rai. (2010) Parliament. In Nirala Jayal Gopal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (Eds.) *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India* (pp. 28-42). New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 35.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34

witness to an unprecedented disruption. The unprecedented majority carried by the government led the opposition to vigorously support the social movements that could bring visibility to the oppositional politics. During the tenure of Rajiv Gandhi Government, ‘There were on an average three walkouts per parliamentary session, usually following a ruling by the Speaker against the opposition, or in a protest over some specific piece of legislation or a particular minister.’<sup>55</sup>

Both the opposition as well as the government remains responsible for the routinisation of disruptions in the House particularly since the Fourth Lok Sabha elections. The intensification of political competition, in particular, at the state level polarized the opposition and it adopted a confrontationist attitude towards the government.<sup>56</sup>

The decades of 1970s and 1980s broadly represent the era of Congress dominance, barring a brief interlude of thirty-three months (during the Janata Party and the Janata Party-S Governments). The Janata Party had 55 per cent vote share and the Charan Singh led Janata (S) had 14 per cent seat share in the Parliament. The Janata (S) was supported by the Congress Party from outside. The Fifth Lok Sabha witnessed around 68 percent of the seats going to the Congress while the Congress returned to power in the Seventh Lok Sabha again with 67 per cent. In the Eighth Lok Sabha elections the Congress got a massive 81 per cent vote share.

**Table 2.5: CMs Listed, Discussed and Voted in Lok Sabha during 1970s and 1980s**

Lok Sabha	Prime Minister	Date of Voting	Ayes	Noes	Result
VI	Charan Singh	Motion not moved			PM tendered resignation

Source: Statistical Handbook (2019) Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India. (2019)

The two decades of 1970s and 1980s witnessed the first CM being listed for the in the history of House during the sixth Lok Sabha in 1979. Though, the need to move the motion did not arise as Prime Minister Charan Singh tendered his resignation, the motion could not be moved.

<sup>55</sup> Vernon Hewitt and Shirin M. Rai. (2010) Parliament. In Nirala Jayal Gopal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (Eds.) *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India* (pp. 28-42). New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 35.

<sup>56</sup> B. Gopal (1996). The Role of Opposition in Indian Parliament: A Study of the Fourth Lok Sabha. In D. Sundar Ram (Ed.) *Readings in Indian Parliamentary Opposition. Vol. 1*. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, p. 170

Table 2.5 shows that during this period, ten NCMs were moved by the opposition. Seven out of these ten NCMs were faced by Indira Gandhi (four in fifth Lok Sabha and three in seventh Lok Sabha), and the Janta Party Government faced two were specifically in 1978 and 1979 (sixth Lok Sabha). Towards the later part of his tenure, in 1987, Rajiv Gandhi government also faced one NCM (eighth Lok Sabha). It is significant that other than the second NCM which the Morarji Desai Government faced none of the NCMs were intended to dislodge the government. Morarji Government could survive the first NCM, while he resigned before conclusion of the discussion of the second one, considering the factionalism in the Janata Party during that moment. Four out of nine NCMs were moved by the CPI(M) and all four of them were moved against Indira Gandhi government.

**Table 2.6: NCMs Listed, Discussed Voted, Mover of the NCM and Issue Raised during 1970s and 1980s**

Lok Sabha	Prime Minister	Mover	Party of the Mover	Issues raised/ Charges leveled against the government by the mover	Date of Voting	Ayes	Noes	Result
V	Indira Gandhi	Jyotirmoy Bosu	CPI	Government losing credibility, price rise and inflation	20.11.73	54	251	Negated
	Indira Gandhi	Jyotirmoy Bosu	CPI	Railway strike	10.5.74	By voice vote		Negated
	Indira Gandhi	Jyotirmoy Bosu	CPI	Ordinances enabling Compulsory Deposit Scheme for Income Tax	25.7.74	63	297	Negated
	Indira Gandhi	Jyotirmoy Bosu	CPI	Government's stand on socialism and democracy in actual practice	9.5.75	By voice vote		Negated
VI	Morarji Desai	C M Stephen	Congress	Failure of government on all fronts since it came to power. Rising tension between the centre and states	11.5.78	By voice vote		Negated
	Morarji Desai	YB Chavan	Congress	Crisis of confidence involving all walks of life	12.7.79	Inconclusive Discussion		Prime Minister Resigned,
VII	Indira Gandhi	George Fernandes	Janata (S)	Price rise, negative trade balance, foreign exchange reserve and black money	9.5.81	92	278	Negated
	Indira Gandhi	Samar Mukherjee	CPI-M	Essential Service Maintenance Bill, Price rise	17.9.81	86	297	Negated
	Indira Gandhi	H N Bahuguna	Democratic Socialist Party	Uneven economic development and the emerging monopoly capitalists	16.8.82	112	333	Negated
VIII	Rajeev Gandhi	C Madhav Reddy	Telgu Desham	Prime Ministerial style of Rajiv Gandhi and government's non cooperative attitude with Chief Ministers of non Congress ruled states	11.12.87	By Voice vote		Negated

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on G.C. Malhotra. (2004). *Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat and Metropolitan Book Company, pp. 53-117, and Statistical Handbook (2019) Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India.

In comparison to the 1970s and 1980s, more NCMs were proposed against the government in the 1960s (compare Table 2.3 and 2.5). This can be partly explained by the nature of legislative majority which marked the successive governments since the Fifth Lok Sabha. The opposition unity based on the ideology of 'anti-Congressism' had dissipated in mid-1960s; instead its withering and lack of floor coordination was visible. As the executive-legislature balance was tilted towards the government, due to the disappointment with the Janata Party experiment in 1979 and the successive consolidation of Congress governments in the 1980s, the intensity of NCMs eclipsed in the Indian Parliament. During the debates on NCMs in this period, recurrent themes were: corruption, deteriorating economic situation, federal tension, emergence of a strong Prime Minister with centralized mindset. NCMs during this period (Fifth Lok Sabha) were defeated either with voice vote or substantial strength. The preponderance of the government is easily explained through the gradual weakening of opposition unity during the period. During the Fifth Lok Sabha two motions were negated by voice votes and the rest two got 54 and 63 votes respectively. In all, during this period four motions were negated by voice votes. Only one NCM moved by H.N. Bahguna, during the Seventh Lok Sabha could master a support of more than 100 MPs. It was negated by 333 MPs opposing the motion, while 112 MPs were supporting the motion. Overall, the balance was tilted in a definite manner towards the executive because of the party arithmetic as well as the fragmentation among the parties in opposition.

In a similar manner, NCMs during the Seventh and Eighth Lok Sabha was negated because of substantial support that existed for the government. During this period, the relationship between the government and opposition remained confrontationist. The relationship became sharply confrontationist from 1986 onwards as corruption cases alleging government involvement came to the surface. This is discernible from the discussion in a NCM listed in 1987 where the Bofors issue received particular attention. The confrontationist stance of the Prime Minister as well as the opposition became quite frequent during the 1970s and 1980 and the discussion on NCM was used as an opportunity by the opposition to question the conduct of the PM and her/his minister, many a times getting personal as well. Chaube's discussion of the NCM moved by H.N. Bahuguna on 16 August 1982, on the deteriorating political and economic situation and corruption against Indira Gandhi government, is worth noting,

‘While George Fernandes complained about the Prime Minister being less and less available to the House. A.B. Vajpayee said that without an NCM one would not get the opportunity to talk with the Prime Minister.’<sup>57</sup>

Indira Gandhi, responding to the NCM, accused the opposition of opportunism and parochialism. Questioning the conduct of the opposition in Parliament and expressing her reservation about the then functioning of Parliament, she remarked,

Chaudhary Charan Singh has himself spoken of the lengthening of the ‘Zero Hour’ and I earlier quoted my honourable colleagues as to how little interest is shown in serious subjects and how much time goes on other subjects repeated over and over again. They may be important subjects but when they have been replied to and you reiterate them, that does not lead to any solution.<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, during the NCM on Bofors in 1987, the Opposition MP C. Madhav Reddy, expressing his displeasure at the conduct of the PM remarked, ‘The Prime Minister rarely comes to the House, and whenever he comes to the House, he comes only to interfere, to see that the Opposition is slighted. That is the feeling of the House.’<sup>59</sup>

The opposition leveled substantive charges of growing economic crisis, rise of fundamentalism and corruption involved in the Bofors deal, against the government. In his defense, during the discussion, PM Rajiv Gandhi retorted that the opposition was engaging in ‘total bankruptcy of thinking and indulgence in personal attacks’. He remarked, ‘The fact is that we have tried to involve the opposition, they have not wanted to get involved, because they have been indecisive and they don’t want to face the truth.’<sup>60</sup>

The 1970s and 1980s also witnessed the intensification of a well marked strategy by the opposition of aligning the protest and disruptions inside the Parliament with the popular demonstrations and protest outside the Parliament. As argued above, numerical weakness of the opposition as well as a centralized personalized rule by the

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<sup>57</sup> Shibani Kinkar Chaube. (2006). *Government and Opposition: Parliamentary Democracy in India*. Kolkata: K.P. Bagchi and Company, p. 117

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 118

<sup>59</sup> Ibid,p.118.

<sup>60</sup> Shibani Kinkar Chaube. (2006). *Government and Opposition: Parliamentary Democracy in India*. Kolkata: K.P. Bagchi and Company, p. 119.

PM remains responsible for interlinking of the dimensions internal to the Parliament to the larger political developments taking outside. This strategy of aligning movement politics with the parliamentary politics shaped politics centrally since late 1980s and continues till day.

### **Transactional Parliamentarianism: Phase I (The 1990s)**

The political landscape of India witnessed fundamental transformation in the decade of 1990s. From the mid-1980s onwards and specifically in the 1990s, electoral support for the national political parties declined at the cost of regional political parties. This was due to the proliferation of political parties and it led to the consolidation of successive minority governments.<sup>61</sup> The 1990s produced instable minority governments in a quick succession. Between 1989 and 1999, India had seven Prime Ministers and four Lok Sabhas, namely the Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Lok Sabhas. The changed nature of representation of political parties had a casting impact over both the issues raised, discussed and voted in the House as well as the nature of proceedings that the House witnessed during the 1990s. The regional parties enhanced the impact of sectional issues in the proceedings of the House. On the salience of the regional and identity based issues in the House, Shankar and Rodrigues note,

In the 1990s, the decisive weight of the Indian polity had shifted to a wholly new terrain. Regions, identities, affiliations of all kind, caste and communities had bounced back on to the public arena with a great vengeance...their assertive presence in the public sphere in the 1990s had great impact not merely on the making of the Lok Sabha, but also on the kind of debates that came to dominate deliberations.<sup>62</sup>

The protests and disruptions in the House that became a routine affair towards the late 1960s became much sharp with the withering away of one dominant party system and the formation of successive minority coalition governments during 1990s. The

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<sup>61</sup> See Rekha Diwakar. (2017). *Party System in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, E. Sridharan (Ed.) (2014). *Coalition Politics in India: Selected Issues At the Centre and the States*. New Delhi: Academic Foundation, K. K. Kailash. (2011). Federal Calculations in State Level Coalition Governments. *India Review*, 10(3), 246-282.

<sup>62</sup> B.L. Shankar and Valerian Rodrigues. (2011). *The Indian Parliament: A Democracy At Work*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 166.



realization among the parties that with their modest strength in the House, they could stall the proceedings in order to be heard contributed immensely to the disruptions. The formation of minority governments with reduced majorities amid the persistent fragmentation among opposition parties made political instability the important marker of the period and further heightened the importance of disruption for the opposition to use it as a tool for increasing its bargaining capacity.

The period opened up the possibilities for transaction among political parties in setting the agenda for the Parliament. Though the deep division among parties in the opposition persisted but this moment for the opposition remained fundamentally different than that of the previous decades of the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The difference emerged from the numerical strength of the opposition parties that made the possibility of an alternative government a reality.

**Table 2.7: Lok Sabha, Government, Leader of Opposition and Strength of Principal Opposition Party (1989 to 1999)**

<b>Lok Sabha</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Leader of Opposition</b>	<b>Principal Opposition Party</b>	<b>Principal Opposition Party Strength</b>
IX	V. P. Singh	Rajiv Gandhi	Congress (I)	197
	Chandra Shekhar	L. K. Advani	BJP	85
X	P.V. Narsimha Rao	L. K. Advani, A. B. Vajpayee	BJP	120
XI	A. B. Vajpayee	P.V. Narsimha Rao	Congress	140
	H. D. Deve Gowda	A. B. Vajpayee	BJP	161
	I. K. Gujral	A. B. Vajpayee	BJP	161
XII	A. B. Vajpayee	Sharad Pawar	Congress	148

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on Statistical Handbook (2019) Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India.

As can be seen from Table 2.7 the opposition for the first time consisted of parties that could muster parliamentary support to propose an alternative political arrangement. The principal opposition party in the Parliament had strength of its own to get a NCM listed and voted in the House. The similarity remained in respect of the deep ideological divide among the parties sitting in the opposition.

**Table 2.8: NCMs Listed, Discussed Voted, Mover of the NCM and Issue Raised during 1990s**

Lok Sabha	Prime Minister	Mover	Party of the Mover	Issues raised/ Charges leveled against the government by the mover	Date of Voting	Ayes	Noes	Result
X	P V Narasimha Rao	Jaswant Singh	BJP	Economic policies, corruption, national security, collapse of the system	17.7.92	225	271	Negatived
	P V Narasimha Rao	A.B. Vajpayee	BJP	Murder and mayhem which took place in the country before and after December 6,1992	21.12.92	111	336	Negatived
	P V Narasimha Rao	Ajoy Mukhopadhyay	CPI-M	Government's economic and industrial policy had hit at the self reliance base of the Indian economy	28.7.93	251	265	Negatived

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on G.C. Malhotra. (2004). *Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat and Metropolitan Book Company, pp. 53-117, and Statistical Handbook (2019) Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India.

The increase in numerical strength of opposition parties remained empowering and in part, it explains the three NCMs and 10 CMs being listed in the House in a period of nine years (See Tables 2.8 and 2.9). Paradoxically, the numerically empowered character of the Opposition could not develop an overlapping consensus in regard to values that could be fundamental in binding the opposition together. There were instances of parties transcending the ideological basis in lending support to government (the Left and the BJP supported V.P. Singh government in 1989) or supporting a NCM against a government (P.V. Narsimha Rao in 1993). However such instances of ideological transcendence remained self limiting in providing a sustainable strength to the character of opposition. The opposition continued to be fragmented, divided on issues and unsure about its own strength with respect to government. This contributed to an immensely confrontational relationship between the government and the opposition. Though this period witnessed the unleashing of a major institutional innovation aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the House- the Department Related Standing Committees (henceforth DRSCs) which were set up in 1993, political instability with steep decline in parliamentary performance characterized the period. .

**Table 2.9: CMs Listed, Discussed and Voted in Lok Sabha during 1990s**

Lok Sabha	Prime Minister	Date of Voting	Ayes	Noes	Result
IX	V. P. Singh	21.12.89	By voice vote		Adopted
	V. P. Singh	7.11.90	152	356	Negated
	Chandra Shekhar	16.11.90	280	214	Adopted
X	P V Narasimha Rao	15.7.91	240	109	Adopted
XI	A.B. Vajpayee	Motion not put to vote			PM announced his intention to resign
	H. D. Deve Gowda	12.6.96	By voice vote		Adopted
	H. D. Deve Gowda	11.4.97			Negated
	I.K. Gujral	22.4.97	By voice vote		Adopted
XII	A.B. Vajpayee	28.3.98	275	260	Adopted
	A.B. Vajpayee	17.4.99	269	270	Negated

Source: Statistical Handbook (2019) Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India.

Before 1990s, the CM had been an exception but between 1989 and 1999, 10 CMs were moved in all the consecutive Lok Sabhas. While 1989-99 had four Lok Sabhas—ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth Lok Sabhas, it had seven Prime Ministers. As Table 2.8 shows out of the 10 CMs moved, the government could not survive in three instances, while in the CM of 1996 Atal Bihari Vajpayee government resigned even before the Motion was put to vote. CMs were adopted by the Lok Sabha six times in this period and only the P.V. Narasimha Rao Government of the tenth Lok Sabha could complete its term.

In sharp distinction to the case of CMs, the frequency of NCMs was low. During the 1990s, NCMs were moved only thrice and were unsuccessful on each attempt. S. K. Chaube explains that during 1990s and after, CMs pre-empted NCMs.<sup>63</sup> The rise in the instances of CMs during 1990s can be attributed to factors like the inadequate legislative majority that the successive governments enjoyed during this period. Moreover, as already stated coalition partners during the 1990s were mainly regional forces which were interested in enhancing their bargaining capacity and their interests and aspirations were in constant flux. Additionally, these regional and numerically weak parties had a significant role for the survival and policy approval of the minority governments of this period. This dependence on regional players led to perpetual instability which incentivized numerically weak parties in the Parliament. Therefore, minority governments could opt for an alternative set of arrangements – essentially

<sup>63</sup> Shibani Kinkar Chaube. (2006). *Government and Opposition: Parliamentary Democracy in India*. Kolkata: K.P. Bagchi and Company.

choose a different coalition or change in the composition of Cabinet or even the Prime Minister – rather than face a situation of fresh elections.<sup>64</sup> Effectively, ‘because of threat of No Confidence Motions, a government could respond to the pressure of particular groups within Parliament, even as it became less accountable to the Parliament as a whole.’<sup>65</sup> Thus, the stability of the polity was ensured through the intensity of CMs in the Indian Parliament while trading off the emergence of moral and political consensus among the opposition and the government parties.

The distinguishing feature of the NCMs and CMs during 1990s was its intention to dislodge the incumbent government unlike the past ones where the aim was twofold: first, to evoke responsiveness from the government and second, to censure the government for all those areas where it did not meet the expectations. In sharp contrast, NCMs in the 1990s became devices for bargaining.

A close reading of the CMs and NCMs of the 1990s clearly shows that NCMs/CMs can be successful where a government has a thin majority. In such a case, allies see some incentive and consider either the options of defection or dissolution leading to fresh election. Therefore, this period was characterized by a fragmentation of the party system amid a lack of consensus on major issues that confronted politics. No ‘ideological consensus’ or ‘programmatic consensus’ emerged among major parties represented in the Parliament.<sup>66</sup> While the government remained unsure of its strength, the opposition continued to be fragmented.

The CMS and NCMs of the 1990s were mainly concerned with: economic reforms, the Ramjanmabhoomi movement and the question of secularism and social justice. The Ramjanmabhoomi movement figured as an issue at the centre of parliamentary politics with the rise of BJP and generated intense responses in the Parliament. In fact, the emotive appeal of the issue was such that despite emerging as the second largest party since 1991 and the single largest party since 1996, alliance making was difficult

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<sup>64</sup> This is what happened during the change of guard in the short-lived United Front Government, which came to power in 1996; it had two Prime Ministers in its two-year life – H.D. Deve Gowda (1/6/1996 to 21/4/1997) and I.K. Gujral (21/4/1997 to 18/03/1998). Thus the eleventh Lok Sabha was dissolved on 4/12/1997.

<sup>65</sup> Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (2005). Introduction. In Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (Eds.) *Public Institutions in India: Performance and Design*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.9.

<sup>66</sup> Vikas Tripathi. (2018). ‘Responsibility’ and ‘Accountability’: Confidence and No Confidence Motions in the Indian Parliament. In Ajay K. Mehra (Ed.) *The Indian Parliament and Democratic Transformation*. London and New York: Routledge, p. 263.

for the BJP till 1998. Social justice and secularism figured as central to the politics of 1990s as it became the plank for the second CM moved by V.P. Singh in 1990 (Ninth Lok Sabha) when the BJP withdrew support.<sup>67</sup> It led to the first major debate on secularism and the Ramjanmabhoomi movement in the Lok Sabha. V.P. Singh, during the motion, raised his concern regarding religious polarisation and the inexpediency or otherwise of mixing religion and politics.<sup>68</sup> He asserted the Rathyatra by L.K. Advani was in reality a ploy to prevent the Mandal Commission Report being tabled in the Parliament. While extending his support to V.P. Singh, Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M) said, ‘a vote against the confidence motion is a vote against secularism and for disintegration on the basis of communalism.’<sup>69</sup> Significantly in 1996 (eleventh Lok Sabha), when H.D. Deve Gowda moved the CM, secularism was emphasized again.

A trend analysis of the CMs from the 1990s reveals that secularism had become a significant ground for CMs and non-resolution of the issue can be co-related with the political instability until the Twelfth Lok Sabha. P.V. Narasimha Rao’s statement that ‘Congress could not support BJP on ground of secularism’<sup>70</sup> while the CM was moved, is indicative of the above.

However, debates in the Twelfth Lok Sabha onwards are marked by a change in the tone and tenor. In the words of E. Sridharan, ‘in 1998, the BJP shelved its overt Hindutva agenda to strike explicit or tacit alliances with a range of state based parties, both regional and others, many of which had earlier been with the UF, a strategy, that it consolidated after its victory’.<sup>71</sup> However, in the ensuing years the compulsion of coalition politics had a moderating effect on the BJP and the emphasis on issues of Ramjanmabhoomi, Uniform Civil Code and Article 370 had to be hidden though Hindutva persisted as an issue. This is borne by L K Advani’s statement which was made when CM was moved by Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1998 (Twelfth Lok Sabha).

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<sup>67</sup>V.P Singh moved the first CM in 1989 (Ninth Lok Sabha) and it was adopted by voice vote.

<sup>68</sup> Shibani Kinkar Chaube. (2006). *Government and Opposition: Parliamentary Democracy in India*. Kolkata: K.P. Bagchi and Company, p.128

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. 129

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p.144

<sup>71</sup>E. Sridharan, ‘The Party System’ in Niraja Gopal Jayal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010 P.124

He had said, 'this government was bound by the National Agenda for Governance (NAG) and not the BJP Manifesto'.<sup>72</sup>

Overall, the ten year period witnessed several instances of legislature asserting itself. Given the numerically weak character of government and existence of a few parties in opposition that commanded significant strength added to the difficulties of government for floor coordination. On matters of economic reforms, social justice and national security considerable confrontation took place and on several occasion the opposition came together to attack the government. The entire spectrum of the opposition (including the Congress and the BJP) barring the Left parties voted against the V.P. Singh government during the Confidence Motion at the backdrop of the BJP withdrawing its support.<sup>73</sup> Rao's Finance Minister Manmohan Singh had to face an upbeat opposition over the measures and policies concerning economic reforms. There were many occasions during which the BJP and the Left parties joined hands in the Parliament in the name of opposing government's liberalization measure. Rao government had to face opposition both in the Parliament from parties in the opposition and members of his Cabinet.<sup>74</sup> Finance Minister, Yashwant Sinha had to roll back few decisions made during the presentation of the 1998 Budget under the pressure of MPs from opposition benches as well as the allies in the government. Commenting upon decision to roll back the increase in the price of urea as announced while presenting the Budget of 1998, Sinha writes,

There was a big hue and cry in Parliament at the steep increase. MPs, even those of the ruling coalition, were up in arms on the issue. MPs, even those of the ruling coalition, were up in arms on the issue...I made an honest admission that it was a mistake and that I had issued instructions for it to be corrected immediately. But the members kept heckling me about the increase in price of urea. On the spur of the moment, and even without consulting the prime minister, I announced that the hike of Rs 40 would be halved and the increase would be only

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<sup>72</sup> Shibani Kinkar Chaube. (2006). *Government and Opposition: Parliamentary Democracy in India*. Kolkata: K.P. Bagchi and Company., p.151

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, pp.129-130.

<sup>74</sup> See Chapter-IV of the study.

Rs 20 per bag. Later, under the pressure from my own party MPs, even this increase was undone.<sup>75</sup>

When India went nuclear in 1998, the government had to face a united opposition in the House. However since the nuclear test was a part of National Agenda for Governance as agreed among the allies, it could not destabilize the Vajpayee government in 1998.<sup>76</sup> Only P.V. Narsimha Rao government could complete its term while all other governments fell prior to completing their full terms. Rao had to face three NCMs and one CM but survived. The imperatives of floor coordination as well as the compulsion of taking together the allies did restrain the successive minority governments. In particular, the successive governments faced the gigantic challenge in carrying forward the economic reform agenda.<sup>77</sup> This period witnessed the institutionalization of coalition experiment with the formation of Deve Gowda government in 1996 and the emergence of semi institutionalized/ institutionalized coordination committee mechanism to ensure the sustainability of government. The setting up of Coordination Committee was premised upon the agreement between the government and allies over the Common Minimum Program. The Eleventh Lok Sabha could be considered as the teething phase of the institutionalization of coalition politics and in particular the experiments since 1996 contributed to the political stability as well as strength of the government in the subsequent phase from 1999 onwards.

Statistically the period 1989-1999 marked the considerable decline of Parliament as an institution of accountability.<sup>78</sup> It reflects upon the weakening of Parliament in ensuring effective control over government. However, the governments too during this period lacked strength as well as stability. Subhankar Dam looks at the number of ordinances re-promulgated during the 1990s and argues that though a convention had developed since 1950s against the re-promulgation of ordinances, the 1990s broke this convention. In this period 196 ordinances were promulgated and out of which 53 ordinances were re-promulgated. Some of them were even re-promulgated twice or thrice.<sup>79</sup> Ironically, in Dam's account such huge number of ordinances and its re-

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<sup>75</sup> Yashwant Sinha. (2007). *Confessions of a Swadeshi Reformer: My years as Finance Minister*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p. 61.

<sup>76</sup> See Chapter V of the study.

<sup>77</sup> See Chapter IV of the study

<sup>78</sup> See Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (2006) *The Indian Parliament As An Institution of Accountability, Democracy, Governance and Human Rights*, Programme Paper No. 23, January. Geneva: UNRISD.

<sup>79</sup> Subhankar Dam. (2014). *Presidential Legislation in India: The Law and Practice of Ordinances*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, p. 90.

promulgations reflect not upon strengthening of the executive are rather it explains the weak and divided character of the successive governments. The successive minority coalition governments as well as single party minority governments failed to evolve bipartisan legislative business. The Parliament too remained at pause owing to fragmented mandate as well as irreconcilable differences among the parties constituting the opposition. Arthur Rubinoff argues that the fragmentation of Indian polity in the 1990s led to political instability and profoundly impacted the working of institutions:

The minority governments headed by V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar from 1989 to 1991 afforded Parliament an opportunity to expand its activities, but the chaos brought about by the wholesale defections prevented the institutions from being effective during the interim between Congress regimes. As a consequence of losing control of most Assemblies, the Congress Party lost its majority in the indirectly elected Rajya Sabha in 1994, thereby assuring that each house of Parliament was immobilised.<sup>80</sup>

Therefore, Dam argues that the government thus took the route of ordinances.<sup>81</sup> In other words, during this period while the successive governments lacked strength and stability, the Parliament also remained weak in ensuring accountability.

**Table 2.10: No. of Ordinances Promulgated from 1989-1999**

Year	Number of Ordinances
1989	02
1990	10
1991	09
1992	21
1993	34
1994	14
1995	15
1996	32
1997	31
1998	20
1999	10
Total	198

Source: Statistical Handbook (2019) Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India.

<sup>80</sup> Arthur G. Rubinoff (1999) *The Decline of India's Parliament*. In Philip Norton and Nizam Ahmed (Eds.) *Parliaments in Asia*. London and Oregon: Frank Cass and Company, p.24

<sup>81</sup> Subhankar Dam. (2014). *Presidential Legislation in India: The Law and Practice of Ordinances*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, p. 90.



**Table 2.11: No. of Ordinances Promulgated from 2000-2009**

Year	Number of Ordinances
2000	05
2001	12
2002	07
2003	08
2004	08
2005	04
2006	03
2007	08
2008	08
2009	09
Total	72

Source: Statistical Handbook (2019) Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India.

However, as Tables 2.10 and 2.11 show, with the attainment of political stability from 1999, the number of ordinances promulgated came down drastically from 198 (1989-1999) to 72 (2000-2009). As compared to the preceding periods, the distinction between party and government became a reality with the proliferation of political parties and the Parliament did acquire a transactional character. This is because successive governments relied on outside support of parties in the passage of legislation and ensuring governance. As far as the opposition is concerned, during this period though it remained assertive and commanded significant strength in the House yet the frequency of the NCMs and CMs in the House reduced its strategy of ensuring accountability of government with replacing governments. It added to the instability apart from dividing the opposition. The governments of the period, apart from the taking decisions on national security that reoriented the direction of Indian Foreign Policy, also legislated on some of the most significant issues that transformed society, politics and economy. However, such decisions were perceived by the opposition in Parliament as being taken by government to overcome its weakness and enhance its credibility and stature in the public and the House. Both the decisions taken by V.P. Singh government to implement the Mandal Commission recommendation and the decision by Vajpayee government to conduct peaceful nuclear explosion could be seen in this context.

The issues pertaining to economic reforms, social justice as well as the nature and direction of foreign policy divided both the government as well as opposition. It made consensus and coordination an essential attribute of the successive governments. Strategies such as the creation of Steering Committee/Coordination Committees as

well as regular convening of inter party meetings can be cited as efforts towards the smooth conduct of the House. A semi institutionalized coordination mechanism first emerged (1989) during V.P. Singh government when the Prime Minister formalized a weekly dinner meetings with the leaders of the Left parties and the BJP to deliberate over the issues before government and ensure floor coordination. The coordination mechanism was institutionalized with the setting up of the Steering Committee during Deve Gowda government. It was supposed to be the highest decision making body in the Gowda government. It continued during the Gujral government too. The second Vajpayee government also formed a Coordination Committee and formulated a common minimum program that was acceptable to all the allies. Though all these experiments failed during 1990s, as evident through frequent turnover of governments and constitution of Lok Sabhas, yet it laid the framework for the stability in the subsequent period.

Successive governments, as a part of accommodation strategy have tried to reach out to parties and groups represented through convening all party meeting. V. P. Singh convened all party meetings to deliberate upon significant issues before the government.<sup>82</sup> The practice was continued by successive governments. It had to do with the fragmented nature of Parliament as well as divisions within the government whereby the successive governments considered floor management to be an uphill task. As per the data made available by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, such meetings of the government with interparty leaders became a frequent phenomenon since 1998 and were often presided over by the Prime Minister.<sup>83</sup> Such meetings were called to evolve consensus and coordination in the House on the crucial social, political, strategic and economic questions of the moment. This dual coordination, the first one between the government and allies through commitment to Common Minimum Program and setting up of the Coordination Committees and the second between the government and other parties present in the Parliament through All Party Meetings imparted stability to the government particularly in the period beyond 1999.

These strategies of Coordination Committees and All Party Meetings reflect upon the character of the government-Parliament relationship getting more transactional. It did

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<sup>82</sup> Prem Shankar Jha. (1993). *In the Eye of The Cyclone: The Crisis in Indian Democracy*. New Delhi: Viking, p. 93

<sup>83</sup> Please See Appendix for the data.

add to the strength of parties in the opposition to bargain with the government and thus maintained a fragile balance between the executive and legislature during this period. Owing to its numerically balanced status the opposition could defeat governments thrice during the CMs and three PMs resigned owing to either lacking in strength or pull out by allies.<sup>84</sup> However such defeats of the government did not in any substantial manner contribute to enhanced effectiveness of Parliament as an institution of accountability.<sup>85</sup> Though the policies and perspectives of successive governments remained at the centre of attack, as evident from the debates during CMs/NCMs, yet the main objective was to dislodge the governments. Policies and perspectives being at the centre of debate was just coincidental to the discussing and voting CMs/NCMs. Despite enjoying an elusive majority the government could pass many economic policies and was able to take foreign policy decisions during this period.

### **Transactional Parliamentarianism, Phase II (1999 and Beyond)**

This period witnessed two Lok Sabha (Thirteenth and Fourteenth) with two Prime Ministers successfully completing their tenure. The period was witness to one CM which came up in the Fourteenth Lok Sabha and one NCM which came in the Thirteenth Lok Sabha.

**Table 2.12: NCMs Listed, Discussed Voted, Mover of the NCM and Issue Raised during 1999 and beyond**

Lok Sabha	Prime Minister	Mover	Party of the Mover	Issues raised/ Charges leveled against the government by the mover	Date of Voting	Ayes	Noes	Result
XIII	A.B. Vajpayee	Sonia Gandhi	Congress	Jeopardizing country's defenses, weakening national security, subversion of national security, rising unemployment etc.	19.8.03	189	314	Negatived

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on G.C. Malhotra. (2004). *Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat and Metropolitan Book Company, pp. 53-117, and Statistical Handbook (2019) Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India.

<sup>84</sup> The three PMs along with the years when they faced CMs and were voted out were V.P. Singh (1990), Deve Gowda (1997) and A.B. Vajpayee (1999)

<sup>85</sup> Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (2006) *The Indian Parliament As An Institution of Accountability, Democracy, Governance and Human Rights*, Programme Paper No. 23, January. Geneva: UNRISD. pp. 9-10.

As Seen from Table 2.12, the NCM was moved towards the last leg of the Vajpayee Government's tenure in 2003 by Sonia Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha. It intended to consolidate opposition unity prior to the election due in 2004. The NCM was primarily a statement of disapproval towards the government's actions on social, economic and strategic fronts.

**Table 2.13: CMs Discussed in Lok Sabha during 1999 and beyond**

Lok Sabha	Prime Minister	Date of Voting	Ayes	Noes	Result
XIV	Manmohan Singh	22.7.08	275	256	Adopted

Source: Statistical Handbook (2019) Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India.

Table 2.13 shows that the CM was moved in 2008 by Manmohan Singh. In this case, 61 MPs of the Left Front withdrew its outside support to the government and this was the only moment of political instability, during this period, but the government survived the ordeal and completed its tenure.

Political stability and survival of the government did not remain as vital an issue in this period as during the preceding period. The strategy of accommodating and appropriating the regional parties remained a crucial factor for the survival of successive governments during this period.<sup>86</sup> However, floor coordination and passage of key legislations remained a key challenge before the governments in the face of a visibly strong parliamentary opposition. Considering its numerically fragile base in the Parliament, the governments tried to reach out not merely to allies but also to the opposition benches. However, stability of the alliance and consequent stability of the government remained a potent factor in imparting strength to both the governments.

As discussed in the previous section, the moderation of BJP's Hindutva agenda and its commitment to the National Agenda for Governance triggered a political realignment since the twelfth Lok Sabha period. This period (1999-2009) marks the consolidation of a stable coalition politics with the emergence of two major political blocs: the UPA and NDA. It is the emergence and subsequent consolidation of this loose bipolar bloc that determined how the executive-legislature relationship in India would be in the ensuing period. Since 1999, the UPA and NDA- the two loose poles —existed alongside the Left Parties, Samajwadi Party (henceforth SP), Bahujan Samajwadi

<sup>86</sup> See Chapter IV of the study.

Party (henceforth BSP), Telegu Desham Party (henceforth TDP), Biju Janta Dal (henceforth BJD), and All India Anna Dravida Munetra Kazhagam (henceforth AIADMK) which together formed the Third Front. The loose bipolar blocs remained porous with respect to parties that did not join any of the two blocs. Such parties did enjoy considerable leverage to bargain from either side during crucial moments like the passage of POTA in a joint sitting during Vajpayee government (2002) or passing of Confidence Motion during Manmohan Singh government at the backdrop of the Indo US Nuclear deal (2008). The two blocs were divided primarily over the question of secularism. However, political stability could generate a broad consensus on deeply contested matters such as economic reforms, social justice and nature and direction of foreign policy. Though the measures of economic reforms and certain foreign policy decisions were witnessed with resistance in the Parliament and divided the governments yet, the continuity and consensus could be perceived in the manner through which the governments continued to pursue these policies.

The differences in the approach of different governments of this period only remained with respect to pace and vigor, and not with the overall direction and orientation of these policies. It can be stated that the emergence of the broad consensus on values that remained irreconcilable during 1990s contributed a great deal in establishing and strengthening of - NDA and UPA- the bipolar alliances in the Indian Parliament. The presence of a principal opposition party with considerably significant number of MPs as compared to the preceding three periods made the opposition more assertive. Despite the ideological and issue based divide among opposition parties, certain moments of parliamentary assertion became a reality during this period. Two significant instances of parliamentary assertion during this period are noteworthy the passage of Prevention of Terrorism Act in 2002 and the debate over the government's decision on the Indo-US nuclear deal in 2008. While the former was eventually passed in the joint sitting of both the Houses of Parliament convened by the President the latter brought the government to the brink. These two occasions are significant as the parties bypassed the ideological divide and coordinated to vote against the government. Though many parties in the opposition abstained, few of them voted with the government on both the occasions.

The Prevention of Terrorism Bill was passed in the joint sitting of both the Houses as the Bill passed by the Lok Sabha was rejected by the Rajya Sabha. The Congress

party, the Left parties and few regional parties opposed to the Prevention Of Terrorism Bill had significant presence in the Rajya Sabha as compared to the BJP and its allies and precisely because of this reason the Bill was earlier defeated in the Upper Chamber. Thus, following the procedure laid down in Article 108 the President convened a joint sitting for the passage of the Bill during which 425 members voted for the Bill, 296 against and 60 abstained from voting on the Bill.<sup>87</sup> The debate lasted for around 10 hours in which 28 members of both the Houses participated. The Bill became law owing to the numerical strength of the BJP and its allies in the Lower House and the strategy of floor coordination pursued by it. However the principal opposition party, the Congress could ensure coordination with the Left parties and certain other regional and state based parties and remained successful in launching a scathing attack on the government over the Bill. Previously, only on two other occasions in 1961 and 1978 did the joint sitting of the House pass any legislation.<sup>88</sup>

The Indo-US Nuclear deal being negotiated during the Manmohan Singh was not acceptable to the Left parties which supported the government from outside and consequent to its withdrawal of support over the deal, the government had to bring in a Confidence Motion. The Motion was passed with 275 MPs voting for the trust vote while 256 MPs voted against the motion. The margin of around 20 MPs speaks volume about the weight that the opposition has gained during this period. The opposition to the deal started in 2005 itself and the Left withdrew its support in 2008.

**Table 2.14: Lok Sabha, Government, Leader of Opposition and Strength of Principal Opposition Party (1989 to 1999)**

Lok Sabha	Government	Leader of Opposition	Principal Opposition Party (Strength)
XIII	A. B. Vajpayee	Sonia Gandhi	114
XIV	Manmohan Singh	L. .K Advani	138

Source: Author's own compilation. Based on Statistical Handbook (2019) Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India.

Keeping in mind the numerical base of the opposition in mind (as shown in Table 2.14) and the trend that emerged during the preceding period, the government reached out to opposition and strategised to accommodate the views of opposition in

<sup>87</sup><https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/anti-terror-law/Poto-passed-in-joint-session-of-Parliament/articleshow/4995019.cms>

<sup>88</sup>In 1961, the matter pertained to Dowry Prohibition Act and in 1978, it pertained to Banking Service Commission Act (Repeal). For more see, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/anti-terror-law/History-of-joint-sessions-of-Parliament/articleshow/4916708.cms>

the policy measures. When the NDA government sought to legislate in regard to Insurance Regulatory and development Authority and increase the Foreign Direct Investment (henceforth FDI) in insurance sector to 26 per cent, it reached out to the principal opposition party, the Congress party. The government sensing the vehement opposition expressed by the Left parties on the issues apart from being in minority in the Rajya Sabha accommodated the concerns expressed by the Congress party leadership and assured the House that the limit would not be crossed under any circumstances and form. Sinha recalls,

We could not have got the Bill passed in the Rajya Sabha without the support of the Congress party. We could not therefore ignore their point of view in the Lok Sabha, where we had a majority. The Congress party still had some points to make. Negotiations were held with the leaders of the Congress party and we showed readiness to accommodate their concerns...I assured the Parliament that all foreign investment, direct and institutional, would be within the limit of 26 per cent and that no financial engineering would be allowed to cross this limit under any circumstance.<sup>89</sup>

The transactional character of the relationship became evident as the both the minority governments had to rely on parliamentary support of parties which were not part of government for the smooth conduct of parliamentary business as well as passage of key legislations.

The Government continued the practice of convening the inter-party meetings with the leaders of various parties.<sup>90</sup> In this period, the Vajpayee government convened 29 meetings of inter-party leaders to ensure coordination in the legislative business. 19 out of 29 such meetings were presided over by the Prime Minister himself. The trend continued during the period of Manmohan Singh government too. During his first tenure, Manmohan Singh from convened only one meeting of with the leaders of various parties. This is in sharp contrast to his second tenure, he convened 16 meetings. The subjects discussed during meetings involved some of the most crucial issues before the government. Some subjects like the Women's Reservation Bill were

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<sup>89</sup> Yashwant Sinha. (2007). *Confessions of a Swadeshi Reformer: My years as Finance Minister*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p. 108.

<sup>90</sup> Please See Appendix for the data.

discussed during four meetings. However the successive governments and Lok Sabha remained divided on this subject and it failed to develop any consensus. Other subjects during Vajpayee government included, electoral reforms, delimitation of constituencies, India Pakistan relations, Kashmir issues, Terrorist Attack in America, Kargil, Constitution Amendment Bills. While some subjects were matters of urgent consideration and necessitated prompt action, others were part of government long term agenda like the Women's Reservation Bill, electoral reforms and constitutional amendment bills. Considering the fragile minority that governments enjoyed, such meetings were in the nature of an informal mechanism of coordination convened by the government with the parties represented in the Parliament. Later on, a subject that gained primacy during such meetings was the smooth functioning of the Parliament as the relationship between the government and Parliament became more confrontationist and a lot of parliamentary time was wasted owing to frequent adjournments and disruptions.

### **Measuring the Accountability**

An assessment of the Parliament based on its working presents a picture of decline in terms of its activity over a period of time. This decline in statistical terms can be seen in reference to the following indices: the number of sittings and the number of hours spent in different business transactions, the number of bills passed, the amount of time spent on question hour and the proportion of questions admitted and the amount of time spent on the financial business in the House. To be precise, a vertical assessment, comparing the functioning of Parliament in regard to passage of legislations, financial business and use of the instruments of accountability during 1950s and 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, 1990s and 1999 and beyond present a decline in linear fashion.

**Table 2.15: Sitting held and time spent (First to Fourteenth Lok Sabha)**

<b>Lok Sabha</b>	<b>Number of sittings held</b>	<b>Time spent (hours)</b>	<b>Average duration of a sitting (minutes)</b>
I	677	3784	335
II	567	3651	386
III	578	3733	387
IV	467	3029	389
V	613	4071	398
VI	267	1753	394
VII	464	3324	430
VIII	485	3324	399
IX	109	754	415
X	423	2527	358



Lok Sabha	Number of sittings held	Time spent (hours)	Average duration of a sitting (minutes)
XI	125	813	390
XII	88	575	392
XIII	356	1946	346
XIV	332	1737	315

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on Lok Sabha Secretariat (2015). *Parliament of India: The Fifteenth Lok Sabha, 2009-2014: A Study*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, pp.2 -3

**Table 2.16: Number of Sittings Year Wise**

Year	No of Sittings	Duration of Sittings (in hrs approx)
1952	123	880
1962	116	730
1972	111	700
1982	92	640
1992	98	575
2002	84	470
2012	74	273

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on, Lok Sabha Secretariat (2015). *Parliament of India: The Fifteenth Lok Sabha, 2009-2014: A Study*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, pp135-137.

As seen from the Tables above (Tables 2.15 and 2.16) the number of sitting held declined from 677 in the First Lok Sabha to 485 in the Eighth Lok Sabha and finally it slipped down to 332 sittings in the Fourteenth. Similarly, number of sittings year wise declined from 123 in 1952 to 74 in 2012. The figure for 1972 and 1982 remained 111 and 92 respectively.

Apart from the decline in number of sittings and the duration of sittings, a more disturbing trend, as seen from Table 2.17 below, has been the time lost owing to frequent disruptions and adjournments of the House. While the Tenth Lok Sabha lost 10 per cent of its time, the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Lok Sabha lost 19 per cent and 24 per cent of its time respectively. The time lost owing to adjournment and disruptions has witnessed progressive growth during the successive Lok Sabha since the Ninth Lok Sabha.

**Table 2.17: Total Time Spent and Time Lost Due to Interruptions/ Adjournments (First to Fourteenth Lok Sabha)**

Lok Sabha	Total time spent	Time Lost Due to Interruptions/ Adjournments	Percentage of time lost (%)*
X	2807	279	10
XI	859	45	5
XII	644	69	11
XIII	2400	455	19
XIV	1737	423	24

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on Lok Sabha Secretariat (2015). *Parliament of India: The Fifteenth Lok Sabha, 2009-2014: A Study*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat., p. 6.

\*Rounded up

The trend remains the same in regard to legislation. As Table 2.18 shows, during the First Lok Sabha, the Parliament spent 1844 hours on legislation which came down to 807 hours during the Eighth Lok Sabha and it was further reduced to 376 hours during the Fourteenth Lok Sabha. Corollary to this trend has been the decline in number of Bills passed by both the Houses of Parliament since 1952. The number of Bills passed stood at 319, 346 and 247 during the First, Eighth and the Fourteenth Lok Sabha. The decline in amount of time spent on legislation coupled with the decline in number of Bills passed indicates at the quantitative as well as qualitative decline of Parliament in statistical terms.

**Table 2.18: Total time Spent on legislations, budget and questions (in hours)**

Lok Sabha	Legislation	Budget	Questions
I	1844	792	552
II	1032	902	553
III	868	934	565
IV	668	580	483
V	1122	882	514
VI	412	409	240
VII	798	693	405
VIII	807	700	412
IX	123	121	77
X	560	440	298
XI	128	143	78
XII	95	84	52
XIII	493	213	228
XIV	376	353	198

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on Lok Sabha Secretariat (2015). *Parliament of India: The Fifteenth Lok Sabha, 2009-2014: A Study*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, p.5.

Another matter of concern has been the halt witnessed by Private Members' Legislation. No Private Member's Bill has been passed since the Fourth Lok Sabha. Though the number of Private Members' Bill being introduced is on rise yet very few among them are discussed and this is evident from table 2.19 given below:

**Table 2.19: Private Member's Bills Introduced and Passed (First to Fourteenth Lok Sabha)**

Lok Sabha	Bills Introduced	Bills Passed
I	135	7
II	194	2
III	177	3
IV	347	2
V	282	Nil
VI	249	Nil
VII	435	Nil
VIII	417	Nil
IX	156	Nil
X	406	Nil

Lok Sabha	Bills Introduced	Bills Passed
XI	158	Nil
XII	122	Nil
XIII	343	Nil
XIV	327	Nil

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on Lok Sabha Secretariat (2015). *Parliament of India: The Fifteenth Lok Sabha, 2009-2014: A Study*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, .p. 10.

In keeping with the declining trend of the business transactions of the Parliament the number of Bills passed by both Houses of Parliament has witnessed steep erosion in the phase of Transactional Parliamentarianism. While the period of 1950s and 1960s, the number of Bills passed remained considerably higher, it witnessed a moderate decrease during 1970s and 1980s. However, the decrease remains steep only during 1990s and beyond, as can be seen from Table 2.20. Only three governments could complete its full term during the two phases of Transactional Parliamentarianism. They are the governments led by P.V. Narasimha Rao, second tenure of A.B. Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh. Of all the governments that completed its full term, the Manmohan Singh Government had the lowest number of legislations.

**Table 2.20: Government Bills Introduced and Passed (First to Fourteenth Lok Sabha)**

Lok Sabha	Bills Introduced	Bills Passed
I	274	319
II	274	316
III	278	273
IV	196	219
V	378	487
VI	161	136
VII	290	336
VIII	273	346
IX	81	63
X	248	275
XI	67	61
XII	71	56
XIII	252	297
XIV	219	247

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on Lok Sabha Secretariat (2015). *Parliament of India: The Fifteenth Lok Sabha, 2009-2014: A Study*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat,, p. 9.

Similarly, there has been a dip in the amount of time that the Parliament utilizes in financial oversight. The decline can also to be noticed in the number of ministries whose Demand for Grants is being discussed by the Parliament. While the Parliament spent 792 hours on the Budget process during the First Lok Sabha, the corresponding figures for the Eighth Lok Sabha and the Fourteenth Lok Sabha remained 700 hours and 353 hours. In 1985 the Parliament discussed Demand of Grants for 15 ministries and spent more than 100 hours. The corresponding figures for 2009 remain 6 ministries and 31 hours (Table 2.21).

**Table 2.21: Number of Ministries/Departments whose Demands for Grants Were Discussed (1985-2009)**

Year	No. of Ministries	Time taken (hrs. Mts.)
1985	15	101.54
1986	16	89.01
1987	10	83.28
1988	10	71.34
1989	3	27.48
1990	9	72.16
1991	5	46.08
1992	8	40.16
1993	3	22.37
1994	2	15.41
1995	2	19.39
1996	2	3.22
1997	5	10.49
1998	1	1.27
1999	No ministry was discussed. Demand for Grants in respect of Budget (General) for 1999-2000 were submitted to the vote of the House and voted in full without discussion	-
2000	3	16.15
2001	2	6.47
2002	1	5.41
2003	2	12.49
2004	No ministry was discussed. Demand for Grants in respect of Budget (General) for 2004-05 were submitted to the vote of the House and voted in full without discussion	
2005	4	14.31
2006	3	18.9
2007	3	15.5
2008	4	24.5
2009	6	31.3

Source: Statistical Handbook (2019) Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India

M.R. Madhavan (Table 2.22) also presents an analysis of the percentage of Budget discussed and points out that in 1999 and 2004 none of the ministries were discussed and 100 per cent Budget were guillotined. In the year 2009, 79 per cent of the Budget was guillotined and six ministries were discussed.

**Table 2.22: Percentage of Budget Discussed (amounts in Rs. crore) during Fourteenth Lok Sabha**

Year	Total	Discussed	Guillotined	% Guillotined	Ministries Discussed
2004	339,300	-	339,300	100	0
2005	384844	57217	327626	85	4
2006	448109	74053	374057	83	3
2007	547020	29107	518003	95	3
2008	597662	223734	373928	63	4
2009	887194	187495	699699	79	6

Source: M. R. Madhavan (2017) Parliament, In Devesh Kapur. Pratap Bhanu Mehta and Milan Vaishnav (Eds.) (2017). *Rethinking Public Institutions in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.87.

Table 2.23 shows that while the total number of notices received questions increased progressively, the percentage of questions admitted declined. During the 1950s and 1960s, approximately 45 per cent questions were admitted; during 1970s and 1980s it varied between 35 to 39 per cent and the during 1990s, around 25 per cent of the questions were admitted. During the Thirteenth Lok Sabha and the Fourteenth Lok Sabha, 25 per cent and 21 per cent questions were admitted. Thus, there is a decline from 47 per cent to 21 per cent in regard to questions admitted between the First Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha.

**Table 2.23: Total Notices Received for Questions and Questions admitted/replied**

Lok Sabha	Notices received	Admitted/ Replied	Percentage (%)
I	92134	43725	47.45
II	143651	63252	44.03
III	162334	42725	46.37
IV	264742	63607	44.27
V	252700	58355	36
VI	137045	93538	35.3
VII	269221	102959	38.24
VIII	250098	98390	39.34
IX	75228	21550	28.64
X	330325	90695	27.45
XI	96863	23681	24.44
XII	72934	15579	21.36
XIII	313157	77982	25
XIV	311728	66677	21.38

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on Lok Sabha Secretariat (2015). *Parliament of India: The Fifteenth Lok Sabha, 2009-2014: A Study*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, p. 7.

The same story continues in regard to resolutions moved and adopted. In absolute terms, both the resolutions moved and adopted declined (Table 2.24).

**Table 2.24: Resolutions Moved and Adopted (First to Fourteenth Lok Sabha)**

Lok Sabha	Moved	Adopted
I	69	29
II	83	11
III	97	24
IV	89	26
V	157	63
VI	43	20
VII	124	45
VIII	83	39
IX	37	22
X	135	44
XI	33	6
XII	29	8
XIII	81	27
XIV	65	20

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on Lok Sabha Secretariat (2015). *Parliament of India: The Fifteenth Lok Sabha, 2009-2014: A Study*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, p. 9.

A similar trend can be seen in regard to discussions as per Rule 184, Rule 193, adjournment motions and half an hour discussion (Table 2.25).

**Table 2.25: Number of CMs, NCMs, Adjournments Motions, Discussion under Rule 193, Discussion under Rule 184 and half an hour Discussion**

Lok Sabha	No Confidence Motions	Confidence Motions	Adjournment Motions	Discussion under Rule 193	Discussion under Rule 184	Half an hour discussion held
I	0	0	1	36	3	38
II	0	0	3	31	86	108
III	6	0	7	17	34	109
IV	6	0	12	66	43	183
V	4	0	11	64	25	124
VI	2	0	6	12	26	59
VII	3	0	5	56	19	85
VIII	1	0	5	94	5	65
IX	0	3	8	24	1	11
X	3	1	4	33	3	16
XI	0	4	0	13	2	7
XII	0	2	0	15	0	4
XIII	1	0	5	59	4	25
XIV	0	1	7	55	1	14

Source: Statistical Handbook (2019) Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India.

The only exception in regard to discussion on motions remains the listing and discussion on Confidence Motions which became frequent particularly during the 1990s. This period also witnessed the decline in the number of No Confidence Motions being listed and discussed. The period 1999 and beyond witnessed a decline in number of CMs as well as NCMs. Post Ninth Lok Sabha period did not witness any significant increase in the number of discussions on adjournment motions or discussions as per Rule 193 and Rule 184. Thus, the data shows that in this period also, there was a decline in the functioning of the Parliament in statistical terms.

## CONCLUSION

Matthew Flinders in ‘Shifting the Balance? Parliament, the Executive and the British Constitution’ has argued that despite the conventions of ministerial responsibility in the twentieth century the balance has shifted to the executive as the executive’s majority in the House insulated it from effective scrutiny.<sup>91</sup> Using his argument to locate the Indian scenario, it can be stated that the nature of majority in the House from 1950s to the late 1980s profoundly determined the kind of relationship between the legislature and executive. During this period, the executive was dominant and the

<sup>91</sup> Flinders, Matthew. (2002). Shifting the Balance? Parliament, the Executive and the British Constitution. *Political Studies*, 50, 23-42

Parliament remained weak. As seen from the discussion above, the dominance of the executive becomes apparent in the trend emerging out of the listing, discussion and voting on the confidence and no confidence motions during successive Lok Sabha. The divided and fragmented nature of opposition parties, apart from its numerically weak position gave the government a leeway in influencing the rules and resources in the House through which it could maintain its dominance. For instance, a major factor behind the opposition resort NCMs more frequently to censure government in the era of Majoritarian Parliamentarianism as compared to censure motions or adjournment motions was that the procedures governing the Rules on Resolutions gave an edge to the Speaker regarding admissibility of such motions. Though, during two Lok Sabha- the Fourth Lok Sabha and the Sixth Lok Sabha- there were instances when the opposition parties could coordinate and therefore the legislature was seen as assertive. However, those were momentary instances.. The proliferation of political parties and the decline in numerical strength of the single largest party in the House fundamentally transformed the legislature-executive relationship in India. Contrary to the preceding period, the 1990s witnessed frequent voting on the CMs while the intensity of the listing of NCMs declined, as these motions were no longer moved as a kind of measure to censure governments. In this phase, given the numerically fragile status of government and a considerate presence of the opposition parties in numerical terms the intention was to dislodge the government as compared to preceding period. Significantly, the CMs and NCMs were used only twice during 1999 and beyond. During this period, the governments despite being minority coalitions attained stability. Nonetheless, owing to the strong presence of opposition parties, the relationship between Parliament and government became too confrontationalist, even to the extent that frequent adjournments and disruptions became the norm of the House. The imperatives of floor coordination as well as managing alliance pressure imparted significant transactional character to the Parliament. The stability also contributed to the strength of government and, thus, one may argue that the periods of the 1990s and 1999 onwards present two distinct patterns of relationship between the legislature and executive.

During 1990s the governments, barring the exception of P.V. Narasimha Rao government, remained instable. Also, all governments including Rao government had a divided Cabinet which added to the weakness of the government especially in the

face of the significant presence of opposition parties. During 1990s, 'divided governments and fragmented Parliament' caused considerable confrontation and the government could only take significant decisions owing to legislature immobilisation. This is in sharp contrast to the period beyond 1999 which despite producing minority coalition governments witnessed stronger governments in comparison with the preceding period. The balance certainly remained tilted towards the executive.

Though in terms of degree and character, the shifting balance remained much moderate as compared to 1950s-60s and 1970s-80s; after 1999, the executive has evolved strategies to maintain its preeminence while facing the challenge of managing a confrontationist opposition.<sup>92</sup> Pai and Kumar argue that the adoption of neoliberal economic imperatives further rendered Parliament weak as it led to the transformation of 'Cabinet system' to 'Prime Ministerial Executive'. The executive strengthened with the Prime Minister's Office gaining ground as a major centre of power. They argue that the emergence of institutions such as the Group of Ministers and the National Advisory Council has further undermined the parliamentary control over the Cabinet,

In the absence of strong parliamentary oversight of these new institutions, the powers of Parliament has diluted and its functioning affected. In other words, one can argue that the Parliament, instead of acting as a law making body, has been restricted to merely being a validating House.<sup>93</sup>

The dominance of the executive does raise the question over effectiveness of the Parliament during the period 1950s to 1980s. However, the Parliament worked more efficiently as an institution of accountability during this period. In the era of majoritarian parliamentarianism the Parliament was less effective in ensuring its control over the government yet it was comparatively more efficient in terms of legislative transactions. An assessment of Parliament as an institution of accountability during 1980s, presents a picture of more efficient Parliament in terms of passage of legislation, authorizing expenditure, admitting questions and discussion on various types of motions. Though, the Parliament remained more efficient during

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<sup>92</sup> See Chapter-V of the study.

<sup>93</sup> Sudha Pai and Avinash Kumar (Eds.) (2014). *The Indian Parliament: A Critical Appraisal*. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, p. 13.



1950s and 1960s as compared to 1970s and 1980s yet during the later period, the decline with regard to parliamentary activity has not been so sharp. It is in the post Ninth Lok Sabha that a steep decline is visible and the trend continues till the Fourteenth Lok Sabha. Paradoxically, the post Ninth Lok Sabha period has been a moment of transactional parliamentarianism when opposition gained numerical strength and vigor, yet the decline in the working of Parliament became steep during this period. On the contrary, the 1970s and 1980s remain testimony to the centralization and personalization of power that established an era of prime ministerial dominance. Though, the Parliament was marginal yet more efficient. In a nutshell, 'strong government, weak Parliament' aptly describes the period.

The paradox of parliamentary efficiency with decline in its effectiveness could be understood in the backdrop of strong governments backed by comfortable majorities that remained largely indifferent to parliamentary activism and therefore activism in general could not withhold government business or legislations in any substantive manner. Apart from certain momentary assertions (as mentioned earlier), the Parliament could not prevail upon the government. Also, the parliamentary activism owes to the substantial government business during this period. Parliamentary business need not be presumed to be the opposition business solely. Efficient conduct of different kind parliamentary transactions like passage of bills or discussion on motions and resolutions may be attributed to government business too. Such a paradox is not unique to India and even the western democracies have been witness to moments of the decline of Parliament coupled with an increase in parliamentary activism. Rudy B. Andeweg, while studying the legislature-executive relations in Netherlands, points out the trend of parliamentary activism simultaneously with a decline of Parliament. He concurs with the idea that parliamentary activism contributed in part to the decline of Parliament as the government did not consider seriously the parliamentary questions or the motions.<sup>94</sup>

Anthony King's classification of the modes of relation between the legislature and executive seems relevant while understanding the pattern of dominance that the executive enjoys since 1950s. King argues that essentially three modes of legislature-executive relationship emerged in the UK: the *intra party* mode, the *opposition* mode

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<sup>94</sup> Rudy B. Andeweg. (1992). Executive-Legislative Relations in the Netherlands: Consecutive and Coexisting Patterns. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 17(2), p. 172.

and the *non party* or *Private Members'* mode<sup>95</sup>. The opposition mode reflects the public face of the House of Commons and is concerned with the pattern of conflict between the government and opposition parties in the Parliament. Norton elaborates King's 'opposition mode' by saying that it, 'reflects the basic relationship between Parliament and government.'<sup>96</sup> The intra-party mode is basically a reflection on kind of relationship that exists between government and government backbenchers. Precisely, it is an index of the influence that the backbenchers enjoy in the House. The Non-Party or Private Members' Mode reflects upon decisions made in the House on a non party basis<sup>97</sup>. In particular, King refers to the decisions made in the committees of the House. He writes,

Those who participate in the work of non-party committees (usually Select Committees) change their perception of their own roles. They cease to see themselves as members of the Conservative Party or the Labor Party, concerned with scoring points off the other side, and come to see themselves simply as backbench Members of Parliament, concerned with investigating the quality of the performance of the executive.<sup>98</sup>

Using King's classification, it can be said that in the Indian context, the opposition mode of relationship predominantly characterized the interaction between the executive and legislature since 1950s. The backbench activism or the non party activism remained marginal to the working of Parliament. Though, the working of Department Related Standing Committees (henceforth DRSCs) is considered to be a step in the direction of reinforcing the Parliament as a collective entity yet its functioning seems to be structured around the nature of majority enjoyed by the government. First, the committees have failed to distance itself from the nature of party system dominating the chamber. The proliferation of political parties impacted not only the working of chamber but had profound consequences for the working of

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<sup>95</sup> Anthony King. (1976). Modes of Executive-Legislature Relations: Great Britain, France and West Germany. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 1(1), 11-36.

<sup>96</sup> Philip Norton. (2013). Old Institution, New Institutionalism? Parliament and Government in the UK. In Philip Norton (Ed.) *Parliaments and Governments in Western Europe*. London and New York: Routledge. p.21

<sup>97</sup> Anthony King. (1976). Modes of Executive-Legislature Relations: Great Britain, France and West Germany. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 1(1), p. 19.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

committee system. The journey from chamber to committee raised expectations about the non party mode gaining ascendance with members across parties anticipated to participating in a bipartisan manner. However, it's working though considerable is yet not efficient enough to fill the void created by the abdication by the chamber particularly since 1990s. Secondly, the committee system has remained quite self limiting on the more substantive dimension of the shift from opposition mode to the non party mode. The members have retained their primary loyalty to the party and the most challenging task before the committees has been to ensure consensus over contentious public issues and the party basis position dominates in such cases. Mehra writes,

the truth however is that it is easier to garner cooperation amongst members of different parties on peripheral issues rather than on substantive issues of policy and programmes with distributive and redistributive implications. Ideological and programmatic compatibility and divergence can influence quality and amount of work done by any committee.<sup>99</sup>

Based on his assessment of the DRSC from the Tenth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha (till 2007), Mehra argues that the changing complexion of the House and the emergence of coalition politics added to difficulties of an effective functioning of committees. The distributions of chairpersonship seem to be patterned in manners that give leverage to the parties keeping an eye on their allies in the government. Further, party heavyweights and leader of opposition who invariably are more inclined to party work than committee engagements are given preference for the chairpersonships. Further the lack of institutionalization of political parties has withheld the growth of enabling structures within parties that could reinforce the committees.<sup>100</sup> Rodrigues too remains cautious in his assessment of the DRSCs and argues that party lines fragment the functioning of the committees. In his words, 'Their functioning often fragments discussion along party lines; they tend to be overtly deferential to the

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<sup>99</sup> Ajay K Mehra. (2009). Parliament Under Social Watch: Senseless Tumult, Un-kept Promises. Citizen's Report. In Social Watch (2009). *Citizen's report on Governance and Development 2008-2009* (pp. 31-58). Delhi: Daanish Books,p.44

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p.44.

ministries concerned; and the government has often tended to sidestep their suggestions and recommendations.’<sup>101</sup>

The public face of executive-legislative relation remained the opposition mode as the institution akin to the backbench in the UK could not take root and the institution facilitating the non party activity among MPs remained self limiting. During 1950s and 1960s different factions within the Congress negotiated with political parties possessing varied ideological persuasion, ‘functioned as pressure groups to influence the decisions of the government.’<sup>102</sup> As a result, it stunted the possibility of alternatives to the Congress emerging in Parliament. Moreover, ‘intra party’ and ‘inter party’ differences were also bridged by the personality and leadership of Nehru and he was able to could bring together these factions for promotion of the policies of his government. Co-ordination was, however, lost with the rise of Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister (post-1967) and the eventual ideological shift of the Congress under her leadership.<sup>103</sup>

The nature of relationship between the executive and legislature changed since the late 1960s as it became increasingly more polarised and saw a rising index of opposition unity which apparent through the working of the Fourth Lok Sabha. The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of Prime Ministerial style of governance and the legislature did not witness any significant back bencher activism. Those who had differences with the government resigned and joined/formed new party rather getting involved in the legislature activism. Given the tight grip of parties over individual MPs and numerically weak presence of opposition parties, backbench activism could not gain ground during 1950s to 1980s. The Rajiv Gandhi tenure witnessed many remarkable resignations on this ground (see Chapter-3). The 1990s witnessed the proliferation of political parties apart from the ushering in of the stronger provisions against defections of MPs in the form of Anti Defection Act. While the number of

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<sup>101</sup> Valerian Rodrigues. (2018) Parliamentary Opposition and Government Backbenchers in India. In N. Ahmed (Ed.) *Inclusive Governance in South Asia: Parliament, Judiciary and Civil Service*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 77.

<sup>102</sup> Mahender Kumar Saini, ‘A Study of No Confidence Motions in The Indian Parliament (1952-70)’, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 32 (3), pp.297-318.

<sup>103</sup> The split of Congress party in 1969 rendered Indira Gandhi Government into a minority, however it received support from CPI, CPI-M, DMK and Muslim League in addition to some independents. The Communist parties interpreted the split as a part of conspiracy to withhold the Government’s socialist project while Indira Gandhi herself intensified socialist rhetoric. V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p.88.

parties multiplied, the grip over the MPs further enhanced. As the parties lack internal democracy the proliferation of political parties did not lead to greater institutionalization of parties. The floor management turned out to be an uphill task and the relationship between the government and opposition further deteriorated. While the committees could not enforce the chamber, the governments attained stability and consequent strength in the post 1999 period. Thus, from 1999 'Weak Parliament and Executive Preeminence' defined the pattern of relationship.



## CHAPTER III

### **CABINET IN THE ERA OF MAJORITARIAN PARLIAMENTARIANISM: NEHRU TO RAJIV GANDHI**

India is virtually unique among contemporary post-colonial countries in having functioned, since independence, with the exception of the Emergency, with a Parliamentary system modeled on the British form of government. India's parliamentary system has evolved from one in which the Cabinet and the Prime Minister were dominant and the President was a figurehead-though potentially important-into a form of prime ministerial government, in which both the Parliament and the Cabinet play a secondary role.

- Paul Brass <sup>1</sup>

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The period from 1950s to 1980s witnessed the formation of fourteen cabinets, which also includes the first two Cabinets in independent India that were formed prior to the constitution of the First Lok Sabha on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1952. Following the decadal division done in the previous chapter, it is worth noting that while the 1950s and 1960s had 8 Cabinets, the 1970s and 1980s were witness to the formation of 6 Cabinets. Post-independence, within a span of around 42 years, except a brief interlude of the Janta Party government from 1977 to 1979, the Congress party remained in power for the remaining period. During this period, the office of PM rotated among six persons and out of which three: Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi belonged to the same family. In all, their total tenure was around 37 years. In all, Nehru led five Cabinets, two of which were formed before the constitution of the First Lok Sabha in 1952. Nehru served as the PM for around seventeen years (1947-1964) -and was succeeded by Lal Bahadur Shastri who had a brief tenure of around eighteen months (1964-66).<sup>2</sup> Indira Gandhi succeeded Lal

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<sup>1</sup> Paul R. Brass. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 336

<sup>2</sup> Gulzari Lal Nanda acted as Prime Minister from 27<sup>th</sup> May 1964 to 9<sup>th</sup> June 1964. Shastri died on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1966. Again, Gulzari Lal Nanda acted as Prime Minister from 11<sup>th</sup> January 1966 to 24<sup>th</sup>

Bahdur Shastri in 1966 as the latter passed away at Taskent in 1966. She became PM in January 1966 during the Third Lok Sabha and consecutively returned as PM in the Fourth and Fifth Lok Sabha.

In Sixth Lok Sabha elections of 1977, the Morarji Desai led Janta Party formed the first coalition government at the Union. The Janta Party coalition was short-lived and Morarji Desai had to resign after a brief tenure of around two years and four months (1977-1979). Charan Singh succeeded Morarji Desai but enjoyed support of the parliament for a very period and headed a care taker government. Indira Gandhi's Fourth term as PM started with the constitution of the Seventh Lok Sabha in 1980. However, she could not complete her full term as she was assassinated on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1984. Rajiv Gandhi was sworn in as the PM as soon as Indira Gandhi was assassinated and served his first term for a very short period of around two months. Consequent to the Eighth Lok Sabha election in 1984, he returned as PM and remained in office till the completion of his tenure in 1989.

This period was witness to the resilience of the Congress system, as well as its demise. As Indira Gandhi rose to a pre-eminent position, the design envisaged by the Constitution eclipsed. While in the Nehruvian era, the position of the Prime Minister vis-à-vis his Cabinet colleagues could largely be characterized as 'primus inter peres', post-Indira Gandhi the position of the Prime Minister became akin to 'the sun around which the planets revolve.'<sup>3</sup>

Primarily, the change in the position of the Prime Minister is strongly linked to numerical strength that the Congress enjoyed. While the Congress enjoyed has an overwhelming presence of 364 member in the First Lok Sabha, in the Fourth, Fifth and Seventh Lok Sabha its presence had declined to 283, 352 and 353 respectively. Nevertheless, the vacuum created due to the absence of competing stalwarts and the absence of a viable opposition, the ascendance of a personalized and centralized form of executive was possible. The trend got consolidated further when in the Eighth Lok Sabha elections, the Congress could manage to win 415 seats, which was even higher than its record in the First Lok Sabha.

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January 1966. See R. J. Venkateswaran. (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin.

<sup>3</sup> The competing notions on the office of the Prime Minister is found in the writings of Lord Morely and Sir Ivor Jennings respectively. Please see Sir Ivor Jennings. (1959). *Cabinet Government*. London: Cambridge University Press.



Keeping in mind the relations that existed between the legislature and the executive in this period, this chapter uses the classification of Majoritarian Parliamentarianism, as proposed in Chapter-II, to locate the functioning of the Union Cabinet in the period from the First Lok Sabha to the Eighth Lok Sabha. The chapter aims to describe how the relationship between the government and the Parliament influenced the functioning of the Union Cabinet. It also probes into the pattern of relationship that existed among the different Prime Ministers and their Cabinet colleagues with a view to understand the reasons that not only helped in the ascendance of prime ministerial form of government consequently with the marginalisation of the legislature since the 1960s but also the sustenance of Prime Ministerial dominance over the Cabinet till late 1980s. Furthermore, the chapter also engages with the emergence of institutions like Prime Minister's Secretariat which later became the Prime Minister's Office and attempts to place its role in ensuring the emergence and sustenance of a prime ministerial government. The present chapter, with its significant role, is written as a bridge for the subsequent chapters which will specifically deal with the period under consideration (from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha). The Present chapter relies upon secondary sources of data while attempting to fulfill the aforesaid objectives.

Through a discussion of tenures of all the Prime Minister from the First Lok Sabha to the Eighth Lok Sabha, the chapter establishes that the Union Cabinet cannot be cast in a homogenous mould, even within the classification of Majoritarian Parliamentarianism. This is because though the Constitution laid down a framework that favoured a strong executive<sup>4</sup> yet the leadership of Nehru and the presence of stalwarts ensured that on one hand there was a harmonious relationship between the legislature and executive and on the other, collegial and collective nature of the cabinet is maintained. However, as the composition of the Parliament changed from the Fourth Lok Sabha, the manner in which the Cabinet functioned also underwent drastic change. With executive dominance remaining intact and the shifting away of stalwarts the equilibrium between legislature and executive, and the Prime Minister and their Cabinet was disturbed.

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter-I of the study.

The chapter is divided into two main sections which are in tandem with the bi-fold classification of Majoritarian Parliamentarianism, as elaborated in Chapter-II. The decades of 1950s and 1960s, which is the first part of the chapter deals with the tenures of Prime Ministers (Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi) from the first cabinet formed in 1947 to the eight Cabinet formed in the Fourth Lok Sabha. This has been classified as Majoritarian Parliamentarianism, Phase I. The second section of the chapter is titled as Majoritarian Parliamentarianism, Phase II, which deals with the decades of 1970s and 1980s and hence provides an account of Cabinets formed from the Fifth Lok Sabha to the Eighth Lok Sabha, under the Prime Ministership of Indira Gandhi, Morarji Desai, Charan Singh and Rajiv Gandhi.

### **Majoritarian Parliamentarianism, Phase I: The 1950s and 1960s**

As discussed previously, the precedence to Cabinet government in India could be seen in the formation of interim governments. Though there were three interim governments, Pai Panandiker and Mehra point out that none of 'Cabinet in the strict sense of term'<sup>5</sup>. In fact, prior to assuming office in the interim government (in September 1946) Nehru had no administrative experience. The only occasion when Nehru experienced administrative exposure was during his stint as the Chairman of Allahabad Municipality Corporation. Nehru had no opportunity to enter either the legislature at centre or in any provincial legislature during pre-independence period.<sup>6</sup> S. C. Gangal argues that Nehru was invited by the then Viceroy, Lord Wavell to form the interim government in 1946 precisely because he happened to be the President of the Indian National Congress at that moment.<sup>7</sup>

Maulana Azad who remained President of the Congress prior to Nehru from 1939-46, presents an intricate picture of the episode, leading to the emergence of Nehru as President of Congress. He argues that the supporters of Patel in the Congress wished Patel to succeed him in 1946 as the next President. Azad proposed the name of Nehru to be the next President of Congress. According to Azad, Gandhi was a bit inclined towards Patel and he was not much pleased to learn about the announcement of Nehru's name from Azad. However in Azad's words, 'but once I had proposed

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<sup>5</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 20

<sup>6</sup> R. J. Venkateswaran (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p.54

<sup>7</sup> S.C. Gangal. (1972). *Prime Minister and the Cabinet in India: A Political Study*. Varanasi: Navchetna Prakashan, p. 19

Jawaharlal's name, he gave no public indication of his views.'<sup>8</sup> A contrasting picture is, however, presented by Brecher who argues that Gandhi's influence was the most decisive in making Nehru the President. This is despite the fact that Patel at that moment was being supported by 12 out of 15 Provincial Congress Committees. According to Brecher, Gandhi preferred Nehru over Patel, 'because of his greater international prestige'<sup>9</sup>. To quote Brecher,

If Gandhi had not intervened, Patel would have been the first de facto Premier of India in 1946-47. Gandhi certainly knew of the impending creation of the interim government. One must infer, therefore, that he preferred Nehru as the first Prime Minister of free India.<sup>10</sup>

In a similar tone, Vekateswaran writes,

There were other leaders like Sardar Patel, Rajagopalchari and Rajendra Prasad who had also achieved all India fame for their heroic part in the struggle for freedom and who, therefore, enjoyed in a considerable measure the affection and esteem of the masses. But the nation's choice fell on Nehru because, apart from his other qualifications, he was much younger than his colleagues; he was better known both in India and abroad than any other leader except Gandhi, and above all, he was preferred by the Father of the Nation for holding the most important office in independent India.<sup>11</sup>

The three successive interim governments continued till the formation of the first Indian Cabinet led in independent India by Nehru on 15 August 1947. As the Congress Parliamentary Party unanimously elected Nehru as its President, he became the first Prime Minister of sovereign and independent India.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. (2014). *India Wins Freedom: An Autobiographical Account*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan., p.162

<sup>9</sup> Michael Brecher. (1998). *Nehru: A Political Biography*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 314.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p.314

<sup>11</sup> R. J. Venkateswaran (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p.55

<sup>12</sup> S.C. Gangal. (1972). *Prime Minister and the Cabinet in India: A Political Study*. Varanasi: Navchetna Prakashan., p.20.

**Table 3.1: Performance of Parties in Elections to Lok Sabha 1952-1984**

	I (1952)	II (1957)	III (1962)	IV (1967)	V (1971)	VI (1977)	VII (1980)	VIII (1984)
<b>Total Seats</b>	489	494	494	520	518	542	542	542
<b>Contested</b>	479	482	491	515	517	540	529*	541
<b>Uncontested</b>	10	12	3	5	1	2	1	1
<b>INC, INCI in 1980</b>	364 (479) 45%	371 (490) 47.8%	361 (488) 44.9%	283 (516) 40.8%	352 (441) 43.7%	154 (492) 34.5%	353 (492) 42.7%	415 (517) 48.1%
<b>BJP, BLD in 1977, BJS till 1971</b>	3 (94) 3.1%	4 (130) 5.9%	14 (196) 6.4%	35 (251) 9.4%	22 (160) 7.4%	295 (405) 41.3%	--	2 (229) 7.4%
<b>Swatantra Party</b>	-	-	18 (173) 7.9%	44 (178) 8.7%	8 (56) 3.1%	--	--	---
<b>CPI</b>	16 (49) 3.3%	27 (110) 8.9%	29 (137) 9.9%	23 (106) 5.0%	23 (87) 4.7%	7 (91) 2.8%	11 (48) 2.6%	6 (66) 2.7%
<b>CPI (M)</b>	-	-	--	19 (62) 4.4%	25 (85) 5.1%	22 (53) 4.3%	36 (63) 6.1%	22 (64) 5.7%
<b>Lok Dal (LKD), JPS in 1980, (INCO) till 1977</b>	-	-	--	-	16 (238) 10.4%	3 (19) 1.7%	41 (294) 9.4%	3 (174) 5.6%
<b>Janta Party</b>	-	-	--	-	-	-	31(432) 19%	10 (219) 6.7%
<b>PSP, KMPP in 1952</b>	9(145) 5.8%	19 (189) 10.4%	12 (168) 6.8%	13(109) 3.1%	2 (63) 1.0%	--	---	--
<b>SSP, SOC till 1962</b>	12 (254) 10.6%	-	6 (107) 2.7%	23 (122) 4.9%	3 (93) 2.4%	--	---	--
<b>Others</b>	47 16.5%	31 7.6%	34 10.5%	45 10.0%	53 13.8%	52 9.9%	52 9.9%	44 10.0%
<b>Independents</b>	38 15.9%	42 19.4%	20 11.1%	35 13.7%	14 8.4%	9 5.5%	9 5.5%	5 8.1%

\*Elections were not held in 13 constituencies: 12 in Assam and 1 in Meghalaya

BLD- Bhartiya Lok Dal, BJS- Bharitya Jan Sangh, CPI- Communist Party of India, CPIM- Communist Party of India Marxist INCO- Indian National Congress (Organised), JPS- Janta Party Secular. JP- Janta Party, KMPP

Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party, SSP- Sanyukta Socialist Party, SOC- Socialist Party, PSP- Praja Socialist Party  
Source: E. Sridharan (2002). The Fragmentation of the Indian Party System, 1952-1999: Seven Competing Explanations. In Zoya Hasan (Ed.) *Parties and Party Politics in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press., pp.478-480

**Table 3.2: Governments and Lok Sabha from August, 1947 to May, 2009**

Period	Sl. No.	Cabinets*	Party	Lok Sabha	Duration
<b>1950s</b>	1.	Jawaharlal Nehru I**	Congress	---	15/08/1947 to 25/01/1950
	2.	Jawaharlal Nehru II**	Congress	---	26/01/1950 to 12/05/1952
<b>1960s</b>	3.	Jawaharlal Nehru III	Congress	I	13/05/1952 to 16/04/1957
	4.	Jawaharlal Nehru IV	Congress	II	17/04/1957 to 09/04/1962
	5.	Jawaharlal Nehru V	Congress	III	10/04/1962 to 27/05/1964
	6.	Lala Bahadur Shastri	Congress	III	09/06/1964 to 11/01/1966
	7.	Indira Gandhi I	Congress	III	24/01/1966 to 12/03/1967
	8.	Indira Gandhi II	Congress	IV	13/03/1967 to 17/03/1971
<b>1970s</b> <b>and</b> <b>1980s</b>	9.	Indira Gandhi III	Congress	V	17/03/1971 to 25/03/1977
	10.	Morarji Desai	Janta Party	VI	26/03/1977 to 28/07/1979
	11.	Charan Singh	Janta Party (S)	VI	28/07/1979 to 13/01/1980
	12.	Indira Gandhi IV	Congress (I)	VII	14/01/1980 to 31/10/1984
	13.	Rajiv Gandhi I	Congress (I)	VII	31/10/1984 to 30/12/1984
	14.	Rajiv Gandhi II	Congress (I)	VIII	31/12/1984 to 4/12/1989

\*Does not include acting Prime Ministers. Nehru died on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1964. Gulzari Lal Nanda acted as Prime Minister from 27<sup>th</sup> May 1964 to 9<sup>th</sup> June 1964. Shastri died on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1966. Again, Gulzari Lal Nanda acted as Prime Minister from 11<sup>th</sup> January 1966 to 24<sup>th</sup> January 1966

\*\*The First Lok Sabha was constituted on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1952

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on Statistical Handbook (2019) Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India.

An overwhelming presence of the Congress party in both the houses of parliament became the major reason for the significant stability of the Cabinet and pre-eminence of Nehru during the 1950s and 1960s. The first four elections to the Lok Sabha (1952, 1957, 1962 and 1967) were held simultaneously with the assembly elections to all the states. The Congress enjoyed more than two-third majority in the first three elections which got reduced only in the Fourth general election of 1967 when it just got 54 per cent of the seat share. This was the lowest ever seat share and vote share performance of the Congress. As discussed previously, the opposition during this period mostly remained a numerical minority as well as deeply divided within itself. Therefore, despite retaining a vote share of around 50 per cent, it could neither emerge as a political alternative nor could come into any kind of power sharing arrangements at the centre. In part, it happened because many parties within the opposition camps contested each other in different states and hence remained fragmented. But mostly, it owed to ways in which the Congress system that engaged and co-opted the opposition parties of different ideological persuasion. Providing a pictorial depiction of Morris-Jones' account of the Congress System, Rekha Diwakar writes,

the Congress could be conceived as a circle whose midpoint was at the intersection of all the principle axes of polarization. The opposition parties were positioned outside the Congress circle, diametrically opposed to each other along various axes, but were closer to Congress factions adjacent to them on their axes than to other opposition parties. Since the Congress system was a competitive and an open one, the opposition parties were able to engage with and influence the sections of the Congress which were ideologically close to these parties.<sup>13</sup>

The Congress remained representative of different social segments as well as diverse regional aspirations. Diwakar invokes Kothari's argument that owing to the dominant presence of the Congress and its unique style of engaging and co-opting the opposition space, the major debates and political conflicts during this period remained internal to the Congress.<sup>14</sup> Such conflicts could never take place between the

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<sup>13</sup> Rekha Diwakar. (2017). *Party System in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 47.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p.46

Congress and the opposition parties.<sup>15</sup> The situation changed only after the Fourth general elections when the Congress got its lowest ever majority and lost power in at least nine states to the opposition parties. However, despite losing a significant vote share it enjoyed comfortable majority in both the Houses of parliament.

### **Nehru: Expectations of a Harmonious Legislature-Executive Relationship**

The magnitude of the majority as well as the unique style of the functioning of Congress party had an immediate impact on the functioning of the Union Cabinet during this period. As the Congress had a preponderant majority and the opposition remained fragmented, divided and unsure of its strength the leadership of the successive PMs remained unquestionable and towering, particularly till the ascendance of Indira Gandhi as the PM. The profound acceptance of Nehru's leadership was a legacy of the freedom struggle with which the party identified itself and the functioning of Nehru's successive governments were also cast in the same light. It is only in the post Fourth Lok Sabha period that the nature of leadership of the PMs within Cabinet has changed.

The post Nehru period is characterised as one where institutions in general and the Cabinet and the parliament in particular underwent an alteration: both in its character as well as functioning. As Sudipta Kaviraj says, the period subsequent to Nehru's death was a test of institutionalization, in the sense, whether the political system that India adopted be able to adapt to the social and political changes that became imminent.<sup>16</sup> The change in social base of the parties and emergence of political changes at the centre as well in various states consequent to 1967 elections indeed put the strains on political system. Paul Brass argues that from the death of Patel (who was considered to be a rival to Nehru) till the death of Nehru, the Cabinet functioned mostly conforming to the basic norms of Prime Ministerial government. To cite him, 'the Cabinet functioned in conformity with the basic norms of "Prime Ministerial governments" but one in which individual Cabinet ministers were still allowed to play

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<sup>15</sup> The only momentary exception during this period was the period when Congress got split in 1969 and the Indira Gandhi government was reduced to minority, However, it could get the working majority with the support of two Communist Parties, DMK and the Muslim League.

<sup>16</sup> Sudipta Kaviraj. (2010). *The Trajectories of the Indian State*. Ranikhet: Permanent Black, p.157

important political roles and of whom some were persons with substantial political followings'.<sup>17</sup>

Subsequently, the functioning of the Cabinet under successive PMs were markedly different in its character from what it used to be during 1950s till late 1960s. Nehru remained the PM for most of the period during 50s and 60s. R.J. Venkateswaran classifies Nehru's seventeen years period into three phases. Though there is no explicit justification provided behind the classification yet it appears that the classification is based on Nehru's style of functioning as PM. It must be noted that the style of functioning of the PM is not just dependent upon the personality of PM but also contingent upon the nature and pattern of his relationship with his colleagues and the relationship between the party and the government. Based on this he lays down the classification as:

- Phase I            August 15, 1947 to December 1950
- Phase II           January 1951 till August 1963
- Phase III          September 1963 till Nehru's death in May 1964.<sup>18</sup>

Pai Panandiker and Mehra have also accepted the broad classification presented by Venkateswaran.<sup>19</sup>

The first phase of Nehru's period represents the most significant moment of the nation building as India then attained independence and adopted a parliamentary system. It had been one of the most challenging moments in the working of parliamentary democracy in India. It was a moment full of euphoria as well as despair and deeper crisis that lay ahead immediately after partition. Being conscious of the enormous challenges, Nehru laid greater emphasis on the principle of accommodation in the Cabinet formation. He attempted to bring leaders belonging to different ideological spectrum as well as diverse communities in the Cabinet to make it a unified body representing a national and historical consensus over the dominant concerns of the nation building. Thus, in the choice of his Cabinet Nehru gave consideration to different ideological groupings and diversity of caste, region and religious

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<sup>17</sup> Paul R. Brass. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 49

<sup>18</sup> R. J. Venkateswaran (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p.55

<sup>19</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 30.

communities. Despite enjoying comfortable majority Nehru included five non Congress man in his first Cabinet that had a total strength of fourteen<sup>20</sup>. These included:

- Dr. John Mathai, (Ministry of Transport, later Ministry of Finance) was a South Indian Christian and a known financier. He was presumably taken to ensure representation to the Christian community.
- Sir R.K. Shanmukham Chetty, (Ministry of Finance) has been a leading South Indian merchant-banker.
- Dr. C.H. Bhabha, (Ministry of Commerce), to ensure representation to Parsee community.
- Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukerjee (Ministry of Industry and Supply), belonged to the Hindu Mahasabha and was included to give representation to the voice of right wing Hindu nationalist forces.
- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (Ministry of Law), an outstanding political figure among the Untouchable class and was included to ensure its due representation.

The presence of stalwarts who came from diverse political ideology, caste, region and religion leads Pai Panandiker and Mehra to observe that within the Nehruvian Cabinet,

At the political levels, broad spectrums of opinions were included in an attempt to generate a national consensus on policy issues, as well as to create an impression of a representative cabinet by including members from various communities. It was probably part of the post independence nation building strategy that Nehru persuaded even his staunch critic, B.R. Ambedkar to join his cabinet. In spite of his aversion to communal element, he included Shyama Prasad Mukerjee, known for his Hindu Mahasabha connections.<sup>21</sup>

Michael Brecher's analysis reveals that gradually the number of non-Congress ministers declined as the crisis affecting the nation stemmed. There were only three

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<sup>20</sup> Michael Brecher. (1998). *Nehru: A Political Biography*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 451

<sup>21</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p.31.



non-Congressmen by the mid of 1950 which further got reduced to two by 1953. By 1958, there were no non-Congressmen.

The impact of accommodation of such non-Congress yet influential personalities could be seen through the toning down of Nehru's influence during his initial days. The presence of such domineering personalities who participated in the freedom struggle and contributed to the making of India's constitution meant that there was a moderation in the functioning of the office of the Prime Minister.

A remarkable feature of these initial days was the immense faith that the members displayed in the functioning of institutions.<sup>22</sup> Nehru, in this regard, walked an extra mile particularly during the initial years to maintain the collective and collegial character of the Cabinet. Brecher maintains that the presence of Patel not only moderated the overwhelming presence of Nehru and also could to an extent challenge the all embracing nature of Nehru's leadership. He calls Nehru and Patel as 'the duumvirs of the new India'.<sup>23</sup> Nehru and Patel differed fundamentally in terms of ideological predisposition as well as temperamentally.<sup>24</sup> To quote Brecher,

Two men ruled India during the critical transition period from 1947 to 1950 - Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel, or 'Pandit ji' and the Sardar as they were known to friends and foe alike. It was a strange alliance in many ways, a striking combination of opposites. Indeed, no two leaders of any Asian nationalist movement in the twentieth century differed more than the duumvirs of the new India- in background, education, temperament, ideology, sources of power, and qualities and defects of leadership.<sup>25</sup>

The Congress, since the initial days, consisted of ideological factions and Nehru and Patel had followings in the left and the right camp respectively. During the initial

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<sup>22</sup> See R. J. Venkateswaran (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin; W. H. Morris-Jones. (March, 1963). Parliament and the Dominant Party: Indian Experience. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 17 (3), pp. 296-307. Ramachandra Guha. (2007). *India After Gandhi: The History of World's Largest Democracy*. London: Macmillan.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Brecher. (1998). *Nehru: A Political Biography*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 389.

<sup>24</sup> See Neerja Singh (Ed.) (2010) *Nehru Patel Agreement within Differences: Select Documents and Correspondences 1933-1950*. New Delhi: National Book Trust; S.C. Gangal. (1972). *Prime Minister and the Cabinet in India: A Political Study*. Varanasi: Navchetna Prakashan; V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers. Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers

<sup>25</sup> Michael Brecher. (1998). *Nehru: A Political Biography*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.389.

years, the ideological rift between the camps could never be wide enough to assume the shape of a struggle over party supremacy. However, the ideological factionalism within the Congress deepened consistently with the gradual rise in Nehru-Patel differences. The differences between Nehru and Patel started at the inception itself, beginning with what the role and position of the PM should be in a parliamentary system and how his relationship with his Cabinet colleagues should be understood. Patel resented that many of the decisions were made by Nehru without consulting him. On the other hand, Nehru became upset at the frequent delay in getting things moved in the ministry under Patel while the latter was away at Mussoorie for his treatment.<sup>26</sup> The differences between the two deepened as the problem of Hyderabad came up before the government. While Patel considered Hyderabad to be a part of the work of States Ministry, Nehru remained concerned as the PM because the problem of Hyderabad was intrinsically linked to the India's policy on Kashmir.<sup>27</sup> Brecher is of the opinion the duumvirate could resolve many personal and political differences but towards the end sharp conflict emerged between the two over their respective positions on Pakistan and social change.<sup>28</sup> Venkateswaran argues that the differences between the two grew to an extent that Nehru considered dismissing Patel from the Cabinet while Patel too maneuvered to get rid of Nehru.<sup>29</sup> However the situation was saved owing to the intervention of Gandhi. Venkateswaran remarks, 'Gandhi declared straight out that the Prime Minister had a right to select his own colleagues and could ask Patel to quit if his attitude to Muslims violated Cabinet policy'.<sup>30</sup> Subsequently, the assassination of Gandhi brought in a deeper realization between the two that they could not carry their differences too far and that they need to coordinate their working if they wish to see the unity, peace and progress in India.<sup>31</sup>

Sarvapalli Gopal argues that the ideological and temperamental differences between the two were kept at bay owing to two factors: first, the transcendental leadership of Gandhi, and second, the common cause of India's historical struggle for independence. But with the attainment of independence as well as the gradual weakening of the Gandhi's authority, 'it was difficult for these pre-eminent persons,

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<sup>26</sup> Sarvepalli Gopal. (2010). *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 194

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 195

<sup>28</sup> Michael Brecher. (1998). *Nehru: A Political Biography*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 401

<sup>29</sup> R. J. Venkateswaran. (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 57.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p. 57.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p. 57.

one with a massive hold on popular affection and other on a sure grip on the party, to work together in the accustomed field of administration'.<sup>32</sup>

In Brecher's account until 1950 (till Patel passed away) every decision of substance of Cabinet was taken by the duumvirate. The duumvirate constituted the 'super cabinet' within the Cabinet.<sup>33</sup> The only other person in the Cabinet whom the duumvirate looked for counsel occasionally was Maulana Abul Kamal Azad, 'the dean of India's nationalist Muslims'.<sup>34</sup>

Based on his discussions with Cabinet ministers, prominent officials and senior congress men, Brecher describes the 'super Cabinet' as one which discussed all the matters first and subsequently presented a recommendation to the Cabinet. He remarks,

Though the procedures of Cabinet government were followed, and ministers were at liberty to discuss, even oppose, proposals of Prime Ministers were followed, and ministers were at liberty to discuss, even oppose, proposals of the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, their special position dominated the proceedings. It was the same in parliament, the Congress and the country at large.<sup>35</sup>

With the death of Patel in 1950, the duumvirate came to an end. As Brecher says, 'with Patel's death at the end of 1950, Nehru's leadership was strengthened – in the Cabinet as elsewhere'.<sup>36</sup> Venkateswaran agrees with Brecher when he remarks, 'it was Sardar Patel's powerful personality that prevented Nehru from having that amount of freedom in the Cabinet which he came to have after 1950'.<sup>37</sup> Nehru's stature in the party as well as government grew but the contest over party still remained owing to the presence of certain stalwarts. The existence of factions and

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<sup>32</sup> Sarvepalli Gopal. (2010). *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.194

<sup>33</sup> Though in a different context, the term 'super cabinet' has been used previously. See K.M. Munshi (1959). The Super Cabinet. *The Radical Humanist*, December 6; Editorial. (March 25). Planning Commission or the Super-Cabinet. *The Economic Weekly*, 1950, pp. 297-298; Kartikeya Sharma (October 13, 2013). *Sonia Gandhi's super cabinet rules*. Available at <https://www.indiatoday.in/featured/story/sonia-gandhi-cabinet-national-advisory-council-congress-UPA-NREGA-214158-2013-10-13>. Accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> September, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Brecher. (1998). *Nehru: A Political Biography*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 451.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 395.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p. 451.

<sup>37</sup> R. J. Venkateswaran (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 56.

factionalism, till the ascendance of Indira Gandhi, could never bring the factions and the party into a contest as a consensus on the monopoly of the party remained. Diverse factions and different leaderships in the Congress, the pre-eminence of Nehru as well as Shastri and even Indira Gandhi till her first tenure, was largely accepted. It was only during the Fourth Lok Sabha elections, during the second tenure of Indira Gandhi, that the consensus broke down. The intense factionalism and rivalry within the Congress led to its split in 1969 and this was monumental in bringing about a fundamental redefinition in the relationship between the party and government, on one hand and the PM and her Cabinet colleagues, on the other.

Though after the death of Patel, Nehru became unquestionably pre-eminent, he gave considerable importance to his colleagues. However, considering his status in the party and the country at large, his views and opinions came to be accepted and respected by all his colleagues. Based on interviews with former ministers and officials of the cabinet secretariat in late 1950s, Brecher remarks, 'Where there is disagreement, the outcome depends on how strongly Nehru feels about the issue. If he is firm, his colleagues give way, not because of fear but because they acknowledge his pre-eminence and respect his leadership.'<sup>38</sup>

By late 1950s and early 1960s, Nehru's position had become considerably dominant as compared to his colleagues in Cabinet. This was partly due to the political vacuum created owing to either death or resignations and retirement of Congress stalwarts by late 1950s. Azad, who was considered one of the most influential voices, next only to Patel, passed away in 1958 and other Cabinet veterans like Gopal Swamy Ayyangar, Baldev Singh, Raj Kumari Amrith Kaur and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai too passed away by mid 1950s.<sup>39</sup> Others with relatively longer experience and influence in the Cabinet like C.D. Deshmukh and Ajit Prasad Jain resigned owing to political differences. By late 1950s Pant, Morarji Desai and Krishna Menon emerged as influential leaders but their late entry into the Cabinet limited their influence. The Nehruvian Cabinet, particularly since mid 1950s onwards, witnessed the emergence of an 'inner cabinet circle', which exercised relatively more influence in comparison to the other in the Cabinet. Govind Vallabh Pant, Morarji Desai and Maulana Azad constituted an inner circle in regard to domestic affairs, while Nehru started relying heavily on Menon in

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<sup>38</sup> Michael Brecher. (1998). *Nehru: A Political Biography*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 462.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 442.

foreign policy matters.<sup>40</sup> Brecher remarks, ‘Since 1957, there appears to be an informal understanding among the ‘Big Three’ of the Indian Cabinet-Nehru, Pant and Desai- as to the permissible limits of disagreement. By and large, they accommodate each other, with Nehru’s pre-eminent position readily acknowledged’.<sup>41</sup>

Notwithstanding the emergence of the inner cabinet since mid 1950s, Nehru emerges as a strong voice and predominantly influential among his peers. According to Pai Panandiker and Mehra, during this period the spirit of tolerance and accommodation began to decline in the Cabinet and the collegial character of the Cabinet came to be questioned.<sup>42</sup> They cite the instance where C.D. Deshmukh offered his resignation from the Cabinet citing the manner and procedure for arriving at the decision of the reorganization of the old Bombay. Deshmukh alleged that Nehru did not consult the Cabinet before making his proposals public.<sup>43</sup> Brecher also points out that dissension within the Nehru Cabinet took the form of resignations and the reasons offered by such stalwarts while doing so were mainly their disagreement with Nehru.<sup>44</sup> Till 1964, the Nehru Cabinet witnessed 10 resignations. This is to the exclusion of a spate of resignations as fallout of the Kamraj Plan of 1963.

Brecher argues that the first eight resignations show that the Indian Cabinet has not always functioned smoothly.<sup>45</sup> The resignations were mostly on matters of policy decisions while in one instance the Finance minister T.T. Krishnamachari had to put in his paper owing to the corruption charges leveled against him. The most controversial resignation was that of V.K. Krishna Menon who served as the Defence Minister during the Indo-China war of 1962. Venkateswaran points out that despite the brewing disaffection against Menon both within the congress party as well as in the parliament, persistent efforts were made by Nehru to retain him.<sup>46</sup> Based on his conversation with a participant of the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Congress Party who attended the meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> November 1962, Venkateswaran

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<sup>40</sup> Michael Brecher. (1998). *Nehru: A Political Biography*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press , p. 452.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p. 463.

<sup>42</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 39.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Brecher. (1998). *Nehru: A Political Biography*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 452-462.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 452

<sup>46</sup> R. J. Venkateswaran. (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 87.

observes that Nehru made a strong plea for Menon but the opposition within the party had grown beyond his measures. In Venkateswaran's words,

Taking a different track, he (Nehru) accurately said that he was as much at fault as Menon and vaguely threatened to resign. Always before, such a threat had been sufficient to make the opposition crumble with piteous cries of "Pandit ji don't leave us alone!" This time one of the leaders said: "If you continue to follow Menon's policies, we are prepared to contemplate that possibility". Nehru was beaten and Menon thrown out of the Cabinet.<sup>47</sup>

The debacle in the Indo-China war did impact Nehru's prestige and standing among his colleagues. However, it was momentary and consequent to the Kamraj Plan, Nehru emerged as the uncontested leader carrying an unprecedented power and influence. The Kamraj Plan was adopted by the All India Congress Committee in 1963 which required all Congress ministers to submit their resignations and Nehru was entrusted with the responsibility of deciding which resignations were to be accepted or declined and the persons who should be directed towards taking up organizational activities of the party.<sup>48</sup> Nehru considered the plan as an opportunity and reorganized the Cabinet by accepting the resignations of: Morarji Desai, Minister of Finance; S K Patil, Minister of Food and Agriculture; Lal Bahadur Shastri, Minister of Home Affairs; Jagjivan Ram, Minister of Transport and Communication; Gopal Reddi, Minister of Information and Broadcasting; and Kalu Lal Shrimali, Minister of Education

The Cabinet size was reduced and in the post Kamaraj period, the Cabinet became more compact and homogeneous and Nehru's power and influence increased

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<sup>47</sup> R. J. Venkateswaran. (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 89.

<sup>48</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p.59. Krishna Ananth unravels the background to the acceptance and implementation of the Kamraj Plan. In his view, the victory of Lohia, Kriplani and Masani in the byelections of 1963 played a significant role in the ultimate shaping of the plan. Previously, two significantly disturbing trends for the Congress during the general elections of 1962 were the growth of DMK in Tamil Nadu and Swatantrata Party in Odisha. Both Kamraj and Biju Pattnaik, the then serving CMs of respective states proposed their resignation in order to contribute to refurbishing of the organizational set up. Nehru wondered if this could be taken up on a nationwide scale to reboot the organization. The idea became urgent with the by-election results of May 1963 and in August 1963 the ministers in the states and union government tendered their resignations. However, Nehru accepted the resignation of only six Chief Ministers and an equal number of ministers from his cabinet.

enormously.<sup>49</sup> In Venkateswaran's words, 'Never since the achievement of independence had Nehru enjoyed so much power as he did since September 1963. He wielded absolute authority in the Cabinet and was in a position to implement his policies without opposition from his colleagues.'<sup>50</sup>Based on his analysis of the Cabinet committees and its composition, Hardgrave too argues about the overwhelming dominance that Nehru exercised in his Cabinet 'as Prime Minister, Nehru exercised a preeminent role: His dominance in the Cabinet was overwhelming'.<sup>51</sup> The Emergency Committee constituted in 1962, which consisted of six senior ministers including the PM, apparently assumed the role of an inner Cabinet. The Committee became powerful enough and in Hardgrave's words, 'took over many of the decision-making responsibilities of the whole Cabinet'<sup>52</sup>

Since late 1950s, questions were raised regarding the nature of the Nehruvian Cabinet. . In congruence with Brecher, Venkateswaran argues that questions were raised regarding the manner in which many decisions of significance were taken by Nehru without consulting his Cabinet. The Cabinet lacked coordination at moments and Nehru failed to enforce discipline in its functioning. Further an apprehension was expressed regarding too much interference by Nehru in running the day-to-day affairs of many ministries.<sup>53</sup>

In particular, the unwieldy size of the Cabinet came under considerable criticism. The size of the council of ministers expanded noticeably consequent to the general elections in 1962. The criticism gathered steam as the emergency was proclaimed in 1962. Venkateswaran notes that concerns were expressed both within the parliament and outside that the Cabinet could not function effectively owing to its unwieldy size. At a moment when emergency was in operation and India was confronted with the task of protecting its territorial integrity from the Chinese aggression the size of the Cabinet came under criticism. A resolution was moved in the Lok Sabha to reduce the

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<sup>49</sup> The Kamraj Plan influenced the cabinet size both in the centre as well as states. It led to drastic reduction in the cabinet size in both the centre and states. While at the centre it got reduced to twelve from eighteen, the Congress Parliamentary Party issued a similar directive that no states barring the exception of UP and Maharashtra shall have a cabinet size of more than twenty. R. J. Venkateswaran. (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p 125.

<sup>50</sup> R. J. Venkateswaran. (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 69.

<sup>51</sup> Robert L. Hardgrave. (1970). *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation*. New York: Harcourt. Brace and World, p. 63

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p.63

<sup>53</sup> R. J. Venkateswaran. (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 70.

size of council of ministers and to enforce austerity in ministerial circle. In Venkateswaran's words,

Nehru opposed the resolution, pointing out that the emergency had actually increased the work of the ministers. He said, 'merely to say that the Ministry should be reduced has no meaning to me. If the work is greater, it has to be done efficiently.'<sup>54</sup>

Pai Panandiker and Mehra argue that though Nehru could not ever recover from the shock of the Chinese debacle yet he could not be dominated by others, either in the party or Cabinet. Y.B. Chavan, the then CM of Maharashtra, succeeded Menon as the Defence Minister, while M.C. Chagla, former Chief Justice of Bombay High Court became Minister of Education. Both owed their position to Nehru and could never challenge him. The only challenge to Nehru's authority came from Morarji Desai but he could challenge but not confront.<sup>55</sup> Based on their analysis of Chagla's autobiography, Pai Panadiker and Mehra argue,

It is apparent from Chagla's autobiography that for most of the Cabinet members it was not possible to openly criticize Nehru's decisions in the Cabinet meetings. Therefore, as Chagla indicates, Ministers met and talked it out either before or after the Cabinet meeting and sorted out the differences.<sup>56</sup>

Krishna Ananth argues that Shastri was chosen by Nehru himself as his successor. In his view the Kamraj plan had two major objectives: first, to get rid of Morarji Desai and second, to create an enabling political conditions for Shastri to succeed Nehru.<sup>57</sup> During Nehru's last years in power, there has emerged a collective of leaders in the party who used to function in tandem even during his tenure. The collective consisted of K Kamaraj, Atulya Ghosh, S.Nijalingappa, Neelam Sanjeev Reddy and S.K.Patil. The collective over the period of time came to be known as 'the Syndicate' which was the power bloc within the party. Krishna Ananth says that the Syndicate 'took care to refrain from challenging Nehru's authority and were clear enough to let all his

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<sup>54</sup> R. J. Venkateswaran. (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 124.

<sup>55</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 44.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p.46.

<sup>57</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 61



socialist rhetoric endorsed in the party. It is another matter that they were hardly concerned with implementing them'.<sup>58</sup>

### **Shastri: Consensus amid Crisis**

The syndicate shared Nehru's disdain for Morarji Desai and it was a major reason behind the smooth succession of Lal Bahadur Shastri. The emergence of syndicate was a reflection of two kinds of changing patterns of relationship: first, between the PM and the party in general and second, the PM and the Cabinet in particular. When Shastri succeeded Nehru, the political situations changed considerably. Organizationally, the Congress did not remain as strong an organization that it used to be. Ideologically, a gradual disenchantment had set in over the unfolding of the Nehruvian socialist project. Most importantly, a widespread discontent has emerged in Punjab and the South Indian states with regard to certain actions and policies of the union government. The two most prominent agitations during the concerned period were: the demand led by Akali leaders for creation of a separate Punjabi speaking state and the resistance against the adoption of Hindi as the official language across the non Hindi speaking states in South India.<sup>59</sup>

Shastri had an illustrious administrative and political experience. He had served as a Cabinet Minister in UP, and within Nehru's government handled portfolios like Minister of Railways and Transport, Minister of Transport and Communication, Commerce and Industry and Home Affairs. He remained one of the most trusted lieutenants of Nehru. Infact, he was the only person called back into the Cabinet within six months as a Minister without portfolio, after six ministers resigned consequent to the implementation of the Kamraj Plan. As per Venkateswaran's account, Shastri favoured having a large Cabinet justifying that the Cabinet should reflect the vastness of country. The Cabinet that Shastri formed in 1964 added two more members and therefore was bigger in comparison to the Cabinet that existed at the time of Nehru's death.<sup>60</sup>In the beginning, Shastri's council of ministers consisted of sixteen Cabinet ministers, fifteen ministers of state and twenty deputy ministers. He

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<sup>58</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 61.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p.63.

<sup>60</sup> See R. J. Venkateswaran. (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin , p. 134.

retained most of the ministers who served the Nehru government previously and added three new faces. They were: Indira Gandhi, Sanjiva Reddy, and S. K. Patil

S.S. Khera argues that Morarji Desai was left out altogether of Shastri's as his condition that he should be given the post of Deputy Prime Minister was not acceptable to Shastri.<sup>61</sup> Shastri retained the Ministries of External Affairs and Atomic Energy with him but as health conditions deteriorated Shastri gave up the Ministry of External Affairs, concentrated more upon the domestic affairs and invested more time in coordination with his Cabinet colleagues.<sup>62</sup> Venkateswaran argues that Shastri's Cabinet was more homogenous than Nehru's. The allocations of portfolios were not rational, though.<sup>63</sup> Like his predecessor, Shastri too had an 'inner Cabinet' which Venkateswaran says consisted of: T. T. Krishnamachari, Gulzarilal Nanda, S.K. Patil, Indira Gandhi and N. Sanjiva Reddy constituted the inner cabinet. Three out of these four faces were brought into the Cabinet by Shastri himself.

An innovative practice started by Shastri was to hold informal Cabinet meetings at the residence of each Cabinet minister on a rotational basis. These meetings were presided over by Shastri.<sup>64</sup> Practices such as these hints at the more consultative and collegial character of the Shastri led Cabinet.

Pai Panadiker and Mehra argue that despite being Nehru's close associate Shastri lacked the stature and his position in the party also did not remain undisputed. Even Shastri was aware of this and therefore, immediately after his election as the PM, Shastri speaking at the Congress Parliamentary Party remarked, I tremble when I am reminded of the fact that I have to be in charge of this country and parliament which had been led by no less a person than Jawaharlal Nehru.<sup>65</sup>

However, Shastri evolved his own style of functioning in view of the changed political circumstances: he practiced consensus and made it an essential attribute of his Cabinet. Shastri practiced consultation on important matters not only with his

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<sup>61</sup> S. S. Khera (1975). *The Central Executive*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, p.121. Also, during Shastri's period Nanda held the second rank in the cabinet and he was equally vociferous in retaining it.

<sup>62</sup> R. J. Venkateswaran. (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p.135.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p. 136

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 139

<sup>65</sup> S.C. Gangal. (1972). *Prime Minister and the Cabinet in India: A Political Study*. Varanasi: Navchetna Prakashan, p . 60.

party colleagues and Cabinet members but also with the opposition parties.<sup>66</sup> The art of consensus building, according to Khera, had much to do with the contested position of Shastri in the party; it compelled Shastri to practice more consultations with his colleagues than Nehru. Khera is of the view that Shastri probably remained under pressure to act as member of a team to work out the consensus. In Khera's words,

He was probably under some sort of pressure to act as a member of a team. The Congress President may have seen himself as a member of Shastri's decision making group. For as soon as he had seen Shastri installed in power, Kamraj spoke of 'we' having to shoulder the responsibility that had come to us to fill the role of departed leader of the nation...<sup>67</sup>

Limaye too has argued that the Syndicate expected Shastri to consult them on all significant matters and relished the prospect of backseat driving.<sup>68</sup> In his book 'The Government and Politics of India', Morris-Jones argued that tussle between the ministers had never been absent in Indian scenario and their resolution required more than a simple command from above. In the post- Nehru period such tussles emerged as a major concern for the successive PMs. Nehru's towering personality could avert a major personality clash but Shastri had to evolve the method of consensus-building to avert any personality clash within his Cabinet. Shastri's Cabinet worked on consensus basis also because most of the members in his Cabinet were his co-equals. Consensus has to be patiently worked out under such condition<sup>69</sup>. Robert L. Hardgrave too emphasizes upon the restoration of consensual Cabinet Shastri's period. To quote him,

Under Shastri, the Emergency Committee declined in relative importance. The Cabinet's primacy was restored in domestic affairs, as each minister was given a greater role of initiative and discretion. If

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<sup>66</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p.47

<sup>67</sup> S. S. Khera (1975). *The Central Executive*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, p. 120.

<sup>68</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. 105.

<sup>69</sup> W.H. Morris Jones. (1996). *The Government and Politics of India*. New Delhi: Universal Book Stall, p. 145.

under Nehru, decisions had been frequently imposed from above, decisions under Shastri reflected more of a genuine consensus.<sup>70</sup>

But towards the end of his tenure, Shastri's stature has indeed grown considerably. According to Morris-Jones, this was because Nehru has passed some of his personal magic to this institution.<sup>71</sup> D.R. Mankekar argues that despite believing firmly in the idea of joint responsibility and sharing of power with Cabinet colleagues, Shastri could maintain a certain degree of assertion. He preferred to take his own decision after due consultations with his colleagues. In an interview to Mankekar, Shastri had said,

I would not like to praise myself but I do take my own decisions. However, it is true that I want to have as much consultations as possible with all shades of opinion before coming to a decision. I always like to respect the views and opinions of others, and if they are right, I don't hesitate to accept them.<sup>72</sup>

Also in response to the question over the interference exercised by the syndicate in general and Kamraj in particular, Shastri confidently responded by saying that he had always acted on his own and even the choice of his Cabinet ministers has also been independent of any kind of interference by the party President Kamraj.<sup>73</sup>

It was the war with Pakistan that enhanced Shastri's stature further though this was towards the end of his tenure. Regarding the political fallout of the war, Venkateswaran remarks, 'the war with Pakistan generally enhanced the reputation of Shastri... Shastri's decision revealed to the world that Nehru's successor was by no means a soft man, wedded to non violence at all costs but a great leader of courage and realism'.<sup>74</sup>

Assertion could be seen in the manner in which Shastri compelled Krishnamachari to resign from the Cabinet despite reservations being expressed by President

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<sup>70</sup> Robert L. Hardgrave. (1970). *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation*. New York: Harcourt. Brace and World, p. 63

<sup>71</sup> W.H. Morris Jones. (1996). *The Government and Politics of India*. New Delhi: Universal Book Stall, p. 145.

<sup>72</sup> D.R. Mankekar (1977). *Builders of Modern India: Lal Bahadur Shastri*. New Delhi: Publications Division, p. 176

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p. 176

<sup>74</sup> R. J. Venkateswaran. (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 146.

Radhakrishnan in this regard.<sup>75</sup> Pai Panandiker and Mehra argue that another instance in this context was when Shastri shifted the portfolio of External Affairs which he was holding to Swarn Singh, without any consultation with his Cabinet colleagues.<sup>76</sup> Even Indira Gandhi who was supposed to be a core member of his ‘inner Cabinet’ was marginalized in the process of decision making subsequently.<sup>77</sup> Shastri was, infact, contemplating of sending her to London as India’s High Commissioner.<sup>78</sup> Shastri’s Information Officer, Nayar too argues that Indira Gandhi became insecure with increasing popularity of Shastri. In his words,

After TTK’s resignation, Indira Gandhi observed that it was only a matter of time before she could be crowded under pressure. According to a senior Congress leader, Dinesh Singh, very close to her, she even spoke of settling down in the UK...Indira Gandhi realized that Shastri had gained new strength and was receiving a hero’s welcome wherever he went.<sup>79</sup>

After the Indo-Pak war, a greater unity emerged both within the Cabinet as well as between the Cabinet and the parliament. Shastri had ensured due consultations with the opposition and the congress party leadership on major issues during the war. Glowing tributes were paid to Shastri in the parliament by both opposition members and treasury benches subsequent to the proclamation of cease-fire. Overwhelmed with the support that Shastri received across the parties in the parliament, he said, ‘in fact, it is this unity which has been the biggest source of strength to all of us in these testing times. I am grateful to the House for the magnificent support given during these historic times’.<sup>80</sup>

Venkateswaran has argued that in regard to the working of the Cabinet, Shastri introduced three remarkable changes<sup>81</sup>. Firstly, Shastri set up the Prime Minister’s Secretariat (henceforth PMS). The Secretariat was to be led by L.K. Jha, a senior ICS

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<sup>75</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 47.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

<sup>77</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 63.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. 63.

<sup>79</sup> Kuldip Nayar. (2012). *Beyond the Lines: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, p.159.

<sup>80</sup> R. J. Venkateswaran. (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin, p. 147

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p. 138

officer and its main task was to keep the PM informed of all major development in India and abroad and the implications thereof. Secondly, he began to release Cabinet decisions to the press through the Cabinet Secretary at the conclusion of every meeting. And thirdly, as mentioned earlier, he held Cabinet meetings at the residence of respective ministers on rotation basis. However, apprehensions were expressed on the formation of the PMS which was assumed to be causing misunderstanding and conflict between the Prime Minister and his colleagues. Madhu Limaye vehemently criticized the formation of PMS, which supplanted the PM's Cabinet colleagues from their legitimate positions as advisor and replaced them with the civil servants. In the words of Limaye, 'this is how Cabinet government began to be twisted out of shape under this "extremely humble Prime Minister"'.<sup>82</sup> Ananth too has expressed his displeasure with Shastri in this regard and notes that soon after the declaration of India Pakistan ceasefire he started relying more on this new set-up than his Cabinet colleagues.

Shastri's biographer D.R. Mankekar, has argued that his Cabinet was essentially a government of 'dead-centre in its political complexion'.<sup>83</sup> Shastri attached much more importance to pragmatism than ideological persuasions. To quote him, 'if Nanda, Indira Gandhi and Subramaniam were taken as left in the Cabinet, S.K. Patil and Sanjiv Reddy represented the right. The Congress President himself could be considered left of the centre, though his syndicate was essentially rightist.'<sup>84</sup>

Gujral too in his biography, while analyzing Shastri's speech in the Lok Sabha on September 18, 1964, notes a bit deviation in ideological inclinations of Shastri and Nehru. Gujral writes, 'He gave a clear indication that he meant to tread his own path and that loyalty to Nehru did not imply putting fetters in the way of freedom of thought or action.'<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. 108.

<sup>83</sup> D.R. Mankekar (1977). *Builders of Modern India: Lal Bahadur Shastri*. New Delhi: Publications Division, p.175

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 175

<sup>85</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p.37

The untimely death of Shastri on 10 January 1966 created a vacancy for the post of PM.<sup>86</sup> It is worth noting that though, in his brief tenure, Shastri became an assertive PM particularly towards his last years yet he could not in any significant manner reduce the clout enjoyed by the syndicate within the party.

### **Indira Gandhi- I: Equilibrium amid diminishing party dominance**

In the event of Shastri's death, the party President Kamraj persuaded the syndicate to back Indira Gandhi's candidature as PM, Desai staked his claim for the post of PM. Desai claimed that the job of electing the PM should be left to the wisdom of Congress Parliamentary Party and the party leadership should go by the procedure of election. Ananth reasons that the party leadership backed Indira Gandhi's candidature against Desai's for two significant reasons: firstly, the Syndicate thought Indira Gandhi would be meek and considered it easier to sustain their clout during her tenure; and secondly, the erosion of the organizational as well as social base of the party brought them the realization that only she could be the charismatic face of the party to swing in votes for the party during the forthcoming elections.<sup>87</sup> Indira Gandhi won the election in the Congress Parliamentary Party and secured 355 votes against the 169 votes polled by Desai. The votes secured by Desai hint towards the possible division within the Congress Parliamentary Party and that the PM must take this into consideration while running the affairs of government. The deep division within the party and presence of many senior leaders in the party made the first tenure of Indira Gandhi quite unique when compared to her predecessors. Her Cabinet composed of sixteen Cabinet ministers, eighteen ministers of state and seventeen deputy ministers. She retained most of the ministers from Shastri Cabinet but brought in some new faces too: Ashok Mehta, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed and Jagjivan Ram. Two earlier Cabinet ministers Ashok Sen and Humayun Kabir did not find a place in the newly constituted council of ministers. With respect to Gandhi's Cabinet, Hardgrave remarks,

Mrs. Gandhi's cabinet contains, as Shastri's did, many of the ministers who served Nehru. Indeed, despite the death of many Congress

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<sup>86</sup> As soon as the news of the death of PM Shastri reached Delhi, President Radhakrishnan appointed Gulzarilal Nanda as the Acting Prime Minister of India. On the other hand the Congress President and other leaders started the process of finding Shastri's successor.

<sup>87</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 65

stalwarts, ministerial resignations and the continued reshuffling of the portfolios, there has been a remarkable continuity in the Cabinet membership.<sup>88</sup>

In the beginning, Indira Gandhi kept true to the expectations of Kamraj. She relied upon the opinion of stalwarts in the party, particularly Kamraj. She had to accommodate Jagjivan Ram in her Cabinet against her own wishes. Discussing her initial days as the PM, Pai Panandiker and Mehra write,

Her position in the Cabinet also could not be expected to be very dominant in the presence of senior leaders like Gulzarilal Nanda, M.C. Chagla, etc. who had worked with her father and were seasoned parliamentarians on whom she had to depend.<sup>89</sup>

Her position during initial days was far from being assertive and she depended on the advice of C. Subramaniam, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Ashok Mehta, Uma Shankar Dikshit and Dinesh Singh in making crucial decisions related to affairs of government.

The break came barely six months after Indira Gandhi resumed the Office and announced the devaluation of rupee without taking into confidence the party and its stalwarts. Even the Congress President, Kamraj was not taken into confidence. She had relied upon the advice of her close associates from the Congress party whose positions varied across the board: from being a minister of state to being a Cabinet minister. Dharma Vira, her Cabinet Secretary during that period recalls that the whole decision on devaluation was kept a secret and even the Cabinet secretary was not informed about it. He writes,

Unfortunately, the decision was such that it was kept a secret even from me, the Cabinet Secretary. It is the function of the Cabinet Secretary to coordinate the working of the economic ministries in order

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<sup>88</sup> Robert L. Hardgrave. (1970). *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation*. New York: Harcourt. Brace and World, p.64.

<sup>89</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p.48



to ensure that economic processes set in motion do not have adverse repercussions.<sup>90</sup>

Subsequently, the decision was condemned by the congress party itself apart from other principal opposition parties in parliament. During a post facto discussion on the decision of devaluation, Indira Gandhi was criticized by most of her senior colleagues in the Cabinet. She could not escape the criticism in the Congress Parliamentary Party as well as the Congress Working Committee. Her Cabinet colleagues, in particular, Jagjivan Ram, Sanjiv Reddy, Morarji Desai and Party President Kamraj remained vocal in their criticism of the decision.

The unilateral decision in favour of the devaluation of rupee became a potent factor for an apparent distance that emerged between the Congress leadership and Indira Gandhi. The distance between the Congress Parliamentary Party and the PM became a significant reason behind Indira Gandhi's decision to cultivate her own set of people and subsequently, depend upon them for their advice.

In November 1966, Indira Gandhi secured the resignation of her Home Minister G.L. Nanda against his wishes. It is noteworthy that Nanda had served as an Acting Prime Minister previously on two occasions and was counted as one of the senior most ministers in her Cabinet. Therefore, the resignation of Nanda has to be read as an instance of Indira Gandhi's assertion of Prime Ministerial authority. Limaye considered Nanda as second in terms of the pecking order in Indira Gandhi's Cabinet<sup>91</sup> and by asking him to resign she got rid of a minister who had turned into her detractor.<sup>92</sup>

During her first tenure despite having certain moments of assertion and independent action, Indira Gandhi's power was restrained cornered owing to the presence of stalwarts and her failure in establishing a fine balance between the office of Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the Congress Parliamentary Party. As the PM did not take the senior members of her Cabinet into confidence while taking decisions like the devaluation of currency or seeking resignation of Nanda, their alienation created deep

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<sup>90</sup> Dharma Vira cited in Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. 121.

<sup>91</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. 123

<sup>92</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 73.

divisions in the Cabinet itself. Consequently, her position remained complicated and less dominant as compared to her predecessors. The division across the parliamentary party had its casting impact on the working of the Cabinet and eventually pushed Indira Gandhi to take refuge in the advices of her selected few. The elections to the Fourth Lok Sabha in 1967 significantly reduced the strength of the Congress party in the Lok Sabha where it could just win 41 per cent (283/516) of the seats (as seen in Table 3.1). It was the lowest ever for the party, since the constitution of First Lok Sabha in 1952. Rita Diwakar argues that while during 1950s and 1960s the opposition to the Congress largely remained within the party, from 1967 onwards the opposition started manifesting itself into a form of inter-party electoral competition. The Congress started losing base in the centre as well as in many states and the party system became much diffused and differentiated in different states of India.<sup>93</sup> Defections also gathered up steam and leaders moved in and out of Congress. In a more profound sense, Diwakar argues, the party system in India was evolving into a new phase, 'in which the Congress had to function under more complex set of circumstances, where the opposition became less fragmented, new states were formed, and economic environment underwent many changes.<sup>94</sup> Though, the Congress retained a comfortable majority yet the political complexion of the Lok Sabha had changed considerably. The overwhelming dominance of the Congress party was checked and it had its impact on the relationship between the Congress party leadership with the Office of PM and consequently over the kind of relationship that the PM would have with her Cabinet colleagues. The Congress leadership supported Indira Gandhi and she was elected as the leader of Congress Parliamentary Party for the second time. In reality, however, Kamraj had to work out a compromise formula whereby Morarji withdrew his nomination and Indira Gandhi accommodated him as number two in her second Cabinet. As per the consensus worked out by Kamraj, Desai was made the Deputy PM as well as given the charge of Ministry of Finance. The post of the Deputy PM had not been given to any one since the death of Patel. Ananth argues that because the consensus that Indira would be the prime minister and Morarji would be her deputy was based on expediency rather than on

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<sup>93</sup> Rekha Diwakar. (2017). *Party System in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 55.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, p 55.

faith, the position of PM was compromised..<sup>95</sup> However, the Fourth Lok Sabha elections also witnessed the decline of the power and prestige that the syndicate enjoyed within the party. Kamraj was not consulted while Indira Gandhi constituted her Cabinet. While prominent syndicate members, including Kamraj, were defeated during the elections; N. Sanjiva Reddy, the only prominent Syndicate member, who won a seat in the Lok Sabha was not inducted into the Cabinet. Prominent and senior members like Morarji Desai, Y.B. Chavan, Jagjivan Ram and M.C. Chagla were inducted into the Cabinet. Indira Gandhi strived to balance the syndicate and stalwarts by inducting few of her own favorites. For instance, Ashok Mehta and I. K. Gujaral were inducted as a Cabinet minister and minister of state respectively, Dinesh Singh was promoted to the rank of Cabinet Minister and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed was retained as Cabinet minister. Apart from the weakening of the authority of PM, the opposition too became more vigorous during this period for three significant reasons. First, Indira Gandhi had been a reluctant parliamentarian. As Ananth elaborates,

Soon after Jaipur meet, she had had to face parliament. It was then that her inability to speak before the public and in parliament became evident. While it was possible for her to avoid parliament as the minister for information and broadcasting, things were different now...Indira's inexperience and her problems with public speaking gave these men a handle to taunt her. This was the time when Lohia called her *gungi gudiya*, an attribute she managed to shed very soon.<sup>96</sup>

Secondly, the opposition space became vigorous with significant gain in vote share and seat share by the Jan Sangha, the socialist parties and the communist parties. The gain in strength of non-Congress parties apart from the presence of stalwarts in the opposition considerably subdued the position of government vis-a-vis the opposition during the initial phase of Fourth Lok Sabha. The Bhartiya Jan Sangha won 35 seats, the two communist parties taken together secured 42 seats and the socialist parties won 36 seats in all.

Thirdly, the formation of several non congress governments in states based on ideology of 'non congressism' and coalitions at state level phenomenally boosted the

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<sup>95</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 71

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p. 71

confidence of opposition parties in favor of floor coordination in the parliament.

Considering the emergence of an assertive opposition and a reduced majority of the Congress Party in the Lok Sabha apart from the presence of senior and prominent ministers in her Cabinet, Indira Gandhi could not be assertive in the beginning. Pai Panandiker and Mehra too argue that initially she had to accommodate her senior leaders and took into consideration their advices on certain issues. Based on the evidence gathered they argue that considerable debates and discussion characterized the Cabinet during the period between 1967 and 1969. However the Cabinet gradually polarized between ‘conservatives’ and ‘progressives’. With stalwarts like Desai in the Cabinet, Indira Gandhi could not impose her will on it<sup>97</sup>. Pai Panandiker and Mehra cite a stormy Cabinet meeting when Indira Gandhi could not get the support for the immediate nationalization of banks and in his bid to oppose the nationalization, Desai threatened to resign over the issue. To quote Pai Panandiker and Mehra, ‘reportedly Morarji Desai clinched the decision by stating that Mrs Gandhi would have to find another Finance Minister to nationalize the banks<sup>98</sup>.’

However, Indira Gandhi could in the words of Pai Panandiker and Mehra could ‘short circuit established procedures’ in due course of time. That was probably the only way for her to assert her power and position. It was in the second period that the term ‘Kitchen Cabinet came into vogue. She in the words of Gujaral, set up a ‘Kitchen Cabinet’ to bypass the Cabinet and other senior leaders of the party. To quote Gujaral,

The Cabinet mostly comprised stalwarts, and Mrs. Gandhi was ill at ease in their company. To bypass them and to short circuit the Jha headed secretariat she had issued an order that all official papers were to submitted to her through Mr. Dinesh Singh who had been promoted to the rank of Minister of State in the Foreign Office. Informally she instructed her staff to refer the parliamentary work to me in the first instance. The “Kitchen Cabinet”- as it came to be called, was not a cohesive structured group. Within the amorphous body of this “Kitchen Cabinet” there were some distinct groupings. Ashok Mehta

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<sup>97</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 51

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p. 51.

and C Subramaniam occupied high positions in the government. She consulted them separately on matters of administration and politics. Regarding the economic policies, she relied a great deal on Pitamber Pant. For day to day functioning and on party matters she leaned mostly on a group of us three- Dinesh Singh, Uma Shankar Dikshit and myself.<sup>99</sup>

While the division in the Congress Parliamentary Party had deepened in particular since the death of Nehru and the ascendance of syndicates, it became quite apparent subsequently in the manner in which the syndicate and Indira loyalists tried to balance each other within the party organization and the Cabinet. In October 1967, S. Nijalingappa was chosen as the party President. He had been a prominent syndicate member and his election had been a part of strategy to contain Indira Gandhi. Further two prominent syndicate members Kamraj as well as S.K. Patil returned to the Lok Sabha by 1969. The trend strengthened the grip of the syndicate on the party. By 1969, the polarization of the Congress party between those who supported Nehruvian Socialism and those who supported free market principles became complete. The issue of the nationalization of banks became the axis of polarization. While Morarji Desai favored social control, Indira Gandhi intended nationalisation of banks. The Congress Working Committee had endorsed the Desai line in 1967 and when the issue was put up before the Cabinet, most members favoured a nationalization of a few banks only. Ananth notes,

In the process, the battle that was essentially between personalities was given an ideological coating. For the first time in few years after Indira's ascendancy, the war seemed to be between those who wanted the Congress party (and the government) to continue with the Nehruvian socialist course and those who stood for free market principles. Indira became the leaders of the socialists and Morarji Desai, backed by the syndicate, advocate free market principles.<sup>100</sup>

The untimely death of President Zakir Hussain brought Indira Gandhi and the Party

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<sup>99</sup> I. K. Gujral (1987). *The Prime Minister's Office : Emergence of a Power Centre*. The Hindustan Times, 14 August.

<sup>100</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 82

leadership in direct confrontation. While she proposed the name of Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy as the party's candidate for the post of President, she could feel that a syndicate candidate might be a ploy for her own marginalization and an eventual ouster from the party and the post. In this context, Pai Panandiker and Mehra writes

Mrs. Gandhi was convinced after the Bangalore session of the Congress Working Committee in 1969 that the Syndicate was out to rid her of the prime ministership. The nomination of the Presidential candidature of Sanjeev Reddy against her wish at Bangalore signaled a threat to her position.<sup>101</sup>

Limaye argues that in order to wrest control of the party Indira Gandhi strategically went ahead with the nationalization of fourteen major banks, abolition of privy purses and ensured the victory of V.V. Giri in the election of the President of India against the nomination of her own party candidate.<sup>102</sup>

In order to secure popular appeal she planned to go ahead with the nationalization of banks, and consequently, she had to strip off Morarji Desai on the ground that it was untenable on the part of a conservative Finance Minister to implement bank nationalization. Chandra notes that immediately after assuming the Finance portfolio Indira Gandhi announced the nationalization of fourteen major banks through an ordinance promulgated by the President.<sup>103</sup> Immediately thereafter, she announced her plan to withdraw the special privileges of the princes. The move received popular support of the masses, even the political left enthusiastically supported the decisions.<sup>104</sup> While Indira Gandhi filed the nomination papers of the party's candidate for the post of President, she refused to issue a party whip supporting Reddy on the ground that the Syndicate had struck a secret deal with communal forces for her ouster from the party.<sup>105</sup> In the words of Chandra, 'She now, more or less openly, supported Giri by refusing to issue a party whip in favor of Reddy and asking

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<sup>101</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 52.

<sup>102</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p.52.

<sup>103</sup> Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee. (1999). *India after Independence*. New Delhi: Viking.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p..235

<sup>105</sup> Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee. (1999). *India after Independence*. New Delhi: Viking, p. 235

Congress MPs and MLAs to vote freely according to their conscience.<sup>106</sup>

V.V. Giri won the election with a narrow margin owing to the support of around one-third of the MLAs and MPs from the Congress party who defied their organization and supported Giri. With this, Indira Gandhi was expelled from the party for violating disciplinary norms of the party and the Congress party split into two.

The Syndicate dominated Congress came to be known Congress (O) while the one led by Indira Gandhi was called Congress (R). In all, 220 MPs of the original Congress party went with Congress (R) while the Syndicate supported Congress (O) had the backing of 68 MPs. Indira Gandhi's Congress party held the AICC meet on 22 November 1969 and removed Nilanjigappa from the post of President and elected Jagjivan Ram to the post of President. This allowed her to firmly establish her grip over both the party and the government. The two communist parties, Muslim League and the DMK extended their support to the Congress party so that it secures parliamentary majority. Limaye argues that the period from 1968 also witnessed the beginning of the Haksar Era. Indira Gandhi in 1968 reorganized the Prime Minister's Secretariat and appointed P.N. Haksar her Principal Private Secretary. The character of the Prime Minister's Secretariat underwent a drastic transformation and it emerged as one of the most powerful bloc that corroded the autonomy of the government departments. In the words of Limaye, 'Cabinet Secretariat became a cipher, the concept of neutrality of civil service was attacked and the independence of the judges was undermined. The Prime Minister's Secretariat became a parallel government'.<sup>107</sup>

With the ascendance of Haksar, the PMS assumed a more than significant role and the Kitchen Cabinet lost its relevance. People like I.K. Gujaral and Dinesh Singh became marginal in the scheme of things. Indira Gandhi was mostly advised by Haksar on major decisions like nationalization of banks and abolition of privy purses. Her ministers remained quite subsidiary in all this. In Ananth's words,

...the manner in which Indira went ahead in asserting her own position against the party bosses showed that she was anything but a dumb doll. Her strategy, in that context was devised by her aide in the Prime

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<sup>106</sup> Bipan Chandra, Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee. (1999). *India after Independence*. New Delhi: Viking, p. 236

<sup>107</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. 125

Minister's Secretariat, P.N. Haksar.<sup>108</sup>

Gujral, who handled several key portfolios as minister of state during this period, also argues that Haksar occupied a vital position among her key advisors. For almost all crucial decisions preceding the Indo-Pak war, Indira Gandhi depended upon the advice, guidance and perception of Haksar. With the ascendance of Sanjay Gandhi, Haskar was shunted to the Planning Commission of India as both of them developed open differences<sup>109</sup>. Commenting on the functioning of PMS during the Haksar period, Austin notes,

Haksar's and the PMS's authority relegated the Cabinet Secretariat and its Secretary to near obscurity, the former having taken over the latter's function as coordinator of cabinet business on its way to the Prime Minister. This also greatly reduced the Cabinet Secretary's responsibility –if not his authority as the senior most civil servant and head of the civil service- for processing senior civil service appointments on their way to the Cabinets...Downgrading the Cabinet Secretary's position was part of Mrs Gandhi's personalization of power.<sup>110</sup>

## **Majoritarian Parliamentarianism, Phase II: The 1970s and 1980s**

The Lok Sabha barely objected to her aggrandizement of power, and with her ministers subdued, constitutional power migrated from the voter to his legislator to the council of ministers and then to the Prime Minister. Mrs. Gandhi had gone from vulnerability to the political system to mastery of it. The consequences progressively would become apparent.<sup>111</sup>

-Granville Austin.

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<sup>108</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 92

<sup>109</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p.51

<sup>110</sup> Granville Austin. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: A History of the Indian Experience*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p. 195



The party split in 1969, according to Rudolphs, triggered the de-institutionalization of the party. Indira Gandhi's ideological stance and policy interventions were instrumental in the struggle for power within the party. They were not aimed at the organizational or electoral revival of the party. Simultaneously, the rise of plebiscitary and personal politics under Indira Gandhi resulted in the marginalization of an organization, 'capable of articulating with society, serving and leading the political community and fighting elections...As the myth of Indira Gandhi began to inspire and diminish India, the party that she led lost its institutional coherence and elan'.<sup>112</sup> Limaye argues that the split resulted in destruction of Cabinet balance and the Cabinet members became submissive. In his forceful words, consequent to the split, Indira Gandhi gained complete control over the party. Her populist measures and confrontation with judiciary over the abolition of privy purses brought her tremendous popular support. Bolstered with such support, she dissolved the Lok Sabha prematurely soon after its winter session in 1970 and called for an early election. Somnath Chatterjee reflects on the development of the period and writes that:

the nationalization of banks in July 1969 which was acclaimed by all sections of people, met with the same fate and was declared ultra vires. Indira Gandhi, thereupon, decided to dissolve the Fourth Lok Sabha to seek a fresh mandate from the people, nearly fourteen months before its term was due to get over. She declared that reactionary forces were obstructing progressive measures only because her government wanted to ensure a better life for the vast majority of the people. As a result, public support for Indira Gandhi reached an all time high.<sup>113</sup>

To re-iterate, the position of Indira Gandhi became uncontested both within the Cabinet as well as within the Congress. Limaye argues that, in all likelihood, the decision to advance the Lok Sabha election was not put up before the Cabinet for consideration. In fact, she had become so powerful by then that none of her ministers could have possibly raised an objection to the proposal.<sup>114</sup> The phenomenal victory of

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<sup>112</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (1987). *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of The Indian State*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, pp. 134-135.

<sup>113</sup> Somnath Chatterjee. (2010). *Keeping the Faith: Memoirs of a Parliamentarian*. Noida: Harper Collins.

<sup>114</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. 127.

Indira Gandhi led Congress established her supremacy in the party as well as government.

While Indira Gandhi became the undisputed and uncontested leader of her party, the opposition lost the edge in the House. CPI emerged as the principal opposition party with just 25 members. The absence of any challenger within the party, apart from a weak opposition in the parliament, phenomenally strengthened the position of PM vis-a-vis her Cabinet colleagues. Paul Brass notes that the victory of Indira Gandhi with two third majority in the Lok Sabha, unquestionably established her as the preeminent leader of the country.<sup>115</sup> The only two significant personalities who remained with Indira Gandhi, Jagjivan Ram and Y.B. Chavan had become docile. Jagjivan Ram was made the party president while Chavan was shifted from the Ministry of Home Affairs to the Ministry of Finance and eventually to the Ministry of External Affairs. The party completely lost its control over the government. The party president remained a marginal figure in the affairs of government. Unlike the previous decades,

The office of the Congress President lost its importance. The Cabinet consultation became desultory...whenever, Mrs Gandhi sought of Y. B. Chavan's or Jagjivan Ram's advice, they were extremely reticent. "You know best", they would say in a docile manner. There was no Patel, or Rajaji or Azad or Morarji in the Cabinet.<sup>116</sup>

Shortly after the ascendance of Indira Gandhi in 1971, the Indian Army defeated the Pakistan Army in the third India Pakistan war which contributed greatly to further enhance her stature and credibility.

## **Indira Gandhi-II: Towards Prime Ministerial Dominance**

Gandhi could use the recently gained popularity during the legislative assembly polls held in 1972 to ensure that the Congress (R) could gain large majorities in most of the state assemblies. Consequent to the 1972 Assembly polls, Indira Gandhi could consolidate her position both in the centre as well as states as her dependence on other parties to secure parliamentary majority (as fallout of the 1969) came to an end. Ananth writes,

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<sup>115</sup> Paul R. Brass. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 39.

<sup>116</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. 127.

the point is, after the 1972 round of Assembly elections, the Congress was in power across the country... And by now, she went about setting up her own man as Chief Ministers in states, a definite shift from the times, not in the distant past, when the chief ministers and party leaders from the states played a major role in her election as the prime minister.<sup>117</sup>

Brass argues that between 1972 and 1975 Indira Gandhi established a definite strategy of rulership that remained highly personalized and centralized. This resulted in an unprecedented assertion of executive power in the Indian political system<sup>118</sup>. She firmly established her personal control and dominance over the organizational wing of the party as well as the ministerial wing of the party. This was done through two significant strategies: first, by centralizing and personalizing the power to nominate CMs in different states; and second, by accruing the power to herself to nominate different office bearers in the higher positions of party. The centralized and authoritarian control of the party led to the relinquishment of the democratic procedure for recruitment within the party and instead the choice made personally by Indira Gandhi was given supremacy. The mode of organizational election was certainly discarded and disregarded. Brass remarks,

Unlike her father, who preferred to deal with strong Chief Ministers in control of their legislative parties and state party organizations, Mrs Gandhi set out to remove every congress chief minister who had an independent base and to replace each one of them with chief ministers personally loyal to her and without an independent base.<sup>119</sup>

Commenting upon the trend towards centralizations of power during 1971-77, Austin maintains that from 1971 onwards Indira Gandhi moved away from constitutionalism towards absolutism. Further he writes,

(during this period) Owing their elections to her, chief ministers depended on her continuing favor. And she appeared to be deliberately

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<sup>117</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 113

<sup>118</sup> Paul R. Brass. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 40

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, p.40

manipulating Congress factionalism to prevent a healthy consolidation of power in the states. Congress party officials were in a similar situation, and she had fulsome supporters Shankar Dayal Sharma and Dev Kant Barooah elected party president at different times.<sup>120</sup>

According to the Rudolph, by 1974 the congress-led governments, both at the centre as well as states, had squandered the mandate and the country was in crisis. The government rather than actively pursuing the agenda of pro-poor policies and distributive policies involved itself in the crushing of railway strike in 1974 and faced Jayprakash Narayan's movement for total revolution.<sup>121</sup>

Indira Gandhi imposed the emergency in June 1975 which was a logical corollary to the deinstitutionalisation of the party, since its split in 1969. In their words, 'the imposition of an authoritarian emergency regime in June 1975 signaled both the deinstitutionalization of the Congress party and the radical erosion of Mrs. Gandhi's plebiscitary support'.<sup>122</sup> As far as the impact of the emergency on the cabinet system is concerned, Pai Panandiker and Mehra argue that it was a moment of the complete eclipse of the cabinet system in India. The Cabinet ministers lost their authority and became submissive. In fact, they became dependent upon the unconstitutional authority of Indira Gandhi's son Sanjay Gandhi and other bureaucrats for clearances.<sup>123</sup> The style of the functioning of Cabinet during this period, Pai Panandiker and Mehra point out, was one where more decisions were taken outside the Cabinet than by the Cabinet, to the extent that some prominent ministers of certain states enjoyed more power and influence in decision making than the Cabinet minister. It eventually led to the diminution of the Cabinet as a formal institution of policy making and governance in the country.<sup>124</sup> Mankekar and Mankekar write,

She never took her Cabinet into confidence but functioned through a coterie. At Cabinet meetings there was rarely, if ever, a worthwhile

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<sup>120</sup> Granville Austin. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: A History of the Indian Experience*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 194

<sup>121</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (1987). *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of The Indian State*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, p.136

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, p.137

<sup>123</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 56

<sup>124</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 54.

debate or discussion. At the most, some exchange of views might take place at the meetings of the Political Affairs Committee. She never let two senior ministers get close to each other- a postmaster at 'divide and rule.'<sup>125</sup>

This was also apparent through the manner in which the decision to impose emergency was taken and the way it was promulgated. Scholars working on the period agree that the decision to impose the emergency was taken without consultation of either the Cabinet or the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs.<sup>126</sup> Even the PMS and significant ministries like the Ministry of Home Affairs were not consulted in the decision making process. Mankekar and Mankekar write, '.. it is clearly established that the proclamation of Emergency was signed by the President before the Cabinet approved of it, in contravention of Article 74 of the Indian constitution.'<sup>127</sup>

Limaye notes that the decision was taken by Indira Gandhi only in consultation with Siddharth Shankar Ray, the then Chief Minister of West Bengal and Om Mehta, Minister of State for Home Affairs.<sup>128</sup> Home Minister Brahmananad Reddy was informed about the decision once it had been already communicated to the President. The President, Fakkrudin Ali Ahmed, signed the proclamation around mid-night and the Cabinet meeting was convened early next morning to inform it about the proclamation of emergency. The meeting which lasted just for fifteen minutes ratified the decision of promulgation.<sup>129</sup> Based on his assessment of the sequence of events leading to the ratification of promulgation of emergency by the Cabinet, Limaye

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<sup>125</sup> D.R. Mankekar and Kamla Mankekar. (1977). *Decline and Fall of Indira Gandhi*. New Delhi: Vision Books, p.24

<sup>126</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson; I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications; D.R. Mankekar and Kamla Mankekar. (1977). *Decline and Fall of Indira Gandhi*. New Delhi: Vision Books. V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers; Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers.

<sup>127</sup> D.R. Mankekar and Kamla Mankekar. (1977). *Decline and Fall of Indira Gandhi*. New Delhi: Vision Books, p. 15

<sup>128</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p.54

<sup>129</sup> D.R. Mankekar and Kamla Mankekar. (1977). *Decline and Fall of Indira Gandhi*. New Delhi: Vision Books, p. 14

writes, 'how the essence of the Cabinet Government has been whittled down steadily, and the senior Cabinet ministers reduced to the position of yes men'.<sup>130</sup>

In a similar vein, Pai Panandiker and Mehra thus write, 'The emergency saw the complete eclipse of the cabinet system. Most Cabinet ministers waited for signals and clearances from the unconstitutional authority of Mrs. Gandhi's younger son, Sanjay Gandhi, and several relatively junior bureaucrats. Indira became India.'<sup>131</sup>

During the period of emergency two noteworthy reshuffle that Indira Gandhi made were: the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Gujral who had been uncomfortable with Sanjay Gandhi was moved to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. V.C. Shukla, who was given the charge of this ministry, had to deal with the press and remained most controversial. This constituted one major area of investigation during the Shah Commission Enquiry.<sup>132</sup> Bansi Lal, who was made the Minister of Defense in December 1975, replaced Swarn Singh and he along with Sanjay Gandhi, R.K. Dhavan and Om Mehta played the most significant role in making the list of people to be arrested while Indira Gandhi was busy preparing the presidential proclamation on June 24 and 25, 1975.<sup>133</sup>

As argued previously, during the initial years of her first and second tenure as PM, Indira Gandhi used to rely upon her 'Kitchen Cabinet' for advice to balance her Cabinet colleagues. With the ascendance of Haksar era and gradual centralization of power in the PMS, the 'Kitchen Cabinet' was marginalized. Brass notes that the PMS which was a significant source of authority since the days of Shastri expended its ambit even during Indira Gandhi's tenure. Nonetheless, its role declined considerably during the Emergency, 'when Mrs. Gandhi came to rely heavily for both policy advice and political counsel upon her son, Sanjay'.<sup>134</sup> Though this trend had started by early 1970s, subsequently, Indira Gandhi came to rely even more upon the advice of Sanjay Gandhi in running the affairs of government. The institution of Cabinet stood at the margins in as far as the making of key political decisions is concerned. The real

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<sup>130</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. 132.

<sup>131</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p.56

<sup>132</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 153

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, p. 152

<sup>134</sup> Paul R. Brass. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.48

power then, Austin says, shifted from the PMS to PMH, the Prime Minister's House.<sup>135</sup> Commenting upon this shift of power and the functioning of Cabinet during the Emergency period, Mankekar and Mankekar write,

‘Finally, it was the Sanjay caucus that ruled the country and gave shape to the Emergency regime, for good or ill. The caucus consisted of, besides Sanjay Gandhi, Defence Minister Bansi Lal, Information and Broadcasting Minister Vidya Charan Shukla, Minister of State for Home Affairs Om Mehta and Rajendra Kumar Dhavan’.<sup>136</sup>

The eclipse of Cabinet became evident not just in the manner in which the emergency was imposed but also in the decision to dissolve the Lok Sabha and hold general elections. Her unilateral decision surprised even her Cabinet colleagues.<sup>137</sup> Austin supports the claim, based on his interview with Jagjivan Ram, who admitted that the Cabinet was informed but not consulted before calling the election.<sup>138</sup> Indira Gandhi called an emergency meeting of the Cabinet to inform about the dissolution and got it approved.<sup>139</sup>

### **Morarji Desai and Charan Singh: Restoring Collegiality**

In conclusion, I may sum up my own appraisal of these last twenty months of Janata rule. I believe that on the plane of governmental performance, the Janata record is quite satisfactory, even though it may not be spectacular. It is much better than earlier government's. But on the plane of political behavior –individual as well as collective–the Janata has failed to inspire confidence.<sup>140</sup>

In the general elections held in 1977, the congress incurred a resounding defeat and the Janta Party came to power. Janta Party descended from the Janta Front that had been led by Morarji Desai and JP Narayan. The Janta Front had challenged Indira

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<sup>135</sup> Granville Austin. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: A History of the Indian Experience*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 193.

<sup>136</sup> D.R. Mankekar and Kamla Mankekar. (1977). *Decline and Fall of Indira Gandhi*. New Delhi: Vision Books pp.24,25

<sup>137</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 185

<sup>138</sup> Granville Austin. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: A History of the Indian Experience*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.304

<sup>139</sup> Ibid

<sup>140</sup> L K Advani's letter to Morarji Desai, offering his resignation from the government. Cited in Arun Gandhi. (1983). *The Morarji Papers: Fall of The Janata Government*. New Delhi: Vision Books, p.223

Gandhi during the months leading to Emergency. The Janta Party declared itself formed on 23 January 1977.<sup>141</sup> The party was formed through the merger of four distinct parties, the Congress (O) the Bhartiya Jan Sangh (BJS), the Bhartiya Lok Dal and the Socialist Party. It also included few prominent former MPs who were earlier with the Congress but rebelled against the party subsequent to the proclamation of Emergency and were put under detention during that period. These included Chandra Shekhar, Mohan Dharia, Kishen Kant and Ram Dhan. Three other parties, the Congress for Democracy (CFD) led by Jagjivan Ram, Akali Dal, and Dravida Munetra Kazhagam (henceforth DMK) had a formal alliance while the CPI (M) had a seat adjusting arrangement, with the Janta Party during the 1977 elections. Morarji Desai was made the Chairman while Charan Singh was made the Deputy Chairman of the Party. The party had three General Secretaries drawn from the BJS, Socialist Party and the Congress dissident respectively. They were L.K. Advani, Surendra Mohan and Ram Dhan. The Janta Party also constituted a National Committee of 27 members which was entrusted to make key decisions. Among others it included Ashok Mehta, A.B. Vajpayee, Biju Patnaik, C.B. Gupta, Chandra Shekhar, H.M. Patel, Sanjiva Reddy, Nanaji Deshmukh, N.G. Goray, Karpoori Thakur and Shanti Bhushan.<sup>142</sup>

The Janta Party was the first coalition government at the centre since independence. The Janta Party had its genesis in the coalition of 1967 which was premised on the ideology of 'anti -Congressism'. Barring the exception of the BJS, all other parties that came to form the Janta Party had formed an alliance in 1967 and the coalition did phenomenally well, both in the parliamentary as well as in the assembly elections. However, the alliance of 1977 was fundamentally different in character as all the four parties that forged together to form a single entity and committed themselves to the agenda of restoration of democracy. The party fought election on the BLD's election symbol, *Chakra Haldhar*.

The fractions that constituted the Janta Party, in Rudolph's words, were a diverse lot and perpetually remained in conflict with each other as with the Congress. Despite the diversity within, the Janta Party could win the election and formed the government too. However, it remained fragmented since the beginning. The major issue that

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<sup>141</sup> Granville Austin. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: A History of the Indian Experience*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 397.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.



divided the party since commencement of the government and which eventually triggered its downfall was the choice of PM. There were three claimants for this position- Morarji Desai (Congress O), Charan Singh (BLD) and Jagjivan Ram (CFD). The decision in regard to nomination of PM did not follow the voting procedure in the Janta Parliamentary Party instead was based on the personal assessment of the situation made by Kriplani and JP. Both of them cited administrative experience and personal integrity of Desai as the major reason for nominating him as the leader of the parliamentary party.<sup>143</sup> Rudolphs argue that Jansangh faction preferred Ram over Charan Singh and the latter fearing the prospect of the former to be the PM wrote to JP in support of Desai.<sup>144</sup> Guajral too maintains that the Jan Sangh faction favored the name of Jagjivan Ram.<sup>145</sup> Singh's letter to JP endorsing Desai's name turned the balance in his favour.

Though Singh had considerable political experience, he entered the Lok Sabha for the first time in 1977. Previously he had been the CM of UP and had been an active political leader of the state. In the new government, Ram was appointed as the Deputy PM and was given the charge of the Ministry of Defense and Singh was appointed as the Minister of Home Affairs. Rudolphs write,

The choice was not achieved by the usual democratic or formal processes within the Janta parliamentary party that tested the support of the contending candidates. While evading such procedures saved the party from starting its rule with a highly acrimonious controversy, it merely postponed the moment of reckoning.<sup>146</sup>

Though Singh was assigned the ministry of his choice yet Desai refused to nominate him as the Deputy PM. In this regard, Limaye writes,

while Morarji honored his supporters' commitment about the Home department, he refused to name Charan Singh as Deputy Prime Minister. He was prepared to make him one of the two Deputy Prime

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<sup>143</sup> Sanjay Ruparelia. (2015). *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 77

<sup>144</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (1987). *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of The Indian State*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, p.169

<sup>145</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p.113

<sup>146</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (1987). *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of The Indian State*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, p. 169

Ministers, the other post going to Jagjivan Ram . He wanted to adopt the same tactics as Nehru did on G B Pant's death when the former changed the practice of having a single deputy leader and suggested that there should be two instead of one. A single Deputy Leader or Deputy Prime Minister would acquire status. Two persons holding the same post would effectively denigrate the post.<sup>147</sup>

Being denied the opportunity, Singh turned bitter and eventually unseated the PM. Based on the interview of Chandrashekhar, President of the Janta Party, Austin also arrives at the conclusion that the decision by Kriplani and JP to nominate Morarji as the PM created huge discontent, particularly among the senior leaders of the party and it continued till the fall of government.<sup>148</sup> Desai belonged to the Congress (O) faction whose contribution to the parliamentary party remained far below than BLD and the BJS. The socialists had (only marginally) lesser MPs than the Congress (O). It made the position of the PM quite vulnerable and provided Singh as well as Ram enough space to maneuver any possible takeover of the government. The coalition was fragile as it consisted of factions with diverse ideological aspirations and with contradictory social bases. Further the disproportionate distribution of the portfolios among the factions in Janta Party aggravated the rivalry among them and triggered personality clashes since its inception. While the Congress (O) contributed 18 per cent of the seats, it got the highest number of portfolios. The Socialists and the Jan Sangh got three each and the BLD got four ministries. One Cabinet berth was given to the SAD. The Janta government started off with dispute among faction over the distribution of Cabinet berths by the PM. In the words of Ruparelia, 'personal ambition and partisan rivalry beset the Janta government from the beginning'.<sup>149</sup> The failure of the Janta Party to perceive and present themselves as a single and unified Cabinet emerged due to two significant problems: first, selection of the council of minister in consonance with the principle of proportional distribution of ministries among the diverse factions, and second, the diverse social and ideological rootedness of the different factions.. For instance, Finance Minister H.M. Patel, coming from the Swatantrata Party had diametrically opposite views on economic policies as compared to socialists

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<sup>147</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p.138.

<sup>148</sup> Granville Austin. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: A History of the Indian Experience*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.401.

<sup>149</sup> Sanjay Ruparelia. (2015). *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 77.

like George Fernandes and key Jan Sangh members like L.K. Advani and A.B. Vajpayee. The Jan Sangh's ideological predisposition towards Hindu nationalism put them at odds with the Socialists as well as other major factions of the Janta Party. Moreover, as Austin notes that, 'caste origin inflamed several relationships, with Charan Singh, a Jat from Meerut, referring privately to Jagjivan Ram as that 'Chamar''.<sup>150</sup> The Rudolphs argue that though the contradictions and cleavages facing the Janta Party had not been an exception to that party alone and Congress also had to deal with such contradictions but unlike the Janta Party, the Congress could contain it to a large extent because of its consolidation since independence.<sup>151</sup> In their words,

Congress's long tenure as the majority national centrist party was in part a measure of its capacity to handle such contradictions. Compared with Congress, with its nationalist heritage and organizational legacy, Janta was disadvantaged by the negative and fragmented circumstances of its origin.<sup>152</sup>

**Table 3.3: Name of leader, Number of Seats, Percentage of seats and Number of Cabinet Ministers of different factions in Janta Party**

Janta Faction	Leader	No. of seats	Per cent of seat (round off figure)	Number of cabinet ministers*
<b>BJS</b>	A. B. Vajpayee,	90	30	3
<b>BLD</b>	Charan Singh,	68	23	4
<b>Congress (O)</b>	Morarji Desai	55	18	5
<b>Socialists</b>	George Fernandes,	51	17	3
<b>Congress for Democracy</b>	Jagjivan Ram,	28	9	2
<b>Dissident Congressmen</b>	Chandra Shekhar,	6	2	1
<b>Total</b>	-	298	100	19**

Source: Author's own compilation. Based on Sanjay Ruparelia. (2015). *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press p. 74-75. V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 197.

\*The initial composition of the Janta Party Cabinet. \*\*It also included one member from the SAD (Prakash Singh Badal)

As Chandrashekhar became the President of the Janta Party, he attempted to reorganise the organizational wing of the party to ensure better coordination between the government wing and itself.. The main objective was to review the implementation

<sup>150</sup> Granville Austin. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: A History of the Indian Experience*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, P.402

<sup>151</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (1987). *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of The Indian State*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, p. 168

<sup>152</sup> Ibid, p.168.

of the policies and programmes of the government. Chandrashekhar selected forty-three members for the Working Committee and the party also nominated three General Secretaries drawn from the Socialist Party, Jan Sangh and the BLD. They were Madhu Limaye, Nanaji Deshmukh and Rabi Ray respectively.<sup>153</sup> The relationship between the two wings of party never remained smooth and in Austin words, ‘the organizational wing of the party increasingly found itself at odds with and ignored by ‘government wing’, much in the manner of contention between the two Congress wings in the late forties and early fifties’<sup>154</sup> Rivalries among leaders and mutually conflicting interest of party leaders of different factions across states made the task of coordination between the party and the government uneven. The mutually conflicting interest of the party central command and local leaderships of different states made the whole affair of coordination dysfunctional.<sup>155</sup>

Given the nature of Janata Party led coalition, Desai’s Cabinet was unique in terms of its composition as well as the position of PM. The Cabinet consisted of many senior leaders who had been in the opposition since 1950s as well as senior leaders like Jagjivan Ram who had been in the Congress since the days of the making of the Constituent Assembly. Morarji Desai himself had been known as the conservative face of the Congress and had worked with all the PMs till then, barring the exception of Lal Bahadur Shastri. He had been the Chief Minister of Bombay State and had worked with Nehru as his Finance Minister from 1958 to 1963. The forging of alliance among the opposition parties to constitute the Janata Party enhanced the position of senior leaders from respective factions of the party. Consequently, most members of the Cabinet owed their nomination to their faction of origin and primarily remained loyal to the faction and their leadership that they belonged to. Pai Panandiker and Mehra argue that none of them owed their position to the PM and this had an impact on the functioning of the Cabinet. However, in their assessment, the Janata government was markedly different from the previous Congress government<sup>156</sup> because ‘For the first time since the emergence of Mrs. Gandhi as “the single Leader”

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<sup>153</sup> Granville Austin. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: A History of the Indian Experience*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 405.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, p.405.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, p.405.

<sup>156</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p.58.

and the consequent decline of the Cabinet System, the Cabinet again functioned as a collegial decision-making body'.<sup>157</sup>

In their opinion, despite the personality clashes and overambitious zeal of his colleagues that severely undermined the functioning of Cabinet, decision-making in the Desai Cabinet was collegial. Desai upheld the right and prerogative of Cabinet as an institution. This view is in conformity to the assertions made by Desai himself. In Desai's words,

I don't think in any other Cabinet, decisions were unanimously taken as during the Janata term. I have permitted the ministers to have free discussion but at the end of it the decision should be unanimous. Even in the matters proposed by me if I found that a majority of the Cabinet did not agree I withdrew the proposal without hesitation. Others therefore were obliged to the same.<sup>158</sup>

However, a contrary view point is also present which argues that though there was a surge in participation in the Cabinet meetings yet Morarji had a complex leadership style. Based on his assessment of Nirmal Mukarji's<sup>159</sup> private papers, Austin argues that Desai had a varying leadership style from accommodating his colleagues to being 'unbending and inflexible' towards some other colleagues and this leadership style eventually isolated him.<sup>160</sup> Limaye argues that though the PMO during the Janata tenure was not as overwhelming as it was during Indira Gandhi's tenure, yet its interference remained considerable in the functioning of ministries.<sup>161</sup> In his words, 'file continued to go to the new Prime Minister's Office as in his old days'<sup>162</sup>. Centralization of power in the PMO remained a reality even during the Janata regime

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<sup>157</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p.58.

<sup>158</sup> Arun Gandhi. (1983). *The Morarji Papers: Fall of The Janata Government*. New Delhi: Vision Books, p. 58.

<sup>159</sup> Nirmal Mukharjee was the Cabinet Secretary during the tenure of Morarji Desai.

<sup>160</sup> Granville Austin. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: A History of the Indian Experience*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 404.

<sup>161</sup> During the tenure of Morarji Desai, the nomenclature of the PMS was changed to the Prime Minister's Office.

<sup>162</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. 141.

though it was much modest as compared to the Indira Gandhi regime.<sup>163</sup> Sethi remarks,

Although Morarji Desai tried to undo the concentration of power created by the Haksar-Indira regime, by dismantling the parts of the PMS, he was not prepared to hand over the respective ministers and institutions decisions which constitutionally and politically belonged to them. He could have done this by refusing to accept files he had no reason to see. Instead he signed many such files at the dictates of his Principal Secretary V Shankar, because within the system it was impossible to do otherwise.<sup>164</sup>

Though Desai announced his firm intention to divest the PMS of its 'excessive power' and convert it into a smaller unit yet all he could succeed in doing, 'was changing its name from 'Secretariat to 'Office', and reducing the staff marginally from 229 to 211.'<sup>165</sup> Limaye argues that Desai's leadership remained inconsistent in regard to functioning of the Cabinet. He conceded more autonomy to the departments and ministries under the charge of stalwart leaders like Jagjivan Ram, L.K. Advani, A.B. Vajpayee or Charan Singh. The PMO though interfered and influenced the decision makings of the departments being led by, 'inexperienced, weak and incompetent Ministers.'<sup>166</sup> The political drama that eventually led to the fall of Janta Party began in 1978 just a year after the party completed a year in power. Charan Singh embarked upon his strategy to dislodge Deasai from the post of PM with the intention to replace him. In Rudolph's view, initially the consensus on national leadership and state governments were violated primarily to promote the factional interests. Then, the institution of Cabinet was put to question when the Charan Singh's speeches, writings and conduct violated the principle of collective responsibility of the Cabinet. Further, the quest for a 'suitable institutional and legal response to the emergency regime' became an instrument of personal advancement in politics<sup>167</sup>. Singh challenged

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<sup>163</sup> From the time of Desai, the PMS was renamed as PMO. See section on Morarji Desai in present chapter.

<sup>164</sup> Cited in Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p.141.

<sup>165</sup> P.N. Dhar. *Indira Gandhi and the 'Emergency' and Indian Democracy*. (2000). New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.144.

<sup>166</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p.141

<sup>167</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (1987). *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of The Indian State*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, p. 173.

Desai's leadership through a letter that was leaked to the press in which he charged, 'Kanti Desai, the Prime minister's son and personal aid, had used his father's position improperly or illegally to further his own interests'.<sup>168</sup> As per Arun Gandhi's assessment, between March 11, 1978 and March 22, 1978 around half a dozen letters were exchanged between Desai and Singh but it couldn't resolve the point of contention. Though the letters were marked as 'Secret' and 'Top Secret' yet it got leaked to the press by Singh to corner Desai.<sup>169</sup> However, the first serious crack appeared on the differences of approach between Desai and Singh over the government's policy response to Indira Gandhi's abuse of power during the Emergency. The rift in the Cabinet widened during June 1978. A Special Wing of CBI was established by Singh to do the follow up on the Shah Commission of enquiry on excesses during the Emergency. Desai appointed a Cabinet sub-committee composed of the PM himself, Shanti Bhushan and Singh to coordinate the prosecution of Indira Gandhi.<sup>170</sup> Austin writes, 'Singh claimed that Desai had "felt it below dignity" to consult him on this'.<sup>171</sup> Singh assumed Desai's concern for a correct procedure in this regard as a cover up for inaction and circumvented the principle of collective responsibility, challenging the PM for ordering the immediate arrest Indira Gandhi on June 28. The Cabinet endorsed Desai's decision to seek resignation of Singh and Raj Narain.<sup>172</sup> However, Singh re-joined the Cabinet within six months as Minister of Finance on January 24, 1979. Raj Narain was still kept out of the ministry. Both Singh as well as his arch rival Ram were made Deputy PM in order to ensure stability of government and maintain a balance in the Cabinet. Subsequently, Narain resigned from the Janata Party itself which triggered mass defection from the party, reducing its numbers to about two hundred in a House of 539 members. Towards the beginning of the Monsoon session of Parliament in July 1979 Congress (I) and the Congress Party led by Y.B. Chavan brought in the motion of No Confidence against the Desai government. Under pressure, owing to series of resignations of his Cabinet colleagues and fellow parliamentarians, Desai resigned before the motion of No

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<sup>168</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (1987). *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of The Indian State*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, p.173.

<sup>169</sup> Arun Gandhi. (1983). *The Morarji Papers: Fall of The Janata Government*. New Delhi: Vision Books, p.215

<sup>170</sup> Granville Austin. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: A History of the Indian Experience*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.459

<sup>171</sup> Ibid, p.459

<sup>172</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (1987). *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of The Indian State*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, p. 175.

Confidence brought against him was put to vote on July 15, 1979. Desai sent two letters to the President Reddy: in the first, he tendered his resignation as the Janata Parliamentary Party had lost the majority in the House but he did not advise the dissolution of the House, and in the second letter he placed his request to allow him to form an alternative government.<sup>173</sup> Reddy invited Chavan, the then Leader of Opposition to form the government but Chavan expressed his inability to form government. Charan Singh was then invited to form the government who did form a minority government on July 28, 1979 with the support of Congress (I). Y.B. Chavan was made the Deputy Prime Minister and AIADMK joined the government later<sup>174</sup>. Though, Charan Singh resigned as the PM on August 20 as the Congress (I) withdrew support, he did not face the vote of confidence listed in the Lok Sabha. Singh advised the President to dissolve the Lok Sabha and hold fresh elections. In the meanwhile, on the resignation of Desai from the post of the Leader of the Janata Parliamentary Party, Ram became the Leader of the Janata Parliamentary Party and he staked his claim to form the government but Reddy turned down his proposal and acting on the advice of Singh dissolved the Lok Sabha. Reddy asked Singh to lead a care taker government and called for a mid-term elections to the Lok Sabha.

The Desai government contributed significantly to the restoration of democracy. Its rise must be placed within the context of the imposition of emergency and therefore, considering the nature and pattern of opposition politics since independence is phenomenal. For a movement that eventually turned into party just after the Emergency was withdrawn, the Janata Party could win a phenomenal 298 seats. In this regard, J. Dasgupta writes,

The phenomenon of rapid graduation of disparate opposition leaders into a fairly coherent team of executive leaders at the federal level indicates the increasing capacity developing in Indian political system for replacing a political leadership that had, for decades, warned the

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<sup>173</sup> Granville Austin. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: A History of the Indian Experience*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 467.

<sup>174</sup> Somnath Chatterjee. (2010). *Keeping the Faith: Memoirs of a Parliamentarian*. Noida: Harper Collins, p.62.



countries of the catastrophes the would follow the end of Congress party dominance.<sup>175</sup>

To establish its democratic credential the government conferred upon the Leader of Opposition in both the Houses of Parliament the status of Cabinet Minister for the first time since independence.<sup>176</sup> However, despite being able to restore democracy during the post Emergency period, the Desai government failed in restoring the primacy of the Cabinet as an institution. In Brass's words, 'the divisions in his government were too great, the collective responsibility of the Cabinet disintegrated in the open warfare...'<sup>177</sup>The plight of Desai's Cabinet and his own assessment of few of his Cabinet colleagues, in particular, the socialists could be best summed up in his words,

These people are followers of Dr Ram Manohar Lohia who was a great person but highly indisciplined. These followers have imbibed only his worst traits. They firmly believe that all party differences should be raised in public and let the public decide whom they want to follow. This way possibly you cannot build a party. There are forums within the party for debate and one should have the magnanimity to concede point of view if a majority of people within the party accept it. Having conceded it one should steadfastly work to make that a success. This was lacking among these Janata members. They took everything to the public and created the impression that the Janata Party lacked not only discipline but cohesiveness. People began to lose faith. And they were justified. How could anyone gain faith in ministers who were always fighting one another in public? Then there were people like Vajpayee and George Fernandes besides Charan Singh and Jagjivan Ram who fancied themselves as Prime Ministers of India. They were quite convinced about it and openly spoke of the possibility.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Jyotirindra Das Gupta (April, 1979). The Janta Phase: Reorganization and Redirection in Indian Politics. *Asian Survey*, 19(4), p.393

<sup>176</sup> Granville Austin. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: A History of the Indian Experience*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 403.

<sup>177</sup> Paul R. Brass. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 48.

<sup>178</sup> Arun Gandhi. (1983). *The Morarji Papers: Fall of The Janata Government*. New Delhi: Vision Books, p. 58.

The elections held in 1980 brought the Congress (I) back to power with 353 seats against 31 seats won by the Janata Party. Charan Singh led Janta (S) could secure 41 seats while the Congress (U) that fought this election in alliance with the Janta (S) won only 13 seats.

### **Indira Gandhi-III: Resurfacing of Prime Ministerial Dominance**

I am not at all a powerful leader because I don't have the powers that most heads of states have, whether it is the President of France or the United States of America..here the Prime Minister is very much entangled in a number of committees...in making of decisions. Of course the ultimate responsibility is the Prime Minister's. You know we have Political Affairs Committee in which are the senior members of the Cabinet and we bring every single political matter before them, which are not party matters. If it is a party matter, then we bring it before what we call our Parliamentary Board of the Party. Of course, some of the people are common; I mean some of the senior ministers are on that Board. For economic policy, we have the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs. So anything on this subject goes to them. So the Prime Minister by herself isn't really that powerful. Then in a country of India's size and diversity, you have to keep so many things in view- religion, language and all these things...<sup>179</sup>

The above views of Indira Gandhi on the question about her being a powerful leader really stands in sharp contrast to the political reality that characterized the decade of 1980s which brought back-to-back majority governments with fragmented and divided opposition. The profound parliamentary strength of the Congress (I) coupled with the deinstitutionalization of the party that has set in since the early 1970s resulted in the shift of balance towards the government thereby strengthening enormously the position and power of the PM. With the split of the Congress party once again in 1978, Indira Gandhi assumed the Presidentship of the party, a strategy that could ensure her command over both the organizational wing of the party as well as over the parliamentary wing of the party. She continued to be the President of the Congress (I) till her assassination in 1984. Her unquestionable pre-eminence in the party shaped to

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<sup>179</sup> Indira Gandhi in an interview with Jean Brook (28 March 1983) of Daily Telegraph, , cited in Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. pp.135-136.

a large extent the pattern of relationship that between the PM and her Cabinet colleagues. Given the fact that most of the stalwarts of the Congress had either left the party or passed away further strengthened the position of PM who had no co-equals in the Cabinet. Most of the Cabinet colleagues owed their position to the Indira Gandhi. In the words of the Rudolphs,

Mrs Gandhi, the author of the 1971 and the 1980 Indira waves that swept the party into power, became the party's principal political resource. In 1972 she sealed the fate of organizational elections...Mrs Gandhi used her plebiscitary endorsement by the people to legitimize her authority in the party. The result sealed the fate of intra party democracy. ..Prior to Mrs Gandhi's assassination in 1984, the balance between the centre and the states and between the parliamentary and organizational wings of the party had been reversed; members of the party's apex bodies as well as Chief Ministers and State Congress Committee Presidnets were nominated from Delhi, not chosen by state party bosses, state legislature parties, or state committees.<sup>180</sup>

Weiner too argues that though during the period 1980-84, the Congress had an overwhelming majority in the parliament as well as it formed comfortable majority governments in many states yet the party became organizationally weak as the PM displayed reluctance to allow any political leader with independent support base to emerge either at the centre or states.<sup>181</sup> B.D. Dua remarks that Indira Gandhi displayed visible reluctance to enable the rise of durable and secure Chief Ministers because of the fear that, 'they would hegemonize the Center and paralyze her dynastic ambitions'.<sup>182</sup>

A striking feature of the Congress Parliamentary Party strength during this time was the numerical dominance that Sanjay Gandhi loyalists enjoyed. Sanjay Gandhi entered the Lok Sabha from Amethi in 1980 and was made as one of the Party's General Secretary on June 13, 1980. As per some estimates no less than 150 out of

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<sup>180</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (1987). *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of The Indian State*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, p. 144.

<sup>181</sup> Myron Weiner. (1983) *The Wounded Tiger: Maintaining India's Democratic*. In Peter Lyon and James Manor (Eds.) *Transfer and Transformation: Political Institutions in the New Commonwealth*. New Hampshire: Leicester University Press, p.57

<sup>182</sup> Bhagwan D. Dua. (1985) *Federalism or Patrimonialism: The Making and Unmaking of Chief Ministers in India*. *Asian Survey*, 25(8), p.797.

353 Congress MPs were considered to be Sanjay loyalists<sup>183</sup>. Prominent Sanjay loyalist MPs included, Bansi Lal, V.C. Shukla, Mohammad Yunus, N.D. Tiwari and V.P. Singh. They were referred to as ‘Sanjay Gandhi’s executor during the Emergency’.<sup>184</sup> The composition of Cabinet too had a deep Sanjay imprint and the criterion adopted by Indira Gandhi remained personal loyalty to her and the endorsement of Sanjay Gandhi. In the words of Ananth, ‘while personal loyalty to Indira Gandhi was a necessary condition for all of them to become ministers, it was also important that Sanjay did not object to them becoming ministers’.<sup>185</sup>

Sanjay loyalists within the Cabinet included Pranab Mukherjee and J.B. Pattnaik. Jagananth Pahadia and Yogendra Makhwana were included as Minister of State and Kamalapati Tripathi who had been a Cabinet Minister during the Sixth Lok Sabha was also present. Indira Gandhi brought in many new faces, which included Giani Zail Singh, R. Venkatramn, Shiv Shankar, B. Shankaranand, Abdul Ghani Khan Chaudhary, Vasant Sathe, P. C. Sethi and Bhishma Narain Singh.<sup>186</sup> Limaye’s remarks on the composition of Cabinet is intriguing as he argues that Indira Gandhi’s Cabinet of 1984 was neither up to the standards of her 1971 nor 1967 Cabinets. He writes,

The caliber of her Cabinet was neither comparable to her 1967 administration nor even to the ministry which she formed in 1971. In the 1967 Cabinet were Morarji Desai, Y B Chavan, Jagjivan Ram and C Subramaniam and in 1971, again, all except Morarji had continued as Ministers. But in 1980 only Sanjay Gandhi’s handpicked men, cronies and light weights secured cabinet appointments. In 1971, her junior team was also good. But this was not so in 1980-84.<sup>187</sup>

In the Post-Janta phase, the return of Indira Gandhi marked the consolidation of Prime Ministerial government once again. This period characterized a repetition of the earlier pattern (as during 1971-77) of Prime ministerial dominance of a weak

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<sup>183</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p.247.

<sup>184</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 247.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, p.248

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, p. 248

<sup>187</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. 134.

Cabinet.<sup>188</sup> It is in this context of the absolute pre-eminence of the Prime Minister that came to engulf the political system that Pai Panandiker and Mehra argue, ‘the Cabinet lost its historic and constitutional role’.<sup>189</sup> Brass argues that during the initial period Indira Gandhi relied upon the opinion and views of Sanjay Gandhi for running the affairs of government but with death of Sanjay Gandhi in 1981, Indira Gandhi depended on, ‘other relatives, and former retainers of the Nehru Gandhi Household and turned increasingly towards her second son, Rajiv’.<sup>190</sup> Indira Gandhi frequently consulted his own set of personal advisers than the colleagues in the Cabinet. The then Principal Secretary to Indira Gandhi, P.C. Alexander points to an increasing trend, as compared to 1960s and 1970s, of files being marked from the ministers to the PMO seeking advice, direction or decision . He attributes this trend to the poor quality and level of competence of a few of her colleagues in the council of ministers.<sup>191</sup> Alexander writes,

Since the Prime Minister herself had reservations on the abilities of some of her colleagues, she did not discourage this practice and thought that this was one way of keeping control on their functioning. But this became a regular practice with some ministers and this brought into the functioning of the central government a new practice of ministers voluntarily subjecting their decision making powers to the authority of the Prime Minister even in cases when it was not necessary.<sup>192</sup>

The interference of PMO during Indira Gandhi tenure has been corroborated by many others.<sup>193</sup> This trend could be explained as fallout of two factors: first, the disappearance of senior party members or experienced colleagues from the Cabinet

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<sup>188</sup> Paul R. Brass. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 48

<sup>189</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 56

<sup>190</sup> Paul R. Brass. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.48

<sup>191</sup> P.C. Alexander. (1991). *My Years with Indira Gandhi*. New Delhi: Vision Books,p.48

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, p.50

<sup>193</sup> See D.R. Mankekar and Kamla Mankekar. (1977). *Decline and Fall of Indira Gandhi*. New Delhi: Vision Books; V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson; P.C. Alexander. (1991). *My Years with Indira Gandhi*. New Delhi: Vision Books; I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications;V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers; Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers.

and second, the induction of fresh faces. Deshmukh points towards a trend marking the marginalization of the Cabinet Secretariat coupled with ascendance of the PMO.<sup>194</sup> Among her Cabinet colleagues, Indira Gandhi used to seek opinion of P.V. Narsimha Rao and R. Venkatraman quite often on important and sensitive issues before being considered by the Cabinet. Alexander writes that she had her own set of trusted advisers on whom she used to rely for opinion but the role of advisers invariably depended upon the subject at consideration. The circle of advisers included G. Parthasarthy, L. K. Jha and Pupul Jaykar. She also consulted Kamalpati Tripathi and Uma Shankar Dikshit on important political issues of the time. However, these discussions used to be informal and eventually she used to take decisions on her own. The formal role of Cabinet seems to have been much overshadowed by the salient role of her informal advisers. The decision on the reshuffle of the Cabinet rarely used to be based on her consultations with her Cabinet colleagues. Her senior colleagues in the Cabinet were informed just before the swearing in ceremony<sup>195</sup> and her Cabinet secretary used to be informed about the decisions on reshuffle a few hours before the ceremony.<sup>196</sup>

Indira Gandhi was assassinated on October 31, 1984 before the completion of her term and with this a marked phase of Cabinet system also ended.

### **Rajiv Gandhi: Prime Ministerial Dominance within Fading Party Dominance**

Expectations about reviving the Congress were high when Rajiv Gandhi became the Prime Minister. He, however, frittered away the advantage within two years. Far from invigorating the party, he functioned as though he could minimize the role of organization or dispense with it altogether. He persisted with a centralized decision making structure and what is more, power was concentrated in the hands of a small group of inexperienced advisors came from outside politics, infused with a corporate culture.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> B.G. Deshmukh. (2004). *From Poona to The Prime Minister's Office: A Cabinet Secretary Looks Back*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, p.142

<sup>195</sup> P.C. Alexander. (1991). *My Years with Indira Gandhi*. New Delhi: Vision Books, p. 53.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, p.56.

<sup>197</sup> Zoya Hasan, *Congress After Indira : Policy, Power, Political Change*, OUP, 2012, p.15

Notwithstanding the existing convention of the swearing in of an interim Prime Minister in case of the vacancy arising because of the death of the incumbent Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi was sworn in as the Prime Minister by the President Giani Zail Singh on the same fateful day. The convention that was followed in 1964 and 1966, on the death of former Prime Ministers Nehru and Shastri respectively was not followed. Rajiv Gandhi was nominated by the Central Parliamentary Board of the All India Congress (I) Committee as Leader of Congress (I) Parliamentary Party on October 31, 1984<sup>198</sup> and the decision was subsequently endorsed by the Congress (I) Working Committee and the Congress (I) Parliamentary Party on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> November, 1984. Immediately, after Gandhi was sworn in as the PM, following persons were sworn in as the Ministers: Pranab Mukherjee, P.V. Narsimha Rao, P. Shiv Shankar, and Buta Singh.

The other ministers were sworn in later. Gandhi retained all the members of previous Indira Gandhi Cabinet barring the exception of P.C. Sethi<sup>199</sup>. Before being sworn in as the PM, Rajiv Gandhi neither had legislative experience nor ministerial experience.. He was the General Secretary of the Congress Party during that time. He continued the tradition of being both the President of the Organizational wing of the Party as well as Leader of the Parliamentary Party. The elections to the Eighth Lok Sabha happened in November 1984 and Gandhi returned with an unprecedented mandate riding on the sympathy wave.<sup>200</sup> The Congress secured 415 seats and Gandhi was once again sworn in as the PM on 31 December 1984. The Congress (I) secured 48 per cent vote share and 77 per cent seat share in the parliament. The opposition continued the trend of its marginalization since 1980 and got further disarrayed as its number dwindled even more. Telegu Desham Party was recognized as the Principal Opposition Party having secured a mere 30 seats. The Left Parties taken together had just 28 MPs while the Janta Party and the BJP had 10 and 02 seats respectively. Most of the prominent opposition leaders belonged to the Left and the former Socialist parties. Further during the Assembly elections held in March 1985, within three months from the swearing in of Gandhi, the Congress (I) secured power in 9 out of 11 states. The political spread of the Congress coupled with an unprecedented majority

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<sup>198</sup> Pranab Mukherjee, *The Turbulent Years: 1980-1996*, Rupa, New Delhi, 2016, p.73

<sup>199</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 61.

<sup>200</sup> Zoya Hasan. (2012). *Congress After Indira: Policy, Power and Political Change*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

that the Congress enjoyed in the Parliament strengthened the leadership of PM. However, these successive mandates could not reverse the trend towards the deinstitutionalization that has marked the party since the early 1970s. As Gandhi could not reverse the trend towards the deinstitutionalization of the party, centralization and personalization of power marked his period too. Rudolph's remark,

Rajiv Gandhi's record as a politician is a mixed one..the party remained centralized and subject to its leaders' managerial ideology and professional style but it was less subject than it had been under Indira Gandhi to arbitrary test of personal loyalty that dissolve institutional commitment and procedural regularity...Similarly, the selections of Chief Ministers, while it sometimes reflected the Prime Minister's more than state party's preferences, showed a lighter hand from Delhi. The party under Rajiv Gandhi was not the institutionalized party of the Mohandas Gandhi or Nehru eras, nor was it a party of state bosses in the syndicate era. But collegiality, institutional autonomy, and decentralization seemed to have a better chance than they had had in a decade.<sup>201</sup>

The PM being the President of the Party as well as the Leader of Parliamentary Party gained enormous power and this had a casting impact over the relationship between the PM and his Cabinet colleagues and the PM and Chief Ministers of different states. Most of his Cabinet colleagues owed their position to Gandhi and in constituting his second cabinet he brought in several new faces in the council of ministers. On the composition of the ministry, Ananth says that, 'all of them were loyal to Rajiv Gandhi, the Congress (I) and were not known to be ambitious'.<sup>202</sup> Gandhi did not include Pranab Mukherjee in his Cabinet who was the Minister of Finance in the previous government and was considered as number two in Indira Gandhi's Cabinet. Subsequently, Mukherjee was removed from the Congress Working Committee and the Congress Parliamentary Board.<sup>203</sup> Arun Singh and Arun Nehru, both Ministers of State, enjoyed considerable clout in the Gandhi's ministry during the initial years.

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<sup>201</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (1987). *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of The Indian State*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, p. 158

<sup>202</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 280

<sup>203</sup> Pranab Mukherjee. (2016). *The Turbulent Years: 1980-1996*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.93-94



Vinay Sitapati categorically mentions about their in those years.<sup>204</sup> C.D. Deshmukh, Cabinet Secretary during Gandhi's period admits that the Prime Minister's House too wielded considerable influence. M. L. Fotedar and Captain Satish Sharma were quite active in the PMH. Commenting about the leadership style of PM during his first year in the Office, Deshmukh writes, 'Rajiv Gandhi was more comfortable with a small group consisting of personal friends, selected bureaucrats who had caught his attention, and some technocrats, top managers from industry and close political aides.'<sup>205</sup>

However, by 1986 political circumstances changed and the sheen that Gandhi enjoyed gradually started disappearing. Natwar Singh, who served as Minister of State in three different ministries at different times, during this period writes,

For the first eighteen months of his prime ministership, Rajiv Gandhi depended almost wholly on a team of ignoramuses with inflated egos. They were bright but brash...collectively they were an irresponsible group that showed little regard for senior Cabinet ministers and government rules and regulations. They dented Rajiv Gandhi's prestige and his image.<sup>206</sup>

Arun Nehru's influence had withered considerably after 1986 and he was dropped from the Union Council of Ministers. In Deshmukh's view, Fotedar emerged as one of the principle political advisors and came to enjoy considerable influence. He was made a minister and gradually a new advisory group emerged in this period which consisted of Buta Singh, Rajesh Pilot and Ghulam Nabi Azad. Later, R.K. Dhawan too became a member of this coterie.<sup>207</sup>

Gandhi displayed his political will to bring in economic and political reforms. In the first year of his Office he opened up the economy slightly; though these steps in the

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<sup>204</sup> Vinay Sitapati. (2016). *Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p. 72.

<sup>205</sup> B.G. Deshmukh. (2004). *From Poona to The Prime Minister's Office: A Cabinet Secretary Looks Back*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, p.142

<sup>206</sup> K. Natwar Singh. (2014). *One Life is Not Enough: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications., p. 275.

<sup>207</sup> B.G. Deshmukh. (2004). *From Poona to The Prime Minister's Office: A Cabinet Secretary Looks Back*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, p. 177

direction of economic reforms can be considered as baby step and not leap.<sup>208</sup> Ruparelia notes that Gandhi supported economic liberalization and the Union Budget of 1985-86 piloted by V P Singh, 'liberalized trade and lowered taxes, and simplified licensing and deregulated various sectors of the economy'.<sup>209</sup> His openness to the idea of reforming the economy and rebuilding the party put him at odds with the old Congressmen like Kamalapati Tripathi, the Working President of the Party who enjoyed definite influence during IG's period. Considerable opposition began to develop against Gandhi on his leadership style and incompetent handling of the affairs of the organizational wing of the party.

In his Presidential address at the Centenary Congress Session held in Bombay in 1985, Gandhi gave a call for reorganization and revitalization of the party<sup>210</sup> and put forward a strong critique of the party organization. He laid out the reasons for its weakness over a period of time and categorically reprimanded the power brokers who have converted a mass movement into a feudal oligarchy. Though Gandhi made considerable effort to rebuild the party, the goal was abandoned by 1987.<sup>211</sup> In the Assembly elections, held in 1986 and 1987, the Congress (I) faced several reverses. A trend towards centralization and personalization of power becomes evident in the manner of appointment of several senior level appointments made by the Prime Minister that reflected his personal preference. To quote Kohli 'Cabinet and parliamentary officers on the one hand and senior civil and police appointments on the other, were often made at the whim of the Prime Minister'.<sup>212</sup> Gandhi made changes to his Council of Ministers on 36 occasions which included six major reshuffles.<sup>213</sup> This remains the maximum number of change being made in the Council of Ministers during the period of any government. The only minister who could remain in the same ministry during the entire period of the government was Madhavrao Scindia.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Vinay Sitapati. (2016). *Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p.73

<sup>209</sup> Sanjay Ruparelia. (2015). *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.95

<sup>210</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 290

<sup>211</sup> Atul Kohli. (1991) India's Democracy under Rajiv Gandhi (1985-1989). In Atul Kohli (Ed.) *India's Democracy: An Analysis of Changing State-Society Relations*. New Jersey: Orient Longman, p.323.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid, p. 323.

<sup>213</sup> Council of Ministers 1947-2015 (From 15 August 1947 to 28 August, 2015): Names and Portfolios of the Members of the Union Council of Ministers. (2016). New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat.. p. vii

<sup>214</sup> K. Natwar Singh. (2014). *One Life is Not Enough: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.275

During the same period, on 16 occasions, the Chief Ministers of Congress ruled states were changed.

The Congress under Gandhi had been witness to enormous centralization of decision making and strengthening of the PMO. Dissension against the powerful leader started brewing from the mid of 1986 and several voices could be heard criticizing Gandhi in running the affairs of party and administration. With regard to the strengthening of the PMO in this period, Deshmukh writes,

In 1985-86 almost every ministry saw a change of Cabinet ministers. This, of course, took a heavy toll on efficient government working and naturally created a powerful PMO and a coterie of strong bureaucrats who had worked their ways into the prime minister's confidence.<sup>215</sup>

On April 22, 1986 Kamalapati Tripathi addressed a eleven page note to the Party President Rajiv Gandhi that was leaked to the media. Tripathi wrote the note in consultation with few other senior leaders of the party which included Pranab Mukherjee, Gundu Rao and Sripat Mishra. Critiquing Gandhi's economic policies and mismanagement of the affairs of the party, Tripathi vehemently criticized the centralization of decision making in regard to changes in the organizational set up of the party as well as governance of the country. Tripathi wrote,

Not only the common Congressmen and women are puzzled and bewildered at the rapid disintegration of the party at all levels, but they are shocked at the casual, ad hoc and inept handling of the party matters by you and your so called operators..frequent changes in party and administrative offices have become a style of your functioning. Since November 12, 1984, to January 19,1986, you have appointed and removed as many as nine general secretaries. In one key ministry, the incumbents were changed five times during this period. The impression left by the musical chair style is that you are not sure of the capabilities of the persons you select.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> B.G. Deshmukh. (2004). *From Poona to The Prime Minister's Office: A Cabinet Secretary Looks Back*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, p. 147

<sup>216</sup> Cited in V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 293

The frequent reshuffle of the Cabinet even in significant ministries like the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs in part contributed to the enormous strengthening of the PMO during this period. This is also evident from the manner in which the decision to send the Indian troops to Sri Lanka was taken by Gandhi in 1987. In this regard Natwar Singh, the then Minister of State for External Affairs, recites his conversation with Gandhi,

Jaywardene had told him that he feared unless India immediately sent troops to Sri Lanka to contain the deteriorating Law and Order situation, a coup could take place that very night. I told the PM to take a decision on so grave a matter only after consulting his senior Cabinet colleagues on his return to Delhi. To my utter surprise, he said that he already given orders for the immediate dispatch of Indian troops by air to Colombo.<sup>217</sup>

Not only in this instance but in others as well the same pattern was visible. As P.S. Jha recollects,

Once more decisions were taken in the Prime Minister's secretariat (or the Camelot like institution, the prime minister's house, where his less official advisers held sway) and passed on to the Cabinet to rubber stamp. So great was the servility of his ministers that when he circulated the amendment to the Anti-Defamation Bill, in 1988, not one of the members of the Cabinet bothered to read it, before approving its submission to the parliament for enactment.<sup>218</sup>

Rajiv Gandhi's Cabinet apart from being witness to frequent reshuffles, also saw some remarkable resignations which were in protest against the high handedness of the Prime Minister. V.P. Singh, who the Finance Minister and considered close to the PM, was reshuffled to the Ministry of Defense and subsequently forced to resign over his reluctance to probe some suspicious defense deal.<sup>219</sup> Previously, Arif Mohammad Khan resigned from his ministry protesting over the government's stand on the

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<sup>217</sup> K. Natwar Singh. (2014). *One Life is Not Enough: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.261

<sup>218</sup> Prem Shankar Jha. (1993). *In the Eye of The Cyclone: The Crisis in Indian Democracy*. New Delhi: Viking, p. 95.

<sup>219</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p. 250.

Uniform Civil Code. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed too resigned from the Cabinet owing to the Congress (I)-National Conference alliance in Kashmir.<sup>220</sup>

The position of PM became quite susceptible not only because of the remarkable resignations, expulsions of prominent congress men and brewing disaffection that has set in since late 1986 but also because the opposition became vocal and vigorous during this period. By July 1987, prominent Congressmen like V.C. Shukla, Arif Mohammed Khan, Arun Nehru and V.P. Singh had been expelled from the party. The Rudolphs argue that Gandhi's action in expelling Pranab Mukherjee and other prominent Congressmen from the party could be read as paralleling the efforts of his grandfather and mother to establish their control of the party.<sup>221</sup> Further, this period also witnessed a deeply strained relationship between the President and the Prime Minister. Gandhi stopped visiting the President to brief him on significant political development. President Zail Singh's letter to Rajiv Gandhi, that was published in the Indian Express on March 13, 1987, explicitly mentioned that the Prime Minister did not brief him on the Assam, Punjab and Mizoram Accords and further that Prime Minister did not pay him the courtesy visit to brief him after his visits to the US and the USSR.<sup>222</sup> An article published in the New York Times read as the following, 'It was widely reported, for example, that Mr, Gandhi had stopped briefing and consulting the President, had barred him foreign trips and had permitted his allies to criticize him in parliament'.<sup>223</sup>

The President charged that the Prime Minister had refused to keep him informed of the issues as mandated by the constitution.<sup>224</sup> This noteworthy wedge between the President and the Prime Minister at a moment when the government had been facing heat over the charges of corruption in HDW submarine case and marked by series of disaffection and resignation added to the difficulties of the Prime Minister.

## CONCLUSION

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<sup>220</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 304

<sup>221</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (1987). *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of The Indian State*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, p. 152.

<sup>222</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p.297

<sup>223</sup> Steven R. Weisman. (March 15, 1987). India's President Confronts Gandhi. *The New York Times*, Available at . <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/03/15/world/india-s-president-confronts-gandhi.html>. Accessed on 25th November, 2018.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

It can be discerned from the above discussion that executive dominance as envisaged in the Constitution remained intact from the beginning of the Cabinet system in India. However, with the ascendance of Prime Ministerial power to the exclusion of their Cabinet colleagues and marginalization of the legislature, the equilibrium that was established in the Nehruvian period was eclipsed. This has also been noted by Madhu Limaye who interestingly had moved two NCMs against Indira Gandhi. He says, 'It (the cabinet system) flowered into a developed institution in during the Nehru era. It struggled for survival during Shastri interlude and the early years of Indira Gandhi's first tenure. In 1969, its rapid decline began'.<sup>225</sup>

In this chapter, an attempt was made to look into functioning of the Union Cabinet during the two phases of majoritarian Parliamentaryism. By looking into the tenures of the different Prime Ministers it can be asserted that the collegial and collective character of the Cabinet underwent transformation, as the composition of the Parliament underwent change, post-Fourth Lok Sabha. As the equilibrium between the legislature and the executive shifted, the relationship between the Prime Minister and the Cabinet was also disturbed. Furthermore, as the chapter shows, the ascendance and sustenance of prime ministerial domination cannot be understood without an investigation of the instrumental role played by the Prime Minister's Office. Attempting to work as a bridge for the chapters ahead, this chapter based on secondary literature on the working of the Union cabinet from the First Lok Sabha to the Eight Lok Sabha, lays down the necessary backdrop for understanding the pattern of relations between the legislature and executive and how it impacted on the Union Cabinet from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha.

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<sup>225</sup> Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, p. 126.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CABINET IN THE ERA OF TRANSACTIONAL PARLIAMENTARIANISM: V. P. SINGH TO MANMOHAN SINGH**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

‘Coalitions are the order of the day in Indian politics and look like remaining so in the foreseeable future.’

-E. Sridharan.<sup>1</sup>

Owing to the ideological consensus around the National Movement, the Congress as a Party continued to lead the country till the end of the 1980s at the centre. As mentioned in the previous chapter, barring the exception of the Janta Party coalition in the Sixth Lok Sabha, the remaining periods were witness to a Congress majority in the all the Lok Sabhas. Despite such an overwhelming presence, over a period of time, political competition in the states were undergoing transformations. Unlike the centre, where Congress enjoyed dominance, the party system in states carved out their own pattern which remained insulated from the politics at the Centre. However, the rise of the regional parties did not keep the politics at the Centre unaffected. In fact, the elections to the Ninth Lok Sabha ‘marked an unequivocal end to the era of Congress’s dominance.’<sup>2</sup>

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in the Eighth Lok Sabha (1984), the Congress had won an overwhelming number of 415 seats, but by the Ninth Lok Sabha its strength had gone down to 197. As per Rekha Diwakar’s study, from 1971 to 1989 the seat share of the Congress declined from 68 per cent to 37 per cent and the primary factor in this context remains the combined opposition which took on the Congress in 1989.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the preceding period, where no major opposition existed, the rise of

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<sup>1</sup> E. Sridharan. (2014). National and State Coalitions in India: Theory and Comparison. In E. Sridharan (Ed.). *Coalition Politics in India: Selected Issues At the Centre and the States* (pp.23-34).. New Delhi: Academic Foundation, p. 23

<sup>2</sup> Rekha Diwakar. (2017). *Party System in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 60

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 60

‘anti-Congressism’ from the states led to an overhauling of the Indian party system after the Eighth Lok Sabha. The fragmentation of party system during the post Ninth Lok Sabha period witnessed three concomitant phenomenons: the rise of the regional parties, the emergence of the BJP as a principal opposition player and the decline of Congress, at the centre.<sup>4</sup> Consequent to the fragmentation of party system and the proliferation of political parties, the period saw the formation of successive minority governments whether single party or coalition.

From 1989 to 2014, the office of the Prime Minister was held by nine persons, of whom A.B. Vajpayee had assumed office in three instances (see Table 4.1 below). In 1989, when the National Front ensured the seat of the majority party by combing together a coalition of many anti-Congress parties, V.P. Singh became the Prime Minister. However, the government could hold only for a period of 10 months. Thereafter, Chandra Shekhar assumed the prime ministership, only to leave within a period of seven months. As discussed in Chapter-II, unlike the 1990s which produced instable minority governments in a quick succession, by 1999 the emergence of a broad consensus on values allowed the establishment and strengthening of alliances in the Indian Parliament. The political instability during 1990s owed to lack of consensus among parties constituting the government and those supporting it from outside, as the proliferation of political parties brought in parties together that belonged to diverse ideological persuasion. Six out of seven governments during 1989-1999 could not complete its full terms. Only P. V. Narsimha Rao government could complete its full terms as it was the government that did not depend on the outside support of parties to secure a parliamentary majority. Chandra Shekhar government was also a single party minority governments but it could not complete its term. Barring these two, all other governments were coalition minority governments.

From 1999 and 2014, there were two Prime Ministers in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Lok Sabhas. This is striking because even these were coalition minority governments but completed its full term. It can be presumed that the programmatic consensus premised upon a sustainable consensus over a Common Minimum Program and steered through Coordination mechanism which became enduring only in late

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<sup>4</sup> Rekha Diwakar. (2017). *Party System in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. p.94



1990s, allowed these governments to be stable. Keeping in mind, the changed political scenario and legislature-executive relationship, this chapter uses the classification of Transactional Parliamentarianism, as proposed in Chapter-II, to locate the functioning of the Union Cabinet in the period from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha. The chapter aims to understand the way in which the Union Cabinet has functioned during a period marked by successive minority coalition governments and single party minority governments. It intends to analyze the impact of proliferation of political parties on the relationship between the legislature and the executive and its consequent impact on the working of the Union Cabinet and to see if 'smaller parties have held disproportionate power in negotiating Cabinet berths and influencing policy.'<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the chapter also engages with the question of whether the consolidation of successive minority coalition governments has led to the withering away of the prime ministerial dominance of the cabinet. In the backdrop of the above, the chapter probes into the pattern of relationship that exist between the Indian prime ministers and their cabinet colleagues within the minority governments, whether coalition or single party, which have been the featured form of government from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha. The chapter uses primary data sources such as autobiographies of Cabinet Ministers of the relevant period as well as secondary sources such as biographies of Cabinet Ministers and published articles and interviews from newspaper, while attempting to fulfill the objectives.

With the help of the primary and secondary data a, the chapter argues that the period from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha can be divided into two phases of Transactional Parliamentarianism. While the period from 1989-1999, with its marked political instability can be characterised as Phase I, the years from 1999-2014 can be characterised as Phase II. Unlike the previous periods of Majoritarian Parliamentarianism, in the period from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha, there is enhanced deliberation within the Cabinet. This is not only because with the presence of coalition allies, the Cabinet becomes divided and therefore deliberations are inevitable but also because with the increase in the number of allies, institutional mechanisms had to be devised in order to by-pass the possibility of policy paralysis. As the number of political parties within the Parliament has

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<sup>5</sup> Rekha Diwakar. (2017). *Party System in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 95

proliferated, the nature of executive has also been transformed. Not only has the Cabinet witnessed its transformation from being ‘weak cabinet’ to being collegial and deliberative but the nature of prime ministerial authority has also been transformed. The Prime Minister, in the era of minority coalition government and fragmented parliament, is no longer the decision maker but a consensus-creator.

The chapter is divided into two main sections which are in tandem with the bi-fold classification of Transactional Parliamentarianism, as elaborated in Chapter-II. Phase I of Transactional Parliamentarianism deals with the period from 1989 to 1999, which encompasses the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Twelfth Lok Sabha with an elaborate analysis of nature and functioning of the Cabinets under the prime ministerial tenures of V. P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, P. V. Narsimha Rao, H. D. Devegowda, I. K. Gujral and A.B. Vajpayee. The second section of the chapter is titled as Transactional Parliamentarianism, Phase II, which deals with the period from 1999 to 2009 and hence provides an account of Cabinets formed from the Thirteenth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha, under the Prime Ministership of. A.B. Vajpayee and Dr. Manmohan Singh.

**Table 4.1: Governments and Lok Sabha since 1989**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Party/Coalition</b>	<b>Lok Sabha</b>	<b>Duration</b>
<b>1990s</b>	V. P. Singh	National Front	IX	21/12/1989 to 10/11/1990
	Chandra Shekhar	Janta Dal (S)	IX	10/11/1990 to 21/6/1991
	P. V. Narsimha Rao	Congress (I)	X	21/6/1991 to 16/5/1996
	Atal Bihari Vajpayee	BJP	XI	16/5/1996 to 1/6/1996
	H. D. Devegowda	United Front	XI	1/6/1996 to 21/4/1997
	I. K. Gujral	United Front	XI	21/4/1997 to 18/3/1998
	A. B. Vajpayee	NDA	XII	19/3/1998 to 13/10/1999
<b>1999 &amp; Beyond</b>	A. B. Vajpayee	NDA	XIII	13/10/1999 to 22/5/2004
	Manmohan Singh	UPA	XIV	22/5/ 2004 to 22/5/2009

Author’s own calculation

**Table 4.2: Governments, Representation of Parties in the Coalition and the Lok Sabha from 1989**

Lok Sabha	Government	Single Party/ Coalition	Name and No. of parties in the government	Name and No. of parties extending outside support to the government	Total Number of parties in the government and parties supporting the government from outside	Total number of parties represented in the parliament
IX	V.P. Singh	Coalition Minority	JD, TDP, ICS (SCS), DMK and AGP (5)	BJP and Left Parties (CPI, CPI(M), RSP, FBL) (5)	10	24
	Chandra Shekhar	Single Party Minority	Janata Dal (S)	Congress, AIADMK, Muslim League, Kerala Congress(M), Akali Dal	5	24
X	P.V. Narsimha Rao	Single Party Minority	-	-	-	27
XI	A.B. Vajpayee-1	Coalition Minority	BJP, SHS (2)	Haryana Vikas Party, Samata Party (3)	5	30
	Deve Gowda	Coalition Minority	JD, TMC, SP, DMK, TDP, CPI, Cong (T), AGP, MGP (9)	CPI(M), RSP, FBL, Congress (4)	13	30
	I. K. Gujral	Coalition Minority	JD, TMC, SP, DMK, TDP, CPI, Cong (T), AGP, MGP(9)	CPI(M), RSP, FBL, Congress (4)	13	30
XII	A.B. Vajpayee-2	Coalition Minority	BJP, AIADMK, Samata Party, BJD, SAD, WBTC, Shiv Sena, PMK, MDMK, Lok Shakti, HVP, Arunachal Congress (12)	TDP, WBTC, Haryana Vikas Party, Haryana Lok Dal, MDMK, National Conference, MSCP, BSMC, Citizen Common Front, RJP (A M Singh) (10)	22	40
XIII	A.B. Vajpayee-3	Coalition Minority	BJP, RLD, WBTC, SHS, SAD, JD (U), DMK, MDMK, NC, MSCP, PMK, BJD, IFDP, NC, RLD, IFDP (16)	TDP, INLD, SDF, HVC, ABLTC, AADMK (6)	22	41
XIV	Manmohan Singh	Coalition Minority	Congress, NCP, IUML, PMK, DMK, JMM, TRS, LJP, RJD (9)	Left Front (CPI, CPI(M), RSP, FBL), SP, BSP, AIMIM, SDF, JKPDP, MDMK, Kerala Congress (11)	20	37

Source: E. Sridharan. (2014). Why are Multi Party Minority Governments Viable in India? Theory and Comparison. In E. Sridharan (Ed.). *Coalition Politics in India: Selected Issues At the Centre and the States* (pp.35-70). New Delhi: Academic Foundation; and Author's own. Based on data available from Lok Sabha Secretariat. Available at <https://loksabha.nic.in>. Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2018

**Table 4.3: Strength of the Union Council of Ministers, Ninth Lok Sabha to Fourteenth Lok Sabha \***

Prime Minister	Date of swearing-in	Cabinet Ministers (including the Prime Minister)	Ministers of State (Independent Charge)	Ministers of State	Deputy Ministers	Total strength
V. P. Singh**	21/12/1989	2	0	0	0	2
Chandra Shekhar**	10/11/1990	2	0	0	0	2
P.V. Narsimha Rao	21/6/1991	15	14	19	6	53
Atal Bihari Vajpayee	16/5/1996	12	0	0	0	12
H .D. Gowda	1/6/1996	13	0	8	0	20
I. K .Gujral	21/4/1997	17	0	17	0	34
Atal Bihari Vajpayee	19/3/1998	22	0	21	0	43
Atal Bihari Vajpayee	13/10/1999	26	7	37	0	70
Manmohan Singh	22/5/2004	29	10	29	0	68

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on data Cabinet Secretariat available at <https://cabsec.gov.in/> accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2018.

And Council of Ministers 1947-2015 (From 15 August 1947 to 28 August, 2015): Names and Portfolios of the Members of the Union Council of Ministers. (2016). New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat.

\*Initial composition only. The strength of the union council of ministers on the date of the swearing-in of the respective prime ministers.

\*\*Only the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister were sworn-in. V.P. Singh expanded his ministry on December 6, 1989 and it included 18 Cabinet ministers, 15 Ministers of States and 5 Deputy Ministers. Chandra Shekhar expanded his ministry on November 21, 1990 and it included 15 Cabinet Ministers, 3 Ministers of State (independent charge), 12 Ministers of State and 4 Deputy Ministers.

**Table 4.4: Party wise distribution in the Union Council of Ministers in minority coalition governments, from V.P. Singh to Manmohan Singh**

Prime Ministers	Cabinet Ministers	Minister of State (Independent)	Minister of State	Deputy Ministers	Total
V.P. Singh	JD=14, DMK=1, TDP=1, Congress (S)=1, AGP=1 (18)	JD=2 (2)	JD=13 (13)	JD=5(5)	38
H.D. Deve Gowda	JD=5, TMC=2, DMK=2, TDP=1, SP=1, IND.=1 (12)	---	RJD=3, TDP=2, SP=2, JD=1 (8)	-----	20
I.K. Gujral	JD=5, SP=3, CPI=2, DMK=2, JKNC=1, TDP=1, AGP=1, IND.=1 (16)	---	TDP=3, RJD=3, AICT=2, DMK=2, BJD=1, JDU=1, JD=1, AGP=1, MGP=1, SP=1, IND.=1 (17)	-----	33
A.B. Vajpayee-II	BJP=10, SAD=1, Samata=2, AIADMK=2, IND.=2, Lokshakti=1, TRC=1, BJD=1, SHS=1 (21)	---	BJP=15, AC=1, SAD=1, PMK=1, JD=1, BJD=1, AIADMK=1 (21)	-----	42
A.B. Vajpayee-III	BJP=14, Samata=2, JD(U)=2, SHS=2, DMK=2, AITC=1, IND.=1, BJD=1 (25)	BJP=3, BJD=1, MDMK=1, PMK=1, IND.=1 (7)	BJP=26, Samata=2, IND.=1, MDMK=1, PMK=1, JKNC=1, AITC=1, DMK=1, TDP=1, SHS=1, BJD=1 (37)	-----	69
Manmohan Singh	INC=18, DMK=4, RJD=2, NCP=1, LJP=1, TRS=1, JMM=1 (28)	INC=8, NCP=1, RJD=1 (10)	INC=16, RJD=5, DMK=4, IUML=1, NCP=1, TRS=1, PMK=1 (29)	-----	67

# Figures in brackets indicates total number of respective Ministers. Based on initial composition only. Author's own calculation.

Source: Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India, [www.cabsec.gov.in](http://www.cabsec.gov.in) (Accessed on 28 August, 2019)

## **Transactional Parliamentarianism, Phase I: From 1989 To 1999**

### **V.P. Singh: Consensual Prime Minister within a Fledgling Party**

I have my own style. I did not form a party or a group. I tried to unite the whole spectrum of the opposition, for in my mind I did not think it was politically moral to form a group, especially when everyone has trusted me. It is not as if I joined a party, grew in it and then become the President. In our case everyone came in together following tremendous pressure from the workers and the people. So when I didn't get in through a group why should I retain the leadership by creating a group? I was not born out of a group then why should I extend loyalty to one? When I was not born out of it why should I create an adoptive father?<sup>6</sup>

– V. P. Singh

The formation of Jan Morcha on October 2, 1987 was the first step in the direction of constituting a National Front against the Congress (I) for the elections of 1989. . The Jan Morcha comprised of Arif Mohammed Khan, Arun Nehru, V.C. Shukla and Mufti Mohammed Sayeed. These Congress dissidents who were expelled from the party sought to consolidate a united opposition which would be an alternative to the Congress. As the movement gained momentum, the National Front was formally launched during a public rally in Madras on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1988. A concrete organizational structure was announced and N. T. Ramarao was made the President while V.P. Singh was made the convener of the National Front.

V.P. Singh was also instrumental in the merger of the three splinter parties that arose from the fragmentation of the Janata Party of 1977: Lok Dal (A), Lok Dal (B) and Janta Party. They merged together to form the Janta Dal<sup>7</sup> which was formally launched in Bangalore on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1988. It was unanimously decided that the Janata Dal would be a constituent of the National Front. V.P. Singh was declared to

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<sup>6</sup> V P Singh, quoted in Seema Mustafa. (1995). *The Lonely Prophet: V.P. Singh, A Political Biography*. New Delhi: New Age International, p.150.

<sup>7</sup> Prem Shankar Jha. (1993). *In the Eye of The Cyclone: The Crisis in Indian Democracy*. New Delhi: Viking, p.80

be the President of Janata Dal, Ramkrishna Hegde was made the Vice President and Ajit Singh was declared as the General Secretary.<sup>8</sup>

The Janata Dal constituted a National Council of 140 members which carried members from different splinter parties came together as the Janata Dal. In order to ensure coordination between the parliamentary wing and the organizational wing of the party, the Janta Dal leadership constituted a seven member Political Affairs Committee (PAC) and a Parliamentary Board of the party. Apart from the Janata Dal, the National Front included the regional parties namely, TDP, DMK, AGP, Indian Congress Socialist (SCS). The uniting thread among these regional parties was their cynicism towards the centralizing tendency of the Congress and their strong insistence on state autonomy. Moreover, with the exception of AGP, most of these parties ‘supported the politics of non Brahmanism and the rights of the minority religious communities’.<sup>9</sup> To ensure electoral success, the National Front had to reach out to both the Left and the Right. It sealed seat adjustments with the BJP as well as the Left parties<sup>10</sup> and the seat adjustment tactics were instrumental in containing the split of anti-Congress votes. Only this could consolidate the vote share and seat share of the Janata Dal.

The possibility of a fragmented parliament was present from the beginning due to nature and pattern of seat adjustment among the National Front, Left Parties and the BJP. None of the parties in the opposition fielded candidates in sufficient numbers and therefore, it was clear that none could attain a majority on its own<sup>11</sup>. In all, the Janata Dal fielded only 243 candidates.<sup>12</sup> The BJP had put candidates in 226 constituencies. The only condition for a majority government was the possibility of the Congress (I) securing a majority on its own. Sanjay Ruparelia notes the Congress (I) contested on 510 constituencies.<sup>13</sup> While V.P. Singh considered the Left to be a ‘natural ally’, he explicitly expressed his reservations about forging formal alliance

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<sup>8</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p.334

<sup>9</sup> Sanjay Ruparelia. (2015). *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.99

<sup>10</sup> The Left Parties included the CPI (M), CPI, Forward Bloc and the Revolutionary Socialist Party.

<sup>11</sup> Csaba Nikolenyi. (2010). *Minority Governments in India: The Puzzle of Elusive Majorities*. London and New York: Routledge, p.54

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.54

<sup>13</sup> Sanjay Ruparelia. (2015). *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.103

with the BJP to form government<sup>14</sup>. However, this did not deter the National Front, the Left and the BJP from arriving at seat-sharing adjustments. This implied that during the elections the Congress (I) faced a single opposition candidate in majority of the constituencies.<sup>15</sup> Ruparelia writes,

The JD chief stressed that their electoral understanding was not a power sharing agreement, while defending secularism and minority rights...Singh's tactical ploys and the shared desire of the communist Left and the Hindu Right to defeat the Congress (I) allowed them to suspend, for the moment, their intense mutual antipathy.<sup>16</sup>

The Janata Dal won 143 seats with 18 per cent vote share while the Congress (I) got 197 seats with 40 per cent vote share. The Congress (I) emerged as the single largest party. The election also witnessed the meteoric rise of the BJP which got 85 seats with 11 per cent vote share. The Left parties in all secured 52 seats. Significantly, the allies of Janata Dal in the National Front performed miserably and could secure a mere 03 seats. While the AGP could not contest the elections as the Lok Sabha elections could not be conducted in Punjab and Assam<sup>17</sup>, the DMK could not open its account. The TDP won just two seats and one seat was secured by ICS (SCS). Despite the electoral setback, the National Front stayed together. The total strength of the Congress and its allies including the AIADMK, the National Conference and others stood at 205 which in itself was much short of the required majority mark. On November 29<sup>th</sup>, Rajiv Gandhi tendered the resignation of his Council of Minister and decided not to stake claim to form the government. The Congress Parliamentary Board too endorsed it.<sup>18</sup> As the Congress declined to stake its claim to form the government, the Left parties and the BJP pledged its support to the National Front. Ananth notes that the Left Leader, Jyoti Basu as well as the BJP President Advani, had made it publicly known that their support to non Congress (I) government at the centre was contingent upon V. P. Singh being declared as the Prime Minister.

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<sup>14</sup> Prem Shankar Jha. (1993). *In the Eye of The Cyclone: The Crisis in Indian Democracy*. New Delhi: Viking, p. 87

<sup>15</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p.340

<sup>16</sup> Sanjay Ruparelia. (2015). *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.99

<sup>17</sup> Due to internal disturbances, general elections of 1989 could not be held in Punjab and Assam.

<sup>18</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p.323

The Janata Dal still had to struggle to arrive at a consensus over the leadership of the National Front Parliamentary Party. As Chandra Shekhar announced his decision to contest for the post of the Leader, attempts to secure unanimity in favor of V.P. Singh received a body blow. In this regard, Seema Mustafa writes that, Chandra Shekhar was obdurate that either Devi Lal or he himself should be the Prime Minister and that, ‘V.P. Singh was completely unacceptable’.<sup>19</sup> In the meeting of the Parliamentary Party of the National Front, convened by N.T. Ramarao to elect the leader of Janata Dal Parliamentary Party, Madhu Dandavate was the Returning Officer. Though Devi Lal’s name was proposed by V.P. Singh and seconded by Chandra Shekhar, Lal declined and instead proposed the name of V.P. Singh. Ananth points out that all this had been pre-planned and perhaps Chandra Shekhar was the only one oblivious of the plot.<sup>20</sup> Chandra Shekhar felt deceived by the Janata Dal leadership in this whole episode and explicitly expressed his reservations on the whole exercise.

In response to the letter by NTR and Singh, seeking support in the formation of the National Front government, the BJP offered to give ‘general but critical support’<sup>21</sup>. Advani categorically mentioned that support to the government remains confined, ‘to its governmental programmes to issues on which we agree’.<sup>22</sup> The support was based on the expectations of the BJP that the government would make an effort to consider issues which are common to the manifestos of both the parties.<sup>23</sup> In his autobiography, Advani recalls,

The National Front and the BJP fought these elections on two separate manifestos, not on a common manifesto...there are aspects on which our two manifestos differ. We would like the NF Government to confine its governmental programmes to issues on which we agree.<sup>24</sup>

Though the BJP expressed categorical reservations in extending its support, yet it did not make those reservations conditional to offer support. V.P. Singh handed over the letter to the President that pledged the support of 85 MPs of the BJP and 52 MPs of

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<sup>19</sup> Seema Mustafa. (1995). *The Lonely Prophet: V.P. Singh, A Political Biography*. New Delhi: New Age International, p.132

<sup>20</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 349.

<sup>21</sup> L.K. Advani. (2008). *My Country. My Life*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 442.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 441.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 441.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.441.



the Left Parties to the National Front government and on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1989 he was sworn in as the Prime Minister. The only other person who was sworn-in on the same day was Devi Lal, who was the Deputy Prime Minister. The rests of the Cabinet Ministers were sworn in on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1989. It is worth re-iterating that the survival of the government depended upon the support of two mutually antagonistic political forces that differed with each other ideologically in the most fundamental sense. This necessitated coordination to ensure consensus over common goals and objectives in running the affairs of the government. It required, in the words of Chatterjee, ‘to coordinate our strategies and work in sync on all major national issues’.<sup>25</sup> A semi-institutionalized framework to ensure coordination among the Left Parties, the BJP and the National Front was devised in the form of a weekly dinner meetings scheduled for Tuesdays at the Prime Minister’s residence. These weekly dinner meetings were used as discussion sessions for significant political issues facing the government and as an informal coordination committee meeting. Somnath Chatterjee and Indrajit Gupta from the Left Parties and Advani and Vajpayee from the BJP used to meet the Prime Minister during these weekly dinner meetings.<sup>26</sup> Jyoti Basu too attended the meetings sometimes when he used to be in Delhi.<sup>27</sup> Commenting on this informal mechanism of Coordination Committee, Mustafa writes,

At these he (V.P. Singh) would seek their suggestions on decisions to be taken, brief them on decisions taken. He admits that sometimes there was some explaining to do, as in the case of the Industrial policy on which the Left had objections.<sup>28</sup>

Given that this was the first minority government at the centre since Charan Singh’s government in 1979. Floor management an uphill task especially with the outside support of the Left and the right apart along with the sizeable presence of the Congress (I) as principal opposition party in the parliament. Moreover, the feeble numerical strength of the Janata Dal and the deep squabbles within, produced an inherently weak government and impacted the nature and the manner in which the Prime Minister could exercise his authority. Gujral, the then Minister of External

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<sup>25</sup> Somnath Chatterjee. (2010). *Keeping the Faith: Memoirs of a Parliamentarian*. Noida: Harper Collins, p. 70.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 70.

<sup>27</sup> L.K. Advani. (2008). *My Country. My Life*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 444.

<sup>28</sup> Seema Mustafa. (1995). *The Lonely Prophet: V.P. Singh, A Political Biography*. New Delhi: New Age International, p.137.

Affairs writes, ‘we were very unsure about the party’s cohesion and its role in parliament. Even, at that initial stage, mutual distrust among various constituents was evident’.<sup>29</sup> The weak cohesiveness of the party can be attributed to two factors: first, most of the constituents of the Janata Dal emerged from different states and through different political parties and second, it united as a political force only in the late 1980s. The party had just emerged and was mostly driving on the fragile social base of regional satraps who came together with the common objective of defeating the Congress (I). This was the reason why Singh was opposed to election in the party and advocated that leaders ought to be chosen by consensus rather than election.<sup>30</sup> He could sense that the cleavages were getting sharper at the outset itself. The fledgling party required time, ‘to settle down – for its members to develop new links and develop a new loyalty’.<sup>31</sup>

Based on the writings of Prem Shankar Jha (Information Advisor to the Prime Minister), B.G. Deshmukh (Principal Secretary, PMO) and I.K. Gujral (Minister of External Affairs) it could be asserted that V.P. Singh exercised his discretion in deciding his Cabinet and there was no challenge to his authority. It happened primarily because of two reasons. First, the other constituents of the NF like TDP, DMK, AGP taken together contributed little to the parliamentary strength of the government and thus none of them were in a position to bargain on portfolios. Second, within the Janata Dal, V.P. Singh was always assumed to be the natural leader of the party since the Jan Morcha days. Once, the contest over the post of PM between Chandra Shekhar and V.P. Singh decisively went in the latter’s favor and Devi Lal had backed him for the post, his authority in the party remained uncontested, though only in the initial days.

When the decision to make Devi Lal the Deputy Prime Minister was announced during the swearing-in ceremony, it utterly surprised even his colleagues. Gujral recounts, ‘it took many of us by complete surprise. Nay by shock’.<sup>32</sup> V.P. Singh didn’t even consult his party colleagues like Arif Mohammed Khan, Arun Nehru and Mufti

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<sup>29</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p. 255.

<sup>30</sup> Prem Shankar Jha. (1993). *In the Eye of The Cyclone: The Crisis in Indian Democracy*. New Delhi: Viking, p. 90.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p.90

<sup>32</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p. 257

Mohammed Sayeed who were presumably considered close to him.<sup>33</sup> Even the Office of the President was informed about it merely two hours before the swearing-in ceremony.<sup>34</sup> The appointment of Devi Lal as the Deputy Prime Minister caused considerable unease among V.P. Singh's Cabinet colleagues.<sup>35</sup> An impression had set in that the Prime Minister had yielded to the pressure of Lal and the PM compromised his authority by conceding to his demand. This incident held the potential to further destabilize the party and the government. Jha writes,

Not only did the National Front government start with a question mark over its heads in the people's minds, but by seeming to have become Prime Minister because of Devi Lal's bounty, V.P. gave the impression of being a weak prime minister within a weak party. For this reason, he was unable to control the very fractiousness that he had hoped to avoid.<sup>36</sup>

On 5<sup>th</sup> December 1989, when the swearing-in of the rest of the Cabinet was done, it appeared that V.P. Singh had made an attempt to bring different constituents on board and sought to make the Cabinet representative of diverse groups. Madhu Dandavate, senior Janta Dal leader, was given the Ministry of Finance while Gujral was to be the Minister of External Affairs. Mufti Mohammed Sayeed was assigned the Ministry of Home Affairs and Former Lok Dal leader Ajit Singh was assigned the Ministry of Industry. Jan Morcha leaders like Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammed Khan too were accommodated within the Cabinet.. Despite the insignificant performance of the National Front constituents, one seat each was allocated to TDP, DMK, AGP & ICS(SCS) in the Cabinet. Significantly, V.P. Singh kept the portfolio of the Ministry of Defense under his charge.

The internal feud in the Janata Dal became apparent as Chandra Shekhar chose to keep out of the ministry and no sincere effort was made to bring him in the Cabinet.

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<sup>33</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p. 257

<sup>34</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p.325

<sup>35</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p. 257

<sup>36</sup> Prem Shankar Jha. (1993). *In the Eye of The Cyclone: The Crisis in Indian Democracy*. New Delhi: Viking, p.91

Chandra Shekhar's supporter Yashwant Sinha was offered the position of a Minister of State which he declined and walked out in protest.<sup>37</sup>

Paul Brass argues that since the defeat of the Congress in 1989, internal divisions in the governing party as well as Cabinet emerged as a major challenge before the Prime Ministers.<sup>38</sup> V.P. Singh was no exception to this trend and management of internal divisions in the party and Cabinet remained a difficult task for him also. Based on the interviews with the former Cabinet colleagues of V.P. Singh, Brass argues that V.P. Singh remained short on consulting his Cabinet colleagues and could not evolve systematic procedures to ensure consultation with his Cabinet members. He writes,

V.P. Singh was criticized by many of his former Cabinet colleagues for failing to consult them. Nor did he develop any systematic procedures for consultation with Cabinet members or administrative officers.<sup>39</sup>

In Seema Mustafa's account as well, two principle criticisms of V.P. Singh emerges: firstly, he never took his Cabinet colleagues in complete confidence on party affairs and secondly, he conveyed decisions through intermediaries rather than directly talking to the concerned minister.<sup>40</sup> However, to be fair to V.P. Singh these criticisms overlooks the fact that the fundamental transformation that has come to characterize the party system, in the light of a coalition minority government which was supported by the two contradictory forces: the Left and the Right. Moreover, the Janata Dal as a fledgling party with members from diverse ideological background, with divided loyalty. lead to formation of various factions and groupings in the Cabinet as well as the party. All these factors together determined the PM's relationship with his Cabinet colleagues during the life time of National Front government. As Mustafa writes,

the other bane of the party were the conflicts within, created by the different streams of thought that had come into it. The Lok Dal, the erstwhile Congress (O), the Socialists- all with their own ideological backgrounds, perspectives and differences dating back to decades.

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<sup>37</sup> Seema Mustafa. (1995). *The Lonely Prophet: V.P. Singh, A Political Biography*. New Delhi: New Age International, p.135

<sup>38</sup> Paul R. Brass. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.48

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49.

<sup>40</sup> Seema Mustafa. (1995). *The Lonely Prophet: V.P. Singh, A Political Biography*. New Delhi: New Age International, p.136

They functioned within the Janata Dal as separate groups, and perhaps the only leader above group politics was V.P. Singh who refused to get drawn into the controversies. He was often unable to solve these, and would simply ‘switch off’, creating a fair share of misunderstanding and hostility.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, the Janata Dal also faced leadership crisis as soon as the National Front government was formed because as soon as V.P. Singh assumed the post of Prime Minister, he resigned from the post of the Party President. When he was the President of the Janata Dal, he devoted considerable time in resolving issues and matters within the party. Singh himself admitted that problems in the Janata Dal started with him leaving the post of the President as it created a political vacuum.<sup>42</sup> Since most prominent members of the party became Ministers in the government, the coordination became tough. Mustafa writes, ‘the party organization suffered a great deal in consequence and by the time SR Bommai was elected President, considerable damage had been done to the party’.<sup>43</sup>

The Janata Dal being faction-ridden could not provide a strong leadership to the party and in turn this had a casting impact over the functioning of the government. The absence of a strong leadership in the organizational wing, which could impart a minimum centralization or strength in order to ensure coordination between the organizational wing and parliamentary wing of the party, further deepened the already existing divide within the party. The V. P. Singh Cabinet thus came to characterize dissension and division, at moments to the extent that it violated the basic premise of Cabinet government itself.

Having realized the inherent weakness of a minority coalition government dependent upon the outside support, V.P. Singh evolved his own style of political management to possibly alleviate the disadvantages. The style was to broaden the scope of consensus and thus he tried to include all the major political parties in the exercise of decision-making by seeking their opinion and offering them explanation with regard

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<sup>41</sup> Seema Mustafa. (1995). *The Lonely Prophet: V.P. Singh, A Political Biography*. New Delhi: New Age International, p.150

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p.149

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p.149.

to the action and policies of the government.<sup>44</sup> In other words, he saw the all party meetings he used to convene as an opportunity to discuss the pressing issues of the day. There were frequent meetings with the MPs belonging to the National Front which included the Janata Dal. It was, in addition, to the weekly dinner meetings that the Prime Minister hosted with the two leaders each of the Left and the BJP. All these strategies must not only be understood as compulsion of politics where floor management was an uphill task but also through the lens of the peculiar leadership style and personality that V.P. Singh possessed. The V.P. Singh Cabinet was much more deliberative and participatory than its predecessor and the members could freely exchange views and raise issues in the Cabinet. Jha, the then Information advisor to the Prime Minister notes,

Only those who had observed him at meetings of the council of ministers, explaining the issues being discussed and the options before the government, and the careful attention he devoted to the observations of all those who spoke at the meetings he attended, and his point by point explanations or rebuttals of what had been said, were in a position to know the importance V.P. attached to consensus building and to educating and involving the people's representatives.<sup>45</sup>

B.G. Deshmukh, the then Principal Secretary to the PM, too observes that V.P. Singh adopted a practice of arriving at decision through consensus which however was quite time-consuming. Commenting on the nature of decision making style of V.P. Singh, Deshmukh remarks,

Decision making became a casualty because reaching a consensus acquired more importance than taking a decision and this automatically led to taking soft options. It is natural for a new government to take whatever hard decisions it has to take in the first six to eight months, which is the usual honeymoon period with the public, but the process

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<sup>44</sup> Prem Shankar Jha. (1993). *In the Eye of The Cyclone: The Crisis in Indian Democracy*. New Delhi: Viking, p. 93.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 97.

of consensus which V.P. Singh government had to adopt did not permit this.<sup>46</sup>

It is worth mentioning that V.P. Singh's first Cabinet meeting lasted for 90 minutes and dealt with certain pending issues that had to be taken up in the parliament. Gujral recalls a discussion that regarding the government's hold on radio, in which while P. Upendra and Arun Nehru were reluctant to let go of the government's hold on the TV and radio, Gujral advocated that radio and TV ought to come under an autonomous body.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Gujral narrates another Cabinet meeting which held on July 29, 1990 that lasted for around two hours and eventually triggered the sacking of Devi Lal from the Cabinet.<sup>48</sup> During V.P. Singh's tenure, though the Cabinet restored collegial and collective nature functioning yet there were moments of severe strains and deep division which stands in sharp contrast to the basic ethos of a Cabinet government. As Pai Panandiker and Mehra write,

V. P. Singh, true to his style, raised consensual functioning of his Cabinet to a moral pitch...but the Janata Dal Cabinet during its brief tenure did function collectively despite Devi Lal, the Deputy Prime Minister, violating most of the norms of the Cabinet system.<sup>49</sup>

The enhanced deliberative and participatory character of the Cabinet could not in any substantial manner avert the factionalism and divisions. In fact, as argued previously, it contributed to the delay in decision making and sent a perception about government being lead by a weak PM.

Using Gujral's autobiographical account, it could be argued that V.P. Singh in particular used the forums of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) of the Janata Dal and Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) quite extensively in consultation and deliberation. The Political Affairs Committee played a very significant role

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<sup>46</sup> B.G. Deshmukh. (2004). *From Poona to The Prime Minister's Office: A Cabinet Secretary Looks Back*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, pp.242-243

<sup>47</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p. 260

<sup>48</sup> Ibid p.291.

<sup>49</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 64.

during this tenure and consisted of the following seven members: V. P. Singh, Devi Lal, R. K. Hegde, Ajit Singh, Chandra Shekhar, Biju Patnaik, and I. K. Gujral.<sup>50</sup>

The Political Affairs Committee (PAC) also comprised six special invitees who included Chimanbhai Patel and George Ferenandes among others.<sup>51</sup> The Committee in the words of Gujral, 'soothed the relationships inter se'.<sup>52</sup> The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) constituted on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1989 too remained quite active and it had following members: V. P. Singh Prime Minister, Chairperson; Devi Lal, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Agriculture; Madhu Dandavate, Minister of Finance; Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Minister of Home Affairs; Ajit Singh, Minister of Industry; Arun Kumar Nehru, Minister of Commerce & Tourism; and I. K. Gujral, Minister of External Affairs.<sup>53</sup> V.P. Singh, Devi Lal, Ajit Singh and I.K. Gujral were common to both the committees.

Considering the fact that the National Front government was in reality a Janata Dal government, the Political Affairs Committee assumed great significance. In part, it also had to do with fact that the party lacked a commanding leadership and most of the members remained co-equals in the fledgling party. The forum gained importance as prominent Janata Dal leaders like Chandra Shekhar didn't take any ministry but were a member of this committee and thus, it acted as a coordination mechanism between the organizational wing and the government. The significant of the PAC as a formal coordination mechanism can be gauged through how it impacted on crucial matters like sacking of Devi Lal from the Cabinet, the decision over the implementation of Mandal Commission report and the Babri Masjid- Ram Janmabhoomi imbroglio, among others. Based on the biographical accounts presented by Prem Shankar Jha and Seema Mustafa, as well as the autobiographical accounts of I.K. Gujral and R..Venkataraman it could be safely argued that the Political Affairs Committee of the party remained quite central in ensuring consensus, maintaining

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<sup>50</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p.263.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 263.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 263.

<sup>53</sup> Based on *CPIO and Under Secretary on 28th March as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 1st March 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50163 (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22nd November as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2018] Dated 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Registered No. F-12015/301/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22nd January as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 4<sup>th</sup> January 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50009 and No. F-12015/310/2018-RTI(Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information.



coordination and influencing the decisions of the party. In other words, it shows the crucial role that the party played over the functioning of the V.P. Singh Cabinet. The role of party was distinctively salient in the decision-making of this Cabinet and partly, it explains the deep consultative mechanism in which the PAC of the Janata Dal was involved. For instance, V.P. Singh took the Party President into confidence particularly in the whole affair of Devi Lal. As Gujral writes, ‘V.P. Singh consulted Bommai, the Party President, who, in turn, had informed the Chief Ministers and leaders of those parties that were supporting the government. All of them had endorsed the prime minister’s decision (of sacking Devi Lal)’.<sup>54</sup>

It is ironical that though the ideological rivalry between the Left and the Right did not cripple the functioning of the government, it was jeopardized by the infighting within the party, led by Devi Lal who was supported by leaders like Chandra Shekhar and Ajit Singh.<sup>55</sup> It was the weak foundations of the party which determined the functioning of the Cabinet. Though it was quite later that the BJP withdrew its support, its collapse was perceivable from much ahead. The disaffection towards the leadership was so intense that even while the government faced crisis during its last leg, the Cabinet remained divided and repellent. Even those considered closer to V.P. Singh such as Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammed contemplated resignation from the Cabinet.<sup>56</sup> Commenting upon the relationship between V.P. Singh and his Cabinet colleagues, Deshmukh remarks,

He was not a lucky Prime Minister. The way he was elected prime minister in the Janata Dal meeting did not really augur well. Normally, every Prime Minister has a honeymoon period, but in his case this was too early. Though, he had a consensual approach, neither those with him in the government nor those who supported him from outside found him easy to work with. He too found it difficult to carry on with all of them together. The BJP started doubting his sincerity and bonafides within a couple of months, but even his colleagues, like Ram Vilas Paswan and George Fernandes, did not make his life easier. Devi

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<sup>54</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p.291

<sup>55</sup> Seema Mustafa. (1995). *The Lonely Prophet: V.P. Singh, A Political Biography*. New Delhi: New Age International, p. 151.

<sup>56</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p. 407.

Lal was in a class by himself and wanted to extract his pound of flesh for supporting his election as prime minister. By March-April 1990, we could sense the beginning of the end of his government.<sup>57</sup>

The early infighting in the Cabinet started quite early on and there were reports that alleged the arbitrary way in which the Prime Minister was handling the Kashmir and Punjab affairs.<sup>58</sup> V.P. Singh had appointed George Fernandez as Minister-in-Charge, Kashmir Affairs Committee, to handle the Kashmir crisis. This created a serious division between the Home Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed and George Fernandez whereby a chaotic situation emerged, bringing nothing but embarrassment to the government. This incident compromised the Prime Minister's authority as his directives were overruled.<sup>59</sup> Deshmukh too notes that the creation of the Kashmir Affairs Committee resulted in confusion in the Ministry of Home Affairs and triggered an 'undefined tension' between the Prime Minister and the Home Minister, who per chance belonged to Kashmir.<sup>60</sup> The decisions on appointment of Jagmohan as the Governor of Kashmir and then his subsequent recall were made by the Prime Minister without consulting the Kashmir Affairs Committee. Commenting upon the developments in Kashmir and V.P. Singh's unilateral decisions that backfired and eventually questioned his authority too, Mustafa writes,

V. P. Singh decided to intervene directly and without taking his Cabinet colleagues into confidence, recalled Jagmohan and appointed Girish Saxena as the new governor. This arbitrary action was criticized by several ministers in the government including George Fernandez who is reported to have thought of resigning at that stage. In particular, because all important decisions concerning the Valley- the appointment of Jagmohan and his subsequent recall, as the dismissal of the state government and the governor's recall, were taken without consulting the Kashmir Affairs Committee.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> B.G. Deshmukh. (2004). *From Poona to The Prime Minister's Office: A Cabinet Secretary Looks Back*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, p.293

<sup>58</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p. 386.

<sup>59</sup> Seema Mustafa. (1995). *The Lonely Prophet: V.P. Singh, A Political Biography*. New Delhi: New Age International, p.143.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 240.

<sup>61</sup> Seema Mustafa. (1995). *The Lonely Prophet: V.P. Singh, A Political Biography*. New Delhi: New Age International, p.144

The Kashmir issue was succeeded by the Meham incident and the subsequent installation of Om Prakash Chautala as the Chief Minister of Haryana. In the light of the deepening crisis three ministers- Arun Nehru, Arif Mohammed Khan and Satpal Malik- resigned in protest.<sup>62</sup> They stated that the whole exercise was a compromise with the value based politics that the Janata Dal stood for.<sup>63</sup> Faced with embarrassment over the whole issue, V.P. Singh conveyed to the Party President S.R. Bommai his decision to resign and asked him to convene a meeting of the Parliamentary Board so that a new leader of the House may be elected. However, the Political Affairs Committee affirmed its confidence in the leadership of V.P. Singh and agreed upon modalities of getting Chautala to resign.<sup>64</sup>

Devi Lal, on the other hand, leveled corruption charges against two Cabinet ministers: Arun Nehru and Arif Mohammed Khan. In an interview to the *Illustrated Weekly of India* Devi Lal called the Prime Minister as spine less and other colleagues as ‘nalayaks’ and ‘whimps’.<sup>65</sup> The divisions in the Janata Dal was reflected in the Cabinet. For instance, Biju Patnaik, the then Chief Minister of Odisha, contended that the resignation was not needed while the BJP and the CPI(M) were unanimous on seeking the resignation of Chautala.<sup>66</sup> Following the debate and discussions in the Political Affairs Committee of the Janata Dal, the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs and the Cabinet itself, decision was taken on seeking the resignation of Devi Lal. V.P. Singh accordingly, presented a letter to the President Venkatraman on August 1<sup>st</sup>, advising him to remove Devi Lal, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture, from the Council of Ministers.<sup>67</sup>

The implementation of the recommendation of the Mandal Commission Report was categorically mentioned in the manifesto of the Janata Dal. It also found its place in the President’s Address to the Parliament. V.P. Singh had also mentioned during the Budget session of the parliament that the Commission’s recommendation would be implemented.<sup>68</sup> However, on August 7<sup>th</sup>, in an unexpected and hasty development, the

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<sup>62</sup> For a detailed discussion on the Meham incident . See I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p. 284-292

<sup>63</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p. 390

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p.391

<sup>65</sup> B.G. Deshmukh. (2004). *From Poona to The Prime Minister’s Office: A Cabinet Secretary Looks Back*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, p. 244.

<sup>66</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p. 392.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 395.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, Pp. 403-404

Prime Minister V.P. Singh made a statement on the floor of the House accepting the Mandal Commission recommendation. The decision to accept the Mandal Commission recommendation was taken at a Cabinet meeting convened on August 6<sup>th</sup>. The announcement by V.P. Singh in the Cabinet meeting to discuss the implementation of Mandal Commission recommendation surprised Vinod Pande, the Cabinet Secretary as well as B.G. Deshmukh, the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister as it was not on the agenda of the meeting before hand.<sup>69</sup> Arun Nehru too points out that the item in regard to accepting the recommendations of the Mandal Commission Report was not included in the agenda of the Cabinet meeting and was brought in at the last minute.<sup>70</sup> He himself did not attend the meeting, though.<sup>71</sup> Deshmukh argues that the report was accepted at the backdrop of the Janata Dal meeting held on August 5<sup>th</sup>, to endorse the removal of Devi Lal. During the meeting a large section of the backward caste leaders from the party advocated vigorously for the implementation of the Mandal Commission report. The Prime Minister convened a meeting of the Political Affairs Committee to discuss the same and Sharad Yadav was adamant that the report be accepted by the government. As Deshmukh writes,

The Prime Minister asked for more time but the group (backward caste leader) did not agree. This was followed by an informal meeting of the Political Affairs Committee at which the Cabinet Secretary was present and Sharad Yadav forcefully advocated the adoption of the report. This was how the subject came up before the Cabinet next evening without any notice to the PMO.<sup>72</sup>

Prem Shankar Jha, Information Advisor to the PM, admits too that the decision was taken in haste and no systematic attempt was made to prepare the public before such policy decisions were announced. Jha writes,

apart from not listening to his Cabinet colleagues, several of whom voiced strong opposition to the move and not consulting his friendly

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<sup>69</sup> B.G. Deshmukh. (2004). *From Poona to The Prime Minister's Office: A Cabinet Secretary Looks Back*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, p.280

<sup>70</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p.406

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p.406

<sup>72</sup> B.G. Deshmukh. (2004). *From Poona to The Prime Minister's Office: A Cabinet Secretary Looks Back*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, p.281

parties, why did he also not consult the key officials in his own office, his Principal Secretary and his Information Advisor ?<sup>73</sup>

Both Advani and Venkatraman's accounts are unanimous that the hasty decision taken by V.P. Singh was a strategy to contain the fallout of the removal of Devi Lal. Advani calls it a pre-emptive strike against Devi Lal, who had given a call for a massive rally of farmers in Delhi. He mentions that both the CPI(M) and the BJP had expressed their reservations and wished it be discussed, before any decision in this regard was to be taken by the government. Advani writes,

I requested the Prime Minister not to announce the implementation of the Mandal Commission's report before we had an opportunity of discussing its implementation in the informal coordination committee comprising the leaders of the National Front, BJP and the Left parties. I specifically mentioned that both Somnath Chatterjee, the CPI(M) leader, and I wanted to discuss the issue with him. 'In any case,' I told him, 'our regular Tuesday dinner meeting is only two days away'. Singh's reply was, 'No I cannot wait. I have to announce it tomorrow.'<sup>74</sup>

The Mandal divided the Janata Dal as well Singh's Cabinet colleagues. The Left leader Jyoti Basu argued for material poverty as a criterion to determine reservation and expressed his reservations on V.P. Singh decision. Senior Janata Dal leaders like Ramkrishna Hegde and Biju Patnaik endorsed the position taken by Basu. Chandra Shekhar and Yashwant Sinha openly criticized the government regarding the manner in which the decision was being implemented.<sup>75</sup> Chandra Shekhar issued a statement saying, 'the timing of the announcement made the parliament, press, and academic community feel suspicious that narrow factional and electoral considerations have prevailed over national interests'.<sup>76</sup>

Among his Cabinet members, while Ram Vilas Paswan and Sharad Yadav vociferously defended and argued for the implementation of reservation. Ajit Singh

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<sup>73</sup> Prem Shankar Jha. (1993). *In the Eye of The Cyclone: The Crisis in Indian Democracy*. New Delhi: Viking, p.152.

<sup>74</sup> L.K. Advani. (2008). *My Country. My Life*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.446

<sup>75</sup> Seema Mustafa. (1995). *The Lonely Prophet: V.P. Singh, A Political Biography*. New Delhi: New Age International, p.159.

<sup>76</sup> Cited in Ibid, p.159.

wanted the Jats to be covered under the policy. Arun Nehru, P. Upendra and Gujral had their reservations on the manner in which it had been announced and implemented but their views did not make much difference. Jha notes that during the Cabinet meeting apprehensions were expressed on the decision but the PM was adamant. Jha writes,

After the issue had been thoroughly discussed in the Cabinet, where apparently, V.P. Singh had told his colleagues that if they did not endorse it he would tender his resignation from the government, he asked P. Upendra to inform the leaders of the Left and the BJP. Upendra reported their views to V.P. and advised him to sit on the decision for a few more days but the prime minister decided that since the Cabinet had approved of the measure, its announcement should not be delayed any longer.<sup>77</sup>

The differences between the BJP and V.P. Singh had grown gradually since the inception of government. The *rathayatra* by Advani brought the BJP and the National Front government into direct confrontation. The BJP threatened to withdraw the outside support if Advani were to be arrested. Advani was arrested under the National Security Act in Bihar on October 23 and accordingly, the BJP withdrew the support. However, V.P. Singh after deliberation with his Cabinet met the President and informed him that the Cabinet had decided not to tender its resignation.<sup>78</sup> Accordingly, the President asked V.P. Singh to seek the Vote of Confidence in the Lok Sabha on November, 7.<sup>79</sup> With the increasing disaffection among the Janata Dal members against the PM and the withdrawal of support by the BJP, the fall of government was imminent. After an intense debate in the Lok Sabha, the government fell on November 7 with the Confidence Motion being negated by 152 to 356.<sup>80</sup> Fifty-five members of the Janata Dal voted against the government and the party split, thus, became a reality. During the Confidence Motion, the government was supported by the entire spectrum of Left MPs but several of the Janata Dal MPs including

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<sup>77</sup> Prem Shankar Jha. (1993). *In the Eye of The Cyclone: The Crisis in Indian Democracy*. New Delhi: Viking, p. 155.

<sup>78</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p.427.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p.428.

<sup>80</sup> G.C. Malhotra. (2004). *Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat and Metropolitan Book Company, p. 80

Chandra Shekhar tried to put him down.<sup>81</sup> The V.P. Singh government had a brief tenure of 11 months and 8 days and it did not witness major reshuffle in the Union Council of Ministers or changes in the Cabinet. Contrary to the earlier trends, V.P. Singh made only one change in his Union Council of Ministers.<sup>82</sup> Devi Lal was removed from the Council of Ministers and the Prime Minister took charge of the Ministry of Agriculture.

During his brief tenure, V.P. Singh intended to restore the primacy of the Cabinet Secretariat and accordingly, the primacy of the Prime Minister's Office was considerably moderated. He was concerned that the PMH or the PM had started come to enjoy phenomenal influence since 1970s, at the cost of the Cabinet. Therefore, he attempted to maintain an equilibrium between the PMO and the Cabinet Secretariat. Mustafa argues that the considerable power that the PMO used to exercise was reduced and further by retaining officers like B.G. Deshmukh as his Principal Secretary, V.P. Singh tried to signal that the PMO was no longer a, 'closed coterie of powerful officials'. V.P. Singh himself comments,

The PMO had nothing to do with the other Ministries, it had to do with me only. The officials were there to advise me and I was free to accept or reject their advice. Their function was not to interfere in or run ministries. The Cabinet Secretary had a hierarchical position in the government, and we kept that distinction. Official decisions went through him to the ministries, political and other important decision went through me. Never through the PMO.<sup>83</sup>

The assertion made by V.P. Singh seems to be reasonable given the fact that even Deshmukh remained oblivious of the government's decision to implement the Mandal Commission Report. The appointment of Vinod Pande as the Cabinet Secretary further adds to the claim made by V.P. Singh to restore the primacy of Cabinet Secretariat.

### **Chandra Shekhar: Strong Leader, Weak Government**

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<sup>81</sup> Prem Shankar Jha. (1993). *In the Eye of The Cyclone: The Crisis in Indian Democracy*. New Delhi: Viking, p. 237.

<sup>82</sup> Council of Ministers 1947-2015 (From 15 August 1947 to 28 August, 2015): Names and Portfolios of the Members of the Union Council of Ministers. (2016). New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat,, p.vii

<sup>83</sup> V.P. Singh cited in Seema Mustafa. (1995). *The Lonely Prophet: V.P. Singh, A Political Biography*. New Delhi: New Age International, p. 137

I oppose this motion as the continuation of the so called council of ministers with grand number of two members, without even allocated portfolios, will mean the continued mockery and debasement of parliamentary democracy in this country...This government is the product of political expediency where personal ambition and avarice and abject surrender to forces of authoritarianism have been given primacy over national interests and at the cost of secularism. The Prime Minister has said he wants to save the country from the aftermath of what, according to him, was the misrule of V.P. Singh's government and that is why he has come out and has taken the support of the Congress for the purpose of running the administration. I would ask him, why is it not the other way round? Why does not the single biggest party in parliament take upon itself the responsibility of the administration and why Chandra Shekhar and his supporters did not decide to support that Congress government? They would have had the working majority.

– Somnath Chatterjee.<sup>84</sup>

Following the fall of V.P. Singh government, the President R. Venkataraman explored the possibilities of forming the government and invited the leaders of the Congress (I), the BJP and the Left sequentially.<sup>85</sup> While all of them declined to stake the claim for the formation of government, Rajiv Gandhi, Leader of the Congress (I) Parliamentary Party recommended the name of Chandra Shekhar, Leader of the Janata Dal (Socialist) Party to the President to be invited to form the government. The Congress (I) party decided to offer its outside support to the Janta Dal (S). Gujral writes,

The president was obsessed, unrealistically at that, with the idea of putting off the polls for another year. As a result, he did not want V.P. Singh to continue even as the head of a 'caretaker' government. The

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<sup>84</sup> Somnath Chatterjee speaking during the Confidence Motion faced by Chandra Shekhar, cited in Somnath Chatterjee. (2010). *Keeping the Faith: Memoirs of a Parliamentarian*. Noida: Harper Collins, p. 75

<sup>85</sup> See G.C. Malhotra. (2004). *Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat and Metropolitan Book Company p.81



Congress would not and did not step in at that moment of uncertainty to form a government but decided to support Chandra Shekhar from outside.<sup>86</sup>

With the split of Janata Dal into two, Chandra Shekhar led faction came to be called as Janata Dal (Socialist) Party and had 64 MPs. Venkatraman notes that Rajiv Gandhi's support to Chandra Shekhar was, 'neither temporary nor conditional and that it was given to Chandra Shekhar to tide over a national crisis'.<sup>87</sup> Rajiv Gandhi gave an oral assurance of outside support, for at least one year to the Chandra Shekhar government.<sup>88</sup> Chandra Shekhar government had the outside support of AIADMK, BSP, Muslim League, National Conference, Kerala Congress (M), Akali Dal (Panthic) and a few independent MPs apart from the Congress (I). Chandra Shekhar assured the President that he trusted the Congress (I) leadership for the vital support and informed him about the arrangements which the Congress (I) and the Janata Dal (Socialist) were looking in order to establish coordination between them.<sup>89</sup> The swearing-in of Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal took place on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1991. Devi Lal was appointed as the Deputy Prime Minister, apart from being given the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Tourism. Chandra Shekhar secured the Vote of Confidence on November 16 with 280 MPs in favour and 214 MPs against the motion.<sup>90</sup> Essentially Chandra Shekhar government was a single party minority government which survived on the outside support of seven parties and few independent MPs.

Though the swearing-in of the Prime Minister took place on November 10<sup>th</sup> and the government took secure the Vote of Confidence on November 16<sup>th</sup>, there was considerable delay in the swearing-in of the other members of the Union Council of Ministers. The delay happened primarily because of the pressure tactics of Devi Lal who remained adamant to include MPs from his factions in the Union Council of Ministers. Venkatraman notes,

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<sup>86</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p.321

<sup>87</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p.438.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p.472.

<sup>89</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p. 442.

<sup>90</sup> G.C. Malhotra. (2004). *Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat and Metropolitan Book Company, p.81

Though Chandra Shekhar obtained a vote of confidence with 269 votes in favour and 204 against, he had immense problem in forming the Cabinet. According to reports, Devi Lal wanted a whole block of ministers from his faction. Pulls and pressures harassed the Prime Minister. Finally he told me that he would finalize the Cabinet and that it could be sworn in on November 19. Then it was again postponed to November 20. Again the Prime Minister sent word to me on November 20 that the swearing-in ceremony could be held at 9 a.m. the next day as he had to leave for Male to attend the SAARC Summit the same day. Throughout the night the Rashtrapati Bhawan was waiting for the list of ministers. But the list arrived only at 7 a.m. on the morning of November 21.<sup>91</sup>

Gujral argues that despite being under pressure by Devi Lal, Chandra Shekhar appointed ministers in the Cabinet who were not in his good books and thus the relation between Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar got strained at the beginning itself.<sup>92</sup> Further, Gujral points out that Chandra Shekhar was also under the pressure of Rajiv Gandhi regarding the composition of his Cabinet. Based on his conversation with the then Foreign Secretary, Muchkund Dube, Gujral writes that Chandra Shekhar was asked to share the list of the proposed members of the Cabinet with Rajiv Gandhi, to which he agreed. Moreover, Chandra Shekhar agreed to the demands by the Congress (I) that the Secretaries in the respective Ministries of Commerce, Industry and Finance apart from the Cabinet Secretary would be changed with the approval of Rajiv Gandhi.<sup>93</sup>

Chandra Shekhar had a small Cabinet, consisting of 13 members including the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister. The PM kept the charge of crucial ministries like the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Defence. Yashwant Sinha was made the Minister of Finance, V.C. Shukla was made the Minister of External Affairs and Subramaniam Swamy was allocated the Ministry of Commerce. Chandra Shekhar approached Gujral to take up the Ministry of External Affairs but the latter

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<sup>91</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p.480

<sup>92</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p.324

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, pp.321-322

categorically denied being a part of his Cabinet.<sup>94</sup> Only one change was affected in the Cabinet during the brief tenure of Chandra Shekhar government that lasted just for 7 months 11 days.

Acting under the pressure of one of the allies-the AIADMK- the Cabinet recommended the dismissal of the DMK government in Tamil Nadu. Moreover, the state assembly also stood dissolved. Yet, Ananth writes, the Congress continued to support the government as it did not wish to go for the general elections in the then existing political situation.<sup>95</sup> Nonetheless, within ten weeks of the formation of Chandra Shekhar government, tension started brewing between the Prime Minister and Rajiv Gandhi over policy issues. The latter was categorical in expressing his disappointment in front of the President over the government's permission to allow refueling facilities to the United States Air Force transport planes. The opposition considered this act as a betrayal of India's commitment to the policy of Non-Alignment. Rajiv Gandhi was also disappointed with the government's policy on Punjab and Kashmir but he restrained from hinting towards withdrawal of support from the government.<sup>96</sup> Rajiv Gandhi was concerned that the Budget prepared for the year could be harsh and trigger undue inflation.

The discord in the Cabinet became evident as the President was informed by the former Union Minister H.K.L. Bhagat that Devi Lal could extend support to Rajiv Gandhi to form the government.<sup>97</sup> As Venkatraman writes, 'He (H.K.L. Bhagat) indicated that groups led by Devi Lal and Arun Nehru were prepared to support Rajiv Gandhi to form a government'.<sup>98</sup>

However, a major crisis occurred when two policemen from Haryana were caught putting a surveillance over Rajiv Gandhi. On March 5<sup>th</sup>, the Lok Sabha proceedings witnessed unruly scenes and the Congress staged a walk out on the issue. Chandra Shekhar gave an assurance to institute a parliamentary inquiry into the matter and promised stern action against the culprits. As the Congress continued its boycott of

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<sup>94</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p.323

<sup>95</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, p. 383

<sup>96</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p.472

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p.472

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p.472

the Lok Sabha proceedings, Chandra Shekhar expressed his desire to the President to resign.<sup>99</sup> Venkataraman writes,

At 9:45 am on March 6, Chandra Shekhar called on me and reported all that had happened in the Lok Sabha. He said that if the Congress continued its boycott, he would request the Speaker to adjourn the House to enable him to meet the President and tender the resignation of the Council of Ministers. He said he did not want his government to be defeated in the House.<sup>100</sup>

While replying to the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address on March 6<sup>th</sup>, Chandra Shekhar announced his resignation. Chandra Shekhar forwarded his resignation to the President and advised him to dissolve the Lok Sabha so that fresh election could be held. The President accepted the resignation of the Prime Minister asking him to continue as the care taker Prime Minister in office till a new ministry is constituted. Subsequently, the President dissolved the Lok Sabha and directed the constitution of new Lok Sabha on or before June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1991. The President consulted the Prime Minister regarding the date to be fixed for the constitution of the Tenth Lok Sabha.<sup>101</sup>

### **P. V. Narsimha Rao: Stable Government, Divided Cabinet**

Our concerted effort to remove PV did not succeed because he was far clever than all of us. But he did not have the support of Sonia Gandhi either. An impression was created by one or two members of the CWC that Sonia Gandhi was not happy with the reform process and that Narsimha Rao was ignoring her. The attempt was to weaken the hands of Narsimha Rao. Almost all the senior members of the Congress Party were aware of Sonia Gandhi giving him a cold shoulder. In the months to come, a stage was reached when communication between 7 Race Course Road and 10 Janpath almost ceased. This was good neither for the party nor for the government.<sup>102</sup>- K. Natwar Singh

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<sup>99</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p.479

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p.479

<sup>101</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p.492

<sup>102</sup> K. Natwar Singh. (2014). *One Life is Not Enough: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 294.

In between the polls to the Tenth Lok Sabha, a tragedy fell upon the nation: Rajiv Gandhi, the President of the Congress (I) was assassinated on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1991. Subsequently, the second and third phases of elections were postponed. Kidwai notes that CWC convened a meeting ‘consisting of twelve members, two permanent invitees and four special invitees immediately after Rajiv Gandhi’s death’.<sup>103</sup> The CWC resolved that Sonia Gandhi should take up the post of President.<sup>104</sup> Though the decision was unanimous yet Sharad Pawar expressed his reservations arguing that there should be a distinction between the post of the Party President and the Leader of the Parliamentary Party, he was quite mild in asserting his position. Therefore, the resolution declaring Sonia Gandhi to be the Party President was unanimously passed.<sup>105</sup> However she declined to assume this responsibility. As Sitapati writes, ‘She rejected the CWC resolution, preferring to privately grieve rather than play the public role of a political leader’.<sup>106</sup>

Refusal by Sonia Gandhi gave rise to speculation especially because in case the party returns with a majority in the House, the Party President was in all likelihood would be the Prime Minister. The key contenders were Sharad Pawar and Arjun Singh, though N.D. Tiwari and Madhav Rao Scindia too were in the fray. Natwar Singh notes that he persuaded Sonia Gandhi to consult P.N. Haksar in this regard and who in turn suggested the name of Shankar Dayal Sharma, the then Vice-President of India. On behalf of Sonia Gandhi, Aruna Asaf Ali and Natwar Singh reached out to Sharma who declined the request, citing his old age and health conditions. Sharma, Natwar Singh recalls had said, ‘The Prime Ministership of India is a full-time job. My age and

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<sup>103</sup> Those present in the meeting included Pranab Mukherjee, PV Narsimha Rao (he chaired the meeting on the proposal being made by Mukherjee), K Karunakaran, Arjun Singh, Ghulam Nabi Azad, balram Jaxhar, Meira Kumar, Jagannath Pahadia, Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, H.K.L. Bhagat, Buta Singh, Ram Chandra Vikal and Sitaram Kesri. The Permanent invitees were Janardhan Reddy and Sharad Pawar. The special invitees to the meeting were Jitendra Prasada, M.L. Fotedar and P Shiv Shankar. See Rasheed Kidwai. (2011). *24 Akbar Road: A Short History of the People behind the Fall and Rise of the Congress*. Gurgaon: Hachette, p. 150

<sup>104</sup> Rasheed Kidwai. (2011). *24 Akbar Road: A Short History of the People behind the Fall and Rise of the Congress*. Gurgaon: Hachette, p. 152

<sup>105</sup> See Vinay Sitapati. (2016). *Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p. 92. Also see Rasheed Kidwai. (2011). *24 Akbar Road: A Short History of the People behind the Fall and Rise of the Congress*. Gurgaon: Hachette, pp.150-151.

<sup>106</sup> Vinay Sitapati. (2016). *Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p.93.

health would not let me to do justice to the most important office in the country. Kindly convey my inability to take on so awesome a responsibility'.<sup>107</sup>

Sonia Gandhi was then advised by Haksar to consider P.V. Narsimha Rao and she agreed. Sitapati writes, 'this time he suggested Pamulyapati Venkata Narsimha Rao. Rao had spent decades in party and government, Haksar argued. He was an intellectual who lacked enemies, someone who could keep the party united. The other contenders, Haksar hinted, might split the party.'<sup>108</sup>

Once Sonia Gandhi gave her nod, the CWC unanimously backed the decision and it unanimously elected Rao as the President of the party. Kidwai argues that the choice of Rao did not raise many eye brows in the CWC as he had maintained a low profile and was never really assumed to be a serious contender for the post by those in the fray. Singh was more skeptical about Shankar Dayal Sharma taking over as the President of the party. However as far as the candidature of Rao was concerned, both Singh as well as Pawar, considered him to be a stop-gap arrangement. Kidwai writes,

The prospect of Shankar Dayal Sharma taking over as the AICC chief rattled Arjun so much that he retreated in favour of Rao. Pawar who had remained adamant on a contest, also fell in line when Rao said to him philosophically, 'I will not be able to carry the burden for too long.'<sup>109</sup>

Vinay Sitapati argues that the CWS considered Rao to be a mere stop gap arrangement given his old age and health conditions. When the final two phases of elections happened, the Congress emerged as the single largest party securing 231 seats out of 520, with 44 per cent vote share. The BJP emerged as the second largest party with 120 seats while the Janata Dal got 69 seats. When the results were declared, Pawar emerged as one among the major contenders for the post of the Prime Minister. Previously, he had categorically mentioned that the post of the AICC Chief should be distinct from the post of the Leader of the Parliamentary Party. As the Congress won 37 out of 48 seats in Maharashtra, it tilted the balance in Pawar's

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<sup>107</sup> K. Natwar Singh. (2014). *One Life is Not Enough: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.289.

<sup>108</sup> Vinay Sitapati. (2016). *Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p. 95

<sup>109</sup> Rasheed Kidwai. (2011). *24 Akbar Road: A Short History of the People behind the Fall and Rise of the Congress*. Gurgaon: Hachette, p. 159

favour. Sitapati notes that Pawar intended that the party should resolve the leadership issue through voting by the parliamentary party.<sup>110</sup> Kidwai argues that as Rao and Pawar emerged as major contenders, Pawar could sense that that most members of the CWC may remain positively predisposed towards Rao because of a possible call by the leadership and therefore urged for secret ballot. Kidwai writes,

The AICC treasurer tried to convince Pawar to let the Congress Working Committee elect the new Prime Minister instead of newly elected MPs. But Pawar said that the CWC was packed with members who had lost the 1991 Lok Sabha polls and insisted upon a secret ballot.<sup>111</sup>

Baru argues that P.V.N. Rao reached out to Pawar. and P.C. Alexander played the role of an intermediary in this endeavor. This fact has been corroborated in the writing of Venkataraman too.<sup>112</sup> Pawar too endorses the fact and writes,

P.C. Alexander was as close to the Gandhi family and Narsimha Rao as he was to me. He played broker and organized a meeting with Rao, saying that we should let bygones be bygones. He and I knew that I had been a strong contender but the Gandhi family was not about to let someone with an independent mind get to the prime minister's post. 'The prime minister wants you to join the new ministry', Alexander told me. As suggested by him I had a one-on-one meeting with Narsimha Rao where he offered me the choice of any three top portfolios-home, finance or defence. I asked for some time, and later opted for defence.<sup>113</sup>

In the meanwhile, key leaders including Arjun Singh, N.K.P. Salve and Madhav Rao Scindia who were known to be in close proximity with 10, Janpath affirmed their faith in Rao and Pawar sensing that the tide was turning, withdrew his nomination in

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<sup>110</sup> Vinay Sitapati. (2016). *Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p. 98

<sup>111</sup> Rasheed Kidwai. (2011). *24 Akbar Road: A Short History of the People behind the Fall and Rise of the Congress*. Gurgaon: Hachette, p.162

<sup>112</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p.552

<sup>113</sup> Sharad Pawar. (2016). *On My Terms: From Grassroots to the Corridors of Power*. New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Publications, p. 101-102

favour of Rao.<sup>114</sup> Pawar also realized that taken together the four southern states returned 85 MPs in the Tenth Lok Sabha which was more than double the MPs from Maharashtra in the Lok Sabha. Kidwai cites the letter that Pawar wrote to Rao and it reads,

I accept the Congress President's acceptance of my demand for ascertaining the views of CPP in deciding the leadership of the party. I appeal to all members of the CPP to support PV Narsimha Rao and thus arrive at a unanimous decision.<sup>115</sup>

The same was presented to the Office of the President and consequently he asked PV to form the government and prove his majority in the Lok Sabha within four weeks.<sup>116</sup> Rao was not a member of either House of Parliament as he didn't contest the Lok Sabha elections. Subsequently, he won the by-election to Nandyal Lok Sabha constituency in Andhra Pradesh. Rao took oath on June 21<sup>st</sup> 1991 and proved his majority in the Lok Sabha on July 15<sup>th</sup>. G.C. Malhotra argues that P.V.N. Rao Government was a minority government but it could manage a working majority through the merger of the split away factions of the Shiv Sena, Telgu Desham Party and Janata Dal and few other one member parties with the Congress.<sup>117</sup>

Rao was sworn-in as Prime Minister along with 16 other Cabinet ministers on June 21<sup>st</sup>. Rao consulted the President, P.C. Alexander as well as his prominent colleagues like Sharad Pawar and Pranab Mukherjee while choosing his Cabinet colleagues.<sup>118</sup> The decision regarding the inclusion of the names for the swearing-in of union council of ministers and subsequent allocation of portfolios was not a smooth one. While discussing the composition of Cabinet, Venkataraman advised Rao to induct

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<sup>114</sup> Rasheed Kidwai. (2011). *24 Akbar Road: A Short History of the People behind the Fall and Rise of the Congress*. Gurgaon: Hachette, p.162.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, p.162.

<sup>116</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p.552

<sup>117</sup> G.C. Malhotra. (2004). *Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat and Metropolitan Book Company, p.83

<sup>118</sup> See Vinay Sitapati. (2016). *Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p. 101; R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p.552; Sharad Pawar. (2016). *On My Terms: From Grassroots to the Corridors of Power*. New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Publications, p. 102; Pranab Mukherjee. (2016). *The Turbulent Years: 1980-1996*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.137



around 35-40 members in the council of ministers initially and it could be expanded later.<sup>119</sup> Venkataram recalls,

Finally, when the list arrived I was surprised to see 57 names, instead of expected numbers of 35-40...some of the members of the Council of Ministers were not informed even in time. I was told that Mamata Banerjee who was watching the telecast, heard her name being called and then she rushed to the Ashoka Hall. Another Member of Parliament seated in the audience heard his name called and he rushed to take his oath much to the amusement of the audience.<sup>120</sup>

Sitapati argues that Pawar did express his desire to Rao to be appointed as the Deputy Prime Minister but the latter declined this request. Pawar was appointed as the Defense Minister and Rao accommodated six names recommended by Pawar in the union council of ministers.<sup>121</sup> Most members were Rao's co-equals as far as their position and status in the party was concerned. Considering his stature in the party, Rao reached out to senior colleagues in the party and tried to accommodate most among them in his council of ministers. His Cabinet included heavy weights like Arjun Singh, Sharad Pawar, S.B. Chavan, Madhav Rao Scindia, Sitaram Kesri and Ghulam Nabi Azab. The only exception was Pranab Mukherjee who was made the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission of India. Mukherjee was so upset that he did not turn up for the swearing-in ceremony as a guest.<sup>122</sup> Later on, Mukherjee was brought into Rao's Cabinet as Minister of Commerce in 1993 and subsequently shuffled to the Ministry of External Affairs where he stayed till the dissolution of the government.

Rao could understand the deeper economic crisis that had engulfed the nation since 1990 and he intended that the Minister of Finance should be an expert with exposure to the working of global financial institutions. In his discussion with the President, he emphasized on the need for a Finance Minister, 'with some knowledge of the international financial institutions and experience in dealing with them'.<sup>123</sup> President

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<sup>119</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p.553

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, p.554

<sup>121</sup> Sharad Pawar. (2016). *On My Terms: From Grassroots to the Corridors of Power*. New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Publications, p.102

<sup>122</sup> Pranab Mukherjee. (2016). *The Turbulent Years: 1980-1996*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.137

<sup>123</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p.554

Venkataraman who himself had been a Minister of Finance, advised Rao to have someone as a Finance Minister who remained outside the fold of party politics and accordingly advised him two names: I.G. Patel and Manmohan Singh. Alexander also recommended him these two names for the post. While Patel declined the offer, Singh honoured the proposal and was, thus, appointed as the Finance Minister. He also appointed reform minded P Chidambaram as his Minister of Commerce while he kept the Ministry of Industry with himself.

Vinay Sitapati argues that Rao tried to accommodate different factions in the party to maintain a balance and thus he brought into his Cabinet old timers like Balram Jakher and C.K. Jaffer Shareif<sup>124</sup> and also young parliamentarians like Rajesh Pilot and Madhav Rao Scindia. He recommended the name of fellow devotee of Swami Ramanand Tirtha, S.B. Chavan as Minister of Home Affairs, thereby, enhancing his influence in the key ministry and creating his inner circle. Madhav Singh Solanki was appointed as the Minister of External Affairs. Rao could accommodate both his arch rivals: Sharad Pawar and Arjun Singh in his Cabinet. The most peculiar aspect of the Rao's ministry was its size. Despite leading a single party minority government, Rao had 57 members in his council of ministers. The size of his Council of Ministers is partly a reflection of his style of leadership which tried to contain discontent through accommodation, during a moment of deep economic crisis and social turmoil. However, there was disaffection at certain quarters over the allocation of portfolios and undue representation to certain regions over others also fostered disappointment.<sup>125</sup>

Rao had won six consecutive Lok Sabha elections since 1977 and had also held several key portfolios during the successive governments in 1970s and 1980s, including the Ministry of Defence, Minister of External Affairs and Minister of Finance.. In April 1991, when it was decided that he would not be contesting the Lok Sabha elections, he was already 69 year old. Rajiv Gandhi had assured him a Rajya Sabha seat but it was apparent to Rao and party at large that his active political innings had come to an end. Instead, Rao was assigned the task of drafting the party manifesto for the ensuing general elections of 1991, a role that remains quite marginal

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<sup>124</sup> Vinay Sitapati. (2016). *Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p.185.

<sup>125</sup> R. Venkataraman. (1994). *My Presidential Years*. New Delhi: Indus, p. 561

to active politics. His elevation from the periphery to the post of Prime Minister in June 1991 surprised politicians and political commentators alike. In fact, Baru argues that after being denied the Lok Sabha ticket Rao could sense his imminent marginalization and thus planned to go for political retirement. Post Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, P.V.N. Rao considered his political survival would be quite difficult as he lacked any real political connect with Sonia Gandhi. Despite the fact that Sonia Gandhi kept off politics, yet the 10 Janpath remained the key power centre which had casting impact over all political decisions of the party. Commenting on the stark difference between P.V.N. Rao and Sonia Gandhi, Baru writes,

If Rajiv and PV lived in different worlds, Sonia and PV came from different planets. There was never any real social connect between the two. So PV could not have relied on getting her support. Instead he had to rely on goodwill of elected Congress MPs, especially those from the south.<sup>126</sup>

As P.V.Narasimha Rao's government was a single party minority government, the coherence and coordination between the organizational wing of the party and parliamentary wing became quite crucial during his tenure. The emergence of the BJP as a principal opposition party and presence of a numerically visible non-Congress, non-BJP parties in the parliament added to the difficulties of the government in ensuring smooth floor coordination at a moment of deep economic crisis. Rao's position as a Prime Minister was made vulnerable due to the multifold factors: the compulsion of economic reforms, the assumption of the centre stage by identity politics and consequent fragmentation of the party system at the centre, the decay of the organizational wing of the Congress, the absence of any towering personality with a pan India appeal to lead the party and the emergence of parallel power centres in the party.. All these impacted the exercise of power and authority of the Prime Minister. The working of Cabinet remained embedded in the organizational strength of the party and the kind of leadership it could hold on to at the top.

Rao faced one Confidence Motion (CM) and three No Confidence Motions (NCMs) and his major challenge after the assumption of power remained to stitch a working

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<sup>126</sup> Sanjaya Baru. (2016). *1991: How P.V. Narasimha Rao made History*. New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, p.61

parliamentary majority to run the government and ensure the smooth passage of key legislations. Rao's status and position in the party and his equation with Sonia Gandhi, particularly, became a constant source of impediment as Rao as he could sense the centrality of 10 Janpath as a parallel power centre. Kidwai argues that Rao's relation with Sonia Gandhi remained ambiguous and both being bit reserved persons, did little to clear the misunderstandings.<sup>127</sup> Natwar Singh too writes, 'Sonia had made P. V. Narsimha Rao Prime Minister. But she wasn't very fond of him'.<sup>128</sup> Rao lacked any mass political base and his remarkable rise owed much to his experience in the party affairs and his intellectual strength than to any kind of charisma that he ever created around himself. His position in the party remained precarious. As Kidwai remarks,

Throughout Rao's tenure as prime minister and Congress president, he got the feeling that he could not command the respect normally accorded to the prime minister or the Congress president because he did not have a 'Gandhi-Nehru' surname. Rao told close associates that his 'lowly status' was evident outside the Congress party office as well.<sup>129</sup>

As argued in the previous chapter, the organizational decay or de-institutionalization of the party had started in the early 1970s. However, though the centralization and personalization of power that characterized the Congress during 1970s and 1980s had withered away by the 1990s yet its ramifications could be felt in the manner in which it continued to function. Zoya Hasan argues that the party remained crisis ridden and there was an increasing trend of discontent from all sections within the party that had been facing splits, conflicts and abandonment by certain key leaders.<sup>130</sup> Lack of trust in leadership and factional feuds remained quite prominent. Hasan cites Scindia who says, 'party organization has failed, the CWC hardly ever meets. The AICC meets

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<sup>127</sup> Rasheed Kidwai. (2011). *24 Akbar Road: A Short History of the People behind the Fall and Rise of the Congress*. Gurgaon: Hachette, p. 176

<sup>128</sup> K. Natwar Singh. (2014). *One Life is Not Enough: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 309.

<sup>129</sup> Rasheed Kidwai. (2011). *24 Akbar Road: A Short History of the People behind the Fall and Rise of the Congress*. Gurgaon: Hachette, p.179

<sup>130</sup> Zoya Hasan. (2012). *Congress After Indira: Policy, Power and Political Change*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.74

after long intervals. The Congress party politics has become isolated from the grassroots'.<sup>131</sup>

Rao could realize the limits of a Prime Minister who lacks political base and consequently having a loose grip over the organizational structure of the party. Brass writes,

Lacking the authority of membership in the Nehru dynasty and facing challenges from senior Congress politicians with bases in their home states, notably Arjun Singh from Madhya Pradesh and Sharad Pawar from Maharashtra, Narsimha Rao sought to legitimize and strengthen his leadership by calling for party organizational elections for first time in two decades...Narsimha Rao was himself elected President of the Indian National Congress, the first elected President in twenty years.<sup>132</sup>

After assuming the presidency of the party he aimed at organizational restructuring of the CWC, in particular, to wield considerable influence over the party. During the Tirupati Session of Congress in 1992 he could manage to reconstitute the CWC on his own, by selecting the members himself. Though he retained few of the then stalwarts of the party and his arch rivals in the CWC like Sharad Pawar and Arjun Singh yet because their survival was seen as contingent upon Rao's magnanimity this helped enhance his status in the party considerably. Baru argues that with Rao's election as the President of the party the Congress implicitly became divided into four major factions:

- The Nehru-Gandhi family loyalists which was led by prominent Congress leaders like M. L. Fotedar and R.K. Dhawan
- A north Indian group led by leaders like Arjun Singh, Jagananath Mishra and N.D. Tiwari
- The group led by Sharad Pawar

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<sup>131</sup> Cited in Zoya Hasan. (2012). *Congress After Indira: Policy, Power and Political Change*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.74

<sup>132</sup> Paul R. Brass. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.73

- The south Indian group backed by Rao that was actively managed by K. Karunakaran and had the backing of President Venkataraman.<sup>133</sup>

Based on the writings of Pranab Mukherjee, Sanjay Baru and Sharad Pawar, it can be argued that Rao tried to make his Cabinet more consultative in character and there used to be frequent deliberation in his Cabinet. He gave considerable autonomy to his ministers and this is apparent through the manner in which Manmohan Singh was able to push through major economic reforms, despite profound resistance within the party and in the parliament. Mukherjee notes that P.V.N. Rao had a distinctive approach in running the affairs of government. He could decipher the virtue of patience and remained eager to achieve a consensus. He could show enormous ‘political sagacity and resolved many complex problems’.<sup>134</sup>

Despite being able to ensure consensus, Rao’s Cabinet was marked by noteworthy division and dissension. Amidst the factionalism, the fragile support the government enjoyed in parliament and desire to run the government on consensus, Rao had the distinction of not taking decisions. Mukherjee remarks that Rao turned ‘reticence into a kind of statecraft’.<sup>135</sup> In fact, Rao was known for saying that ‘not taking a decision is in itself a decision’.<sup>136</sup> Brass comments that the post 1989 period is characterized by prime ministerial leadership of weak cabinets. He writes, ‘In the midst of the national crisis of the years since 1989, the pattern of prime ministerial dominance of weak cabinets has been replaced by weak and ineffective prime ministerial leadership of divided cabinets.’<sup>137</sup>

As Rao found himself surrounded with colleagues in the Cabinet who were his coequals, it became vital for him to sound consensual and reach out to the members. Frequent division and dissension in Rao’s Cabinet became apparent as Arjun Singh remained critical of the government’s economic policies which he believed were contrary to the long standing principles and policies of the Congress party. Around 50 MPs from the Congress party signed a letter criticizing the Budget of 1991. Based on the documents prepared by the Intelligence Bureau for the consideration of the Prime

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<sup>133</sup> Sanjaya Baru. (2016). *1991: How P.V. Narasimha Rao made History*. New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, p.121

<sup>134</sup> Pranab Mukherjee. (2016). *The Turbulent Years: 1980-1996*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.156

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, p.156

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, p. 157

<sup>137</sup> Paul R. Brass. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.49

Minister in 1992, Sitapati writes that, ‘there were 55 MPs against the liberalization of trade policies, including seven ministers such as Balram Jakher and Madhav Rao Scindia.’<sup>138</sup>

In May 1993, Arjun Singh wrote a public letter to the Prime Minister citing a report which claimed that government suffered a loss Rs 3,000 crore owing to the disinvestment policy being followed by the government.<sup>139</sup>

Dissension and differences in P.V.Narasimha Rao’s Cabinet emerged since the beginning of his tenure. The note on Industrial Policy put before the consideration of the Cabinet on July 16, 1991 received opposition from his colleagues. M.L. Fotedar and Arjun Singh opposed the policy unequivocally and expressed their apprehensions sharply. The policy was thus referred back to the drawing board for redrafting.<sup>140</sup> The policy was subsequently approved by the Cabinet in its meeting held on July 23, 1991 as those opposed to the policy were taken aboard through certain changes in the style of draft as well as the reassurances given by the Prime Minister. Sitapati writes,

The policy was sent back to the drawing board, but crucially Rao ensured that the substance remained untouched. Jairam Ramesh worked, instead, to add a longish preamble which linked the new ideas to the fundamental ideals of the Congress, Nehru and Indira Gandhi. It worked. When the Union Cabinet met again on the morning of 23 July, those who had opposed the policy earlier were reassured by the addition of the preamble.<sup>141</sup>

In 1995, M.L. Fotedar and Arjun Singh later resigned from the Rao Cabinet. A prominent group of Congress leaders including M.L. Fotedar, N.D. Tiwari, Arjun Singh, Shiv Charan Mathur, P. Shiv Shankar Sheila Dikshit, and Natwar Singh usually spoke openly against Rao government. In Natwar Singh’s account, this group

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<sup>138</sup> Vinay Sitapati. (2016). *Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p. 136

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, p.156.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, pp.124-125

<sup>141</sup> Vinay Sitapati. (2016). *Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p.125

was propped up by Arjun Singh.<sup>142</sup> Eventually they broke up and the Tiwari Congress was formed.<sup>143</sup> Natwar Singh writes,

The attack on Narsimha Rao was two pronged. First he has gone back on the assurance given that after becoming Prime Minister he would give up the post of Congress Presidentship and second, the economic reforms introduced by him were contrary to the policies of the Congress party.<sup>144</sup>

The division in the Cabinet further grew over the question of Ram Janmabhoomi Movement. In this episode too the differences between Arjun Singh and Rao remained quite deep. Arjun Singh accused Rao of mishandling the incident of Babri Masjid demolition on December 6, 1992. In his own forcible words,

Now the differences between the Prime Minister and me were coming out in the open, but I maintained all the decorum and discipline of a Cabinet colleague, although at times, it was becoming difficult to do so. I do not know when the files, which contains the proceedings of the CCPA meetings, will be open to the public, but whenever they are, they will reveal how erratic government went from pillar to post in an effort to find a way out of the Ayodhya imbroglio. I have never witnessed such a pathetic performance by any other government.<sup>145</sup>

Arjun Singh and Rao disagreed during the whole course leading to the demolition of mosque and Singh frequently wrote letters to the Prime Minister that was made public too, at times. He unequivocally asserts that ambiguity of the Congress Party and the Union Government enabled the siege of the Ramjanambhoomi on December 6, 1992.<sup>146</sup> The meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs took place every day from November 20, 1992 to arrive at a decision on the developments in Ayodhya. Though P.V.N. Rao remained serious, yet he failed to arrive at any definite

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<sup>142</sup> K. Natwar Singh. (2014). *One Life is Not Enough: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.292

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, p.292.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, p.292.

<sup>145</sup> Arjun Singh with Ashok Chopra. (2012). *A Grain of Sand in the Hourglass of Time: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse India, p.272

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, p.249



decision.<sup>147</sup> The Cabinet Meeting convened on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1992 witnessed an embarrassed PV who was criticized by many of his Cabinet colleagues who regretted the inability of the government to protect the mosque. Fotedar, Singh, Scindia and C. K. Jaffer Sharif among others spoke during the meeting. Sharad Pawar too maintains that Rao disregarded his suggestions for tough posture and use of the central forces during the crisis period. He writes,

The demolition exposed Narsimha Rao's weakness as a leader. He certainly did not want the demolition to happen but did not take any necessary steps to prevent it from happening. I tried my best to convince him repeatedly that the Karsevaks would go to any extent to raze the mosque.<sup>148</sup>

The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs on December 13, 1992 endorsed the imposition of the President's Rule in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. However, Arjun Singh claims that Rao must not have acted on his own in this regard. It was the CCPA which remained categorically firm about imposing the President's Rule. Though Rao agreed yet he didn't seem to be much pro-active, as per the accounts presented by Singh.<sup>149</sup> Mukherjee claims that several committees of the Cabinet were reconstituted subsequent to the demolition of mosque. However, Rao did not constitute the CCPA as he did not want to include a particular minister in it. In the words of Mukherjee, 'But he never constituted the most important of them-CCPA. I am told that he did not want to include a particular minister. But instead of simply excluding him from the body, he chose not to constitute the Committee itself.'<sup>150</sup>

Rao in his book 'Ayodhya: 6 December 1992' discusses the distrust between his Cabinet colleagues and him in the aftermath of the demolition and maintains that certain of his Congress colleagues had been guided by political and vote earning consideration. In Rao's words, 'they had already made up their mind that one person

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<sup>147</sup> Arjun Singh with Ashok Chopra. (2012). *A Grain of Sand in the Hourglass of Time: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse India, p. 249

<sup>148</sup> Sharad Pawar. (2016). *On My Terms: From Grassroots to the Corridors of Power*. New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Publications, p.96.

<sup>149</sup> Arjun Singh with Ashok Chopra. (2012). *A Grain of Sand in the Hourglass of Time: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse India, p.280

<sup>150</sup> Pranab Mukherjee. (2016). *The Turbulent Years: 1980-1996*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.157

had to be made historically responsible for the tragedy. They got a stick to beat with. I understood it.’<sup>151</sup>

Despite the personal differences with his Cabinet colleagues over policy issues, action undertaken during Ram Janma Bhoomi movement and his leadership style, Rao could ensure a collective face of the government in public. By this time secularism, social justice and economic reforms emerged as the major issue in politics. Rao could tactfully ensure floor coordination despite leading a minority government as most of the opposition space became quite vocal against the BJP owing to its involvement in the Ram Janma Bhoomi movement. Secularism became the primary marker of divide in parliament and most of the parties like the Left parties and other major regional parties, who had visible fundamental differences with the Rao government on the economic reforms and had been critical of his handling of the Babri Masjid dispute, did not support the BJP in parliament. Thus, despite differences within the Cabinet and facing a vigorous parliamentary opposition Rao could ensure the passage of major decisions and policies concerning economic reforms in the country. As Hasan writes, ‘the primacy of secular politics and the need to contain the BJP’s further expansion was one important reason why economic liberalization did not face significant hurdles even though the Congress lacked a majority in the parliament.’<sup>152</sup>

### **Atal Bihari Vajpayee-I: Failing to stitch a Coalition**

Consequent to the elections of the Eleventh Lok Sabha, the strength of the Congress reduced to 140, which was even lower than what the party got in 1977. The BJP won 161 seats and emerged as the single largest party while the Janata Dal secured 46 seats. The combined strength of the Left Parties [CPI(M), CPI, RSP and Forward Block] stood at 52. The combined strength of the regional parties was significant and prominent winners included TDP, DMK, TMC, SP, AGP, BSP, Akali Dal, Shiv Sena, Samata Party and Haryana Vikas Party. These parties came to cast a major impact over the government formation.

In the event of the hung parliament, President S.D. Sharma called Atal Bihari Vajpayee the leader of the single largest party to form the government and seek the

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<sup>151</sup> P.V.N. Rao cited in Rasheed Kidwai. (2011). *24 Akbar Road: A Short History of the People behind the Fall and Rise of the Congress*. Gurgaon: Hachette, p. 172.

<sup>152</sup> Zoya Hasan. (2012). *Congress After Indira: Policy, Power and Political Change*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.58

confidence of the House within 15 days. The total strength of the BJP and its allies was 181. While the Shiv Sena remained a part of government, SAD, Haryana Vikas Party and Samta Party offered their support to the government from outside. On May 16, 1996 Atal Bihari Vajpayee was sworn in as the Prime Minister. In all 13 Cabinet Ministers including the Prime Minister were sworn in by the President which included one member from Shiv Sena. During this tenure of A.B. Vajpayee, the Ministers of State and Deputy Ministers were not sworn and the Union Council of Ministers just consisted of the twelve Cabinet Ministers. It included the following Members: Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister; Jaswant Singh, Minister of Finance; Ram Jethmalani, Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs; Murli Manohar Joshi, Minister of Home Affairs; Pramod Mahajan, Minister of Defence and Parliamentary Affairs; Kariya Munda, Minister of Welfare; Suresh Prabhakar, Minister of Industry; Sikander Bakht, Minister of External Affairs and Minister of Urban Affairs; Suraj Bhan, Minister of Agriculture; Sushma Swaraj, Minister of Information and Broadcasting; Buta Singh, Minister of Communication; Dhananjay Kumar, Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism; and Sartaj Singh, Minister of Health and Family Welfare.<sup>153</sup>

Though Advani could not become a member of Vajpayee's first Cabinet, as he had taken a self imposed resolve not to enter Lok Sabha until his name was cleared of the charges in Hawala scandal,<sup>154</sup> he was the Party President during this period. Despite making all efforts to pull in prominent regional players, the government could not enlist the support of required numbers in the House. In particular, he had expected to rope in parties like TDP, DMK, AGP and TMC:

When the President invited me to form a government, the political situation was fluid. The regional parties were keeping their option open. We wanted to make an honest effort to form the government in the light of the people mandate, with the help of regional parties on the basis of a common minimum program.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Compiled from Council of Ministers 1947-2015 (From 15 August 1947 to 28 August, 2015): Names and Portfolios of the Members of the Union Council of Ministers. (2016). New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat.

<sup>154</sup> L.K. Advani. (2008). *My Country. My Life*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 481.

<sup>155</sup> Cited in Csaba Nikolenyi. (2010). *Minority Governments in India: The Puzzle of Elusive Majorities*. London and New York: Routledge, p. 107.

As the regional parties did not extend its support to the BJP, A.B. Vajpayee announced his resignation on the floor of the House while responding to the debate on the Confident Motion brought in by the government on May 28. Vajpayee continued as a caretaker Prime Minister till June 1 when Deve Gowda was sworn in as the Prime Minister.

### **H.D. Devegowda: Experimenting the Coalition**

H. D. Deve Gowda, belonged to the Janata Dal and it had started reaching out to the other regional parties of the National Front, the Left Bloc and the Congress even before Vajpayee was invited for the swearing –in by the President. The political compulsion of keeping the BJP out of power united the major regional forces and the Congress presented its willingness to extend outside support to the non-BJP government. Yet, four significant challenges remained before the United Front:

- To stitch a coalition that is able to secure parliamentary majority and remains unified
- To decide upon the Leader of the Parliamentary Party who would be the Prime Minister
- To decide upon the Common Minimum Programme which should be acceptable to all the allies
- To maintain a line of communication with the Congress and the CPI (M) that has decided not to be the part of government but extend outside support to the government.

As the possibility of such a government emerged, the name of V.P. Singh surfaced as one representing the consensual choice of the Congress, the National Front parties and other significant regional parties. However, V.P. Singh refused to accept the leadership and thereafter the name of Jyoti Basu was proposed. During the meeting of Political Affairs Committee of Janata Dal on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1996 Biju Patanik informed the members that he had also talked to S.B. Chavan, Home Minister in the Rao Government and suggested him formation of a non-BJP coalition government with Jyoti Basu as Prime Minister and two Deputy Prime Ministers, including Chavan

himself.<sup>156</sup> However, this proposal was also rejected as the Congress later decided not to be a part of government but only to support it from outside. The candidature of Jyoti Basu attracted substantial consensus among major regional parties. However, Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan had deep reservations about joining a coalition government which included the Congress. As per Gujral's account, the CWC had some issues with the name of Jyoti Basu or Lalu Prasad and seemed to be positively predisposed towards Deve Gowda, R.K. Hegde and I.K. Gujral.<sup>157</sup> With the outside support of the Congress, the combined strength of non-BJP parties that included National Front parties, Left Front Parties, DMK, AGP, TMC, SP, other smaller regional parties and few independents reached 300. The CPI(M), however, decided against the name of Jyoti Basu and took a decision of not participating in the government. Nevertheless, it conveyed its stand to offer outside support to the government. Somnath Chatterjee writes,

Though the CPI (M) was not a member of the coalition, having pledged the outside support, Jyoti Basu was offered the Prime Ministership. The party declined the offer. Jyoti Basu and I were not averse to the idea...The ostensible reason behind the party's stand as far as one can understand, was that the CPI(M) would not be part of government in which it did not have a majority.<sup>158</sup>

There were several contenders including Laloo Prasad Yadav, S.R. Bommai, Mulayam Singh Yadav, G.K. Moopnar and N. Chandra Babu Naidu but considering the urgency, the Third Front which till then had reconfigured itself as the United Front, unanimously decided in favour of Deve Gowda as PM. The choice of Deve Gowda surprised many as he had built up his entire political career in his home state Karnataka and was considered as a political non-entity in so far as politics at the centre was concerned. The Janata Dal Parliamentary Party in its meeting held on May 15, elected Deve Gowda as its leader. The motion was moved by Biju Patnaik and seconded by Sharad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan.<sup>159</sup> Subsequently, Deve Gowda's

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<sup>156</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p.356

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, p.358

<sup>158</sup> Somnath Chatterjee. (2010). *Keeping the Faith: Memoirs of a Parliamentarian*. Noida: Harper Collins, pp. 77-78

<sup>159</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p.364.

name was unanimously endorsed by the United Front parties. While Laloo Yadav chaired the meeting, Biju Patnaik proposed Deve Gowda's name and it was seconded by Madhav Rao Scindia.<sup>160</sup> The United Front came to consist of the following parties:

Deve Gowda was sworn-in as Prime Minister along with 12 cabinet ministers and 8 ministers of state. The distribution of ministerial berth to allies remained conspicuous and it distributed seats as per the strength of respective parties in the United Front. The Janata Dal that contributed 46 MPs got the largest contingent of 10 ministries, followed by SP which had 17 MPs held 4 ministries. The TMC with 20 MPs got 2 ministries which included Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Labour respectively. The DMK with 17 MPs had two Cabinet Ministers in the Council of Ministers. The CPI that had 12 MPs and got two significant ministries, decided to join later than the other allies Indrajeet Gupta and Chaturanan Mishra, both from CPI were made the Minister of Home Affairs and the Minister of Agriculture respectively. Balwant Singh Ramoowalia, an independent candidate, was included in the Cabinet on the recommendation made by the CPI(M) to give representation to Punjab.<sup>161</sup>

Ruparelia observes that the over representation of the Janata Dal in the union council of ministers was due to several factors: firstly, the Prime Ministerial prerogative gave Deve Gowda considerable clout to bring in his party men in the cabinet; secondly, V.P. Singh could do behind-the-door negotiations in the constitution of cabinet and lastly, Laloo Prasad Yadav used his influence in getting representation of several MPs from the backward classes in the ministries.<sup>162</sup> Gujral, too, testifies that V.P. Singh was consulted while Deve Gowda constituted his ministry.<sup>163</sup> Prominent National Front leaders like Sharad Yadav, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, Biju Patnaik and Laoo Prasad Yadav were not inducted in the ministry. While Mufti Mohammed Sayeed had lost the Lok Sabha elections, corruption charges had been levelled against Laloo Prasad Yadav, Biju Patnaik and Sharad Yadav. Nevertheless, Laloo Prasad Yadav did influence the constitution and subsequent reshuffle of the Cabinet. Raghuvansh

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<sup>160</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p.365.

<sup>161</sup> V. Krishna Ananth. (2011). *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Pearson, pp.401-402

<sup>162</sup> Sanjay Ruparelia. (2015). *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 172.

<sup>163</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p. 366

Prasad Singh from Bihar was inducted as a Minister of State for Animal Husbandry and Dairy because of his pressure. It is noteworthy that this ministry functioned as a Department in the Ministry of Agriculture but presumably under the influence of Laloo Prasad Yadav it got the status of a Ministry. With the constitution of the cabinet, the party squabbles also increased and Deve Gowda's decision to expel Ram Krishna Hegde from the party brought embarrassment to the party as well as the United Front allies. Chandra Babu Naidu, who had then been appointed as the Convener of the United Front, expressed his concern on the hostility within the party and requested the Prime Minister to end his animosity with his party colleagues.<sup>164</sup> The United Front government agreed upon an agenda of governance and collectively worked out a Common Minimum Programme (CMP). Ruparelia argues that it was for the first time that a coalition government at the centre agreed upon a Common Minimum Programme. Neither the Janata Party government nor the National Front government could develop a Common Minimum Programme. Commenting upon the significance of CMP, Ruparelia writes,

The significance of CMP was threefold. First, its twin commitment to political secularism and social justice marked a sharp break with the Hindu nationalism of the BJP, sharpening the idea of a third force. Second, the manifesto reflected its deepening regional orientation. Finally, it registered the sharp decline of socialist policy ideas in an era of liberal economic reform.<sup>165</sup>

The United Front consisted of parties that were neither ideologically united nor did they hold any programmatic consensus. In the backdrop of the above, the consensus on the Common Minimum Programme was significant as it laid down a common objective and moderated the allies in arriving at policy consensus, which was indispensable for the smooth functioning of the Cabinet. As a senior government advisor to the government pointed out, 'It was supposed to represent the agreed programme... (but) it wasn't coherent at all ideologically. It was full of

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<sup>164</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p. 369.

<sup>165</sup> Sanjay Ruparelia. (2015). *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.178

inconsistencies and contradictions...yet it was very specific about many things. That was its merit.<sup>166</sup>

Maintaining cordial relation with the Congress remained a major concern for the UF government since its inception. The issue was discussed during the meeting of union council of ministers with the Prime Minister on the day of swearing-in and it was decided that the government ought to display restraint in dealing with the Congress and that no minister should criticise the party out of turn.<sup>167</sup> Gujral writes,

We also discussed our relations with the Congress Party. On Mulayam Singh Yadav's initiative, it was concluded that 'we should not criticise the Congress and if in the course of administration a minister comes across any pertinent scam or a scandal, it need not be publicised, but the minister concerned should take it up with the prime minister privately.'<sup>168</sup>

The United Front and the Congress set up a Coordination Committee to ensure consensus and it was agreed that their respective leaders Gowda and Rao should be flexible in ensuring smooth relationship between the two organisations.<sup>169</sup> The relationship between the Congress and United Front was manageable during Rao's Presidency but Rao resigned soon after the formation of Deve Gowda government in 1996 and Sitaram Kesri became the new President of the Congress party. The task of handling the Congress was tough as the party with Kesri as its new President was facing enormous inner party struggle and Kesri himself could not remain at the commanding heights of the party to retain loyalty of the party workers. The relationship between the United Front and the Congress deteriorated and the lack of coordination became apparent in the manner both handled the political situation in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Deve Gowda considered the expectation of the Congress party, in lieu of its external support to the government, as a matter of considerable encroachment upon the autonomy of government. As Nikolenyi writes,

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<sup>166</sup> Cited in Sanjay Ruparelia. (2015). *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 179

<sup>167</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, pp.367-368.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid, pp.367-368

<sup>169</sup> Csaba Nikolenyi. (2010). *Minority Governments in India: The Puzzle of Elusive Majorities*. London and New York: Routledge, p.108.



In defence against the Congress (I)'s manoeuvres, Prime Minister Deve Gowda sought to maintain his government's autonomy and refused to yield to the various demands posed by the Congress (I), which expected to be consulted on government policy in reciprocation for the legislative support it was extending to the cabinet.<sup>170</sup>

Apart from its survival on the outside support of the Congress, several factions within the United Front added to fragility of the government and acted as a constraint on the exercise of power and authority by the Prime Minister on several occasions. Deve Gowda had to manage several power centres among which the prominent ones were: the Left Front parties, the Congress Party leadership and Chandra Babu Naidu, the convener of the United Front. Hinting upon the CPI (M)'s dilatory tactics on the functioning of government, Rupareila writes, 'given the threat of the BJP, few expected the Congress to withdraw external parliamentary support. But disagreement between the party and its partners in the Government could slow policy decisions, deplete political trust and sow governmental instability.'<sup>171</sup>

However, the most destabilising factor in the United Front remained the internal squabbles within the Janata Dal. Immediately after the swearing-in ceremony differences propped up between Laloo Yadav and Sharad Yadav. Moreover, the UP chapter of the Janata Dal under leadership of Mulayam Singh Yadav had its own set of differences with their Bihar counterpart. The fact that the Prime Minister did not carry an independent mass political base and his party the Janata Dal had just 46 MPs in the parliament determined the kind of relationship that existed between the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues. Consequently, such developments continued to impact the functioning of the Cabinet during this period.

In view of the profound disagreements among allies and to avoid personality clashes the United Front constituted a Steering Committee which was supposed to be highest decision making body of the United Front government. The role of Steering Committee became prominent as it included all the allies of the United Front. The CPI (M), though did not participate in the government and extended its external support,

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<sup>170</sup> Csaba Nikolényi. (2010). *Minority Governments in India: The Puzzle of Elusive Majorities*. London and New York: Routledge, p. 109.

<sup>171</sup> Sanjay Ruparelia. (2015). *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.182.

yet it was a part of the Steering Committee. Though the Steering Committee remained instrumental in attempting to resolve key differences among the allies, but the ambiguity surrounding its relationship with the union council of ministers adversely affected its intended objective. While the Steering Committee was an informal coordination mechanism, evolved to maintain consensus among allies on major policy issues and decisions; the Cabinet is a constitutional body and thus the task of establishing coordination between the two was indeed challenging. Ruparelia remarks,

For the latter (CPI(M)) and its smaller Left allies, the RSP and AIFB, the Steering Committee, in which they participated, was the highest decision making body of the United Front. The failure to agree on its relationship to the Council of Ministers would soon test the new governing coalition.<sup>172</sup>

Tension in the government grew when Deve Gowda, under pressure from Laloo Prasad Yadav asked officials in the concerned ministry to file an appeal in the Supreme Court against the Patna High Court Judgement which alleged Yadav's involvement in the fodder scam. Despite Gujral's firm advice not to confront the Judiciary, the Prime Minister went ahead.. Gujral writes,

I suggested to the Prime Minister that any confrontation with the judiciary should be avoided...though my advice to Gowda was firm, he said he could not let down his supporters and hand over the authority over the CBI to the courts. He had therefore asked the concerned officials to file a writ in the apex court. I sustained my argument by asserting that this line of approach might harm his own image. His response was that of bravado and referred to Biju Patnaik and several others who too were corrupt but he had to put up with them.<sup>173</sup>

On the policy front, the government was marked by severe dissension and resistance from its allies particularly on economic policies and decisions. The presence of the Left Front in the Steering Committee and the participation of the CPI in the

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<sup>172</sup> Sanjay Ruparelia. (2015). *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.188.

<sup>173</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, pp. 374-375.

government complicated decision making for the government. The guidelines issued by the Ministry of Finance to central ministries to reduce their expenditure by Rs 3,000 crore triggered protests by the Left which could comprehend that the intention was to curtail manpower. P. Chidambaram, Finance Minister regarded matters of economic policies to be a prerogative of Cabinet and claimed that the Left allies ought not to use the instrument of Steering Committee as ‘a super cabinet’ to withhold the policy decisions of the government.<sup>174</sup> Ruparelia writes,

The dispute also revealed divergent perceptions regarding the locus of power and proper dispute resolution. Chidambaram had exercised his formal ministerial authority. But the CPI(M) believed that appropriate domain to set policies was the Steering Committee. A senior CPI politician defended his Left colleagues, saying they had a right to “have a democratic discussion”. The CPI (M)’s readiness to rebuke Chidambaram publicly was a major tactical weapon in its national political strategy. Criticising economic liberalisation in New Delhi allowed the party to distance itself from decisions that potentially threatened its electoral fortunes or might demoralise its rank-and-file in the states.<sup>175</sup>

The differences within the Cabinet as well as the mistrust between the United Front and Congress leadership grew progressively beyond the limits of coordination. In the meanwhile, Gowda developed certain scepticism on the conduct of his colleagues and started distrusting few of them. His sense of insecurity is testified by Gujral, the then Minister of External Affairs who writes,

On 30 November 1996 leading members of the Janata Dal met at Suraj Kund (in Haryana) just outside Delhi. Deve Gowda did not use this opportunity to ‘pep up’ the party cadres. He instead turned it into a clique of a select few who met in a small room. He told us that the collation was tottering and he was not sure when the Congress would pull the rug from under his feet...he was extremely nervous and was ‘inventing’ imaginary enemies all the time. Gowda, who had his

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<sup>174</sup> Sanjay Ruparelia. (2015). *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 196.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, p. 196.

terrible habit going off to sleep anywhere and at any time (even at formal functions), was seeing ghosts where even shadows did not exist.<sup>176</sup>

By the beginning of 1997, the relationship between the Congress and the United Front had deteriorated to an extent where mutual dislike and distrust for each became public. Ministers had been quite vocal against the previous Congress government and openly vouched for taking the investigation into Bofors scandal to its logical conclusion. Certain voices within the Congress too became critical of ruling dispensation as prominent voices within the government frequently ridiculed the Congress. Thus, a concern among the Congressmen to rethink the party's support to the government became quite apparent. Pranab Mukherjee, a close confidant of Kesri and the then Invitee to the CWC writes,

That the Deve Gowda government was utilizing its official position to malign the Congress, led to the clamour within the party for withdrawing support to the government. The Congress party could not support a government which was bent upon maligning and persecuting its leadership.<sup>177</sup>

Kesri took into confidence Sharad Pawar, the Leader of the House in Lok Sabha from the Congress Party, and along with Pranab Mukherjee, Jitendra Prasad and Arjun Singh took the decision to withdraw support from the government. The decision was not routed through the Congress Working Committee. Kesri met the President and informed him of his party's decision of withdrawing support from the United Front government. Perhaps, the most intriguing aspect in the whole episode remained the distrust between the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues that surfaced during this period. CPI leader Indrajit Gupta, the then Home Minister remarked few years later,

The replacement of Deve Gowda was not entirely Sitaram Kesri's doing; within the United Front also there was a desire to replace him. Gowda was seen as autocratic. I mean, I was his Home Minister: He

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<sup>176</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, pp.376-377.

<sup>177</sup> Pranab Mukherjee. (2017). *The Coalition Years: 1996-2012*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 21.

refused to speak to me. He never spoke to me, never consulted me. I can't say these things publicly, I couldn't say it then also, I had to keep quiet.<sup>178</sup>

The President asked the government to seek confidence of the House and on April 11, the Prime Minister lost the Confidence Motion by 190 in favour and 383 against the government. Thereafter, Deve Gowda resigned.

### **L.K. Gujral: Adapting to a Coalition Culture**

The United Front remained resolute and firm about its unity and did not fragment despite the Congress withdrawing its external support. As the Congress could not break the United Front, it demanded a new Prime Minister. G.K. Moopnar from the Tamil Manila Congress (TMC), Chandra Babu Naidu of TDP, Mulayam Singh Yadav and I.K. Gujral were frontrunner for the post of Prime Minister. While the Congress had preference for Moopnar because of his old links with the party,<sup>179</sup> his candidature was opposed by most of the regional parties in the Front known for their overt anti-Congress political posture. Chandra Babu Naidu was not in favour of taking up the post as he considered the rebuilding of his party in Andhra Pradesh as his primary task at that moment.<sup>180</sup> Though the CPI(M) was confused between Mulayam Singh Yadav and I.K. Gujral, eventually Jyoti Basu zeroed in on Gujral.<sup>181</sup> The Steering Committee played a vital role in selecting Gujral as the next leader. V.P. Singh and Jyoti Basu significantly influenced the choice that the Steering Committee made.<sup>182</sup> On April 19<sup>th</sup>, Gujral was unanimously elected as the parliamentary party leader of the United Front. Though the United Front remained firm with Gujral, yet the decision over leadership brought in certain cracks as the TMC under the leadership of Moopnar decided not to join the government but only to extend parliamentary support from outside. Further, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Laloo Prasad Yadav had a few demands that had to be sorted out. Only then a formal meeting with the President in regard to the constitution of Cabinet could take place. While Mulayam Singh Yadav

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<sup>178</sup> Indrajit Gupta cited in L.K. Advani. (2008). *My Country. My Life*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.483.

<sup>179</sup> Csaba Nikolényi. (2010). *Minority Governments in India: The Puzzle of Elusive Majorities*. London and New York: Routledge, pp.110-111.

<sup>180</sup> Kuldip Nayar. (2012). *Beyond the Lines: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, p.352

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, p.352

<sup>182</sup> Sanjay Ruparelia. (2015). *Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.254.

wanted to be accommodated as the Deputy Prime Minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav pressed to drop Union Ministers like Devendra Yadav, Srikant Jena, Ram Vilas Paswan and C.M. Ibrahim from the Cabinet. As far as Mulayam Singh Yadav's demand was concerned, Chandra Babu Naidu could persuade him to withdraw it, while Gujral conceded to Laloo Yadav's demand partially by dropping Devendra Yadav and retaining all the others. Thus, Gujral was sworn-in as the Prime Minister of India on April 21, 1997 and he secured the Vote of Confidence in the Lok Sabha on April 22.

Barring the exception of Devendra Yadav, all other ministers who served during Deve Gowda government were retained. The TMC initially had objections but later on, both Chidamabaram and Aruachalam, apart from two other members from the TMC joined the government. Gujral also brought in Jaipal Reddy from Andhra Pradesh as the Minister of Information and Broadcasting. The swearing-in of the members from TMC and Jaipal Reddy took place on May 1, 1997. While Gujral kept the Ministry of External Affairs, others retained the portfolio that they held during the previous dispensation.

The tenure of Gujral remained as insecure as Deve Gowda's. Infact, it was further complicated with the rift within the Janata Dal which had widened beyond repair during this period, eventually leading to the breakup of Laloo Yadav faction with 17 MPs from the party. This break-up faction came to be called as Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). Nevertheless, it continued to be a part of the United Front. In order to ensure political stability, both Kesri and Gujral agreed for summit level coordination as per which both the Congress President and the Prime Minister would meet periodically. Previously, Gujral had rejected Deve Gowda's demand of setting up of a Coordination Committee consisting of representatives from the Congress and the United Front and asserted that such wan institution as a ploy to restrict the authority and power of the Prime Minister. He writes,

Kesri tried to sell me the idea of setting up of a five member composite committee consisting of representatives from the UF and the Congress. (Both Kesri and I would be members.) Such a proposal had earlier been rejected by the UF (during Deve Gowda regime) since it would catapult Kesri into a position of parity with the Prime Minister as

chairman of such a committee. I too rejected this idea though Kesri was fully convinced about its efficacy.<sup>183</sup>

However, the Prime Minister continued to be under pressure of key allies and leaders. Gujral mentions certain demands being made by Mulayam Singh Yadav who pressed for retaining Romesh Bhandari as the governor of UP apart from a gubernatorial berth and Rajya Sabha seat (from nominated quota) for his party colleagues. Mulayam Singh Yadav's nominee for the Rajya Sabha seat was Narain Singh and Gujral's yielding to the demand caused huge embarrassment. While Congress President Kesri had objected to Narain Singh's nomination, considering the frailty of political base that the government relied upon, there was no way out for Gujral. The nomination of Singh caused considerable unease among some allies who felt left out. Gujral recounts,

Kesri's objection was not wrong but the pressure exerted by Mulayam and Surjeet and the deal that Deve Gowda had struck with Mulayam played a part in my nominating Narain Singh, much against my wishes. Some of the allies were disgruntled with my choice. The main cause was pointed out on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1997 by Jayanthi Natarajan: there was no Tamilian in the list. She also added that my not having consulted her party, the Tamil Maanila Congress, or the DMK before finalising the names had upset the leaders of two parties. Such a situation did put me in a spot. I decided that I had to first mollify G.K. Moopnar (of the TMC), whom I invited for a breakfast on 27 June, and then the DMK. Such are the compulsions of coalition governments.<sup>184</sup>

Similar to his predecessors, the most daunting challenge before Gujral during this moment remained floor coordination and passage of key legislations as the principal opposition party, the BJP, was the single largest party in the parliament and the government continued to be divided, unsure of its strength. While the single largest party sat in opposition, the second largest party supported the government from outside. The presence of the Left parties in the United Front further added to the complexities, as they had significant differences over major economic policies and

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<sup>183</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p.397.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, p. 405.

decisions. Despite being a part of the United Front, the Left remained vocal about its differences and this increased the difficulty of the government on the floor of the House. The visible and frequent differences and dissensions retrained the prime ministerial authority. An instance worth citing in this regard, can be the Women's Reservation Bill which showed the division in the among the allies. Though Gujral asserted his government's commitment to the Bill yet he failed to bring up a consensus among his major allies. In fact, the Bill faced most vigorous opposition from within the United Front leaders, prominent among whom were Sharad Yadav, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Laloo Prasad Yadav.<sup>185</sup> Even the Steering Committee of the United Front failed to develop a consensus on the Bill and eventually it was put on hold.<sup>186</sup> Contrary to the division and disagreements within the government on the Bill, the Congress, the Left Parties and the BJP offered it support to the Bill.

Further, Gujral had to face severe embarrassment when the President K.R. Narayanan returned the cabinet's decision to dismiss the Kalyan Singh government and impose President's Rule in Uttar Pradesh, under Article 356. T.S.R. Subramaniam, the then Cabinet Secretary, notes that the decision of the government was driven by the compulsion of alliance politics and it lacked constitutional propriety.<sup>187</sup> Interestingly, while the Cabinet meeting that recommended the imposition of President's Rule lasted for around 16 hours, the President replied within twenty minutes asking for reconsideration of the decision.<sup>188</sup>

The task of running government smoothly proved to be a gigantic challenge for Gujral because of the following reasons: first, the factionalism within the Janata Dal; second, the reliance of the government on the external support of the Congress and, third, presence of allies whose political bases existed in their respective states. There were numerous power centres that he had to contend with: Deve Gowda, Harkishen Singh Surjeet, Laloo Yadav, Sharad Yadav, Moopnar and Karunanidhi apart from the Congress President Kesri. Multiple power centres hampered the management of the coalition partners. The frequent outburst of the allies against the government and the difficult demands raised by them placed Gujral into a precarious position on many

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<sup>185</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p.401.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, p.401.

<sup>187</sup> T.S.R. Subramanian. (2009). *Govern Mint in India: An Inside View*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.123

<sup>188</sup> Ibid, p.123



occasions. Two instances remain might be cited. First, no sooner had Laloo Prasad Yadav broken up with the Janata Dal and formed Rashtriya Janata Dal, Sharad Yadav and his faction demanded expulsion of three Union Ministers, Kanti Singh, Ramchandra Nishad and Raghuvansh Prasad Singh. All three union ministers owed their allegiance to Laloo Prasad Yadav led RJD.<sup>189</sup> Second, when DMK leader Karunanidhi issued a press statement contemplating withdrawal of its four ministers from the union council of ministers and instead support the government from outside. Karunanidhi blamed individuals in the UF government who had their own agenda, apart from the Common Minimum Programme, as agreed by all allies in the UF.<sup>190</sup> Though, Gujral could persuade the DMK leadership to remain a part of the government he admitted that a common public perception emerged, owing to such political developments, that he was heading a weak government.<sup>191</sup>

The final reason for the fall of Gujral government was the Justice M.C. Jain's interim report which suggested the possibility of DMK leadership encouraging V. Prabhakarn, the LTTE leader of Sri Lanka, and his followers. It also made references to the poor security arrangements of Rajiv Gandhi.<sup>192</sup> The Congress demanded that unless the DMK is expelled from the UF and its members dropped from the cabinet it would withdraw support from the government. The Congress Working Committee passed a resolution to this effect.<sup>193</sup> As Gujral refused to bow to the pressure tactics of the Congress, the Congress President Kesri on November 28, conveyed to the President regarding its withdrawal of support to the government. Accordingly, on December 3, the cabinet recommended the President to dissolve the Lok Sabha and hold fresh elections.

### **Atal Bihari Vajpayee- II: Towards Consensus and Coalition Dharma**

The trend of a Hung House continued with the elections to the Eleventh Lok Sabha as no single party or pre election alliance could secure a majority. The BJP emerged as the single largest party securing 182 seats while the Congress could secure 141 seats. As per Advani's own admission, the results remained most significant as the party

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<sup>189</sup> I.K. Gujral. (2011). *Matters of Discretion: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse Publications, p.426

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, p.430

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, p. 430.

<sup>192</sup> Pranab Mukherjee. (2017). *The Coalition Years: 1996-2012*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 28

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, p. 30

witnessed phenomenal social and political expansion.<sup>194</sup> The BJP emerged as the single largest party in previous election but the results in 1998 established the BJP as a political alternative. Apart from its territorial expansion, the BJP could expand into social territories that were beyond its hold previously. It could secure largest number of MPs belonging to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe category. In his own words, ‘the goal of becoming an alternative to the Congress, which we had set for ourselves at the founding conference of 1980, had finally been realised in 1998.’<sup>195</sup>

The increase in number of seats in favour of the BJP enabled it to emerge as the leader of the largest alliance: the NDA. Csaba Nikolényi points out that the NDA fell short of majority by just 18 seats and in descending order NDA was followed by the Congress (I) led alliance and then, the United Front. Put together the Congress led alliance and the United Front still fell short of majority by 10 seats.

The BJP could secure the crucial seats owing to the fragmentation of unity within the United Front and by pulling up some small parties towards the alliance. It could garner support of the TDP which extended outside support. The Haryana Lok Dal and Aruncachal Congress with four and two MPs also lent its support to the BJP led government. With the considerable increase in its seat share and vote share, the regional forces could no longer regard the BJP as a non coalitionable entity. Instead, the Congress had become non coalitionable as the party had become the major contender against prominent regional forces in many states, like Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Assam etc. Unlike the previous coalition governments, the BJP led coalition had unanimity about their leader of the parliamentary party as it had contested the election under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Its campaign was centred on ‘stable government’ and ‘able prime minister’,<sup>196</sup>

In Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the people see a leader who combines ability with integrity, charisma with character and experience with universal acceptability. He is not a person who claims leadership by birth in, or relationship with any dynasty. He is a leader by virtue of his

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<sup>194</sup> L.K. Advani. (2008). *My Country. My Life*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 531.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, p. 531.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, p.530.

long and dedicated service to the nation and its people in and out of parliament.<sup>197</sup>

The most prominent factor in securing parliamentary majority however remained the ability of the party to reach out to regional forces like the TDP, AIADMK and BJD that had traditionally remained wary of its Hindu nationalistic aspirations. Rekha Diwakar argues that the 1998 elections became witness to the BJP shelving its Hindutva agenda and keeping a more moderate overtone in order to secure allies among regional parties.<sup>198</sup> The strategy worked and it could make inroads into states like Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Odisha. The BJP decided to form a post poll alliance and in order to maintain consensus among the allies and the BJP, it worked out a Common Minimum Programme which was called as the National Agenda for Governance (NAG). The NAG excluded the reference to three core issues that formed part of BJP's election manifesto: repeal of Article of 370, the construction of a temple at Ramjanmabhoomi in Ayodhya and the Uniform Civil Code.<sup>199</sup>

Despite the fact that the BJP had considerably greater number of MPs in the House as compared to any of its allies in the NDA yet reliance of the government on parties with lesser number of MPs had put the government on tenterhooks. The AIADMK, the second largest party in the alliance, had 18 MPs but its support to the government was critical for its survival because the principal opposition party, the Congress and the opposition alliance- the United Front- had significant presence in the House. As compared to the previous coalition governments at the centre, the National Front and the United Front government respectively, the BJP led alliance seemed to be more durable because of the unanimity of views among all the allies on political leadership of Vajpayee and a deeper agreement among allies over the National for Governance. Also, the alliance formed a coordination committee for smooth resolution of disputes among the allies.<sup>200</sup> It is worth re-iterating that the coordination committees, during the times of I.K. Gujral and Deve Gowda, were known as Steering Committees.

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<sup>197</sup> BJP manifesto cited in L.K. Advani. (2008). *My Country. My Life*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.530.

<sup>198</sup> Rekha Diwakar. (2017). *Party System in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.86.

<sup>199</sup> L.K. Advani. (2008). *My Country. My Life*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 533.

<sup>200</sup> Javed M. Ansari (May 11,1998) Smaller Partners in NDA turn tricky; West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa BJP's new trouble spots. *The India Today*. Available at <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/nation/story/19980511-smaller-partners-in-nda-turn-prickly-west-bengal-bihar-orissa-bjps-new-trouble-spots-826349-1998-05-11>. Accessed on 30 April, 2019.

Vajpayee was sworn in as the Prime Minister on March 19<sup>th</sup> and secured the Confidence of the House on March 28<sup>th</sup> 1998. In all, 22 ministers of Cabinet rank including the Prime Minister were sworn in by the President. Among the 22 cabinet ministers, 11 belonged to the BJP and the rest 10 cabinet ministers belonged to the allies and one was an independent MP.<sup>201</sup> Given the mass political base that Vajpayee carried and complete unanimity over his leadership among his allies, he enjoyed considerable autonomy in deciding about the composition of council of ministers. This was in sharp contrast to A.B. Vajpayee's predecessors of the 1990s. In all eight parties including BJP were represented in the Vajpayee Cabinet. However the Union Council of Ministers had a more wide representation and in all included 10 parties and 4 independents.<sup>202</sup> The BJP also supported the candidature of G.M.C. Balayogi as the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. Two seats each were allocated to BJD, AIADMK and Samta Party. George Fernanades and Nitish Kumar were accommodated from the Samta Party. One seat each was allocated to Shiv Sena, SAD, TRC and Lok Shakti in the cabinet. V Ramamurthy representing the Tamizhaga Rajiv Congress was allocated the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. Buta Singh, a former Congressman, who contested as an independent candidate secured a cabinet berth. Trinamool Congress, TDP, Haryana Vikas Party, Haryana Lok Dal and MDMK remained the prominent parties which offered parliamentary support to the government but declined to participate in the government initially.

Though, unlike the previous coalition governments, the BJP which was the lead party in NDA had considerably large number of MPs in comparison to the other allies and the principal opposition, Vajpayee too faced pressure while constituting his Cabinet and had to accommodate as well as exclude a few. Two remarkable exclusions from the Cabinet remained Jaswant Singh and Pramod Mahajan. While Singh had held the Ministry of Finance and Mahajan was the Minister of Defence and Parliamentary Affairs during the first Vajpayee government in 1996. Sinha notes that both Singh and Mahajan could not be inducted into the Cabinet then because the RSS had

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<sup>201</sup> Includes only those cabinet ministers who were sworn in with the Prime Minister on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1998.

<sup>202</sup> Includes only ministers who were sworn-in along with the Prime Minister on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1998. See Swapan Das Gupta. (March 30, 1998) Hamstrung by internal pressures, demands from governments, Vajpayee govt struggles for direction. *The India Today*. Available at <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/19980330-hamstrung-by-internal-pressures-demands-from-allies-vajpayee-govt-struggles-for-direction-826027-1998-03-30>. Accessed on 30 April, 2019.

expressed its reservation on bringing into the Cabinet those members who lost the Lok Sabha polls.<sup>203</sup> Jaswant Singh was later inducted into the Cabinet as Minister of External Affairs. Till his induction into the Cabinet, Vajpayee kept the portfolio of the External Affairs with himself. On his exclusion, Jaswant Singh remarks,

I was again to be sworn into office, but could not be, immediately due to a last minute difficulty. This arose from an objection being raised, suddenly, from senior and responsible quarters about my inclusion in the cabinet. When informed about this I immediately stepped aside. I was sworn in as External Affairs Minister a few months later.<sup>204</sup>

Pramod Mahajan too was made the Minister of Information and Broadcasting on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1998.

While constituting his Cabinet, Vajpayee consulted Advani, the Party President and also consulted the leaders of the regional parties on the allocation of portfolios. Jayalalitha was categorical that she not just wanted the two powerful ministries of Finance Law<sup>205</sup> but also the induction of Subramainam Swamy into the Cabinet.<sup>206</sup> Accordingly, Vajpayee allocated the Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs to Thambi Durai and the Ministry of Surface Transport to S. Muthiah. However, he did not relent to all the demands made by Jayalalitha and this had possibly far reaching implications over the stability of the government. Even later, when Subramainam Swamy returned as an independent MP, he was neither accommodated in the Coordination Committee nor in the Union Council of Ministers.

In this instance too, the major challenge before Vajpayee government remained floor coordination and passage of key legislations. Also, it became quite important for the Prime Minister to develop a public perception about the collective and unified face of the government in order to lead a stable government. As already mentioned, the

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<sup>203</sup> Yashwant Sinha. (2007). *Confessions of a Swadeshi Reformer: My years as Finance Minister*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p.33

<sup>204</sup> Jaswant Singh. (2006). *A Call to Honour: In Service of Emergent India*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 122

<sup>205</sup> Csaba Nikolenyi. (2010). *Minority Governments in India: The Puzzle of Elusive Majorities*. London and New York: Routledge, p. 113.

<sup>206</sup> Swapan Das Gupta. (March 30, 1998) Hamstrung by internal pressures, demands from governments, Vajpayee govt struggles for direction. *The India Today*. Available at <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/19980330-hamstrung-by-internal-pressures-demands-from-allies-vajpayee-govt-struggles-for-direction-826027-1998-03-30>. Accessed on 30 April, 2019.

National Agenda for Governance could smoothen the differences among allies, particularly on policy matters and political issues and the role of the Coordination Committee was instrumental. For instance, the government could bring the allies on board over their position on nuclear programme of India and could make their objective of establishing nuclear deterrence and option to induct nuclear weapon a part of the National Agenda for Governance. Advani writes,

we could persuade our allies to include in the NDA's Common Minimum Programme an important commitment that we had made in our 1998 election manifesto: 'the BJP rejects the notion of nuclear apartheid and will actively oppose attempts to impose a hegemonistic nuclear regime. (we shall) re-evaluate the country's nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons. We will not be dictated to by anybody in matters of security requirements and in exercise of the nuclear option.'<sup>207</sup>

Within two months of coming to power, the NDA went for two back to back peaceful nuclear explosion tests on May 11<sup>th</sup> and May 13<sup>th</sup>. The nuclear test added to the cohesiveness and strength of the government. While the allies remained one and united with the government, the opposition was confused on taking a principled position over the nuclear tests conducted by government.<sup>208</sup> In an interview to India Today immediately after the nuclear test, Vajpayee said,

We conducted the series of nuclear tests keeping with our commitment made to people during the elections. It is part of the national agenda for governance. I have been advocating the cause of India going nuclear for the last four decades. My party has been making this demand consistently and forcefully. Now that we are in government, people expect us to translate this long standing commitment into action. And we have showed that we mean business.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> L.K. Advani. (2008). *My Country. My Life*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 534.

<sup>208</sup> Saba Naqvi Bhaumik and Harish Gupta (June 1, 1998). Pokhran Nuclear Tests: BJP Euphoric, Opposition Responds with Stunned Confusion. *The India Today*. Available at <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/nation/story/19980601-pokhran-nuclear-tests-bjp-euphoric-opposition-responds-with-stunned-confusion-826491-1998-06-01>. Accessed on 30 April, 2019..

<sup>209</sup> Cited in Kingshuk Nag. (2016). *Atal Bihari Vajpayee: A Man for All Seasons*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications.

This worth noting that apart from the leadership of Vajpayee on which the allies had unanimity, they were firmly behind the inclusion of the nuclear programme in the NAG of the NDA. However, despite such vital agreements and also the installation of a Coordination Committee, a sense of insecurity continued to be a perpetual marker of the government because these common grounds and institutional arrangements could have only a limited potential to resolve the demands made by state based parties like AIADMK. It must be underlined that the state parties would be primarily interested in protecting their electoral and political interests. The relationship between the BJP and the AIADMK was strenuous since the inception of government. Commenting upon the strained relationship, N.P. Ullekh writes,

The alliance had a common minimum programme in place following negotiations with all stakeholders in the coalition, yet the AIADMK was capable of holding the government to ransom on various contentious issues in the south. Even Vajpayee found it rough to handle...Shortly, Jayalalithaa wanted the centre to dismiss Tamil Nadu state government led by her rival M Karunanidhi of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). Her other demands included the removal of Ram Jethmalani and Ram Krishna Hegde from the Union Cabinet and action against a private television channel based in Chennai. She also wanted Subramaniam Swamy to be a part of the crucial Coordination Committee.<sup>210</sup>

Advani who had been the Party President since 1993 stepped down from the position when he became the Home Minister. After him Kushabhau Thakre became the Party President, in April 1998. Though the BJP seemed to be more cohesive and ideologically ingrained yet its strategy of forging alliance had circumscribed its core Hindutva programme and this brought the party into occasional tussle with the RSS.<sup>211</sup> The RSS certainly enjoyed considerable influence since the inception of government, both in regard to the constitution of Cabinet as well as certain other key decisions. L.K. Advani, George Fernandes, Yashwant Sinha, Pramod Mahajan and Jaswant Singh remained quite at the centre and had decisive influence on policies

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<sup>210</sup> N.P. Ullekh. (2017). *The Untold Vajpayee: Politician and Paradox*. New Delhi: Penguin Random House, p.181

<sup>211</sup> See Adeney and Lawrence Saez (Eds.) *Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism* (pp. 13-35). London and New York: Routledge.

during this period. Advani, Fernandes and Sinha were members of the Cabinet Committee on Security and thus their influence remained quite systemic. Advani was considered to be most influential minister by virtue of being the Party President as well as one of the senior most members of the party in government who had worked with Vajpayee since 1950s. Though Pramod Mahajan and Jaswant Singh were not part of the Cabinet, Mahajan was the Political Advisor to the Prime Minister and Singh was the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission.<sup>212</sup> Advani notes that apart from these leaders Brajesh Mishra, the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister was highly influential. This is evident from Advani's recollection that Mishra along with these other ministers, were present at the Prime Minister's residence while the news of the successful conduct of the nuclear tests came in.<sup>213</sup>

During tenure of A.B. Vajpayee, the PMO remained a major power centre. The role and influence of the PMO, led by Brajesh Mishra, increased considerably once the government decided in favour of nuclear tests. The PMO coordinated with all the institutions, players and agencies involved in the exercise.<sup>214</sup> Ullekh mentions,

Besides Vajpayee and those in the scientific establishment, it was only Brajesh Mishra, his National Security Advisor(NSA) and his principal secretary, knew about it much in advance...A while later, Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha was apprised of the plans to prepare for financial emergencies in the wake of sanctions...A few others found out about the test only after most of the preparations was done- these included Home Minister L K Advani, Defence Minister George Fernandes, deputy chairman of the planning commission, Jaswant Singh, and the PM's political advisor, Pramod Mahajan.<sup>215</sup>

Besides the significant role that the PMO played during the nuclear tests, the ascendance of the PMO can be attributed to the considerable clout enjoyed by Brajesh Mishra because of his proximity to Vajpayee. Mehta calls Brajesh Mishra, NK Singh and Ranjan Bhattacharya as the trio that took complete charge of the PMO and opines

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<sup>212</sup> L.K. Advani. (2008). *My Country. My Life*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.542.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, p. 542.

<sup>214</sup> Jaswant Singh. (2006). *A Call to Honour: In Service of Emergent India*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.122

<sup>215</sup> N.P. Ullekh. (2017). *The Untold Vajpayee: Politician and Paradox*. New Delhi: Penguin Random House, p.184



that the PMO remained quite powerful and turned a few policies through its interference.<sup>216</sup>

The major challenge before the government was to ensure political stability in the light of the perpetually stressed relationship between the AIADMK and the BJP. Unlike the previous periods, divisions or dissensions within the Cabinet over policy issues were not sharp as major allies had been accommodated in the ministry. The only major concern before the government was floor coordination in the parliament and coalition management. The parliament continued to be confrontational because of the changed arithmetic and this added to the challenges of the government. In an interview, on the completion of one year of government, Vajpayee agreed that coalition management remained tough and the problem to the stability of government was caused by allies and not the opposition.<sup>217</sup> Coalition politics at that moment, in his views, continued to be indispensable and even if the coalitions cease to exist, the country has to exist on consensus. In his own words, 'Otherwise also, if there is no coalition the country has to be run on the basis of consensus.'<sup>218</sup>

The Vajpayee government too had to face embarrassments as it attempted to manage the interest of allies. Presumably under the pressure of the Samata Party, Vajpayee government recommended to the President the imposition of President's Rule in Bihar in September 1998 but President Narayanan returned the Cabinet resolution seeking imposition of the President Rule in Bihar for reconsideration of the Cabinet. As Kumar writes,

It is said that personally, Vajpayee was not in favour of dismissing an elected government, but eventually gave in when the BJP's ally the Samata Party reportedly put pressure on him to dismiss the Bihar government. Two of the Samata stalwarts, George Fernandez and Nitish Kumar, were member of his Cabinet.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Vinod Mehta. (2011). *Lucknow Boy: A Memoir*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, p.201

<sup>217</sup> Talking Heads: Vajpayee Interview to Rajdeep Sardesai. NDTV.n.d. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohQiYi4oPOA>. Accessed on 30 April, 2019

<sup>218</sup> Talking Heads: Vajpayee Interview to Rajdeep Sardesai. NDTV.n.d. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohQiYi4oPOA>. Accessed on 30 April, 2019

<sup>219</sup> Abhay Kumar. (August 17, 2018). When Vajpayee erred in imposing Prez rule in Bihar. Deccan Herald. Available at <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/when-vajpayee-erred-imposing-687955.html>. Accessed on 30 April, 2019.

The President saw no evidence of the breakdown of constitutional machinery in Bihar.<sup>220</sup>

Unlike the Bihar debacle which caused embarrassment for Vajpayee, the demands from AIADMK led to a stall of the smooth conduct of government. Jayalalithaa had placed three demands before the government, first, to remove Defence Minister George Fernandes, second, to reinstate the sacked Naval Chief Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat and lastly, to institute a JPC probe into the sacking of Naval Chief. All the three demands were rejected by the Coordination Committee as well as the Union Cabinet. Subsequently, the AIADMK ministers put in their papers and withdrew from the Coordination Committee as well.<sup>221</sup> The AIADMK withdrew its support to the government on April 14, 1999.

Previously, in February 1999 HLD led by Om Prakash Chautala having four MPs in the parliament withdrew its outside support to the government citing the inability of the government to roll back the price hike.<sup>222</sup>

Vajpayee moved a Confidence Motion in the Lok Sabha that was defeated by one vote on April 17. The Congress party attempted to form the government under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi but Mulayam Singh Yadav led Samajwadi Party, which had 20 MPs categorically communicated to the President that it would not support any Congress led government.<sup>223</sup> Failing to secure adequate support, the Congress expressed its inability to form the government and communicated the same to the President. President Narayanan, expressed his opinion to Vajpayee that under then prevailing political situation, the dissolution of the Lok Sabha seemed necessary.<sup>224</sup> On April 25, the Cabinet in keeping with the President's views decided in favour of the dissolution of the House. Thus, the Twelfth Lok Sabha was dissolved on April 26, 1999.

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<sup>220</sup> Harinder Baweja. (October 5, 1998). K R Narayanan returns Cabinet resolution seeking imposition of President's Rule in Bihar'. The India Today. Available at <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/19981005-k.r.-narayanan-returns-cabinet-resolution-seeking-imposition-of-presidents-rule-in-bihar-827153-1998-10-05>. Accessed on 30 April, 2019.

<sup>221</sup> G.C. Malhotra. (2004). *Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat and Metropolitan Book Company, p.100

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, p. 100

<sup>223</sup> L.K. Advani. (2008). *My Country. My Life*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 556.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid, p. 557.

## **Transactional Parliamentarianism, Phase II: From 1999 to 2009**

### **Atal Bihari Vajpayee-III: Checking the limits of Prime Ministerial Powers**

From his detractors in the Sangh Parivar to the newly acquired allies in the Janata Dal (United), the Prime Minister has become the meal ticket for an amorphous umbrella coalition. The people haven't shed their distrust of coalitions but they are overcome with their love affair with Vajpayee. This may be Vajpayee's last election but it's certainly going to be his election. In a sense, nothing else matters. Before Kargil, Vajpayee was the first among equals. After Kargil, he is the towering leader seeking votes on the strength of his record and leadership.

- Swapan Dasgupta<sup>225</sup>

The Thirteenth Lok Sabha elections were held at the aftermath of India's victory over Pakistan in the Kargil conflict and Vajpayee was at the peak of his popularity. The elections were held in September and the NDA that had emerged in the previous Lok Sabha elections remained intact and fought as a common platform. While AIADMK dropped out from the NDA, the DMK joined it. Also, the Janata Dal (United) formed with the merger of Samata Party, the Lok Shakti Party and the JD (Sharad Yadav group) became part of the NDA.<sup>226</sup> It was a decisive mandate, in favour of the BJP led alliance. The NDA secured a decisive victory, managing 299 seats and the BJP alone got 182 seats. After the polls, the National Conference and Ajit Singh's Rashtriya Lok Dal joined the NDA and its number swelled to 303.<sup>227</sup> The TDP with 29 MPs and five other smaller parties supported the NDA from outside. In all, the NDA had support of 23 parties in the parliament. The Congress got 111 seats and together with its allies secured only 134 seats with allies. Linking the mandate with idea of a stable and strong government that the BJP promised in its manifesto Advani writes,

The three main issues on which we sought a renewed mandate from the people were: stability, security and development. The Vajpayee's government bold decision to make India a nuclear weapons power had

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<sup>225</sup> Cited in N.P. Ullekh. (2017). *The Untold Vajpayee: Politician and Paradox*. New Delhi: Penguin Random House, p.214

<sup>226</sup> E. Sridharan. (2010) The Party System. In Nirala Jayal Gopal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (Eds.) *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.125

<sup>227</sup> Ibid, p.125

made Indians proud. This feeling of national pride had become more intense after the victory in the Kargil war. If this had endeared the NDA to the people, they were also influenced by our call to stability.<sup>228</sup>

Vajpayee's decision on testing of nuclear bombs and India's decisive victory over Pakistan in the Kargil conflict phenomenally elevated the stature of Vajpayee among his peers and opponents alike. The pre-election alliance helped the NDA considerably in securing a comfortable majority.

Though the NDA remained a coalition minority government yet it was the most stable coalition government since 1989 and the first one which completed its term. It was similar to the previous Vajpayee government in many ways. First, Vajpayee's leadership remained unquestionable both within the BJP as well as among its allies. Second, like 1998 the NDA unanimously agreed upon the National Agenda for Governance. Third, for the smooth conduct of government business and to ensure floor coordination among the allies, a Coordination Committee was set up. George Fernandes who belonged to the Janata Dal United and was the Minister of Defence was its Convener.

Coupled with the parliamentary strength that the NDA gained in 1999, Vajpayee as the PM exercised autonomy and authority which had no parallel to the preceding Prime Ministers of 1990s. This was primarily because of the security of tenure which his government carried since its inception. The strength of the BJP provided lesser space to the allies to keep the government on tenterhook, as was previously possible during the Vajpayee government of 1998.

Vajpayee was sworn in as the Prime Minister for a third term on October 13, 1999. In all, 26 members of the Cabinet including the Prime Minister were administered oath by President Narayanan. The total strength of the Union Council of Ministers on October 13, 1999 stood at 70. Around 60 per cent of the Cabinet ministers, that is, 15 out of 26 belonged to the BJP followed by JDU which had 4 Cabinet berths. Sharad Yadav, George Fernandes, Nitish Kumar and Ram Vilas Paswan from the JDU were accommodated in the Cabinet. George Fernandes remained the Defence Minister apart from being the Convener of the NDA. Two seats each were given to Shiv Sena

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<sup>228</sup> L.K. Advani. (2008). *My Country. My Life*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.579.

and DMK while BJD and Trinamool Congress got one seat each in the Cabinet. Ram Jethmalani, an independent, was made the Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs. Mamta Banerjee from the Trinamool Congress became the Minister of Railways. Vajpayee tried to accommodate allies through representation in the Cabinet. Also important portfolios like Finance, Commerce & Industry and Railways were allocated to the allies. Fernandes was made the Minister of Defence while Mamta Banerjee was given the key portfolio of Railways. Muraosoli Maran of the DMK was made the Minister of Commerce and Industry. As per Swapan Dasgupta for every six MPs in the Parliament the allies were rewarded with one Cabinet berth and one Minister of State was rewarded for additional MPs<sup>229</sup>. However, there were variations, for instance the JDU had 20 MPs and it secured four Cabinet berths apart from the fact that Fernandes was given one of the most significant portfolios of Defence. Nevertheless, Vajpayee tried to follow a proportional logic to accommodate the allies.

Based on interviews with Yashwant Sinha and C.P. Thakur, one may safely conclude that Vajpayee had considerable autonomy in the constitution of his Cabinet and distribution of portfolio. As in the previous period, he certainly consulted Advani in this regard. The role of party President Kushabhau Thakre remained quite marginal. The ascendance of Vajpayee during his third term explicitly established his firm control over the party. While the organisational wing of the party was led by a President who never had visible clout, the Parliamentary wing remained firmly rooted in the idea of strong and decisive leadership of Vajpayee. Most members in his Cabinet were far more junior and owed their presence in the Cabinet to Vajpayee. The only exception to this trend was Advani who as the Party President in 1980s and 1990s and had spearheaded the Ram Janma Bhoomi Movement and led to the subsequent organisational consolidation of the party. After Vajpayee, Advani was most influential leader of the BJP and he became the Deputy Prime Minister in 2002.

Vajpayee retained the same composition of the Cabinet Committee on Security as the portfolios of Jaswant Singh, Yashwant Sinha and Advani remained the same as during the previous government. The Cabinet Committee on Security played the most significant role in managing the political affairs as well as deciding upon the strategic

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<sup>229</sup> Swapan Dasgupta, 'Vajpayee's third government: A blend of expediency and investment in the future', *The India Today*, October 25, 1999.

and security considerations before the government. It is worth mentioning that the Cabinet Committee on Security was constituted for the first time by the Gujral government and all subsequent governments continued it. However, the Vajpayee government did not constitute the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs which was the most prominent Cabinet Committees since Nehru's period.

Sharad Pawar, who was the Leader of Opposition in 1998, notes that Vajpayee used to be consultative and ensured consensus on key decision relating to appointments which required consultations among PM, his Cabinet colleagues and the Leader of Opposition. The meetings used to be participatory and deliberative. Pawar writes,

If all of us agreed on a name, the meeting would get over quickly. If we differed, the Prime Minister allowed us to debate on the merits and demerits of individual candidates for a few minutes and then call for a tea break. On resumption, he would again listen to us for a while and announce his decision. I remember a meeting when Advani ji and I just could not agree on a particular name, Atalji intervened in his inimitable style. Turning to Advani ji, he pointed towards me and said, 'Lal ji hum log satta mein abhi aaye hai. Inko satta ka humse zyada tajurba hai. Inka kehna maan lete hai.'<sup>230</sup>

Despite leading a stable government, Vajpayee had his own set of challenges primarily because of two reasons. Firstly, the NDA did not enjoy majority in the Rajya Sabha and thus floor coordination assumed significance as consensus over policy decisions has to be secured both from allies in the government as well as from the opposition benches. Secondly, despite the fact that Vajpayee was an uncontested leader of the NDA, the BJP in particular has to address the concerns and reservations expressed by the RSS. Though, Vajpayee and senior ministers categorically denied the influence exercised by the RSS on policy decisions made by government yet significant evidence is present to testify the considerable clout and the effort made by Vajpayee to balance the policy decisions made by government with the apprehensions expressed by the RSS.

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<sup>230</sup> Sharad Pawar. (2016). *On My Terms: From Grassroots to the Corridors of Power*. New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Publications, p.226.

Unlike his predecessors, Vajpayee did not face any challenge of dissidence between the organisational wing and the parliamentary wing of the party considering his stature and contribution to the rise of party itself. A major difference between the NDA and its predecessors remained the considerable difference in number of MPs between the leading party (BJP -182 MPs) and the second largest party in the alliance being part of the government (JD(U)-21 MPs). The TDP had the second largest number of MPs (29) in the NDA but it did not participate in the government and only extended its parliamentary support from outside. This difference of strength between the BJP and its allies and the party's strategy in accommodating three major allies JD(U), DMK and Shiv Sena in the Union Council of Ministers both in terms of number as well as nature of portfolios added to the strength of the Prime Minister.

The major challenge before government was to keep pace with the structural demand of economic reform policies and in this context the government faced challenges, both from within the party, allies as well as from the opposition benches. Rob Jenkins argues that the NDA faced the same dilemma vis-a-vis economic reforms as its predecessors and employed the same tactics to manage the politics of economic reforms. The complexity of coalition politics, constraints of ideological compulsions as well as external factors (the World Bank and IMF for instance) collectively shaped the action undertaken by the government in the direction of economic reforms.<sup>231</sup> Jenkins writes, 'the relative influence of each of these three factors on the process by which the NDA pursued economic liberalisation varied across, across policy domains and across reform tasks'.<sup>232</sup>

Jenkins notes that the TDP leader Chandrababu Naidu put considerable pressure upon government as it took enabling decisions to exercise fiscal constraints.<sup>233</sup> Likewise Mamata Banerjee, the TMC leader insisted that the Union government approve her proposal for Bengal package and the government conceded many of her demands.<sup>234</sup> Sinha admits that compulsion of coalition politics made the task of Finance Minister strenuous. Though the government remained secure about its parliamentary strength yet the demands made both by the allies as well as those from the opposition parties

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<sup>231</sup> Rob Jenkins , 'The NDA and the Politics of Economic Reforms', in Katharine Adaney and Lawrence Saez ed 'Coalition Politics and Hindu Nationalism'. New Delhi, Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2005, p.174

<sup>232</sup> Ibid, p.174

<sup>233</sup> Ibid, pp.181-182

<sup>234</sup> Ibid, p.182

added to the complexity of the processes of decision making concerning liberalisation of economy. The pressure from allies used to be formidable against the government's decision on withdrawing subsidies. Sinha had faced such situation in 1998 and again as he announced the reduction of subsidy on food grains during the Budget of 2000-01. Commenting upon the attitude of allies, Sinha writes,

I had to face ire of even those in government. Some of our allies too adopted a holier than thou attitude and regarded themselves as defenders of faith. They raised the issue everywhere- in parliament, on television and in meetings of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). They also spoke against the government in the Lok Sabha, to my great embarrassment.<sup>235</sup>

Even the decisions that carried the nod of PM had to be rolled back under the pressure of allies. Decisions like the raise in fertiliser prices and issue price of food grains through Public Distribution System taken in January 1999 and which had the backing of the PM brought considerable unease among the allies. A meeting of the NDA Coordination Committee took place at the Prime Minister's residence to evolve a consensus on the issue of price rise. Sinha writes,

Most of our allies looked disapprovingly at me when I reached the meeting. As one newspaper reported, the meeting went on for four hours. At the end of it, we succumbed to pressure and were forced to withdraw the hike in the issue prices of rice and wheat for those living below the poverty line. I was happy at least the rest of the decisions were left untouched. Economics in India has always been guided by politics. My experience as finance minister proves this point beyond doubt.<sup>236</sup>

During this period, the Budget process used to be a consultative one. It involved the PM, Finance Minister apart from a few senior members of the Cabinet both from the BJP and allies. During the 2001-2002 Budget, Jaswant Singh, Murasoli Maran, L.K.

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<sup>235</sup> Yashwant Sinha. (2007). *Confessions of a Swadeshi Reformer: My years as Finance Minister*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p. 81.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid, p..102



Advani, George Fernandes apart from the PM and Finance Minister were involved.<sup>237</sup> Vajpayee through inclusion of allies in informal meetings tried to reach out to allies and this ensured consensus which was required for floor coordination. It needs to be re-iterated that in this period the necessity of reaching out to allies and opposition arose not out of a concern for securing parliamentary majority but because the government intended to pass key legislations in parliament and it was short on majority in the Rajya Sabha. A key episode in this regard remains the approval of 26 per cent FDI in insurance sector and the passage of IRDA Act concerning insurance. When the proposal to allow 26 per cent FDI in insurance came up before the Cabinet, it met with disapproval from most of the members. The Cabinet did not support the proposal and sensing its eventual rejection, Vajpayee constituted a GOM under the leadership of Jaswant Singh to examine the proposal. The GoM decided to approve the Bill with certain minor conditions. Thereafter, the Cabinet subsequently approved the Bill without much arguments and it accepted the recommendations made by the GoM.<sup>238</sup> However, the passage of the Bill in parliament faced stiff resistance from the Left parties, in particular and sensing its minority in the Rajya Sabha the government reached out to the Congress party and incorporated some of the suggestions that the latter had put forward. The Bill was eventually passed. Vajpayee, unlike his predecessors, was never defensive about the imperatives of economic reforms and pursued it with deeper conviction despite the occasional resistance and dissensions put forth by his colleagues in the Cabinet. In his Independence Day speech on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2000, Vajpayee unambiguously asserted, 'Reforms are the need of the hour; to reform is to turn the inevitability of the change in the direction of progress. To reform is to improve the life of every citizen.'<sup>239</sup>

A Department of Disinvestment was created by the Vajpayee government in 1999. Arun Jaitely was its first Minister (Minister of State, Independent Charge) from December 1999 to July 2000. Arun Shourie took charge of this ministry as a Cabinet Minister from September 2001. A Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment, chaired by the Prime Minister was constituted to give impetus to the agenda of disinvestment. The Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment approved most of the proposals mooted by

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<sup>237</sup> Yashwant Sinha. (2007). *Confessions of a Swadeshi Reformer: My years as Finance Minister*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p.83

<sup>238</sup> Ibid, p.108

<sup>239</sup> Kingshuk Nag. (2016). *Atal Bihari Vajpayee: A Man for All Seasons*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 160

Jaitley and Shourie. However, the process of disinvestment witnessed major debates and dissensions in the Cabinet. Most of the allies in the government irrespective of their ideological predispositions remained opposed to the idea of privatising PSUs and disinvestment. Sinha writes,

Privatising PSUs through the strategic sale route was not an easy task. A majority of our alliance partners, small and big and of different political ideologies were united in opposing it. Many of the BJP ministers also did not have their heart in it. Each transaction was therefore was a closely fought battle. Non cooperation by the line ministry made the task of the disinvestment minister even more difficult. There were long and often heated arguments in the meetings of the Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment. Fortunately, the prime minister supported the pro-privatisation group.<sup>240</sup>

The proposed privatisation of two public sector oil companies: HPCL and BPCL, triggered huge unrest in the Cabinet with most prominent ministers expressing their reservations on the proposal. While Ram Naik, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas categorically opposed the proposal; Shourie, Minister of Disinvestment and Sinha, Minister of Finance supported the proposal. George Fernandes, the NDA Convener expressed his apprehensions about the political fallout of the proposal, Advani came up with his concerns on the lack of inter-ministerial coordination over the issue.<sup>241</sup> Sensing a lack of consensus, Vajpayee deferred the proposal. However, eventually the process to privatise the oil PSUs was halted through the intervention of the Supreme Court and the government did not pursue the matter any further. While commenting upon this episode Vajpayee's biographer Nag writes,

when the matter of the sell-off of two oil companies came up again at a cabinet meeting on 7 September 2002, Atal said that he wanted to go forward and hoped that nobody would object. However, ministers started expressing their concern and Ram Naik was unmoved. Atal, a great believer in the power of alliances and consensus knew that it

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<sup>240</sup> Yashwant Sinha. (2007). *Confessions of a Swadeshi Reformer: My years as Finance Minister*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p.158

<sup>241</sup> Kingshuk Nag. (2016). *Atal Bihari Vajpayee: A Man for All Seasons*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 156

would not be prudent to overrule Naik, not the least because he represented powerful groups which reflected public opinion to a large extent. So the matter was deferred again. Ultimately, the Supreme Court ruled that the acts through which Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum was nationalised did not follow their prior privatisation without prior clearance from the Parliament.<sup>242</sup>

Though, the issue of Ramjanma Bhoomi, Uniform Civil Code and Article 370 were not part of the National Agenda for Governance yet under the compulsion of maintaining a distinct social and political base, the BJP raised the Ramjanma Bhoomi issue through its platform. Thus, on December 7, 1999, during an *Iftar*, Vajpayee stunned his allies in the NDA as he suggested that the Ram Mandir could be constructed at the disputed site while the Masjid could be taken to an alternative site. Prominent NDA leaders including Chandra Babu Naidu, Omar Abdullah and Mamta Banerjee expressed reservations over statement made by Vajpayee. The opposition too bitterly criticised Vajpayee and gave a call for his resignation.<sup>243</sup> Naqvi writes,

Chandrababu Naidu sharply reminded Vajpayee that his support for was for a national agenda and ‘it is unwarranted that someone should exploit an issue which is before the courts for their political ends’. National Conference MP and the then Minister of State for Commerce and Industries, Omar Abdullah felt ‘let down by the prime minister’s statements...While Mamta Banerjee, who was then a senior leader of the Trinamool Congress went to meet Vajpayee along with TDP’s Yerran Naidu.<sup>244</sup>

Thus, while the compulsion of coalition politics moderated the BJP’s core Hindutva politics,<sup>245</sup> it resulted in the development of a discord between the BJP and the RSS as the latter affirmed its interest in the construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya. As Jaffrelot writes,

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<sup>242</sup> Kingshuk Nag. (2016). *Atal Bihari Vajpayee: A Man for All Seasons*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 156

<sup>243</sup> Saba Naqvi. (2018). *Shades of Saffron: From Vajpayee to Modi*. Chennai: Westland Publications, p.113

<sup>244</sup> Ibid, p.113

<sup>245</sup> For more on how coalition politics moderated BJP’s core Hindutva agenda, please see E. Sridharan. (2010). The Party System. In Nirala Jayal Gopal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (Eds.) *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India* (pp. 117-135). New Delhi: Oxford University Press;

The RSS itself reaffirmed its interest in Ayodhya during the last election campaign. In September, its Supreme Chief, Rajendra Singh, emphasised that Muslims, whose rulers had allegedly destroyed 3000 temples should hand over the sites in Benares, Mathura and Ayodhya, where mosques had been built on so-called sacred places. However, the Vajpayee government resisted these pressures, arguing that Ayodhya was one of the issues that had been removed from the BJP's agenda because of the compulsion of coalition politics.<sup>246</sup>

Vajpayee shared an uneven relationship with the RSS and as per available evidence the latter did put the former Prime Minister in the dock on several occasions. Naqvi notes that throughout his tenure Vajpayee had to face resistance from the RSS, particularly, with regard to the economic policies being pursued by the government.<sup>247</sup> The three major bone of contention between the BJP and the RSS during this period were: the nature of economic policies pursued by government, the Kashmir policy and the Ayodhya issue. Naqvi writes,

My sources would tell me that the RSS had told the Prime Minister that while the government should do its work, it shouldn't expect the party to act like its secretary ; the BJP, they felt must be allowed to raise its own issues. The RSS also let Vajpayee know that it was protecting him from the likes of Ashok Singhal and Giriraj Kishore of VHP, and the Swadeshi lobby within the Sangh itself. The supreme leader of the RSS, K S Sudarshan added that for the cadre, a hard line on Kashmir was an article of faith; yet the RSS leadership had supported the ceasefire in the Valley that Vajpayee was promoting after the Kargil war. The Sangh leaders also mentioned a National Council meeting of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch in Bhopal in mid-November, where speaker after speaker had attacked first generation economic reforms. At the meeting, BJP leaders were warned that the

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<sup>246</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot. (2010). *The Hindu Nationalists and Power*. Nirala Jayal Gopal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (Eds.). (2010). *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. p. 214 -215

<sup>247</sup> Saba Naqvi. (2018). *Shades of Saffron: From Vajpayee to Modi*. Chennai: Westland Publications, p.103

economic reforms could well become the bugbear of the government.<sup>248</sup>

In a similar vein, Jaffrelot too argues that the policies of privatisation and disinvestment explicitly spelled out the contradiction between the ideals of Swadeshi upheld by the Sangh parivar and structural imperatives of economic reforms pursued by government.<sup>249</sup>

In order to ensure coordination and smoothen these differences, the BJP leadership including the Prime Minister had a high level meeting with the senior RSS functionaries on two different occasions on December 1, 2000 and in October 2002 respectively. On December 1, 2000 Vajpayee hosted a dinner for senior RSS functionaries which included the then Sarsanghchalak, K.S. Sudarshan, H.V. Sheshadri, Mohan Bhagwat (both General Secretaries) and Madandas Devi, the Joint General Secretary. While the BJP was represented by its Presidents, both past as well as the present, which included, Bangaru Laxman, L.K. Advani, M.M. Joshi and Kushabhau Thakre.<sup>250</sup> The second meeting held in October 2002 was attended by Vajpayee, Advani and Venkaiah Naidu, the Party President from the BJP side. While the RSS was represented by K.S. Sudarshan, the Sarsanghchalak, H.V. Sheshadri, and Madandas Devi. Kingshuk Nag argues that the meeting was in particular called to resolve their differences over the economic policies of the government that the RSS considered too liberal and anti-Swadeshi, the Pakistan policy and the Ayodhya issue.<sup>251</sup>

### **Dr. Manmohan Singh: Knowing the Limits of Prime Ministerial Power**

‘A strong nationalist, a man of courage and conviction, Manmohan Singh was certainly not an ‘accidental prime minister’. I am convinced that the future will judge Manmohan Singh in a different light as PV is assessed today’

- Pranab Mukherjee<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Saba Naqvi. (2018). *Shades of Saffron: From Vajpayee to Modi*. Chennai: Westland Publications, , p.115

<sup>249</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot, ‘The Hindu Nationalists and Power’, in Niraja Gopal Jayal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta ed. *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India* ‘., OUP,2010, P.214

<sup>250</sup> Saba Naqvi. (2018). *Shades of Saffron: From Vajpayee to Modi*. Chennai: Westland Publications, p.113

<sup>251</sup> Kingshuk Nag. (2016). *Atal Bihari Vajpayee: A Man for All Seasons*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p..152

<sup>252</sup> Pranab Mukherjee. (2017). *The Coalition Years: 1996-2012*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 76.

During the elections to the 14<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha the BJP led NDA lost to the newly formed Congress led coalition: the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). In E. Sridharan's analysis, the victory of the Congress led alliance owed in particular to the coalition strategy adopted by the Congress as it could become coalitionable in a significant way.<sup>253</sup> While the 13 party led NDA secured 189 seats, the UPA with 19 parties was successful in securing 222 seats. The Left parties with 61 seats extended outside support to the UPA which enabled the latter to secure parliamentary majority and form the government. On May 15<sup>th</sup>, the Congress Parliamentary Party unanimously elected Sonia Gandhi as the Leader of the Congress Legislature Party. On the eve of May 16 during the meeting of 19 non-NDA parties at 10 Janpath, it was unanimously resolved that Sonia Gandhi should lead the coalition and form the next government. The resolution to this effect was moved by the DMK Chief Karunandhi and seconded by the NCP Chief Sharad Pawar. The choice of Sonia Gandhi was unanimous.<sup>254</sup> However, on May 18, Sonia Gandhi declined to assume the Prime Ministership and later on nominated Manmohan Singh to the post of Prime Minister. It led to a unique political situation wherein the President of the single largest party declined in favour of a nominated Prime Minister. In the backdrop of these developments Manmohan Singh assumed the post of Prime Minister, while Sonia Gandhi became the Chairperson of the UPA. Hasan argues that a basic attribute of parliamentary democracy is that the Prime Minister is the Leader of the majority party and both the executive and political power is vested in the Prime Minister. However, the UPA altered this basic norm by institutionalizing a division of power between the Prime Minister and the Party President. A dual power centre became a reality during the UPA government.<sup>255</sup> She writes, 'For the first time, a leader who was not the Prime Minister was more powerful than the executive head of the government. Though, it was Sonia Gandhi who won the political mandate, she nominated Manmohan Singh to be the Prime Minister.'<sup>256</sup>

The support of the Left parties remained crucial to the survival of government but the differences between the Congress and the Left were sharp and it fundamentally

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<sup>253</sup> E. Sridharan. (2010) The Party System. In Nirala Jayal Gopal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (Eds.) *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 126.

<sup>254</sup> Venkatesh Ramkrishnan (May 22 - Jun 04, 2004). The Return of Congress. *Frontline*, 21(11), 4-6.

<sup>255</sup> Zoya Hasan. (2012). *Congress After Indira: Policy, Power and Political Change*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 100.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid*, p. 100.

revolved around the nature, pattern and consequences of economic reforms. The Left parties traditionally remained critical of the Congress which it considered was espousing the cause of liberalization and privatization. According to Purnima Tripathi,

The crucial difference of opinion between the Left and the Congress relates to economic issues. The Left parties have been critical of the Congress for espousing the cause of liberalization and privatization...Similarly, on labour reforms, the Left parties, which controls several strong trade unions, are opposed to Congress' "anti labour" views. Regarding the public distribution system the Left and the Congress hold distinct views.<sup>257</sup>

Other than the Left, the second challenge emanated from the demands made by state based parties. This included the demands of Ram Vilas Paswan's LJP to make the Right to Work a Fundamental Right, RJD's demand to open corruption cases against the NDA ministers and the demands made by TRS for creation of a separate state Telangana. The challenge before the Congress was formidable primarily because the Left decided to support the government from outside rather than being a part of the government. Commenting on the complexities of government that arose from divergent views on economics between the Congress and the Left parties, the then Secretary, All India Congress Committee, Jairam Ramesh remarked in this context,

Cohabitation is going to be difficult. Lots of adjustments would have to be made. All the more so because they look inclined to support the government from outside. The Left parties inside the government would be different from when they would be supporting from outside. In the latter case, they would be like loose missile. We would prefer them inside the government.<sup>258</sup>

In order to evolve a consensus on governance, the task of formulating the Common Minimum Programme had to be undertaken. A Coordination Committee of the UPA consisting of members from all parties in the coalition and few members from the

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<sup>257</sup> Purnima S. Tripathi. (May 22 - Jun 04, 2004). More hurdles ahead. *Frontline*, 21(11), 8.

<sup>258</sup> 'We will have to work hard to make CMP work': Interview with Jairam Ramesh. (May 22 - Jun 04, 2004). *Frontline*, 21(11), 9.

Congress was set up to formulate a Common Minimum Programme. The Left not being a part of the government did not become a member of the Coordination Committee but was consulted during its framing.<sup>259</sup> A consensus was reached on the six basic principles of governance that would be constitutive of CMP:

- Preserving, protecting and promoting social harmony and resolutely opposing communalism
- Ensuring sustained employment oriented growth
- Enhancing the welfare of farmers, agricultural labourers and workers
- Empowering women and promoting gender equality
- Ensuring equality of opportunity for socially disadvantaged groups and religious minorities
- Unleashing creative energies and promoting productive forces.<sup>260</sup>

It was decided that the UPA government would consult the Left parties while taking significant political and economic decisions.<sup>261</sup> Sonia Gandhi was appointed as the Chairperson of the National Advisory Council (henceforth NAC) which was set up to implement the Common Minimum Programme of the UPA government. She was accorded a rank of the Minister of Cabinet.<sup>262</sup>

Furthermore, the UPA – Left Coordination Committee was also set up for resolving the difference and ensuring policy coordination between the UPA government and the Left parties. At its first meeting on August 3, 2004 it was decided that the Committee would meet at least once a month. The objective of this Committee was to ensure that the incumbent UPA would last its full term. It would be the prerogative of the Prime Minister and the UPA Chairperson to invite other ministers of Cabinet for the

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<sup>259</sup> Arjun Singh with Ashok Chopra. (2012). *A Grain of Sand in the Hourglass of Time: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse India, p. 367

<sup>260</sup> Venkatesh Athreya. (Jun. 05 – 18, 2004). A step forward. *Frontline*, 21(12), 12-16.

<sup>261</sup> Arjun Singh with Ashok Chopra. (2012). *A Grain of Sand in the Hourglass of Time: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse India, p.367.

<sup>262</sup> The National Advisory Council was an institution created in May, 2004 to play a key role in the drafting of legislations during Manmohan Singh Government, its main objective was to oversee the implementation of the National Common Minimum Programme. Also see S. R. Sankaran. (21 Aug., 2010). The Rebirth of the National Advisory Council. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 45(34), 10-12; Balveer Arora and K.K. Kailash. (2014). Strengthening Legislative capabilities of Parliament: The national Advisory Council. In Sudha Pai and Avinash Kumar (Eds.) *The Indian Parliament: A Critical Appraisal* (pp. 189-230). Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan.

<https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/sonia-heads-council-to-implement-cmp/article27622219.ece>



meeting.<sup>263</sup> The Committee Comprised of the Prime Minister, Sonia Gandhi, Congress President, Ahmed Patel, Pranab Mukherjee and P. Chidambaram from the Congress party. H.S. Surjeet and Sitaram Yechury from the CPI(M), A.B. Bardhan and D. Raja from the CPI, Debbrat Biswas from the Forward Bloc, Abani Roy from the RSP represented the Left parties.<sup>264</sup> The UPA- Left Coordination Committee was the third Committee constituted within three months of the constitution of government to oversee the implementation of the Common Minimum Programme. The other two were the 15 member UPA Coordination Committee and National Advisory Council comprising of 21 members.<sup>265</sup>

The consensus over the Common Minimum Programme and the nomination of Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister by the President of the Congress party enabled the formation of UPA government led by Manmohan Singh. However, running the UPA coalition was mired in complexity since the inception of government for five significant reasons. Firstly, the most powerful and popular leader of the UPA did not become a part of government and preferred to continue as the Party President and the Chairperson of the UPA. Secondly, while Sonia Gandhi did not become a part of government she became Chairperson of the National Advisory Council that was set primarily set up to oversee the implementation of the Common Minimum Programme. Sonia Gandhi was accorded the status of a Cabinet Minister by virtue of being the Chairperson of the National Advisory Council. The NAC made detailed recommendations on the priority areas of the CMP for taking up enabling legislations. However, it can be argued that it added to the complexities of relationship between the Prime Minister and the Party President as the latter assumed a preminent role regarding the formulation of flagship policies and programmes of the government. Some of the key legislations during this period like the Right to Information Act, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, the Forest Right Act were routed through the NAC. Though, it was an advisory body and remained outside the government yet its influence over decision making concerning key legislations could not be ruled out. The role certainly added to the stature and influence enjoyed by Sonia Gandhi, given

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<sup>263</sup> <https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/working-of-coordination-panel-to-be-formalised/article27649640.ece>

<sup>264</sup> <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/nation/story/20040816-govt-sets-up-coordination-panel-left-takes-art-of-political-arm-twisting-to-new-heights-789513-2004-08-16>

<sup>265</sup> <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/nation/story/20040816-govt-sets-up-coordination-panel-left-takes-art-of-political-arm-twisting-to-new-heights-789513-2004-08-16>

the fact that she also was the party President and as such politically the most dominant figure during the UPA government. Sonia Gandhi's biographer Rani Singh writes,

Once idea had taken shape in the NAC, a letter would be sent by Sonia Gandhi to Manmohan Singh with the findings. Panelists prepared draft letters that were sometimes quite strident, and Saxena would frequently discover that Sonia had adjusted the tone so that final version would have a moderate pitch while retaining the essential ideas. At times, she would reorder the recommendations, perhaps with an enclosure, so that the letter that went from her to the prime minister was short and readable.<sup>266</sup>

Hasan notes that Sonia Gandhi wrote and forwarded 98 letters to the Prime Minister during the period and these were primarily related to social sector and policy issues. The government considered and acted upon most of the issues flagged by Sonia Gandhi in these letters. All these testify to the influence exercised by Sonia Gandhi during this period.<sup>267</sup> Thirdly, Manmohan Singh had no independent political base and was a Member of the Rajya Sabha when he was accorded the responsibility of being the Prime Minister. He had been a member of Rajya Sabha since 1991 and ever after becoming the PM, Singh did not contest the Lok Sabha election. He did not come from a political background and was drafted into the fold of party by P.V. Narsimha Rao in 1991 as the Minister of Minister. There were party stalwarts like Arjun Singh, Shivraj Patil and Pranab Mukherjee who rose through rank and file of the party but were not considered for the post of Prime Minister by Sonia Gandhi, Party President. Pranab Mukherjee notes in his autobiography,

There was intense speculation in the party and the media about her choice. Within the Congress party, the consensus was that the incumbent must be a political leader with experience in party affairs and administration. Finally, she named Dr Manmohan Singh as her choice and he accepted. The prevalent expectation was that I would be the next choice for Prime Minister after Sonia Gandhi declined. This

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<sup>266</sup> Rani Singh. (2011). *Sonia Gandhi: An Extraordinary Life. An Indian Destiny*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 202.

<sup>267</sup> Zoya Hasan. (2012). *Congress After Indira: Policy, Power and Political Change*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 104.

expectation was possibly based on the fact that I had extensive experience in the government, while Singh's vast experience was as a civil servant with five years as a reformist finance minister.<sup>268</sup>

Fourthly, taken together the Left parties contributed 61 MPs and barring the exception of the Congress, they were numerically the most dominant force in the UPA. However, the Left parties decided to extend outside support rather than being a part of the government. Fifthly, the Congress had 145 MPs and it remained ahead of the BJP, the principal opposition party in the parliament by a meager difference of 7 MPs. The question about political stability and survival of the government became crucial and thus the strategy of accommodating and appropriating the regional forces became a crucial affair for the Congress party. Floor coordination and passage of key legislations in the face of a vigorous and powerful parliamentary opposition became a major concern for the government. The Congress had to reach out not merely to the allies but also to the opposition benches given the numerically fragile base of the government in the parliament. Hasan argues that the task of managing the coalition was a major challenge before the Congress. However, the regional parties were mostly interested in increasing their influence at the centre and securing key portfolios. The lead party could accommodate concerns of the allies, though to a limited extent, which helped the Congress could to avoid running into major problems with regional allies.<sup>269</sup>

When Manmohan Singh took oath as the Prime Minister on May 22, 2004 he led a 68 members Union Council of Ministers. The initial composition of the Union Council of Ministers included 29 ministers of Cabinet rank including the Prime Minister, 10 Ministers of State (Independent Charge) and 29 Ministers of State. The allocation of portfolios followed intense bargaining with the allies as the regional allies considered securing key portfolios to be the tool to increase their influence at the centre. While Laloo Prasad Yadav wished to be the Deputy Prime Minister apart from securing key portfolio of Home Affairs, Sharad Pawar pressed for the Ministry of Defence for himself and Ministry of Civil Aviation for his party colleague, Praful Patel. The DMK leadership presented its own wish list of ministries and Ram Vilas Paswan wanted

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<sup>268</sup> Pranab Mukherjee. (2017). *The Coalition Years: 1996-2012*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 70.

<sup>269</sup> Zoya Hasan. (2012). *Congress After Indira: Policy, Power and Political Change*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 85.

either the Ministry of Telecommunication or Railways.<sup>270</sup> While allocating the portfolios Sonia Gandhi played a significant role as Singh consulted her in this regard. Mukherjee notes that deciding on name and number of portfolios for allies involved intense bargaining and he was drafted in by Sonia Gandhi to negotiate with the leaders of regional parties including Sharad Pawar, Laloo Prasad Yadav, Shibu Soren, Ram Vilas Paswan and K. Chandra Shekhar Rao. Kamal Nath negotiated with the DMK leadership on behalf of Sonia Gandhi and Manmohan Singh.<sup>271</sup> Mukherjee devised a norm that each party with a minimum of 5 MPs would be given a berth in the Cabinet. There were certain exceptions to the norm. For instance, though LJP had just 4 MPs but Ram Vilas Paswan was made a Cabinet minister.<sup>272</sup> Of the 29 ministers of Cabinet rank, 19 belonged to the Congress while 10 berths were secured by the allies. Among the 10 ministers of Cabinet rank secured by allies, RJD, NCP and DMK got two ministries each while TRS, JMM, PMK and LJP secured one ministry each.<sup>273</sup> In all, the Cabinet had representation of 8 parties including the Congress.<sup>274</sup> While the Congress retained the most significant portfolios of Home, Defence, Finance and External Affairs, the allies could secure certain key portfolios like Railways (RJD), Communication & Information Technology (DMK) and Agriculture (NCP). The induction of the Congress members into the Cabinet remained contingent upon the consultation between the Prime Minister and the Party President. As Mukherjee writes, 'Sonia Gandhi and Manmohan Singh discussed likely ministers from the Congress...She heard me out, making no commitment, nor indicating a decision other than saying that Defence was a world in itself and the Defence ministry would offer me maximum autonomy'.<sup>275</sup>

The allocation of portfolios to regional parties involved consultation with the leaders of respective regional parties. Generally, the leader of a regional party decided upon the name of their party colleagues to be inducted in the Union Council of Ministers. The pattern of allocation of portfolios to allies in particular added to the advantage of states like Tamil Nadu, Bihar and Maharashtra in terms of their representation in the

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<sup>270</sup> Purnima S. Tripathi. (Jun. 05 – 18, 2004). Coalition pangs. *Frontline*, 21(12), 9-10.

<sup>271</sup> Pranab Mukherjee. (2017). *The Coalition Years: 1996-2012*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 70.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid*, p. 70.

<sup>273</sup> Author's own calculation. Based on data available at Lok Sabha Secretariat. Available at <https://loksabha.nic.in>. Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2018

<sup>274</sup> Author's own calculation. Based on data available at Lok Sabha Secretariat. Available at <https://loksabha.nic.in>. Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2018

<sup>275</sup> Pranab Mukherjee. (2017). *The Coalition Years: 1996-2012*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 72.

Union Council of Ministers in general and Cabinet in particular.<sup>276</sup> As per the assessment of state wise representation in the Union Council of Ministers, Tamil Nadu had 13 ministers while Bihar had 11 ministers. States like Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha had nearly insignificant presence in the Union Council of Ministers.<sup>277</sup>

Based on the autobiographical accounts of Pranab Mukherjee It can be argued that the Manmohan Singh cabinet was consultative in character and he made attempts to reach out to allies as well as leadership within the Congress Party. He continued the practice of constituting the GoMs frequently as a mechanism of accommodation as well as resolution of differences over policy issues.<sup>278</sup> In the words of Mukherjee,

Manmohan Singh had to manage a diverse coalition, and this required skills that not many can boast of- particularly when faced with a few adversarial partners. He did this with aplomb, and empowered his senior ministerial colleagues to do their jobs. I say this out of personal experience, of the prime ministers, I have worked with- Indira Gandhi and Narsimha Rao- I got the maximum autonomy when I worked with Manmohan Singh.<sup>279</sup>

The influence of the Left was visible since the inception of government. The UPA government did not constitute the Ministry of Disinvestment. Stalling the process of disinvestment was one of the major demands made by the Left parties as the negotiations started over the framing of the Common Minimum Programme, immediately after the announcement of the Lok Sabha election results in May 2004. In an interview, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, CPI(M) General Secretary, categorically stated,

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<sup>276</sup> Purnima S. Tripathi. (Jun. 05 – 18, 2004). Coalition pangs. *Frontline*, 21(12), 9-10.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Author's own calculation. Based on *CPIO and Under Secretary on 28th March as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 1st March 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50163 (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> November as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2018] Dated 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Registered No. F-12015/301/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> January as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 4<sup>th</sup> January 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50009 and No. F-12015/310/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information. For more See Chapter V of the study..

<sup>279</sup> Pranab Mukherjee. (2017). *The Coalition Years: 1996-2012*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 78.

The Congress party is being accommodative about economic policies. They have told us that they are not going to pursue economic policies started by the BJP. I met Manmohan Singh and he has assured me that the Congress is willing to be accommodative on economic policies... Through this ministry (Ministry of Disinvestment), the NDA has destroyed whatever industry there was in India. That is why we are pushing for a new department which will offset the damage done by Disinvestment Ministry.<sup>280</sup>

However, owing to divergent perspective on economic policies, on the completion of one year of the UPA in power, the Left parties categorically stated that they were unsatisfied with the performance of government on the economic front. It exhorted the government to remain firm about its commitment to pursue the Common Minimum Programme adopted jointly by the UPA and the Left parties.<sup>281</sup> Prakash Karat, CPI(M) General Secretary, remarked,

We have not merely expressed reservations. We are unhappy about the direction of economic policy. If the UPA believes that fighting the BJP and defeating it is only about communalism, we cannot agree. There has to be different policies also. But the way they (the UPA government) are going about further liberalization in the financial sector, the disinvestment measures in the public sector units, including the Navratnas, all point towards a continuation of the BJP's and NDA's economic policies. The overall direction seems to be the same, except for some cosmetic measure. I think this direction is going to lead to difficulties, including political difficulties, for the government.<sup>282</sup>

The strained relationship became even more uneasy as the government moved ahead with the Indo-US nuclear deal. The differences over the nuclear deal started from 2005 onwards as George Bush, President, the USA and Manmohan Singh started negotiations over the deal. The subject of nuclear deal had resistance from even

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<sup>280</sup> Interview to Naunidhi Kaur 'BJP has been isolated': Interview with CPI(M) general secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet. (May 22 - Jun 04, 2004). *Frontline*, 21(11), 12.

<sup>281</sup> Venkitesh Ramkrishnan (Jun 04 - 17, 2005) 'We are unhappy with the direction of economic policy', Interview with Prakash Karat. *Frontline*, 22(12), 6-8.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*

within the Congress and the UPA Cabinet since the beginning. Further, Sonia Gandhi too was not much pleased with the steps taken by the government on arriving at a consensus to start the process for negotiating the deal in July 2005. Natwar Singh the then Minister of External Affairs, writes, ‘On my return to Delhi, I saw Sonia Gandhi, who was far from approving. ‘Natwar, how could you of all people agree to this? She asked, ‘you know there is an undercurrent in the country regarding America’s policy’. Yet six months later she changed her mind.’<sup>283</sup>

Hasan argues that initially the Congress remained skeptic about the deal and the murmurs of dissent ran high in the party in this regard. On his return from the US, when Manmohan Singh addressed the Congress Working Committee, he had to face questions from senior party colleagues like M.L. Fotedar and Ambika Soni.<sup>284</sup> Hasan argues that Singh’s Cabinet colleagues Natwar Singh and Mani Shankar Aiyer too had reservations about the deal<sup>285</sup>. But the disagreements among few of the Cabinet colleagues never assumed the shape of any dissension or an unequivocal public disapproval and gradually the government and the Party President stood firm with the decision on the Indo-US deal.

The negotiation over the deal remained a long drawn process starting with the joint statement issued by the President Bush and the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 2005 and it witnessed firm opposition in letter and spirit by the Left parties. The allies in the government remained considerate and cautious, fully supportive of the stand taken by the government. During this period, the debate on the nuclear deal happened thrice in the Lok Sabha in July 2005, February-March 2006 and in August 2008 during the debate on the Confidence Motion brought in by the government.<sup>286</sup>

The Left parties remained categorically opposed to the deal and the Prime Minister remained firmly committed to carry forward the deal. To smoothen the differences between the government and the Left, in this regard, a Joint UPA- Left Committee was constituted as a mechanism of coordination on August 30, 2007. Pranab Mukerjee, P. Chidambaram, Verappa Moily, Kapil Sibal and Salman Khursheed

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<sup>283</sup> K. Natwar Singh. (2014). *One Life is Not Enough: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p. 341.

<sup>284</sup> Zoya Hasan. (2012). *Congress After Indira: Policy, Power and Political Change*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 201.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid, p. 202.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid, p. 211.

represented the Congress. The Left was represented by A.B. Bardhan (CPI), Sudhakar Reddy (CPI), Prakash Karat and Sitaram Yechury from the CPI (M), Chandrachoodan and Debabrat Biswas from the Forward Bloc and Revolutionary Socialist Party was represented by Abani Roy. Pranab Mukherjee was the convener of the Joint UPA-Left Committee.<sup>287</sup> The Committee had 9 meetings between September 2007 and June 2008.<sup>288</sup> Nevertheless, the Left remained vehemently opposed to the deal and maintained that the government would have to face the Left opposition in the parliament if it went ahead with the deal. By June 2008, Manmohan Singh unequivocally vouched the position of his government both to his colleagues in the government and in the UPA that he would not roll back the decision on going ahead with the deal even if the Left withdraws support from the government. Ramakrishnan writes,

In the interregnum, Manmohan Singh made it clear to his colleagues both in the Cabinet and in the UPA that he had to fulfill his commitment to US President George W Bush on the nuclear deal. Otherwise, he reportedly told Sonia Gandhi on June 19, he would have no option but to step down as Prime Minister.<sup>289</sup>

Sensing the resolute stand of government, the Left parties withdrew its support from the government on July 9 and requested the President to ask the government to seek the Confidence of the House. Subsequently on July 11, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs recommended convening of a special session of the Lok Sabha on July 22 to allow the government to seek the Confidence of the House. The decision was further endorsed by the full Cabinet.<sup>290</sup> Earlier the BSP had withdrawn its support and with the withdrawal of the support by the Left parties the difficulties of the government to secure parliamentary majority during the vote on Confidence Motion increased. However, the support of 39 MPs from the SP, enabled the government to win the trust vote as 275 MPs voted for the government and 256 MPs

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<sup>287</sup> Pranab Mukherjee. (2017). *The Coalition Years: 1996-2012*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.135

<sup>288</sup> Ibid, p.136

<sup>289</sup> Venkitesh Ramakrishnan. (15-18 July, 2008). On the Brink. *Frontline*, 25(14), 4-7.

<sup>290</sup> Pranab Mukherjee. (2017). *The Coalition Years: 1996-2012*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications, p.142



opposed the motion.<sup>291</sup> Manmohan Singh could remain in power for the remaining period of his tenure.

Singh considered the Indo-US nuclear deal to be one of the most remarkable achievements of his tenure and to secure this objective, he had even staked the survival of his government. The parliamentary endorsement to the deal greatly enhanced his stature among his peers and opponents for two reasons. Firstly, the deal was considered to be one of the most significant political decisions made by government and carried an overwhelming personal involvement of the Prime Minister in convincing his colleagues in the Cabinet, the Congress party and the allies. Despite initial apprehensions, the party and the allies stayed together and remained firmly in support of the government over the deal. It is precisely for this reason that Manmohan Singh remarked,

The best moment for me was when we were able to strike a nuclear deal with the United States to end the nuclear apartheid which had sought to stifle the processes of social and economic change and technical progress of our country in many ways.<sup>292</sup>

Secondly, the government no longer remained tagged to the Left for moving ahead with significant policy interventions. After the confidence motion, the government remained confident of its parliamentary strength as both the Left parties and the BJP that voted against the government remained divided and hesitant in ensuring floor coordination against the government.

## **CONCLUSION**

As had been stated in the introduction, the present chapter attempted to understand the way in which the Union Cabinet has functioned from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha, periods. In the wake of fragmented House, this period was witness to the formation of successive minority coalition governments from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Twelfth Lok Sabha, thereafter single party minority governments were formed in the Thirteenth Lok Sabha and the Fourteenth Lok Sabha.

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<sup>291</sup> Venkitesh Ramakrishnan. (15-18 July, 2008). On the Brink. *Frontline*, 25(14), 4-7.

<sup>292</sup> Nuclear deal best moment: PM (January 3, 2014). DNA. Available at <https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-nuclear-deal-best-moment-pm-1944627>. Accessed on 30 April, 2019.

In this chapter, after an analysis of the autobiographical and biographical accounts of previous Cabinet Ministers, it is visible that as the Parliament became fragmented, it had a direct impact on the executive. Unlike the period of Majoritarian Parliamentarianism, which were characterized by stable governments and prime ministerial dominance, in Transactional Parliamentarianism because of the fragmented nature of the House, the necessity of a coalition is undeniable. Consequently, the Cabinet is a reflection of the diverse political parties within the House. The chapter establishes that rather than attempting to look at whether Prime Ministerial dominance has withered or increased in the period under consideration, it is instructive to look into how it has been transformed.

As alliance building becomes a necessity, certain changes within the Cabinet become perceptible. First, the collegial nature of the Cabinet is established, as ministers no longer owe their position to the benevolence of the Prime Minister but to the bargaining or transaction that has become possible. Second, relationship between the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues is determined by the political base and acceptability that he has within the coalition. Third, more avenues for participation in decision making have become available to the Cabinet minister, owing to new mechanisms such as Group of Ministers and Co-ordination Committees. In brief, the chapter argued that in the era of fragmented parliament and minority coalition governments, the nature of relationship between the executive and legislature has undergone tremendous change. As government have become stable, strength has come in, though in new and innovative ways.

## CHAPTER V

### **PARTY SYSTEM, PARLIAMENT AND THE CABINET: UNDERSTANDING THE POLITICAL SHIFT**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The framers of the Constitution had an overlapping consensus about the need for stability, unity and integrity of India and the adoption of the parliamentary system was assumed to be a logical corollary to such normative concerns. While the exercise of framing the relevant provision were being undertaken, the Constituent Assembly had preponderant presence of the Congress party and question of the party system fragmentation in future and its consequences over the working of Constitution remained out of the purview of the debate. As discussed in the Chapter-I, essentially three major ideas profoundly shaped the adoption of parliamentary system: political experience, unity and integrity of nation and responsibility. Any assessment of the functioning of the Union Cabinet from the moment of the one party dominant system to a moment of fragmented the party system needs to consider these assumptions which remained the dominant concerns of the Constitution makers.

The 1990s and beyond remain witness to the proliferation of political parties in the Parliament that shaped the pattern of relationship between the government and the Parliament in profound manner. The emergence of coalition politics consequent to the party system fragmentation at the centre marked a fundamental departure in regard to the functioning of the Union Cabinet. While the one party dominant system led to the emergence of successive strong governments at the centre characterized by Prime Minister dominant Cabinet, Chapter III showed that the Parliament became quite marginal in ensuring an effective control over the government particularly since early 1970s. The balance between the Parliament and the government remained tilted towards the latter since 1970s. With the decline of the organizational base of the Congress party during this period, the successive governments remained testimony to the strengthening of the status and position of the Prime Ministers. The prime ministerial dominance of the Cabinet and the governmental suppression of the Parliament remained concomitant. The equilibrium between the government and

Parliament witnessed during the Nehruvian period withered away with the centralization and personalization of power in the strong Prime Minister dominant Cabinets.

The proliferation of political parties since the Ninth Lok Sabha led to the formation of successive coalition governments and a perceivable departure from the preceding period could be seen in the nature of functioning of the Union Cabinet. Paul Brass argues that ‘since 1989, the pattern of prime ministerial dominance of weak Cabinets has been replaced by weak and ineffective prime ministerial leadership of divided Cabinets.’<sup>1</sup> The marked political instability, particularly between 1989 to 1999, reinforced such assumptions. The political stability since 1999 (with the formation of successive stable governments) did not lead to withering away of such perceptions as it was assumed that the rise of coalition politics has brought in a fundamental change in the manner in which the Prime Minister exercises his authority. Such concerns become imminent as the period had also been witness to a confrontationist relationship between the government and opposition as well as steep decline in the functioning of Parliament in statistical terms.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the question that how has the relationship between the government and Parliament been reshaped during this period and in what ways has the changing pattern of relationship between the two impacted the functioning of the Union Cabinet emerge as the dominant concern of this thesis. Existing literature on the study of Indian Cabinet attribute the following factors as significant in the strengthening or weakening of the government: personality of the Prime Minister, the nature of party system and its organizational character, the acceptability and the political base that the Prime Minister wields in his party or among the allies, the presence of strong leaders apart from the Prime Minister in different governments, emergence of consensus over Common Minimum Programmes, the rise of new institutions to ensure inter-ministerial coordination, the resilience of mini Cabinets and the role of informal/formal coordination mechanisms in a party or among allies to run a coalition government.<sup>3</sup> This chapter attempts to

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<sup>1</sup> Paul R. Brass. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p 49.

<sup>2</sup> This has been discussed in detail in Chapter II of the study.

<sup>3</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers; Madhu Limaye. (1989). *Cabinet Government in India*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers; R.J. Venkateswaran. (1967). *Cabinet Government in India*. London: Allen and Unwin; Kuldeep Mathur and James Warner Bjorkman. (1994). *Top Policy Makers in India: Cabinet Ministers and their Civil Service Advisors*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing House; Kuldeep Mathur and James

present an assessment of above mentioned factors, based on the accounts of former Cabinet ministers who were interviewed and the statistical data on the constitution and composition of Cabinet Committees and Group of Ministers (henceforth GoM) collected from Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India.

The present chapter draws primarily from the interviews conducted personally by the researcher with previous Cabinet ministers and selected interviews of Former Prime Ministers available in YouTube which are used in conjunction with data received through five rounds of RTIs which were filed by the researcher in the Cabinet Secretariat. The responses to RTI were received between the months of October, 2018 to March 2019. Repeated filing of RTIs were necessary as information was not shared in the first instance. Once the data received from the Cabinet Secretariat was received, it was systematically organized in tabular manner and presented in accordance with its relevance to the themes of the study. These factual data sets have been used to highlight the trends in the legislature-executive relationship, by looking through the composition and nature of the Cabinet Committees and Group of Ministers (GoM).

Using a structured interview schedule, in-depth data was generated through interviews with 10 respondents: 8 of whom had been previous Cabinet ministers, 1 was a minister of state and the remaining 1 was a media advisor to a former Prime Minister (Mr. Harish Khare). Though the media advisor is not a formal part of the Cabinet yet the access that the media advisor has to the internal workings of the Cabinet system and thereby the executive-legislature relationship made it necessary that such a person also be interviewed. The 8 Cabinet ministers were chosen through purposive sampling method so that the interviewees can represent most of the governments chosen for the study period. However, the P.V Narsimha Rao government has not been represented as the researcher was unable to obtain interviews, despite repeated attempts to obtain such appointments. Table 5.1 presents an overview of the 9 Cabinet Ministers who were interviewed.

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Warner Bjorkman. (2009). *Policy Making in India: Who Speaks? Who Listens?* New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications; Balveer Arora and K.K. Kailash. (2018). Political Innovation in the working of Indian Democracy: A Study of the Group of Ministers Device. In L. Choukroune and P. Bhandari (Eds.) *Exploring Indian Modernities* (pp. 81-106). Singapore: Springer Nature.

**Table 5.1: Profile of Respondents Interviewed**

Sl no.	Name of the Minister	Political Party	National/ Regional	Rank	Government
1	Arif Mohammed Khan	Janata Dal	Regional	Cabinet Minister	National Front
2	C.P. Thakur	BJP	National	Cabinet Minister	NDA
3	Jairam Ramesh	Congress	National	Minister of State	UPA-1
				Cabinet Minister	UPA-2
4	Mani Shankar Aiyer	Congress	National	Cabinet Minister	UPA-1
5	Raghuwansh Prasad Singh	RJD	Regional	Minister of state	United Front
				Cabinet Minister	UPA
6	Sanjay Paswan	BJP	National	Minister of State	NDA
7	Sharad Yadav	JD(U)	Regional	Cabinet Minister	National Front, NDA
8	T.R. Baalu	DMK	Regional	Minister of state	United Front
				Cabinet Minister	NDA, UPA
9	Yashwant Sinha	Janata Dal (Socialist)	National	Cabinet Minister	Janata Dal (Socialist) government
		BJP	National	Cabinet Minister	NDA

As an elaborate extension of the arguments proposed in Chapter-IV, this chapter by using different data sources corroborates the previous assertions. The chapter aims to investigate if the legislature-executive relationship, from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha, has become more confrontationalist. Though statistical studies have argued that there has been a decline in Parliamentary business due to increased disruptive behavior, this chapter by using interviews with previous Cabinet ministers seek to interrogate such claims. Keeping the fragmented nature of the party system in mind and such assertion by scholars, it would be worthwhile to see what ministers have to say on the ‘decline thesis’. Alternatively, the chapter dwells into the question of whether there has been a democratisation of the House which cannot be assessed through statistical measurement. Moreover, considering the indispensable fact that the Cabinet is the steering-wheel of the executive, the chapter proceeds to assess the centrality of the Prime Minister’s leadership, in an era of Indian politics marked by minority coalition governments. As the nature and pattern of relationship between the PM and his cabinet emerges, the chapter intends that an understanding of whether the Cabinet System in India has witnessed a change or not, will emerge. Keeping the aforesaid objectives in mind and using primary data (collected through RTI and Interviews) the Chapter argues that though the functioning of the Cabinet has

undergone transformation, it is in a positive direction of fostering collegiality. Nevertheless, Prime Ministerial authority has not decline; it has only transformed in its character.

Based on the data collected, this chapter is divided into five sections which relates to the changes that have marked the legislature-executive relationship from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha. The first part of the chapter deals with the proliferation of political parties and the impact that it had on the relationship between legislature and executive. The second segment discusses the matter of coalition Cabinets and the leadership of the Prime Minister within such Cabinets. In the context of the above, it discusses matters such as the constitution and reshuffle of such Cabinet as well as the role of the PMO. The third part of the chapter discusses the nature of relationship that existed between the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues under the study period. The fourth segment discusses the methods and modes of ensuring consensus in decision making which have been used to override division or dissension in the Cabinet. It discusses the role played by Cabinet Committees and GoM in the relevant time frame. The final section of the chapter deals with the interface between the Cabinet Committees, GoM and Prime Ministerial Leadership.

### **Proliferation of Political Parties and the Legislature Executive Relationship**

As discussed in the preceding chapter, the Ninth Lok Sabha marked the decline of Congress party and the consequent fragmentation of the party system. The proliferation of political parties, in turn, made the regional parties a key player in the formation and survival of successive governments. While the period between 1989-1999 witnessed frequent turnover of governments as well as constitution of successive Lok Sabha, the period from 1999 onwards remains testimony to the consolidation of coalition politics as the period witnessed successive stable coalition governments. During 1990s and beyond, the relationship between the government and the opposition was characterized by intense confrontation that had its impact over the functioning of Parliament. As compared to the preceding period, the Parliament witnessed frequent disruptions and adjournment and its effectiveness as an institution of accountability declined in statistical terms. Political instability with a

corresponding decline in the functioning of Parliament became a potent factor leading to its characterization as a period of weak Parliament and weak government as far as legislature executive relationship is concerned.<sup>4</sup> Owing to the proliferation of political parties, the smaller state based parties assumed significance and their impact remained pronounced in the public policies and making significant political decisions. During this period, only the Chandra Shekhar and the P.V. Narsimha Rao government were not a coalition government. They were single party minority governments. Chandra Shekhar government relied upon outside support of AIADMK, Muslim League, Kerala Congress (M) and Akali Dal apart from the Congress. Unlike this, the Rao government did not have to rely on any outside support of a political party in the Parliament. It was formed as a single party minority government but it could attain a working majority by January 1996 through split and merger of Shiv Sena, TDP and Janata Dal with the Congress.<sup>5</sup>

The number of parties represented in the Parliament as well as the number of parties either forming or supporting the government increased progressively during this period. In Ninth Lok Sabha, 24 parties were represented of which 10 parties formed the government or supported it from outside. The corresponding figures for Fourteenth Lok Sabha in 2004 stood at 20 and 38 respectively. Barring the exception of P.V. Narsimha Rao government (Tenth Lok Sabha), all governments including the single party minority government of Chandra Shekhar relied upon the outside support of parties to secure parliamentary majority. The outside support of parties to successive minority coalition governments reflects upon the gradual emergence and practice of coalition culture. The changing pattern of the party system that was dependent upon the changing nature of political competition in states became a potent factor in favour of the institutionalization of coalition politics during this period. E. Sridharan explains that the viability of minority coalition governments since 1996 is because of the fragmentation of the party system, ideological difference between parties on key issues (economic liberalization, secularism etc.) and the state level

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<sup>4</sup> Vikas Tripathi. (2018). 'Responsibility' and 'Accountability': Confidence and No Confidence Motions in the Indian Parliament. In Ajay K. Mehra (Ed.) *The Indian Parliament and Democratic Transformation* (pp. 251-272). London and New York: Routledge. Rahul Verma and Vikas Tripathi. (December, 2013). Making sense of the House: Explaining the decline of the Indian Parliament amidst Democratisation. *Studies in Indian Politics*, 1(2), 153-178.

<sup>5</sup> G.C. Malhotra. (2004). *Cabinet Responsibility to Legislature: Motions of Confidence and No-Confidence in Lok Sabha and State Legislatures (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat and Metropolitan Book Company, p. 83.



political competitiveness that incentivizes coalition with either BJP or Congress.<sup>6</sup> K. K. Kailash too posits that, in the post 1989 period political parties used coalition arrangements as the ‘main collusion mechanism’ to overcome the changed structure of competition during this period. He notes,

‘The increase in competition on these two dimensions encouraged political parties to enter into seat sharing arrangements and form electoral coalitions. The formation of coalition fronts with clearly defined coalition markers and coalitionable parties marks the distinguishing characteristics of the coalition system.’<sup>7</sup>

In a sense, this explains the gradual deepening of coalition politics particularly since 1996 with the formation of Deve Gowda government during the Eleventh Lok Sabha. The interviews held with all the eight respondents reflect a similar sentiment. All the respondents unanimously accepted the inevitability and indispensability of the coalition government during this period. This, however, does not deny that the coalition governments remained fragile till 1999, yet there is an overlapping consensus regarding its indispensability. Corollary to this has been an acknowledgement of the relevance of the multi party system which has come to reflect regional aspirations and social diversity. The instability between 1989-1999 could be, thus, taken as symptomatic of the fledgling phase of coalition politics. It would be instructive to recall an interview of I.K. Gujral in 1997 where he remarked that coalition is not only an arrangement but coalition is a culture. The Prime Minister has to acquaint himself with this culture and make it an essential attribute of his leadership style.<sup>8</sup>

In a similar vein, in 1999, Vajpayee also endorsed the gradual adaptation to the coalition culture in India and remarked,

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<sup>6</sup> E. Sridharan. (2014). Why are Multi Party Minority Governments Viable in India? Theory and Comparison. In E. Sridharan (Ed.). *Coalition Politics in India: Selected Issues At the Centre and the States*. New Delhi: Academic Foundation, p.67

<sup>7</sup> K.K. Kailash (2014). Competition and Coalition Formation in the New Party System. (pp. 71-106). In E. Sridharan (Ed.). *Coalition Politics in India: Selected Issues At the Centre and the States*. New Delhi: Academic Foundation

<sup>8</sup> I. K. Gujral’s interview to Karan Thapar, ITV Focus. (n.d). Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=160&v=fjEzOOCuVg0&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=160&v=fjEzOOCuVg0&feature=emb_logo). Accessed on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

‘Regional parties represent regional aspirations and they want that they should have some tangible say in the running of the coalition...regional parties have come to stay and as I said earlier they represent people’s aspiration much better than the national parties. But regional parties must develop an all India outlook. National parties should have more contact at the grass roots in the region...we are passing through a period of transition but the alignments will change. There will be better arrangements. Otherwise also if there is no coalition, the country has to run on the basis of consensus.’<sup>9</sup>

Such views are also seen from the account of the interviewees. Jairam Ramesh, former Cabinet minister during the UPA-2, notes that coalition essentially reflects the diversity of political opinions. The regional parties carry regional agenda but one has to learn to work with it. Multi party system better suits Indian conditions and it remains more inclusive. (Personal Communication, dated 26.12.18).Ramesh is not alone is holding such views. T.R. Baalu, belonging to the DMK who served in both the Manmohan Singh and the Vajpayee government, as a Cabinet minister, categorically affirms his faith in the sustainability of a coalition arrangement and inevitability of multiparty system. He states,

One of the basic principles of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) is State autonomy. In pursuance of this stated policy, the DMK has been echoing the slogan ‘Federal Governance at the Centre and Autonomous Rule in the State’, which was penned by our great leaders Anna, Kalaingar and Murasoli Maran...I would say that the coalition politics at National level came to play even before 1989. In fact in 1969 itself, after the vertical split of Congress Party, the Indira Gandhi government of the day at the Centre survived because of support of 25 Members of Parliament belonging to DMK. Since then, the coalition politics has come to stay at national level for most of the time and the governments were formed with the close support of various political parties, in particular, regional parties (Personal Communication, dated 30.01.19).

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<sup>9</sup> Talking Heads: Vajpayee Interview to Rajdeep Sardesai. NDTV.n.d. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohQiYi4oPOA>. Accessed on 30 April, 2019.

The consensus on the sustainability of coalition politics across parties belonging to diverse ideological spectrum is evident from the responses of all the respondents. The grounding principle remains the representation of social diversity and accommodation of regional aspiration. In fact, all but one members interviewed (Yashwant Sinha) unequivocally reject the idea about Presidential system as a viable alternative on this very ground. To quote Baalu, ‘This apart, philosophically coalition politics and Presidential form of government cannot co-exist, as coalition politics has come to stay playing an inevitable role in Indian polity at National level’ (Personal Communication, dated 30.01.19).

The basis for accepting the viability of coalition politics remains an acknowledgement of the inevitability of multiparty system. However, despite affirming unalloyed faith in the institution of parliamentary democracy and being sanguine about the prospects of coalition politics, the theme of the decline of the Parliament’s status and effectiveness over a period of time emerged as a major concern. Jairam Ramesh states, ‘Parliament has become the arena for lung power. It is not becoming an arena for debate and discussion anymore which it used to be earlier’ (Personal Communication, dated 26.12.18). Raghuwansh Prasad Singh agrees that parliamentary proceedings have witnessed a qualitative decline as parties are no longer committed to ideology and have been positively predisposed towards representing sectional interests (Personal Communication, dated 27.12.18)

Nonetheless, there does exist disagreement on this particular issue as some of the respondents significantly assert that the 1990s and beyond had been a moment of the reflection of the composite character (Sanjay Paswan, Personal Communication, 02.12.19). Sanjay Paswan, T.R. Baalu and Sharad Yadav explicitly deny the assertion about parliamentary decline and consider that measurement of decline ought to be in terms of the effectiveness of policies (the implementation of Mandal commission report) which the Parliament legislated upon during this period (Personal Communication, dated 02.12.18, 30.01.19 and 31.12.18 respectively). These policies profoundly changed the contour of Indian politics. Sharad Yadav cautions that an assessment of the Parliament in India cannot be context blind and should consider significant social changes taking place outside the Parliament that deeply impacts the internal working of the institution (Personal Communication, dated 30.01.19)

With the proliferation of political parties and regionalisation of the Lok Sabha, the social matrix of Parliament underwent transformation. The study done by Niraja Jayal Gopal mapping the changing nature of representation on the axis of caste in the Lok Sabha the Union Cabinet from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha explicitly affirms that there has been an ascendance of the members belonging to the backward caste community in both the Lok Sabha as well as the Union Cabinet during the period.<sup>10</sup> However, other scholars working on the Indian Parliament link the changing pattern of party system and proliferation of political parties with the decline in Parliament's activities in statistical terms.<sup>11</sup>

Contrary to such writings, Baalu asserts that the Parliament 'continues to retain its sheen' despite 'the change of its composition in terms of political colour and changing aspirations of people of this vast country over the years. It has witnessed keen fights between the ruling and opposition groups on a number of contentious issues and matters of economic and political importance to the people, on wide ranging subjects.' He firmly asserts,

'I do not subscribe to the argument that Indian Parliament is losing its status and that its effectiveness has come down as is being made out. I have been the Member of both the Houses of Parliament and have been privy in the functioning of our Parliament ever since 1986. Indian Parliament has been robust and vibrant as ever (Personal Communication, dated 30.01.19).

Another noteworthy concern that emerged from all the respondents was the steep decline in terms of transacting business in the House. Majority of the respondents agree that owing to frequent adjournments and disruptions the amount of business transacted receives a jolt. The reasons attributed to the decline include: the inability of the government to ensure consensus, the live telecast of proceedings of the House, lack of internal democracy in political parties, the changing social base of the parliamentarians and the proliferation of smaller state based parties in the Parliament.

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<sup>10</sup> Niraja Gopal Jayal. (2006). *Representing India: Ethnic Diversity and the Governance of Public Institutions in India*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.156-160.

<sup>11</sup> Ashutosh Kumar (2018) Why is the Indian Parliament in a state of Decline? In Ajay K. Mehra (Ed.) *The Indian Parliament and Democratic Transformation* (pp.61-82). London and New York: Routledge; Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (2006) *The Indian Parliament As An Institution of Accountability, Democracy, Governance and Human Rights*, Programme Paper No. 23, January. Geneva: UNRISD

It is worth noting that the frequent disruptions in the Parliament strengthen the government, as crucial legislations are passed without much discussions and lesser time is spent on debate and discussion. Despite being a coalition minority, successive governments failed to develop mutual trust with the opposition parties and take them onboard in parliamentary proceedings. Jairam Ramesh holds that owing to the inability of the executive to work out a consensus the disruptions remain the only tool available before the Parliament. (Personal Communication, dated 26.12.18)

In the same vein, Yashwant Sinha says, 'A government that enjoys a greater majority in the Parliament has treated the Parliament with disdain' (Personal Communication, dated 04.12.18)

Raghuwansh Prasad Singh too blames the government in this regard. But he contends that the opposition parties and media also encourage a confrontationist relationship between the government and opposition. The government doesn't promote the idea of Parliament functioning for more days with more sittings. The opposition too concurs with the government's stand on this. Both the government as well as opposition has concurrence in letting the Parliament work for fewer days. He alleges that the members behave irresponsibly as the Parliament meets for lesser days with fewer sittings (Personal Communication, dated 27.12.18). Jairam Ramesh and Sharad Yadav agree with Raghuwansh Prasad Yadav that the live telecast of the proceedings disruptions have become an essential attribute of the House (Personal Communication, dated 26.12.18 and 31.12.18 respectively). Ramesh argues that since the proceedings of the Standing Committees are not telecasted live, therefore these remain more constructive with fewer disruptions (Personal Communication, dated 26.12.18). What remains interesting from these observations is that despite the differences in their party as well as their tenure, the views echo each other.

It has already been noted that the Parliament has undergone social and political transformation which also plays a role in assessing the confrontation between the government and the opposition. In the period of Majoritarian Parliamentarianism, apart from systemic character of the Congress party, the necessity of historical consensus that bound the Parliamentarians, the homogeneity in regard to social and economic background contained such confrontation but the situation has changed at present. Mani Shankar Aiyer laments that there has been a serious deterioration in the

norms and ethos of Parliamentary democracy. From 1967 onwards, Indian politics has been witness to substantial socio-economic diversity which brought in ethos to the Parliament that was not in conformity to higher standards of parliamentary behavior. To quote him, 'regrettably but definitely, over a period of time the Parliament has converted from being a forum of discussion into a forum of demonstration' (Personal Communication, dated 12. 11.18).

Another factor that has impacted the functioning of Parliament is the lack of internal democracy in political parties. This was emphasized in the accounts of Yashwant Sinha, Arif Mohammed Khan, Sharad Yadav, Mani Shankar Aiyer and C.P. Thakur. They agree that lack of internal democracies within parties contribute substantially to the decline of Parliament during the period under consideration (Personal Communication, dated 04.12.18, 17.12.18, 31.12.18, 12.11.18 and 25.12.18 respectively). Raghuwansh Prasad Singh and Sharad Yadav, both of whom belong to regional parties, argue that though most of the state based and regional parties are based in their respective states and their party bosses are primarily involved in the state politics, they invariably retain a firm control over Parliamentary parties despite not being present in the House. This prominence of sectional and regional interests that substantially contributes to frequent adjournments and disruptions in the House. In a close resonance to Sinha, they argue that a pertinent reason for the frequent disruption is also the new found realization among the smaller parties the despite being short on numerical strength it can stall the proceeding of the House (Personal Communication, dated 27.12.18 and 31.12.18 respectively).

## **II. Coalition Cabinets and the leadership of the Prime Minister**

As discussed in the Chapter-III, owing to the centralization and personalization of power in the Prime Minister<sup>12</sup>, his/ her position remained commanding in the Cabinet.<sup>13</sup> The plebiscitary character of the elections since early 1970s made the leadership of Prime Minister most popular and he/she wielded considerable political base to an extent that party became quite marginal in deciding about its organizational

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<sup>12</sup> Barring a brief interlude of the Janata Party government 1977-1979

<sup>13</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (1987). *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of The Indian State*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.

affairs as compared to the Prime Minister.<sup>14</sup> The successive party presidents either remained a nominee of the Prime Minister or the latter himself/herself assumed that post, apart from being the Prime Minister. Political homogeneity within the Cabinet and the vacuum created due to either the death of the party stalwarts or their shift to other parties considerably enhanced the stature of successive Prime Ministers since 1970s. Those who remained with the party depended upon the magnanimity of the Prime Minister for their survival.<sup>15</sup>

The Cabinets during this period, barring the exception of Chandra Shekhar and Narsimha Rao, had sizeable presence of the allies. The coalition conviction seems to be deep as in the National Front Government as parties like AGP, TDP, ICS (SCS) and DMK were accommodated in the Cabinet despite their negligible presence in the Parliament. It was a strategy to keep the Front intact given the composition of Parliament. Not only did the number of ministries allocated to allies increased over a period of time but also significant ministries like Defence, Railways, Home and Finance were allocated to the allies.<sup>16</sup> In part, the politics of accommodation of allies both in regard to numbers as well as nature of portfolios considerably explains the institutionalization of coalition politics particularly since 1996.

The trend towards increased heterogeneity of the Cabinet primarily raises questions about the nature of authority of the Prime Minister during this period. Paul Brass characterized this period as ‘weak governments, divided Cabinets.’<sup>17</sup> Considering the fact that successive Prime Ministers (barring the exception of Vajpayee<sup>18</sup>) had their coequals in respective Cabinet (whose survival did not depend upon the magnanimity of the Prime Minister), the exercise of Prime ministerial authority in this period was restrained. In fact, many regional leaders from the allies enjoyed considerable clout and their political base remained independent of the popularity that the concerned

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<sup>14</sup> Granville Austin. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: A History of the Indian Experience*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press; Paul R. Brass. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Peter Lyon and James Manor (Eds.). (1983). *Transfer and Transformation: Political Institutions in the New Commonwealth*. New Hampshire: Leicester University Press.

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter III of the study.

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter IV of study

<sup>17</sup> Paul R. Brass. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 49.

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed discussion on Vajpayee-Advani relationship, See N.P. Ullekh. (2017). *The Untold Vajpayee: Politician and Paradox*. New Delhi: Penguin Random House; Kingshuk Nag. (2016). *Atal Bihari Vajpayee: A Man for All Seasons*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications.

Prime Minister wielded. On the contrary, certain leaders within the leading party in the alliance were seen as challenger to the authority of the Prime Minister. For instance, Chandra Shekhar and Devi Lal during V.P. Singh government, Sharad Pawar and Arjun Singh during P.V. Narasimha Rao government, Laloo Prasad Yadav, Mulayam Singh Yadav, G.K. Moopnar during Deve Gowda and Gujral governments, Advani during Vajpayee government and Sonia Gandhi, Pranab Mukherjee and Arjun Singh during Manmohan Singh government. The presence of such leaders either in the alliance or in the party and government certainly made the position of respective Prime Ministers markedly distinct from the preceding period when the single party governments provided immense authority to the Prime Ministers.

Within the Union Council of Ministers the accommodation of allies necessitated that the leadership was not only sensitive but assertive as well to protect the prime ministerial prerogative. This would be strategic skill that the leadership would have to possess. Though the PM has the fundamental prerogative of constituting a Cabinet of his choice and to reshuffle the Cabinet, this was put to question. Writing about the impact of the pulls and pressure of the allies to seek ministries of their choice during Deve Gowda government, Mehra writes,

‘Politically H.D. Deve Gowda is to use the lexicon of cricket, on a wicket of unpredictable bounce. He does not even have full control over his team.... As the compromise leader of a motley crowd, he does not even enjoy the usual prime ministerial freedom to select his own Cabinet colleagues. He not only has had to accommodate the nominees of other coalition partners, he also had to accommodate the preferences of the regional satraps within his own party... Thus, as and when he is able to complete Cabinet making, his position may be less than that of *primus inter pares*. He may therefore not find it easy to preside over it and lead a government that does not have full control.’<sup>19</sup>

Apart from the enhanced role of the allies in casting influence over the constitution of Cabinet and allocation of portfolios, the position of Prime Minister became precarious

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<sup>19</sup>Ajay K. Mehra. (1997) The Cabinet System in a Coalition Situation. In Subhash C. Kashyap (Ed.) *Coalition Government and Politics in India* (pp. 91-99). New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House



as prominent leaders from the party spoke against the policy measures. For instance, Sharad Yadav shouted back at the Prime Minister on the Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament (1997). While Gujral, the Prime Minister, supported the Bill in the House, the ruling alliance was divided and unsure of its position. When decisions of the Cabinet were sent back by the President for its reconsideration, it brought in embarrassment to the government of the day.<sup>20</sup> The charges of corruption on prominent leaders supporting the government further propagated an impression of a weak Prime Minister restrained by coalition compulsions to take any definite action.<sup>21</sup> Charges of corruption were also leveled against Prime Minister P.V. Narsimha Rao.<sup>22</sup> The emergence of semi-institutionalized/ institutionalized coordination mechanism since V.P. Singh government was further assumed to be circumscribing the Prime Minister's authority as major decisions of the government were supposed to be routed through these coordination committees. The role of coordination committee remained prominent in all governments, barring the exceptions of the single party minority governments of Chandra Shekhar and P.V. Narsimha Rao. The open differences and growing dissensions among respective governments and their allies can be seen as a trend towards compromising the collegial character of the Cabinet and questioning the basic premise of the idea of collective responsibility.<sup>23</sup> A perception about weakening authority of the Prime Minister was also a resultant of clash of personalities and selective leakages to the media about differences among allies and government over policy issues and otherwise.

In 1997, when Gujral assumed the post of Prime Minister he concurred with the idea that the office of Prime Minister had witnessed certain erosion in its status and dignity. He laments the loss of dignity in the office of Prime Minister:

The office of Prime deserves a restoration of dignity. The dignity has been damaged in many ways. Charges of corruption was most, whether they were right or wrong that needs thinking...Dignity also meant

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<sup>20</sup> An instances in this regard can be the imposition of President Rule in UP during Gujral government in 1997 .

<sup>21</sup> I. K. Gujral's interview to Karan Thapar, ITV Focus. (n.d). Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=160&v=fjEzOOCuVg0&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=160&v=fjEzOOCuVg0&feature=emb_logo). Accessed on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> For instance, one of the charges of alleged corruption against Rao government was that it tried to stitch majority during 1 of the NCMs in 1993 by offering financial allurements to the MPs of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha.

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter –IV of the study

trying to carry people with you. You have to be authoritarian yet assert the authority wherever it is called for. Learn to carry people and give them leadership in the sense they think they are one of you... Basically I wanted the Prime Ministerial Office to be an office of sensitivity, human face and dignity.<sup>24</sup>

During their interviews with the media, Vajpayee, Deve Gowda and Gujral while being the Prime Ministers admitted that running a coalition government was indeed challenging. Vajpayee accepts that threat to the survival of government emanates not necessarily from the opposition parties but from their own allies.<sup>25</sup> However, despite agreeing to the challenges in running coalition governments, successive Prime Ministers have held the position that the coalition context makes it imperative on the part of Prime Minister to remain consultative and ensure consensus.

**Table 5.2: No. of Major Reshuffles and Changes in Union Council of Minister from Jawaharlal Nehru to Manmohan Singh**

Prime Minister	Duration	No. of Tenures	Number of Major Reshuffle	Changes
Jawaharlal Nehru	15/08/1947 to 27/05/1964	5	8	63
Lal Bahadur Shstri	09/06/1964 to 11/01/1966	1	1	10
Indira Gandhi	24/01/1966 to 25/03/1977	3	8	39
Morarji Desai	26/03/1977 to 28/07/1979	1	4	10
Charan Singh	28/07/1979 to 13/01/1980	1	2	6
Indira Gandhi	14/01/1980 to 31/10/1984	1	8	28
Rajiv Gandhi	31/12/1984 to 4/12/1989	1	6	36
V.P. Singh	21/12/1989 to 10/11/1990	1	0	1
Chandra Shekhar	10/11/1990 to 21/6/1991	1	0	1
P.V. Narsimha Rao	21/6/1991 to 16/5/1996	1	3	9
Atal Bihari Vajpayee	16/5/1996 to 1/6/1996	1	0	1
H.D. Deve Gowda	1/6/1996 to 21/4/1997	1	1	4
I.K. Gujral	21/4/1997 to 18/3/1998	1	0	2
Atal Bihari Vajpayee	19/3/1998 to 13/10/1999	1	2	7
Atal Bihari Vajpayee	13/10/1999 to 22/5/2004	1	4	19
Manmohan Singh	22/5/ 2004 to 22/5/2009	1	2	29

Source: Council of Ministers 1947-2015 (From 15 August 1947 to 28 August, 2015): Names and Portfolios of the Members of the Union Council of Ministers. (2016). New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat. pp. 7-8.

The compulsion of coalition politics has necessitated frequent consultation among allies and the government on significant matters such as the constitution of Cabinet and its reshuffle and other political decisions. It emerged from the interviews that

<sup>24</sup> I. K. Gujral's interview to Karan Thapar, ITV Focus. (n.d). Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=160&v=fjEzOOCuVg0&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=160&v=fjEzOOCuVg0&feature=emb_logo). Accessed on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

<sup>25</sup> Talking Heads: Vajpayee Interview to Rajdeep Sardesai. NDTV.n.d. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohQiYi4oPOA>. Accessed on 30 April, 2019

contrary to the views of I.K. Gujral, most of the respondents do not agree that there has been a decline in the authority of Prime Minister during the coalition period. For instance, Arif Mohammed Khan asserts that the argument about decline in authority of Prime Minister during this period is insignificant because even during periods when there was no coalition, the Prime Minister had to consider various interest groups and factors (Personal Communication, dated 17.12.18). Raghuwansh Prasad Singh firmly asserts that it is not true that there has been a decline in the authority of Prime Minister. For him, coalition governments are inherently more democratic as a single party generally lacks internal democracy and accordingly a moderate prime ministerial dominance is better in a democratic set up. The Prime Minister has to be consultative in order to ensure a stable and sustainable government (Personal Communication, dated 27.12.18)

T.R. Baalu also argues that consultation with alliance partners while constituting the Cabinet ensures that the allies are accommodated but that is not to be read as decline in prime ministerial power. In his words,

At a philosophical level, it is always said that Cabinet formation is the prerogative of the P.M. However, in practice, the P.M. has to take the party into confidence in this regard. Now, in a coalition Government where the power is to be shared among the alliance partners, the consultation on Cabinet formation has to be more wide and accommodative. And, that is how it should actually be done. So, by no stretch of imagination it can be described that P.M.'s authority is undermined in Cabinet formation or reshuffle. (Personal Communication, dated 30.01.19).

Jairam Ramesh too firmly denies the assertion about decline in the prime ministerial authority due to coalition politics. For him, 'it depends on how you run a coalition'. He elaborates his position, 'Look at Mr. Vajpayee, how he conducted the coalition. In my view, he ran a very successful coalition. Had Mr. Deve Gowda not taken a *panga* with Sita Ram Kesari his coalition would have continued for quite some time' (Personal Communication, dated 26.12.18). Ramesh explains that though this might be interpreted as the overshadowing of the Prime ministerial prerogative of constituting his Cabinet one has to understand that the Prime Minister is not a

monarch. There are definite limits to his power. He recounts that during UPA government, the leaderships of allies were asked to suggest names of those to be inducted in the Cabinet from their respective parties. While the leadership of respective regional parties decided about the name from their own parties to be inducted in the ministries, the ministers from the Congress party were nominated by Prime Minister in consultation with the party president. Prime Ministers may differ in their style of functioning but that doesn't mean undermining his prime ministerial authority. To quote him further,

The Prime Minister may have far more power than the Prime Minister himself realizes. A Prime Minister can be like Dr. Manmohan Singh and say, I have no power. Or he can be like Mr. Vajpayee who will say I will test the limits of my power (Personal Communication, dated 26.12.18).

In Aiyer's account, the constitution of the Cabinet is essentially a consultative process and a Prime Minister who decides without consulting other leaders and party might eventually land himself up in deep trouble. Effectively, therefore, it can be states that coalition politics has influenced the Office of Prime Minister rather than bring about a decline in its authority and dignity. He says, though theoretically the exclusive right to constitute a Cabinet vests with the Prime Minister yet a pragmatic Prime Minister will ensure a great deal of consultation goes into finally determining the final composition of the Council of Ministers. (Personal Communication dated 12. 11.18)

As against such views, Yashwant Sinha holds that to a certain extent there has been a decline in the Prime Minister's authority, as he seeks to consult party leaders in the composition of Cabinet. Yet the personality of Prime Minister dominates the Cabinet. He cites the case of Vajpayee who despite being under pressure to constitute his Cabinet, remained in a commanding position within his Cabinet. Recollecting his experience, he asserts that the Office of Prime Minister remained assertive, very powerful and influential during this period. According to Sinha, as the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister also became the National Security Advisor, the PMO came to retain a very determinative character during this period (Personal Communication, dated 04.12.18).

The above assertions made by respondents on the prominent role played by leadership of regional parties in influencing the constitution as well as reshuffle of the Cabinet is corroborated by the study of Csaba Nikolenyi who argues that in the era of coalition politics ‘the need to accommodate coalition partners has become a central consideration in the PM’s choice of Cabinet appointments.’<sup>26</sup> The PM has to take on board the demands of coalition partners in this regard as the governments are minority in character and they have fragile base in the Parliament. As seen in Table 4.3 of Chapter-IV that deals with the strength of the Union Council of Ministers during 1990s and beyond, the two coalition minority governments that completed its full term (A.B. Vajpayee in third term and Dr. Manmohan Singh) were characterised by substantial increase in the strength of Union Council of Ministers, while the Vajpayee Government had 70 ministers, the Manmohan Singh Government had 68 ministers. This is in sharp contrast to other coalition minority governments that could not complete its full term where the strength of the Union Council of Ministers was significantly lower. P.V.N. Rao government with 53 ministers, despite leading a single party minority government seems to be representative of the trend of ensuring survival of government through accommodation in the Union Council of Ministers. In a sense, all governments marked by political stability, whether coalition minority or single party minority had a significantly large ministry.

Also, as shown in Table 5.2 (below) more frequent, major reshuffles and more changes in the Union Council of Ministers happens in all those minority coalition governments that could complete its full term. Paradoxically, the two coalition minority governments which completed its full term and have greater number of major reshuffles and changes in the Union Council of Ministers remain akin to the Prime Ministerial governments of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, in this regard. As per Pai Panindikar and Mehra’s study, the significantly large number of changes in the Union Council of Ministers during the successive governments of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi owed in large measure to the prime ministerial dominance of the Cabinet.<sup>27</sup> While the increased number of changes in the Union Council of Ministers, in this period, owed to a great extent to the coalition compulsions rather than any

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<sup>26</sup> Csaba Nikolenyi (2015). India: The Selection and de-selection of Cabinet Ministers. In Keith Dowding and Patrick Dumont (Eds.) *The Selection of Ministers around the World*. London and New York: Routledge, p. 105.

<sup>27</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, pp. 118-123, pp.126-131

prime ministerial dominance. This is also corroborated by the study done by Csaba Nikolenyi.<sup>28</sup>

Apart from the broad agreement on understanding the nature of prime ministerial authority in the context of coalition politics, all the eight respondents unanimously accepted the essential centrality of the leadership style of Prime Minister as one of the defining attributes of respective Cabinets. To quote Arif Mohammed Khan, ‘the Prime Minister is the key person. Everything depends upon his leadership style as he is the first among equals’ (Personal Communication, dated 17.12.18)

All the Prime Ministers under the period studied had considerable ministerial experience barring the exception of Chandra Shekhar (who had never been a minister in government). All the Prime Minister, except Deve Gowda, had been deeply involved in the politics at centre and were actively involved in legislative issues as well as managing party affairs before they assumed this post.

It emerged from the interviews of the former ministers as well as from the autobiographies, memoirs and biographies of former ministers that the successive Prime Ministers differed in three vital respects which imparted uniqueness to each of the Cabinets.

Firstly, they all had unique leadership style which remained considerable in marking the distinct functioning of their respective Cabinets.

Secondly, the political base that successive Prime Ministers enjoyed and their stature and position in the party profoundly shaped the manner in which a Prime Minister exercised his authority and his relationship with his Cabinet colleagues. The kind of relationship that successive Prime Ministers had with their Party President and leaderships remained contingent to a great extent on the political base he wielded and his position in the party. It impacted the relationship between the organizational wing of the party and the parliamentary wing of the party in a profound manner.

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<sup>28</sup> Csaba Nikolenyi (2015). India: The Selection and de-selection of Cabinet Ministers. In Keith Dowding and Patrick Dumont (Eds.) *The Selection of Ministers around the World* (pp.99-116). London and New York: Routledge.

Thirdly, the consensus on the leadership of Prime Minister among allies or in the party in case of a single party minority government. During this phase the consensus over Common Minimum Program and leadership among the lead party and the allies became most crucial to sustain a government and provide stability.

There exists unanimity among respondents that while looking at the functioning of the Union Cabinet, the leadership of the PM is vital. However, any assessment about the leadership of Prime Minister while running a coalition government cannot be devoid of the political context in which the Prime Minister functions. I.K.Gujral in an interview to Karan Thapar in 1998, just before the elections to the Twelfth Lok Sabha, on a question about the expectations from the next Prime Minister leading a new coalition government indicated at the centrality of Prime Minister's leadership in managing a diverse coalition. He remarks that coalition is not merely an arrangement but it is a culture. As a Prime Minister, his historic task was to further the cause of the culture of coalition. In his words, 'I think a leader in a coalition government had to have three qualities: power or strength to persuade, having Conviction enough to carry conviction with others, patience enough to let people differ with you and get persuaded.'<sup>29</sup>

Raghuwansh Prasad Singh is extremely categorical that the Prime Minister's leadership is central in running a coalition government. The Prime Minister by virtue of being the head of government is in reality responsible for the functioning of the Cabinet. Re-iterating the important prerogatives of the PM, he lists the following: allocation of portfolios to ministers, resolution of problems among different different ministries, ensuring inter-ministerial coordination and in certain cases, certain cases of the constitution of a GoM (Personal Communication, dated 27.12.18)

To substantiate a similar point, T.R. Baalu comments on the unique leadership style of Vajpayee, as:

There is no denying of this fact. Mr.Vajpayee has risen from ranks, and politics had been his breath ever since his youth. He was out and out

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<sup>29</sup> I. K. Gujral's interview to Karan Thapar, ITV Focus. (n.d). Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=160&v=fjEzOOCuVg0&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=160&v=fjEzOOCuVg0&feature=emb_logo). Accessed on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

political person and a matured, sagacious leader. A mass leader. His decision making style was that of a tall political leader. As for him, the destination is determined and path to be walked to reach the destination is laid and followed in accordance with the prescriptions. (Personal Communication, dated 30.01.19)

The respondents seem to be unanimous that two factors defined the pattern of relationship between the Prime Ministers and their Cabinet colleagues: first, the political base that the Prime Ministers carried and second, their stature and position within the party. From V.P. Singh to Manmohan Singh, the office of Prime Minister was occupied by leaders whose positions within their respective parties remained quite distinct. V.P. Singh was the natural choice of the Jantata Dal and National Front to lead the coalition. Chandra Shekhar was a challenger and resented the manner in which V.P. Singh was elected as the leader of the Janata Dal Parliamentary Party. But, Singh remained both a natural choice of the party as well as allies (see Chapter-IV) and by virtue of being the President of the Janata Dal there was no question over his authority in the party. In this regard, Arif Mohammed Khan during the interview, argued that despite leading a minority government supported from outside by the Left and the BJP, V.P. Singh government did not face any major challenge in ensuring consensus among colleagues. Problems started only when he did not take the Left parties and the BJP into confidence while announcing the decision to implement the Mandal Commission. Till that moment, V.P. Singh's authority remained uncontested in the party. Khan says,

There was no check on his authority. The problem was although the Mandal was part of the Janata Dal manifesto but Janata Dal was not given majority by the people. We were really supported by CPI (M) and the BJP. What was wrong on our part was that without taking into confidence the supporting parties we announced a major policy decision that created a problem (Personal Communication, dated 17.12.18).

In contrast, Chandra Shekhar who formed the subsequent government had considerable hold over his party and Cabinet colleagues because most of the ministers in the government owed their position to him. The problem of stability emerged



primarily because the party had a mere 64 MPs and it relied on the outside support of the Congress party. Commenting on the differences in Chandra Shekhar's background, Yashwant Sinha remarks,

So he was a well known politician but he has never been a Minister in the government. He directly became Prime Minister and there were people who thought that because he had no experience of being in the government he would not be able to do very well. But I think as Prime Minister he functioned very well on the basis of whatever experience he had acquired in the past... though his regime was short lived. He was a *very effective Prime Minister*. (Personal Communication, dated 04.12.18)

The political base enjoyed by Narsimha Rao, Gujral, Deve Gowda and Manmohan Singh remained much narrow and their nomination as Prime Minister owed much to the consensus reached out among the allies/ in the party after the elections (Chapter-IV). In regard to the lack of political clout that disadvantaged Rao, Sitapati writes, '...the crown was made of plastic. Though Prime Minister in name, Narasimha Rao had little real power. His survival depended on the goodwill of other Congressmen who considered him an usurper of the Nehru-Gandhi throne. Rao had no political base within the party and had to rely on the very men out to unseat him.'<sup>30</sup>

Having become the Prime Minister, Narsimha Rao held elections to the CWC and for the post of President. After assuming the Presidency of the party, he reconstituted the CWC strengthening his own position in the party. However, Aiyer points out that the formation of Tiwari Congress with the breakaway faction of the Congress did restrain his position to a considerable extent in the party among colleagues (Personal Communication dated 12. 11.18). Rao's tenure could impart stability but as seen from Aiyer's comment and corroborated through biographical sources, his Cabinet remained divided. In part, it reflects upon the absence of a minimally strong leadership of Prime Minister which could have imparted coherence to the decisions

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<sup>30</sup> Vinay Sitapati. (2016). *Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin. p.104.

taken by government. The Ayodhya imbroglio, during his tenure, is a testimony to this fact.<sup>31</sup>

In Manmohan Singh's case, he was a nominee of Sonia Gandhi, the Party President, and as such his stature and position in the party remained contingent upon the relationship that the two shared (Chapter-4). As per the accounts presented by Jairam Ramesh, Mani Shankar Aiyer and Raghuwansh Prasad Singh the relation between the two was cordial and characterized by mutual understanding (Personal Communication dated 26.12.18, 12. 11.18 and 27.12.18 respectively). Jairam Ramesh says that Manmohan Singh could assert on certain issues at moments but 'always knew the limitations of his power'. He elaborates,

Manmohan Singh was conscious of the fact that he was not from Lok Sabha, he was a Rajya Sabha MP. He was a nominated Prime Minister... he was deeply conscious of that fact...there were many things that Dr Singh could not do because of political compulsions. The classic example was Sharm El Sheikh, when party took a different position. However, there were issues on which the party had a different view than Dr Manmohan Singh but Dr. Manmohan Singh was able to take the party along. Nuclear agreement, left to itself the party would not have agreed. FDI in multi brand retail, party supported him. Actually the party supported him on all issues except Sharm-El-Sheikh. (Personal Communication, dated 26.12.18)

Aiyer attributes the degree of dominance a Prime Minister enjoys to the political strength that he wields. Prime Minister's position in the government remains contingent upon his clout vis-à-vis his colleagues. Referring to Manmohan Singh, he says

Dr. Manmohan Singh could understand that he hadn't really won the Prime Ministership on his own merit, own political merit. And his meritocracy may have entitled him to become the Principal Private Secretary to Prime Minister but not to be the Prime Minister himself.

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<sup>31</sup> See Chapter IV of the study

And as Prime Minister understanding his limitations he was able to exercise his power. (Personal Communication dated 12. 11.18)

Regarding the position of Dr. Singh, Harish Khare, Media Advisor to Dr. Singh (in UPA-2) says,

the very first press conference that Dr. Singh had in 2004, he had very openly and publicly acknowledged that he was PM because of Mrs. Sonia Gandhi in this was both a statement of fact and an analysis of a great political strategic importance. Here he, Mr. Singh was announcing to everybody, including those within his party and those within government coalition that a) there is no conflict between the party and the government b) that any attack or undermining of his authority would be a kind of somebody choosing to take *panga* with Mrs. Sonia Gandhi. Of Course, publicly in the Indian Constitutional terms, this didn't do down very well as the Office of the Prime Minister is the Office of the Prime Minister but this making the best of the peculiar political situation and that remained the same in the first as well as the second term. (Personal Communication, 22.12.18)

As discussed in the previous chapter, the position of Deve Gowda and Gujral was precarious as these two names emerged more as a matter of compromise and there were many in the party who were challengers to their names from within the United Front. Additionally, the political strength of the Janata Dal itself was fragile given the fact that the party had just 46 MPs in the Parliament. Referring to these two reasons, Baalu says,

In Deve Gowda Cabinet, I was a Minister of State and PM was the Cabinet Minister for that portfolio. Though PM was the Cabinet Minister, only those files which require approval of the Cabinet had to be sent to him for approval. All other matters would be decided by me as the Minister of State. Such was the delegation of power. However, after a few months, in place of Prime Minister, a Cabinet Minister belonging to another party was appointed to that particular Ministry. Neither me nor my party. i.e., DMK raised an issue in this regard and agitated the matter before PM. Even now it is said that he was a weak

PM. Rightly so, because he was from a party which had only 45 MPs  
(Personal Communication, dated 30.01.19).

In contrast to Devegowda, the picture of Vajpayee emerges as ‘a towering leader’ who ‘maintained very good relations with all the party presidents during his tenure’ (C. P. Thakur, Personal Communication, dated 25.12.18). This is also maintained by Yashwant Sinha who remarks that, ‘Vajpayee was a tall leader. Throughout his career he had competition with Advani. In government also there was an element of competition at times. But Vajpayee was clearly the one who was above everybody else’ (Personal Communication, dated 04.12.18).

The consensus on the leadership of Prime Minister among allies or in the party in case of a single party minority government emerged as crucial to the functioning of Union Cabinet. The unanimity on leadership among allies provides strength and sustainability to the government. Cases to be re-iterated here are of Narsimha Rao and Chandra Shekhar, who formed the single party minority governments yet the unanimity among party leaderships on Prime Ministership ensured their ascendance. V.P. Singh was also an unanimous choice among the allies. Infact, the support of the Left parties and the BJP remained contingent upon declaring V.P. Singh as the Prime Minister of the National Front government. As Arif Mohammed Khan firmly asserts ‘there was no question over V.P. Singh’s authority in the party. He could ensure consensus’ (Personal Communication, dated 17.12.18). Later on, the consensus dissipated only because V.P. Singh declared the implementation of Mandal Commission recommendation without taking the allies into confidence.

Notwithstanding the consensus over the leadership, it would be inaccurate to overlook the dissensions within the Cabinet which also impacted the leadership of the Prime Minister. As discussed in Chapter- IV, though Deve Gowda and Gujral were elected unanimously among the allies yet there existed a range of leadership both with the Janata Dal as well as among the allies that aspired for the post of Prime Minister. Further based on the interview of Deve Gowda to Karan Thapar, one can safely argue that he could maintain a cordial relationship with the Congress party so long as Narsimha Rao remained its President. The relationship deteriorated as Sita Ram Kesri became the Congress President and eventually Deve Gowda had to resign.<sup>32</sup> Frequent

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<sup>32</sup> Deve Gowda’s interview to Karan Thapar, ITV Focus, (n.d). Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRxgCdJoUfo>. Accessed on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

dissensions within the government, apart from deteriorating relationship with the Congress leadership, eventually led to the withdrawal of support by the Congress. Gujral too remained a part of this trend. Dissensions were also faced by Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh governments. The withdrawal of support from allies during Vajpayee's second tenure and Manmohan Singh's first tenure year brought both the governments to brink (1999 and 2008 respectively). While the Vajpayee government could not survive the Confidence Motion in 1999 and fell by one vote, the Manmohan Singh government could stitch a majority in the Lok Sabha and won the Confidence motion in 2008. It is noteworthy that the instability that marked the Vajpayee-Manmohan period does not in any way indicate any disaffection towards the leadership. Both Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh came to be unanimously accepted among allies and instability on both the occasion had to do with certain demand of a particular ally in the government.<sup>33</sup>

### **III. The Nature of Relationship between the Prime Minister and his Cabinet Colleagues**

Scholars working on this period under study have characterized it as a phase that represents weak governments and divided Cabinets.<sup>34</sup> The nature of relationship between the Prime minister and his Cabinet colleagues is impacted by the heterogeneity of parties on which successive governments are dependent. As already discussed in the previous section, most of Cabinet ministers from the allies owed their position to their respective party leaderships rather than the Prime Ministers and therefore the relationship was complicated. The position of national/regional parties that were part of alliance considerably impacted the position taken by their representatives in the Cabinet. Due to the function of such factors, successive Prime Ministers evolved an approach of outreach vis-à-vis their colleagues in the Cabinet. Relationship with those from leading party in the Cabinet were however, of a different nature as these remained contingent to a great extent upon the political base wielded by the Prime Minister and his position within the party.

In interviews with the media, Gujral, Deve Gowda and Vajpayee unequivocally claimed out that all the decisions taken in their respective Cabinets have been

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<sup>33</sup> See Chapter IV of the Study.

<sup>34</sup> Paul R. Brass. (1990). *The Politics of India Since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph. (1987). *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of The Indian State*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman

unanimous.<sup>35</sup> Gujral had already talked about ‘coalition culture’ and accepts the inherent contradictions involved in running a coalition government. He acknowledged the challenges he faced in managing a diverse coalition as the Left parties, in particular, openly disagreed with the economic measures of the government and took it to media. Nevertheless, he argues that even single party governments consist of diverse pressure groups pulling in contradictory directions. In brief, factions and groups have remained a perennial feature of Cabinet governments since the days of one party dominance.

An exploration into the respondents’ views indicates a unanimity existing on the consultative and deliberative character of Cabinet. This corroborates with the accounts from biographies, autobiographies and political memoirs which indicates towards an enhanced deliberative character of Cabinet in the coalition era, as compared to the preceding period of one party dominance. For instance, V.P. Singh’s biographers cite the reaching of consensus among Cabinet colleagues as a significant departure from the preceding period of much centralized character of decision making in the Cabinet.<sup>36</sup> In his autobiography Arjun Singh, who was Cabinet minister during Rao government, points out to several instances of long deliberations during the meeting of Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (henceforth CCPA).<sup>37</sup> Gujral cites to a fifteen hour long Cabinet meeting during his tenure to discuss the imposition of President’s Rule in Uttar Pradesh during his interview with Karan Thapar.<sup>38</sup> In close semblance to these accounts, the respondents also agree that the Cabinets witnessed an enhanced deliberation and consultation during this period. All of them unanimously agreed regarding the freedom in raising an issue and participating in the Cabinet meetings. This, however, should not preclude informal meetings among political parties and leaderships which contributed to the easing out of differences and influenced the decision making, to an extent. In fact, enhanced participation in the

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<sup>35</sup> I. K. Gujral’s interview to Karan Thapar, ITV Focus. (n.d). Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=160&v=fjEzOOCuVg0&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=160&v=fjEzOOCuVg0&feature=emb_logo). Accessed on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Seema Mustafa. (1995). *The Lonely Prophet: V.P. Singh, A Political Biography*. New Delhi: New Age International; Prem Shankar Jha. (1993). *In the Eye of The Cyclone: The Crisis in Indian Democracy*. New Delhi: Viking; B.G. Deshmukh. (2004). *From Poona to The Prime Minister’s Office: A Cabinet Secretary Looks Back*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers.

<sup>37</sup> Arjun Singh with Ashok Chopra. (2012). *A Grain of Sand in the Hourglass of Time: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: HayHouse India.

<sup>38</sup> I. K. Gujral’s interview to Karan Thapar, ITV Focus. (n.d). Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=160&v=fjEzOOCuVg0&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=160&v=fjEzOOCuVg0&feature=emb_logo). Accessed on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

Cabinet meetings also meant confrontationist meetings. This would not be exceptional as arriving at a consensus position among allies over certain issues would be difficult. Moreover, it reflects upon the pulls and pressures inherent in running a diverse coalition which constrains Prime ministerial authority at certain moments.

The stability that marked politics since 1999 had its impact over the functioning of Cabinet also. The Cabinet became more reconciliatory and the Prime Ministers, backed by workable majority in the Parliament and stable allies, could ensure smooth functioning of the Cabinet by resolution of differences among his Cabinet colleagues. As Sharad Yadav notes, though he had ideological differences with Prime Minister Vajpayee on his twin agendas of labour reform and disinvestment, the relationship remained smooth and cordial, 'things could be discussed and resolved' (Personal Communication, dated 30.01.19). Mani Shankar Aiyer cites the case of Manmohan Singh in this regard. He argues that the PM was able to spot the difficulties and could arrive at a concensus by either calling the ministers concerned or accommodating them. He remarks that 'Manmohan Singh could ensure that formal Cabinet meetings go on smoothly. He was very sensitive to the concerns raised by coalition partners.' (Personal Communication dated 12. 11.18)

Commenting upon the style of functioning of Manmohan Singh Cabinet, Jairam Ramesh refers to the different mechanisms that he adopted. He says,

It met meticulously and there used to be a lot of discussion, lot of pre Cabinet discussion also. There used to be lot of discussion in the Cabinet and when the decision was not leading to a decision, then the PM would set up a GoM on important issues. Actually, the Cabinet system worked as the Cabinet system should work, during Manmohan Singh government because every Cabinet Minister sort of asserted his or her authority and made sure that they were heard. (Personal Communication, dated 26.12.18)

Though the practice of Inner Cabinet was present from the times of Nehru, it seems to be prominent during those periods where the governments marked by political stability.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The presence of an Inner Cabinet finds its existence in the writings of Sir Ivor Jennings. In the Indian context, an informal mechanism of the Inner Cabinet has been recognised since the time of Nehru in

However, it becomes difficult to categorically point towards this trend in the governments led by V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, Deve Gowda and Gujral as these governments had short duration. Nevertheless, Arif Mohammed Khan refers to Vinod Pande, the Cabinet Secretary to V.P. Singh, who was quite influential and his advice mattered to the Prime Minister (Personal Communication, dated 17.12.18). Such an assertion is endorsed by H.Y. Sharda Prasad who in his article comments upon the considerable power and influence that is wielded by the PMO even during previous Prime Ministers and the prominence that their Principal Secretaries had:

However, it is not Shankar's name that springs to mind when the mention is made of the Prime Minister's Secretary, but the names of L.K. Jha under Lal Bahadur Shastri, P.N. Haksar, Prof. P.N. Dhar and Dr. P.C. Alexander under Indira Gandhi and A.N. Verma under P.V. Narsimha Rao. Another notable aide was Vinod Pandey under V.P. Singh, although he was the Cabinet Secretary and not a secretary in the PMO.<sup>40</sup>

Chandra Shekhar's biography<sup>41</sup> refers to the prominent position that Yashwant Sinha, Finance Minister as well as the Leader of the House, Rajya Sabha enjoyed. It appears that an Inner Cabinet is more pronounced in the governments marked by stability as is evident during Narsimha Rao, Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh governments. Rao relied more on his selected team of bureaucrats than politician. Rao's biographer Sitapati writes in this context,

Now that he was finally at the top of the ladder, Narsimha Rao realized that he needed a team of his own. His economic line has been assembled in the first months of his premiership...By March 1992, his political team was taking shape. Principal Secretary Amar Nath Verma

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the writings of Brecher and Pai Panindiker and Mehra. See Sir Ivor Jennings. (1959). *Cabinet Government*. London: Cambridge University Press; Michael Brecher. (1998). *Nehru: A Political Biography*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press; V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers.

<sup>40</sup> H.Y. Sharada Prasad (December 18, 1995). The Prime Minister: Primus Inter Peres, *Frontline*, 12 (26), Special Issue, p. 58

<sup>41</sup> Harivansh and Ravi Dutt Bajpai. (2019). *Chandra Shekhar: The Last Icon of Ideological Politics*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications..



and Cabinet Secretary Naresh Chandra were as central to Rao's politics as they were to his economics.<sup>42</sup>

As mentioned previously, the central role of A.N. Verma in Rao's government has also been endorsed by H Y Sharda Prasad. Apart from Verma and Chandra, Rao's close confidante also included PVRK Prasad and Ramu Damodaran. Taken together the four could be perceived as constituting an inner circle in the Rao's government. The practice of Inner Cabinet became more prominent during the Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh governments. This was endorsed by the respondents who served in the Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh governments. Though the opinions were divided yet majority of the respondents stated that an informal institutionalization of an Inner Cabinet was present. However, T.R. Baalu from the DMK who served both the NDA and UPA governments and C.P. Thakur from the BJP, does not agree to the existence of an Inner Cabinet (Personal Communication, dated 25.12.18 and 25.12.18 respectively). T.R. Baalu says, 'I had not come across such experiences as a Minister in the Cabinet of these two eminent leaders' (Personal Communication, dated 30.01.19). Nevertheless, he justifies that there is no harm in the presence of a probable Inner Cabinet,

It is the prerogative of the Prime Minister to have informal consultations with various persons whom he or she considers knowledgeable on the specific issues from time to time. Such persons could be not only Ministers or individuals outside the Government also. Over the time it may give the look of an informal mechanism. This is after all a consultative process adopted by any one at the helm of affairs. This may be termed as 'Inner Cabinet', 'kitchen Cabinet' so on and so forth. As long as a Prime Minister needs this sort of informal consultative process for him to be confident and satisfied on his decision, there cannot be a dispute about it.

C.P. Thakur argues that notwithstanding the influential role played by Advani in the Cabinet, Vajpayee Cabinet did not witness any informal institution akin to an Inner Cabinet. The Cabinet gave complete autonomy to ministers and accessibility to the

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<sup>42</sup> Vinay Sitapati. (2016). *Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin, p. . 188

Prime Minister was never an issue and an Inner Cabinet did not exist (Personal Communication, dated 25.12.18).

Though Raghuwansh Prasad Singh expresses his reservations about existence of any Inner Cabinet yet states that certain ministers like Pranab Mukherjee, Sharad Pawar, Laloo Prasad Yadav and Ram Vilas Paswan played a prominent role in Manmohan Singh Cabinet (Personal Communication, dated 27.12.18). Strong views on the presence of the Inner Cabinet were offered by Mani Shankar Aiyer, Yashwant Sinha, Sanjay Paswan, Jairam Ramesh, and Arif Mohammed Khan. They endorse the existence of an informal Inner Cabinet that used to be consulted and played an influential role, though, it had no formal recognition (Personal Communication dated 12. 11.18, 04.12.18, 02.12.18, 26.12.18 and 17.12.18 respectively)

Yashwant Sinha points out that Vajpayee consulted the allies in constituting his Cabinet and also one party leader who exercised considerable influence in the constitution of Cabinet was L. K. Advani. He points out that Advani remained the most influential minister during Vajpayee government and Vajpayee consulted him on all significant issues apart from Cabinet reshuffle and its constitution. As he says,

Advani was also the second most important minister in the Cabinet who later on he became the deputy Prime Minister. Vajpayee and Advani were people who would consult with each other on important issues. Then, Jaswant Singh was another very important party leader. He was in the Cabinet and they would consult with him. And I would say that there was an informal group of these three which was the ultimate, Inner Cabinet. George Fernandes and I were the members of the Cabinet Committee on Security and George was also the convener of the coordination committee But I wouldn't say he was in the top three. The top three only consisted of Vajpayee, Advani and Jaswant Singh (Personal Communication, dated 04.12.18)

This is corroborated by C.P. Thakur and Sanjay Paswan who endorsed the prominence of Advani in Vajpayee government (Personal Communication, dated 25.12.18 and 02.12.18 respectively). As per Yashwant Sinha's admission, the Prime Minister, L.K. Advani and Jaswant Singh remained the top three and constituted a kind of inner circle (Personal Communication, dated 04.12.18).

The successive Vajpayee governments gave primacy to the Cabinet Committee on Security (henceforth CCS) which included the Prime minister, Minister of Defence, Minister of Finance, Minister of External Affairs and Minister of Home Affairs. This Committee was not constituted during V.P. Singh, Narsimha Rao and Deve Gowda government.<sup>43</sup> Gujral constituted it for the first time during 1990s but it came to play a prominent role once Vajpayee government reconstituted it. It could be argued that the CCS assumed greater role and also used to deliberate on matters that used to be political in nature apart from considering strategic and security issue. Based on the data from the Cabinet Secretariat, it is seen that the successive NDA governments (1998-1999 and 1999-2004) did not constitute the CCPA. All other governments constituted it and as per accounts it played a significant in the exercise of decision making. Vajpayee government did not constitute the CCPA. The CCPA was later on constituted during the successive UPA governments though they also continued the practice of constituting the CCS. Yashwant Sinha says

During that time there was no Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs. Vajpayee felt that the Cabinet Committee on Security served the purpose and there was no need for a separate committee on political affairs. The convener of NDA, George Fernandes was a member of this committee by virtue of being the Defence Minister (Personal Communication, dated 04.12.18).

In this context, it seems more plausible to argue that apart from Vajpayee, L.K. Advani and Jaswant Singh, two more ministers- George Fernandes and Yashwant Sinha- by virtue of being the member of the CCS constituted an informal Inner Cabinet. This reading of an Inner Cabinet seems to be corroborated by the biographies and other accounts which reflect upon certain key decisions made by government during its tenure.<sup>44</sup> Sharad Yadav argues that Vajpayee used to be consultative and consulted certain ministers on specific issues. For instance he used to consult Sharad Yadav whenever the issue about Babri Masjid came up. However, L. K. Advani and

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<sup>43</sup> Based on data from the Cabinet Secretariat

<sup>44</sup> See Yashwant Sinha. (2007). *Confessions of a Swadeshi Reformer: My years as Finance Minister*. Gurgaon: Viking Penguin. Jaswant Singh. (2006). *A Call to Honour: In Service of Emergent India*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications. L.K. Advani. (2008). *My Country. My Life*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications. Kingshuk Nag. (2016). *Atal Bihari Vajpayee: A Man for All Seasons*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications. N.P. Ullekh. (2017). *The Untold Vajpayee: Politician and Paradox*. New Delhi: Penguin Random House.

Brijesh Mishra, the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister wielded considerable influence and power during Vajpayee's tenure (Personal Communication, dated 30.01.19). Mani Shankar Aiyer and Jairam Ramesh are unanimous in recognising the existence of an Inner Cabinet during the UPA government. (Personal Communication, dated 12.11.18 and 26.12.18 respectively). Commenting upon the prominence wielded by Pranab Mukherjee, Mani Shankar Aiyer says,

the finance Minister (Pranab Mukherjee) was always clearly number two and he had it in him that many Cabinet meetings I have characterized it as personal-private conversations, just a discussion between the finance minister and the Prime Minister and the rest of us are just onlookers. (Personal Communication dated 12. 11.18)

Jairam Ramesh comments more elaborately on the existence of an Inner Cabinet during Manmohan Singh government and concurs with Mani Shakar Aiyer on the prominence enjoyed by Pranab Mukherjee. In his view this Inner Cabinet comprised of P. Chidambaram, Pranab Mukherjee, A.K. Antony and Sharad Pawar apart from the Prime Minister. Essentially the CCS played a prominent role and constituted an informal Inner Cabinet which also included Sharad Pawar. Sharad Pawar was not a member of CCS but he was a member of the CCPA. In his own words 'There was an informal Inner Cabinet and not a formal one. That was Mr. Antony, Mr. Mukherjee, Mr. Chidambaram, Prime Minister and Mr Sharad Pawar.' (Personal Communication, dated 26.12.18)

#### **IV. Methods and Modes of Ensuring Consensus in Decision Making Amid Divisions or Dissensions in the Cabinet.**

As already seen Chapter-IV, division within the Cabinet had been significant, during the period under consideration. Despite the political stability since 1999 and the formation of two successive stable minority coalition governments, significant divisions continued to characterize the functioning of Cabinet. The division in the Cabinet remains a reflection of the challenges in managing a diverse coalition. Significantly, though the period from 1989 to 1999 witnessed moments of instability with allies pulling out of the government yet during this period certain mechanisms of coordination were created which not only contributed to the durability and strength of successive governments since 1999, but also ensured consensus in the Cabinet.

The two most significant mechanisms to ensure consensus among allies during this period were: the Coordination Committees and the GoM. While the former was a kind of an informal mechanism that came to be extensively used since 1996 for forging consensus among allies on contested political issues, the latter was a formal instrument of inter-ministerial coordination which successive Prime Ministers started using from this period to ensure consensus and for the smooth conduct of Cabinet meetings. The coordination committees did not carry any formal sanction and functioned mostly to ensure the durability of coalition and floor coordination among allies in the Parliament. The major objective of the coordination committees was to oversee the implementation of the Common Minimum Programme (henceforth CMP) and ensure consultation and consensus among parties that either participated in the government or supported it from outside.<sup>45</sup> The coordination committees were external to the Cabinet and could ensure consensus over policy measures of the government among allies. The consensus over CMP leading to the formation of coordination committees and subsequent informal consultation among parties, at various levels, are procedures that were essentially external to the Cabinet but had a profound impact in ensuring coordination among diverse allies. Therefore, these became instrumental in forging consensus which in turn contributed to the smooth conduct of the Cabinet business.

The GoM were constituted by the successive Prime Ministers from P.V. Narsimha Rao onwards with a dual purpose in mind: first, to ensure consensus in the Cabinet meeting, and second, maintenance of inter-ministerial coordination. Previously, V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar had also constituted a few GOMs. Unlike the Coordination Committees, the GoMs were internal to the Cabinet and successive Prime Ministers relied upon these to ensure coordination and consensus. It is worth mentioning that while institutionalized bodies like Cabinet Committees<sup>46</sup> have been an essential practice of Cabinet system since Nehru's time, the GoMs were a

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<sup>45</sup>The Group of Ministers and the Cabinet Committees are formal institutions primarily meant for inter ministerial coordination and informal discussion among Cabinet colleagues. The Cabinet Committees are in the nature of standing committees and once constituted it continues till the dissolution of the Cabinet. The Group of Ministers (GoMs) emerged in 1990s and are issue specific. The recommendations of both the GoMs and Cabinet Committees are placed before the Cabinet for its consideration.

<sup>46</sup> Sir Ivor Jennings. (1959). *Cabinet Government*. London: Cambridge University Press; Miles Taylor (Ed.). (2001). *The English Constitution: Walter Bagehot*. New York: Oxford University Press; John P. Mackintosh. (1968). *The British Cabinet (Second Edition)*. London: Methuen and Company.

innovation that emerged only during the period under consideration. An understanding of the modes and methods of ensuring consensus in a Cabinet necessitates an exploration into both the external as well as internal dimension.

### **A. Coordination Committees and Common Minimum Program**

As seen from Chapter-IV, since 1989, most of the allies in successive governments were regional players which had minimum ideological proximity with each other and therefore this posed a significant challenge before governments. In the absence of an ideological unanimity among the allies, programmatic consensus became instrumental in forging consensus. Parties with diverse political inclinations on questions of economic reforms, secularism and nature and direction of foreign policy forged alliance on the basis of prior agreement over CMP during this period. The alliances were based on programmatic rather than ideological consensus. However, despite being based on CMP division in the Cabinets over certain issues like economic reform or Babri Masjid became quite common to the successive coalition governments (Chapter-IV). Governments had to struggle to ensure consensus among allies on the minimum programmes acceptable to all parties, either participating in the government or supporting it from the outside. At moments, the disagreements among allies and government also led to certain resignations from allies and consequent withdrawal of support. However, during the Thirteenth and the Fourteenth Lok Sabha, such resignations and withdrawal did not impact the stability of the government in any profound manner.

As already mentioned, agreements over the CMP provided cohesion to the coalition governments. Coalitions, whether pre-poll or post-poll, were tied to the agenda of governance and this was corroborated from the accounts of the respondents who agreed that governance program transcended ideological barriers and therefore it was possible to stitch a parliamentary majority, even among parties which had with diverse political inclinations. The alliance could materialize and complete its term despite the ideologies of respective parties as ideologies were no longer at the centre of government formation. As Aiyer notes,

This is happening all over the world...As a result of the end of cold war in many of the democracies most of which are in western world. Sharp ideological differences are getting increasingly dissolved. They

also do not appeal to the electorate which more and more goes into a centrist position. Therefore centre left and centre right rather than left versus right. So this is also happening in India. I think it's inevitable in a country of so many diversities that we do not insist on only one set of values and thoughts govern all actions. There should be some anchoring in fundamental position but subject to those anchors not being removed, a fair level of flexibility in the actual evolution of policies and their implementation. (Personal Communication dated 12.11.18)

The regional forces which willed together to form a national government strove hard to retain its regional character. A dominant view that emerged from the respondents was regarding the decline of ideology in politics as a general phenomenon. Raghuwansh Prasad Singh argues that the question on the relevance of ideology is irrelevant as ideology hardly exists, as 'parties seem to be more interested in gaining power than strengthening the CMP. Parties should rather be strengthening the CMP, they should follow and implement it' (Personal Communication, dated 27.12.18). Yashwant Sinha too agrees about the general decline of ideology in politics as he says, 'There has been general decline in the ideological moorings of society. Therefore ideology hardly matters in politics. There has been an ideological decline in politics over the years not necessarily because of coalition politics' (Personal Communication, dated 04.12.18).

Though the formation of successive coalition governments in post-1999 period was not contingent upon ideology, instead flexibility characterized the formation of successive governments. Yet parties continued to be sensitive to certain core principles that form the ideological basis of their respective political parties. As Sanjay Paswan notes, the resilience of BJP and the decline of communist politics is a reflection that ideology still plays a big role. In fact, he provides a nuanced argument that though the formation of coalition governments are independent of political ideology, as alliances are not ideological, yet the relevance of political ideologies is not questioned as the basis of alliance formation remains the CMP and governance. In his words,

Alliance is not ideological. It's about governance. It is based on national common minimum programme. There should be flexibility in politics. Alliance among parties that remain poles apart happen only for the sake of governance. It's the governance alliance. Its not a political alliance but a governance alliance. There is an acceptance of Common Minimum Program and it does not mean that any particular ideology is compromised. (Personal Communication, dated 02.12.18)

Jairam Ramesh argues that the CMP has gained salience as questions over the relevance of ideology have been posed. However, the core has remained remained the same. Indian politics, in contemporary times, has two poles-the Congress and the BJP- and the regional parties seek to be with the party at the centre. Though the states have become more powerful in last 25 years yet the centre still carries authority (Personal Communication, dated 26.12.18). While reflecting on the relevance of ideology in bringing together different parties T. R. Baalu introduces the distinction between pre-poll and poll-poll alliances. He says,

the loss of relevance of ideologies in coalition politics is somewhat right particularly when a post poll coalition is cobbled up to grab power. By and large, pre-poll alliances woven by like-minded parties sharing strong social concerns such as secularism, etc have been stable and hence the need for compromising the individual party's political ideologies has been few and far between. For instance UPA (United Progressive Alliance) in which DMK played vital and active role, because since 2004 the single issue on which the major alliances were formed at national level is to protect the secular fabric of the country which has been at peril. Many a time, situations warranted that parties which are poles apart in terms of political and / or economic policies need to join hands for the sake of forming the coalition otherwise there will be a vacuum. In such scenarios, parties have come together on the basis of a common stand. That was how DMK had joined the National Democratic Alliance in 1999 which formed the Government under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. In fact this was a pre-poll coalition with a Common Minimum Programme that was acceptable to all the alliance partners. Here also, when DMK felt that there were covert



efforts to undermine the commitment under CMP from the leading party, it did walk out of the coalition. In fact myself and another member in the Cabinet A.Raja, resigned from Ministry. So, as far as DMK is concerned, whether pre-poll or post-poll tie-up, we join the alliance on the assurance that our core ideologies are not at stake (Personal Communication, dated 30.01.19).

Respondents invariably accepted that the cushioning mechanism of coordination committees lend space for deliberation and ensured participation of smaller parties in policy making and taking significant political decisions. Raghuwansh Prasad Singh argues that Manmohan Singh government could come up with significant policy interventions like the RTI, MNREGA, Loan Waiver and Food Security owing to its commitment to the National CMP. There used to be a consistent monitoring of the implementation of the NCMP and meetings between the allies, the Left parties and concerned ministers ensured smooth coordination and resolution of differences (Personal Communication, dated 27.12.18).

Therefore, it can be surmised that the emergence of the coordination committees were a corollary to the forging of unanimity among allies over the CMP. The first experiment on the setting up of a coordination mechanism was in 1989 when V.P. Singh government held weekly dinner meetings for the Left parties' and the BJP leaderships to ensure consultation on policy issues and key political decisions.<sup>47</sup> Though, the weekly dinner meetings were not a purely Coordination Committee this became the semi-institutionalized coordination mechanism. It reflected on the need to ensure consensus among parties with varied ideological persuasion. As already described in Chapter-IV, the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) of the Janata Dal and CCPA of V. P. Singh government were used quite extensively for consultation and deliberation. Subsequently, during the Deve Gowda government, the role of Steering Committee became quite prominent and it was the first experiment in the setting up of a formal coordination mechanism. The NDA government also established a Coordination Committee with George Fernandes as its Chairman as a follow up to the consensus over the National Agenda for Governance. A Coordination Committee of the UPA consisting of members from all parties in the coalition and few members

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<sup>47</sup> See Chapter-IV of the study.

from the Congress was set up to formulate a CMP during Manmohan Singh government. Moreover, the UPA- Left Coordination Committee was constituted to oversee the implementation of the CMP. Additionally, the National Advisory Council was also geared towards the same end.<sup>48</sup>

## B. Group of Ministers

The emergence of the institution of GoM has significantly contributed to inter-ministerial coordination as well as enabled resolution of differences over policy issues among ministers. While the short lived coalition governments led by V.P. Singh, Deve Gowda and I.K.Gujral constituted very few GoMs ranging between 2 to 4, their number surged from 1998 onwards, with the formation of Vajpayee- II government.

**Table 5.3: No. of GoMs constituted during the tenure of Different Prime Ministers from 1989 to 2009**

Government	No of Group of Ministers
V.P. Singh	2
Chandra Shekhar	2
P.V. Narsimha Rao	14
H.D. Deve Gowda	1
I.K. Gujaral	4
A.B. Vajpayee- II	22
A.B. Vajpayee -III	46
Manmohan Singh	41
Total	132

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on *CPIO and Under Secretary on 28th March as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 1st March 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50163 (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> November as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2018] Dated 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Registered No. F-12015/301/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> January as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 4<sup>th</sup> January 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50009 and No. F-12015/310/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information.

As can be seen from Table 5.3, the Vajpayee II government constituted 22 GoMs, Vajpayee III government had 46 GoMs and Manmohan Singh government 41 GoMs. Single party government led by Rao constituted 14 GoMs. A look into the composition of the GoMs reveals that it categorically pertained to specific subjects and its major objective remained inter-ministerial coordination. Their emergence is a pointer to the rising complexity in the domain of governance that not only complicates the task of maintaining consensus but it also necessitates coordination at many levels. Sanjay Paswan views GoMs as informal structures that are conducive to inter-ministerial coordination. He holds that GoMs have become indispensable owing

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/nation/story/20040816-govt-sets-up-coordination-panel-left-takes-art-of-political-arm-twisting-to-new-heights-789513-2004-08-16>

to the complexity arising in the governance of country. In his words, ‘apart from formal structures of Cabinet, informal meetings and coordination is required. This is facilitated by the GoMs’ (Personal Communication, dated 02.12.18)

It is important to note that as the GoMs are constituted by for a specific issue, the ministers concerned with the issues are made members of respective GoMs by the Prime Minister. The reports of the GoMs are put before the Cabinet for consideration. Commenting on the nature and significant of GoMs, T.R. Baalu says that these are,

a similar arrangement like Cabinet Committees. The difference is that the various Committees of Cabinet exist on a permanent basis and issues under their realm, whenever they crop up, are brought up for consideration, whereas Group of Ministers (GOM) is issue-specific and they are considered as and when needed. The Members are determined keeping in view the nature and complexity of the issue. Thus GOM is an issue-centric one time process. Again, GOMs recommendations need the approval of Cabinet (Personal Communication, dated 30.01.19)

While the members generally belong to the rank of Cabinet ministers, on many occasions these may also include the Deputy Chairperson, Planning Commission, ministers of state where the terms of reference of the GoM concerns their ministries. . In certain cases, chief ministers of states and Lieutenant Governor/Governor may be a special invitee to a GoM.<sup>49</sup>

The Prime Minister is rarely a member of GoMs. There are only three instances when Prime Ministers were included as a member of GoM. Vajpayee was a member of the GoM constituted on the subject of commemoration of the 50 years of India’s independence during his second term.<sup>50</sup>

GoMs have been instrumental in the resolution of differences on policy issues. A significant number of GoMs have been constituted on the subjects that relate to matters which emerged as a consequence of the unleashing of economic reforms since

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<sup>49</sup> See Appendix

<sup>50</sup> The other two instances when the PM was a part of GoMs was when I.K. Gujral as PM was present in GOM on 5<sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission and GOM on Report on Processing of the 5<sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission.

1991.<sup>51</sup> As discussed in Chapter-IV, matters related to economic reforms led to major differences among parties and colleagues in different Cabinets since 1990s. Vajpayee had constituted a GoM on Disinvestment which has been an issue of deep contestation among allies and the opposition.

Respondents interviewed opined that GoMs have contributed significantly in ensuring consensus over contentious questions. GoMs, in their view, has primarily to do with resolving differences and seeking inter-ministerial coordination. However, the issue of representation or the accommodation of allies does not seem to be a dominant concern in the constitution of GoMs. This is evident from the data as well as the interviews.

**Table 5.4: No of GoMs which included allies and party-wise representation during Vajpayee-II government, Twelfth Lok Sabha**

Vajpayee-II (22)	Samata Party	SAD	AIADMK	Shivsena	TRC	Lok Shakti	PMK
	13	3	9	5	1	1	1

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on *CPIO and Under Secretary on 28th March as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 1st March 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50163 (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> November as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2018] Dated 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Registered No. F-12015/301/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> January as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 4<sup>th</sup> January 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50009 and No. F-12015/310/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information.

Figures in bracket indicate total number of GoMs constituted  
Based on initial composition of the respective GoMs.

**Table 5.5: No of GoMs which included allies and party-wise representation during Vajpayee-III government, Thirteenth Lok Sabha**

Vajpayee-III (46)	Samata Party	JD(U)	DMK	SAD	BJD	Shivsena	PMK	MDMK	RLD	AITC
	16	11	17	4	1	15	3	1	5	6

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on *CPIO and Under Secretary on 28th March as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 1st March 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50163 (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> November as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2018] Dated 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Registered No. F-12015/301/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> January as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 4<sup>th</sup> January 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50009 and No. F-12015/310/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information.

Based on initial composition of the respective GoMs.  
Figures in bracket indicate total number of GoMs constituted.

<sup>51</sup> See Appendix for constitution and composition of GoMs

**Table 5.6: No of GoMs which included allies and party-wise representation during Manmohan Singh government, Fourteenth Lok Sabha**

Manmohan Singh (41)	NCP	DMK	PMK	LJP	RJD	TRS
	18	15	5	9	12	1

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on *CPIO and Under Secretary on 28th March as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 1st March 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50163 (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> November as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2018] Dated 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Registered No. F-12015/301/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> January as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 4<sup>th</sup> January 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50009 and No. F-12015/310/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information.

Based on initial composition of the respective GoMs.

Figures in bracket indicate total number of GoMs constituted.

Though ministers from allied parties are made members of significant number of GoMs and are also part of important GoMs (as can be seen through Tables 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6), this is only accidental to the portfolios that the concerned ministers hold. The GoMs are an informal platform for the ministers to deliberate and such informal consultations have a more pronounced impact in reaching a consensus over contested subjects. Raghuwansh Prasad Singh categorically points out that the GoMs were constituted on the approval of Prime Minister on specific issues. Invariably, the GoMs were also constituted in case differences cropped up over an issue in the Cabinet meetings. In fact, Manmohan Singh remained 'quite prompt in constituting GoMs' (Personal Communication, dated 27.12.18). Yashwant Sinha de-links the constitution of GoMs from the compulsion of coalition politics (Personal Communication, dated 04.12.18). Jairam Ramesh also agrees, 'GoMs were only about inter ministerial coordination and it was not about accommodating allies in the process of decision making' (Personal Communication, dated 26.12.18).

## **V. Cabinet Committees, Group of Ministers and the Prime Ministerial Leadership**

Existing literature on Cabinet Committees discusses its salience in lending more leverage to the Prime Ministers to strengthen his position vis-à-vis other ministers, eventually marginalizing the Parliament in ensuring effective control over the Cabinet.<sup>52</sup> Based on his assessment of the use of Cabinet Committees by Canadian

<sup>52</sup> Simon James. (1995). Relations between Prime Minister and Cabinet: From Wilson to Thatcher. In R.A.W. Rhodes and Patrick Dunleavy (Eds.). (1995). *Prime Ministers. Cabinet and Core Executive*, (pp. 63-86). Hampshire: Macmillan Publishers. R.H.S. Crossman (1985). Prime Ministerial

Prime Ministers (2003-2019), William le argues that these committees have been ‘the strategic instruments of prime ministerial leadership’.<sup>53</sup> He claims that if the Cabinet Committees are utilized effectively, they can be significant instruments for the maintenance of prime ministerial power. While their utility in conflict management and coordination is obvious<sup>54</sup>, Cabinet Committee systems are also significant because these ‘partly reflect Prime Minister’s personal and political goals and their leadership style and preferences.’<sup>55</sup>

The Cabinet Committees form part of essential Cabinet procedure and are formed proviso to Article 77 of Indian Constitution.<sup>56</sup>

Cabinet Committee is a well established procedure in parliamentary system across the globe. Since the times of Nehru, the Cabinet Committees have played a vital role in decision making.<sup>57</sup> Hardgrave in his study of Indian Politics from Nehru .to the Shatri period has argued that only major issues were brought before the Cabinet for consideration. The ministries and department were quite prominently active in resolving issues at their end, and the work of the Cabinet was mostly handled by the Cabinet Committees.<sup>58</sup> The numerical strength of the Cabinet Committee has varied significantly across times. As per Chanda’s study, a disproportionately large number of committee was chaired by Nehru, followed by the Home minister. While Nehru led seven out of ten committees, the Home Minister led two Cabinet Committees and was a part of nine committees. The Minister of External Affairs and the Minister of

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Government. Anthony King (Ed.) (1985). *The British Prime Minister*, (pp.175-194). Hampshire: Macmillan Publishers.

<sup>53</sup> Kenny William le. (2019). Cabinet Committees as strategies of prime ministerial leadership in Canada, 2003–2019. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 47(4), p.467

<sup>54</sup> Ibid p. 469

<sup>55</sup> Ibid p. 471

<sup>56</sup> Pai Panindik and mehra poit out the Constitutional Basis of the Cabinet Committees in India. The Cabinet Committees are formed proviso to Article 77(3) of the Constitution. Accordingly, the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules framed proviso to Article 77 forms the basis on which the constitution of Cabinet Committees are based in India. See V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p.92-93.

Article 77 (3) provides that ‘The President shall make rules for the more convenient transaction of the business of the Government of India, and for the allocation among Ministers of the said business’. See P.M. Bakshi. (2006). *The Constitution of India (Seventh Edition)*. Delhi: Universal Law Publishing Co., p.89.

<sup>57</sup> Write in brief about the structure and function of Cabinet Committees. Refer V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers,p.92-93 two types of Cabinet Committee- the standing committee and adhoc committee. The thesis deals only with the standing committee p. 95 Ashok Chanda (1958). *Administration in India*. London: Allen and Unwin.

<sup>58</sup> Robert L. Hardgrave. (1970). *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation*. New York: Harcourt. Brace and World,p.62

Finance were part of seven committees each.<sup>59</sup> By scrutinising the composition of committees, Chanda comes to the conclusion that the composition of committees is a testimony to the fact that three to four exceptional personalities were quite influential in shaping policies. The appointments to these all committees were made by Prime Minister based on political considerations.<sup>60</sup> Pai Panadiker and Mehta argue that the existence and utility of Cabinet Committees is contingent upon the desirability of the Prime Minister who decides about seeking help from such committees in policy making.<sup>61</sup>

The relevance of Cabinet Committees increased owing to the increased complexity in governance that requires a deeper inter-ministerial coordination and consultation at many levels. The period from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha witnessed the resilience of Cabinet Committees.

**Table 5.7: Cabinet Committees formed during different governments and no. of members therein, from Ninth Lok Sabha- Fourteenth Lok Sabha**

Sl. No.	Name of Cabinet committees	No of members in Cabinet Committees							
		VPS	CS	PVNR	HDG	IKG	ABV-2	ABV-3	MS
1	President's Address	6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2	Economic Affairs	7	7	6	5	6	9	12	11
3	Prices	6	5	7	6	5	7	9	8
4	Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
5	RTI	5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
6	Right to Work	6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
7	Panchayati Raj	6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
8	Political Affairs	7	5	7	7	NA	NA	NA	9
9	Parliamentary Affairs	5	5	5	13	10	9	11	8
10	Consider Report on Centre State Relations	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
11	15 Point Program for Minority Welfare	7	7	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
12	Sub Committee on Economic Affairs	7	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
13	Appointments	2 (+1)*	2 (+1)*	2 (+)*	1(+)*	2 (+)*	2 (+)*	2 (+)*	2 (+)*
14	Consider Recommendation of Second Backward Class Commission	6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
15	Accommodation	5	3	4	5	5	5	3	6
16	Export Strategy and Performance	7	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
17	Trade and Investment	7	6	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
18	Sub Committee on Drug Abuse Control	6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
19	Sub Committee to deal with Problems of Indian National in the Gulf	5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
20	Organize Mass Education Efforts Regarding the Gulf Crisis	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
21	Expenditure	NA	6	7	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

<sup>59</sup> Ashok Chanda (1958). *Administration in India*. London: Allen and Unwin. p.95

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p.95.

<sup>61</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 103.

Sl. No.	Name of Cabinet committees	No of members in Cabinet Committees							
		VPS	CS	PVNR	HDG	IKG	ABV-2	ABV-3	MS
22	Natural Calamities	NA	NA	11	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
23	Minority Welfare	NA	NA	6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
24	Infrastructure	NA	NA	10	6	7	10	NA	NA
25	Foreign Investment	NA	NA	4	3(+1)*	3(+1)*	3(+1)*	NA	NA
26	Science & Technology	NA	NA	8	9	9	7	7	NA
27	Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe	NA	NA	NA	8	8	NA	NA	NA
28	Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of India's Independence	NA	NA	NA	NA	5	6	5	NA
29	Security	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	4	5	5
30	Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Minorities	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	10	9	NA
31	Foreign Trade	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	8	NA	NA
32	Disinvestment	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	5	7	NA
33	WTO Matters	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	9	10
34	Information Technology	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	NA
35	Environment	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	12	NA
36	Economic Reforms	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	8	NA
37	Drought Management	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	8
38	Management of Natural Resources	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	8
39	Tribal Affairs	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	7

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on *CPIO and Under Secretary on 28th March as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 1st March 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50163 (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> November as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2018] Dated 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Registered No. F-12015/301/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> January as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 4<sup>th</sup> January 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50009 and No. F-12015/310/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information.

Based on initial composition of the respective Cabinet Committees.

As can be seen from Table 5.7, in all, 39 different Cabinet Committees were constituted with the approval of successive Prime Ministers. Their number and strength varied not only during the tenure of different Prime Ministers but also within the tenure of same Prime Ministers. While many new Cabinet Committees were constituted by successive Prime Ministers, some existing Cabinet Committees were discontinued. The constitution and composition of Cabinet Committees follow the leadership style, preferences and policy objectives of the concerned Prime Ministers. The only constant is Cabinet Committee on Appointment which consists of two members, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Home Affairs.

While V.P. Singh constituted 20 Cabinet Committees including the Cabinet sub committees, Vajpayee-2 and Vajpayee-3 governments had are 13 and 14 committees respectively and Manmohan Singh constituted 11 committees As seen from the table above only few Cabinet Committees were common to all the governments, during the period under consideration. Only five Cabinet Committees namely, Cabinet



Committee on Economic Affairs, Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, Cabinet Committee on Prices, Cabinet Committee on Appointments and the Cabinet Committee on Accommodation were common to all the governments. It needs to be underlined that the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs and Cabinet Committee on Prices are quite significant. While the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs is led by the Prime Minister, the Cabinet Committee on Prices is either led by the Prime Minister or Minister of Finance. The Cabinet Committee on Appointments is considerably influential and includes Prime Minister, Home Minister and ministers from concerned ministry/department. The CCS has been constituted in all governments since 1998 and enjoys a definite clout in policy making. The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs was also led by a senior minister during successive governments. The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs generally had leaders from allies and was instrumental in floor coordination. This committee remained one of the largest committees in terms of strength and the involvement of allies in it considerably enhanced its status.

Barring the exceptions of Gujral government and the two governments led by Vajpayee, all governments had constituted Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (henceforth CCPA) which was led by Prime Ministers during respective governments. As it is led by the Prime Minister, it is significant for resolution of differences and accommodation of concerns of allies during the period of all minority governments. Pai Panandiker and Mehra discuss the prominent role enjoyed by the CCPA since the time of Indira Gandhi. In the words of Mehra and Panandiker, 'the CCPA has remained the most crucial committee of the Cabinet ever since under subsequent Prime Ministers right upto 1990.'<sup>62</sup> As discussed in Chapter-IV, the CCPA was quite significant during V.P. Singh government and Narsimha Rao government. Mathur and Bjorkman argue that the Congress Parliamentary Board was a significant forum for feedback and political assessment during Indira Gandhi's and Rajiv Gandhi's tenure.<sup>63</sup> However, as Rao did not constitute it, he relied primarily upon the CCPA. The Gujral government discontinued the practice of constituting the CCPA and the successive Vajpayee governments did not constitute it either.

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<sup>62</sup> V.A. Pai Panandiker and Ajay K. Mehra. (1996). *The Indian Cabinet: A Study in Governance*. New Delhi: Konark Publishers, p. 101.

<sup>63</sup> Kuldeep Mathur and James Warner Bjorkman. (2009). *Policy Making in India: Who Speaks? Who Listens?* New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, p. 59.

Chapter IV has already shown that V.P. Singh and P.V. Narsimha Rao used it as an effective mechanism of coordination and ensuring consensus. The return of the CCPA with the formation of Manmohan Singh government in 2004 is indicative of its resilience. Commenting upon the reason for not constituting the CCPA during the successive Vajpayee governments, Yashwant Sinha says,

During that time there was no Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs. Vajpayee felt that the Cabinet Committee on Security served the purpose and there was no need for a separate committee on political affairs. The Convener of NDA, George Fernandes was a member of the Committee by virtue of being the defence minister. (Personal Communication, dated 04.12.18)

**Table 5.8: No. of Cabinet Committees which includes at least any one among the Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, Minister of External Affairs, Minister of Finance, Minister of Defence and the Deputy Chairperson Planning Commission, during different governments, from Ninth Lok Sabha- Fourteenth Lok Sabha**

PM	Total No of CCs	No of CCs with PM	No of CCs with MEA	No of CCs with HM	No of CCs with FM	No of CCs with DM	No of CCs with DC, PC
V.P. Singh#	20	7	9	8	14	PM in-charge of DM	9
Chandrashekhar##	9	6	3	PM in-charge of HM	8	PM in-charge of DM	0
P.V. Narsimha Rao	13	9	1	4	9	3	3
H D Deve Gowda	10	7	2	2	6	2	3
I KGujaral	11	7	PM in-charge of MEA	5	8	3	5
A B Vajpayee- II	13	9	PM in-charge of MEA	4	10	3	6
A B Vajpayee III	14	11	2	7	9	3	7
Manmohan Singh	11	8	2	5	7	5	6

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on *CPIO and Under Secretary on 28th March as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 1st March 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50163 (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22nd November as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2018] Dated 16th October 2018 Registered No. F-12015/301/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22nd January as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 4th January 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50009 and No. F-12015/310/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information.

# The Deputy Prime Minister was member of five Cabinet Committees during V.P. Singh government.

## The Deputy Prime Minister was member of six Cabinet Committees during Chandra Shekhar government. The table includes permanent invitees and special invitees in Cabinet Committees. In many Cabinet Committees during different Cabinets, Deputy Chairperson, Planning Commission was either a Permanent Invitee or Special Invitee.

Based on initial composition of the respective Cabinet Committees.

**Table 5.9: Total No. of Cabinet Committees, and the number of Cabinet Committees led either by the Prime Minister or any one among the Minister of External Affairs, Minister of Home Affairs, Minister of Defence, Minister of Finance and any other minister during different governments, from Ninth Lok Sabha- Fourteenth Lok Sabha**

PM	Total No of CCs	CCs led by PM	CCs led by MEA	CCs led by HM	CCs led by FM	CCs led by DM	CCs led by other ministers
V.P. Singh#	20	7	2	2	5	0	2 +2*
Chandrashekhar#	9	6	1	0	2	0	0
P.V. Narsimha Rao	13	9	0	0	2	0	2
H D Deve Gowda	10`	7	0	1	1	0	1
I KGujaral	11	7	0	1	1	0	2
A B Vajpayee- II	13	9	0	1	1	0	2
A B Vajpayee -III	14	11	0	0	0	0	3
Manmohan Singh	11	8	0	1	0	1	1

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on *CPIO and Under Secretary on 28th March as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 1st March 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50163 (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> November as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2018] Dated 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Registered No. F-12015/301/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> January as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 4<sup>th</sup> January 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50009 and No. F-12015/310/2018-RTI(Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information.

\*Deputy Prime Minister led two Cabinet Committees.

Based on initial composition of the Cabinet Committees.

Table 5.8 and Table 5.9 shows that, similar to the preceding periods, the overwhelming presence and leadership of the Prime Minister in the Cabinet Committees is seen in the period from Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha as well. The only exception to this generalization is the V.P. Singh government where the Prime Minister led only seven out of 20 committees. In all the other governments, not less than 65 per cent of the committees were led by the Prime Ministers. Even more significant than the number of Cabinet Committees where the Prime Minister leads, is the nature of Cabinet Committees and the inevitable presence of three core ministers in such committees. The core ministers of Finance, External Affairs and Home Affairs is seen frequently present in most committees. Second to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance has an overwhelming presence in the number of committees. Moreover, the presence of Deputy Chairperson, Planning Commission in different committees during different governments is a recurrent pattern. The above trend of the domination of Prime Minister and core ministers must be placed within the backdrop of the ascendance of the CCS since the time of I.K. Gujral.

The CCS was first constituted during Gujral government and it attained an unmatched salience during the successive Vajpayee governments. The National Security Advisor is an ex-officio member of this committee and the Chief of Army as well as heads of

other various intelligence agencies give briefing to this agency.<sup>64</sup> Mathur and Bjorkman write, ‘during the Vajpayee regime, the CCS acquired a somewhat omnibus character and was often called to deal with matters that were strictly political.’<sup>65</sup> The CCS assumed a greater prominence since late 1990s. In fact, the significance of the CCS was such that Yashwant Sinha, Mani Shankar Aiyer and Jairam Ramesh agree to the assertion that the members of the CCS partly constituted an ‘informal Inner Cabinet’ during the successive governments since 1998 (Personal Communication, dated 04.12.18, 12.11.18 and 26.12.18 respectively). Based on these views, it could be argued an informal Inner Cabinet existed during each government which included the core ministers and a few other senior ministers. However, the centrality of the core ministers in the Cabinet remains intact. Jairam Ramesh adds that during UPA-I government apart from the members of the CCS, Sharad Pawar was quite influential and he was also a part of an Inner Cabinet which primarily included members from the CCS. (Personal Communication, dated 26.12.18)

Apart from the core ministers, a few other ministers also had a significant presence in both the Cabinet Committee as well as GoM. For instance Murli Manohar Joshi, Minister of Human Resource Development during Vajpayee government and Sharad Pawar, Minister of Agriculture during Manmohan Singh government had a visible presence in the Cabinet Committees as well as GoMs. Murli Manohar Joshi, though a prominent leader of the BJP in the party as well as government, and made effort to be in the fold of the CCS<sup>66</sup> was not a part of the Inner Cabinet.

The PM also chaired other important Cabinet Committees that pertained to the agenda of economic reforms like Cabinet Committees on Disinvestment, Cabinet Committees on Foreign Trade, Cabinet Committees on Trade and Investment, Cabinet Committee on Economic Reforms and Cabinet Committee on WTO Matters. Though not all the committees were present in each governments yet almost all the committees that concern economic reforms were invariably chaired by the Prime Minister. As mentioned previously, the issue of economic reforms continued to divide successive governments and therefore it can be asserted that subsequent PMs used

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<sup>64</sup> Kuldeep Mathur and James Warner Bjorkman. (2009). *Policy Making in India: Who Speaks? Who Listens?* New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, p.60

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p.60

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p.59.

these Cabinet Committees, under his chairpersonship to impart direction and generate consensus on the agenda of economic reforms.

The formations of Cabinet Committees also reflect upon the ideological compulsions that moved different governments. As seen from Chapter-IV, Vajpayee government which was more open to idea of economic reforms created the Ministry of Disinvestment and constituted the Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment as well as Cabinet Committee on Economic Reforms; Manmohan Singh government neither had the Ministry of Disinvestment nor did it constitute the Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment and Cabinet Committee on Economic Reforms. However, the GoMs were frequently used by both the Vajpayee government as well as the Manmohan Singh government to coordinate and execute issues pertaining to economic reforms.

The salience of the members of CCS could be seen in their preponderant presence in GoMs constituted during period under consideration. Barring three GoMs, the Prime Ministers have never been their members.

**Table 5.10: No. of GoMs which included at least one among Minister of Home Affairs, Minister of External Affairs, Minister of Finance, Minister of Defence and the Deputy Chairperson Planning Commission during different governments, from Ninth Lok Sabha- Fourteenth Lok Sabha**

Government	Ministers	Portfolios	Member of GoMs
P.V. Narsimha Rao	Pranab Mukerjee	Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission 24.6.1991 to 15.5.1996 Minister of Commerce 17.1.1993 to 10.2.1995 Minister of External Affairs 10.2.1995 to 15.1996	6
	S B Chavan	Minister of Home Affairs	4
	Manmohan Singh	Minister of Finance	5
	Madhav Singh Solanki	Minister of External Affairs 21.6.1991 to 31.3.1992	0
	Dinesh Singh	Minister of External Affairs 17.1.1993 to 10.2.1995	1
	Sharad Pawar^	Minister of Defence 26.6.1991 to 5.3.1993	0
	<b>Total no. of GoMs</b>		
I K Gujral	P Chidambaram	Minister of Finance.	4
	Indrajit Gupta	Minister of Home Affairs	2
	Mulayam Singh Yadav	Minister of Defence	2
	<b>Total GoMs</b>		
A B Vajpayee-2&&	Yashwant Sinha	Minister of Finance	18
	Lal Krishna Advani	Minister of Home Affairs	7
	Jaswant Singh	Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission 25.03.1998 to 4.02.1999 Minister of External Affairs 5.12.1998 onwards	9
	George Fernandes	Minister of Defence	8
	<b>Total no of GoMs</b>		

Government	Ministers	Portfolios	Member of GoMs
A B Vajpayee-3@	Yashwant Sinha	Minister of Finance 13.10.1999 to 1.7.2002 Minister of External Affairs 1.7.2002 to 22.5.2004	26
	Lal Krishna Advani	Minister of Home Affairs 13.10.1999 to 29.6.2002 Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs 29.6.2002 onwards	12
	Jaswant Singh	Minister of External Affairs 13.10.1999 to 1.7.2002 Minister of Finance 1.7.2002 to 22.5.2004	12
	George Fernandes	Minister of Defence	8
	K C Pant	Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission	28
	<b>Total no of GoMs</b>		
Manmohan Singh	Pranab Mukherjee	Minister of Defence 23.5.2004 to 24.10.2006, Minister of External Affairs 24.10.2006 to 22.5.2009	18
	Shivraj Patil	Minister of Home Affairs 23.5.2004 to 30.11.2008	13
	P Chidambaram	Minister of Finance. 23.5.2004 to 30.11.2008 Minister of Home Affairs 30.11.2008 to 22.5.2009	30
	A K Antony	Minister of Defence 24.10.2006 onwards	7
	Montek Singh Ahuwalia	Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission	25
	Total GoMs 41		

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on *CPIO and Under Secretary on 28th March as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 1st March 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50163 (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22nd November as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2018] Dated 16th October 2018 Registered No. F-12015/301/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22nd January as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 4th January 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50009 and No. F-12015/310/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information.

Includes permanent invitees/special invite in different GoMs.

@Composition of one GoM is not provided.

^ As per the records made available, the first GoM during Rao government was constituted on 8.03.1994. Pawar had resigned from the union government on 5.03.1993 to assume the charge of the Chief Minister of Maharashtra in March. Rao had assumed the Charge of Ministry of Defence from 5.3.1993 to 16.5.1996.

&& Vajpayee held the charge of Ministry of External Affairs from 19.3.1998 to 5.12.1998.

Based on initial composition of the respective GoMs.

**Table 5.11: Chairpersons of GoMs during different governments, from Ninth Lok Sabha- Fourteenth Lok Sabha**

Government	Ministers	Portfolios	No. of GoMs led	
P.V. Narsimha Rao	Pranab Mukerjee	Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission 24.6.1991 to 15.5.1996 Minister of Commerce 17.1.1993 to 10.2.1995 Minister of External Affairs 10.2.1995 to 15.1996	5	
	Arjun Singh	Minister of Human Resource Development	3	
	S B Chavan	Minister of Home Affairs	3	
	Manmohan Singh	Minister of Finance	2	
	Balram Jakhar	Minister of Agriculture.	1	
	<b>Total</b>			<b>14</b>

Government	Ministers	Portfolios	No. of GoMs led
I K Gujral	I K Gujral	Prime Minister	1
	P Chidambaram	Minister of Finance.	2
	Murasoli Maran	Minister of Industry	1
	<b>Total</b>		<b>4</b>
A B Vajpayee-2	Yashwant Sinha	Minister of Finance	8
	Lal Krishna Advani	Minister of Home Affairs	7
	Jaswant Singh	Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission 25.03.1998 to 4.02.1999 Minister of External Affairs 5.02.1999 onwards	3 (2 as Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, 1 as Minister of External Affairs)
	K C Pant	Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission	2
	Ram Krishna Hegde	Minister of Commerce	1
	Madan Lala Khurana	Minister of Parliamentary Affairs	1
	<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>
A B Vajpayee-3	A B Vajpayee	Prime Minister	1
	Yashwant Sinha	Minister of Finance 13.10.1999 to 1.7.2002 Minister of External Affairs 1.7.2002 to 22.5.2004	11 (all 11 as Minister of Finance)
	Lal Krishna Advani	Minister of Home Affairs 13.10.1999 to 29.6.2002 Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs 29.6.2002 onwards	11
	Jaswant Singh	Minister of External Affairs 13.10.1999 to 1.7.2002 Minister of Finance 1.7.2002 to 22.5.2004	4(all four as Minister of Finance)
	George Fernandes	Minister of Defence	1
	K C Pant	Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission	13
	Murali Manohar Joshi	Minister of Human Resource Development	2
	Jagmaohan	Minister of Urban Development	1
	Ramvilas Paswan	Minister of Communication	1
	<b>Total</b>		<b>45@</b>
Manmohan Singh	Pranab Mukherjee	Minister of Defence 23.5.2004 to 24.10.2006, Minister of External Affairs 24.10.2006 to 22.5.2009	18 (8 as Minister of Defence 10 as Minister of External Affairs)
	Shivraj Patil	Minister of Home Affairs 23.5.2004 to 30.11.2008	5
	P Chidambaram	Minister of Finance. 23.5.2004 to 30.11.2008 Minister of Home Affairs 30.11.2008 to 22.5.2009	1 (as Minister of Finance)
	A K Antony	Minister of Defence	1
	Sharad Pawar	Minister of Agriculture	6
	Arjun Singh	Minister of Human Resource Development	4
	Sushil Kumar Shinde	Minister of Power	4
	Jaipal Reddy	Minister of Urban Development	1
	Laloo Prasad Yadav	Minister of Railways	1
	<b>Total</b>		<b>41</b>

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on *CPIO and Under Secretary on 28th March as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 1st March 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50163 (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22nd November as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2018] Dated 16th October 2018 Registered No. F-12015/301/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22nd January as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 4th January 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50009 and No. F-12015/310/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information.

Includes permanent invitees/special invite in different GoMs.

@Composition of one GoM is not provided.

Based on initial composition of the respective GoMs.

As seen from Tables 5.10 and 5.11, the core ministers not only were members of a large number of GoMs but were also chairs of a significantly large number of these. In 16 out of 22 GoMs during Vajpayee- II government, 27 out of 45 during Vajpayee- III government and 26 out of 41 GoMs during Manmohan Singh government, at least one of them was a member. While Yashwant Sinha, Minister of Finance during Vajpayee II & III government chaired the largest number of GoMs, Pranab Mukherjee, Minister of Defence during Manmohan Singh government presided over the largest number of GoMs in this period.

In contrast to the formal structure of the Cabinet Committees, the GoM are informal in nature and have been considered as institutional innovations created in the era of federal coalitions by Balveer Arora and K.K. Kailash.<sup>67</sup> Arora and Kailash have argue that the GoMs perform two major tasks. First, they are the device meant for inter-ministerial coordination and second, they function as a federal representation device. They argue that this institutional innovation gave an edge to successive Manmohan Singh governments (UPA 1 and UPA 2) to ensure a minimum control over policy outcomes that may be indispensable for coherent public policy. Further, they argue that this device does not lead to a dilution of the office of the Prime Minister. In their words, ‘contrary to popular perception...decision-making by the GoM does not indicate a dilution of the Prime Ministerial Office. It is a device that makes decision making more responsive rather than making PMO powerless.’<sup>68</sup>

Unlike Cabinet Committees which are a standing feature of any government, the GoMs are basically ad-hoc in nature and focused upon the subject concerned only. Based on the data of GoM constituted during the period of study, two interesting observations can be made.

First, few prominent ministers and ministries have visible presence in significantly large number of GoMs.

Second, though it is expected that the GoMs would include only those ministers whose ministries relate to the subject concerned yet certain ministers with ministries unconnected with the concerned subjects

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<sup>67</sup> Balveer Arora and K.K. Kailash. (2018). Political Innovation in the working of Indian Democracy: A Study of the Group of Ministers Device. In L. Choukroune and P. Bhandari (Eds.) Exploring Indian Modernities (pp. 81-106). Singapore: Springer Nature.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.p.92



have also been members of many GoMs. Such exceptions include Advani and Joshi during the Vajpayee governments, and Mukhejee and Pawar during the Manmohan Singh government. Their inclusion can be understood through their position as senior, influential and prominent leaders, holding significant portfolios.

It is significant to emphasize that Cabinet Committees and GoMs are constituted with the approval of Prime Minister and this gives him considerable leverage in deciding the composition as well as subject matter of GoMs. This has allowed the Prime Ministers to use it as instrument to retain his influence over the functioning of the Cabinet. Though Raghuwash Prasad Singh and Jairam Ramesh have emphasized that GoMs were used by successive Prime Ministers as an instrument of coordination and resolution of differences among ministries (Personal Communication, dated 27.12.18 and 26.12.18 respectively) but the composition of GoMs indicates that these also added to the strength of the Prime Minister in a period marked by minority governments.

In consonance with Arora and Kailash's first thesis which they have applied to successive Manmohan Singh led governments, the present data helps in understanding the nature of Prime ministerial dominance from the period of Vajpayee-II government onwards. The subject as well as composition of GoMs became instrumental in not only maintaining consensus and inter-ministerial coordination but in also giving a definite elevation to the status of Prime Minister among his colleagues. This is apparent through the manner in which most of the GoMs were both led by and included core ministers and certain influential ministers. Though the inclusion of ministers from regional parties in large number of GoMs increased the representational character of the decision making procedure, the authority of the Prime Minister is not checked for three significant reasons.

Firstly, the political stability since 1999 imparted strength to the government and consequently it strengthened the position of Prime Minister. Thus, his prerogative in deciding the subject as well as composition of GoMs remained intact and this leverage to the Prime Ministers in making their leadership more effective.

Secondly, almost all the GoMs had a preponderant presence of the members from the leading party in respective coalitions (BJP, in case of NDA governments and the Congress, in case of UPA governments). Though ministers from allies were dispersed in different GoMs, their membership in individual GoM was very low. Most of the GoMs had six to seven members and members from allies hardly contributed one or two out of the seven. The remaining ones were from the leading party in the coalition.

Thirdly, most of the GoMs were led by the ministers from leading party in the respective coalitions (BJP in case of NDA governments, Congress in case of UPA governments). Those like Sharad Pawar and George Fernandes, though they were from the allies, were part of the Inner Cabinet and therefore were either the chair or member of a considerably large number of GoMs.

**Table 5.12: Influential leaders from Regional Parties in the GoMs, Vajpayee-II to Manmohan Singh government**

Name of the leader	Party	Number of GoMs
Vajpayee-II		
George Fernandes	Samata Party	7
Thambi Durai	AIADMK	5
Suresh Prabhu	Shiv Sena	4
Vajpayee-III		
George Fernandes	Samata Party	9
Murasoli Maran	DMK	15
Manohar Joshi	Shiv Sena	8
Manmohan Singh		
Sharad Pawar	NCP	15
Ram Vilas Paswan	LJP	9
Dayanidhi Maran	DMK	8

Source: Author's own calculation. Based on *CPIO and Under Secretary on 28th March as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 1st March 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50163 (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> November as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2018] Dated 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Registered No. F-12015/301/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information; *CPIO and Under Secretary on 22<sup>nd</sup> January as a reply to RTI Online Request* [2019] Dated 4<sup>th</sup> January 2019 Registered No. CABST/R/2019/50009 and No. F-12015/310/2018-RTI (Filed by Vikas Tripathi), Right to Information.

Only three leaders from three different regional parties taken.

Though the GoMs ensured representation of parties in decision making procedures yet the representation seems to be determined by the preferences and policy objectives of the Prime Ministers. Larger political consensus in the running the affair of government appears to be more pertinent, than the deeper involvement of allies in the

formulation of public policies. The distribution of allies in different GoMs does not follow a systematic pattern and is primarily contingent upon the allocation of portfolios to respective members. Nonetheless, as can be seen from the Table above (Table 5.12) influential leaders from the regional parties had good representation in the GoMs.

The strength of regional parties in Parliament did not seem to be the criterion for being included in the GoMs. The GoMs are significant because they provide an informal platform for close interaction among influential ministries and leaders from allies and thereby remain instrumental in ensuring political consensus in the successive minority governments.

Based on the above discussion, it can also be argued that the collegial character of Cabinet was considerable, during the period. While autobiographical, biographical as well as interview based sources have indicated towards a more deliberative and consensual Cabinet, the data made available from the Cabinet secretariat on the Cabinet Committees and the GoM also shows that a large number of ministers are involved in the policy making via the GoMs. All the respondents were unanimous that the decisions in the Cabinet were based on the principle of unanimity. Since there has not been much evidence of a personalisation and centralisation of power during the period, it can be argued that the role of ministers have remained quite prominent in shaping public policies and making significant political decisions during the tenure of successive prime ministers from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha.

However, the stability and the consequent strengthening of the government in the era of minority governments had marginalized the Parliament from ensuring its effective control over the Cabinet. It is noteworthy that the efficiency of the Parliament has been lowest, as compared to the preceding periods of Majoritarian Parliamentarianism. The emergence of new devices and mechanisms like the GoMs or the Co-ordination Committees have strengthened the executive but parallel innovations in the legislature to spring legislature assertion has not kept pace with the strengthening of executive. As discussed previously, the DRSCs have failed in substantially making the legislature autonomous in terms of influencing and affecting the government.

## CONCLUSION

As mentioned in the introductory segment of the Chapter, it aimed at investigating the legislature-executive relationship, from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha. In this context, by using two data sources, the Chapter argued that in the said period while executive has emerged stronger, concomitant changes in the legislature is not visible. A caveat, however, needs to be inserted here. The Executive remained weak from 1989-1999 which is apparent through formation of successive unstable minority coalition government. It emerged as strong only with the ushering in of political stability, after 1999.

Though the Parliament, as asserted by the respondents retains 'its sheen', yet innovations like Coordination Committees and GoMs have strengthened the executive while no such practices have evolved from within the legislature. In the light of the above, it can be asserted that because of the persistence of coalition politics, the Cabinet and its functioning has undergone transformation. In fact, it is marked by increase in deliberation and participation, effectively making it collegial in nature. The emergence of mechanisms- both external (Common Minimum Program and Coordination Committees) and internal (GoMs)- to the Cabinet has ensured strength to the government.

Unlike the phase of Majoritarian Parliamentaryism when the collegial character of the Cabinet was not prevalent (except the tenures of Nehru and Shastri), in the phase of Transactional Parliamentaryism due to increased space for transaction among political parties, the Cabinet becomes deliberative and participatory. Though the Prime Minister no longer emerges as the 'steer-man' yet his authority has not declined. There is, however, a fundamental transformation in his role- from being a decision maker to a consensus creator. The present chapter, when read in conjunction with Chapter-IV of the study gears the argument that the nature of coalition Cabinets and Prime Ministers in the coalition era is transactional and this in turn reflects on the legislature-executive relationship for the Indian context.

## **CONCLUSION**

There exists an overlapping consensus that, across the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, the parliamentary systems in general have been witness to the strengthening of the executive. India is no exception to the trend, but the strengthening of executive has varied across distinct periods in character and its impact. An understanding of the nature and pattern of the strengthening/ weakening of executive in India can contribute in a profound sense to the existing literature on the changing pattern of relationship between the legislature and executive.

Post-independence, Cabinet government was adopted in India as the Constitution makers overwhelmingly argued that it could best guarantee the unity and integrity of nation, ensure in a true sense the responsibility of executive and represented continuity as it was based on previous political experience it. It was assumed that only a parliamentary system could lead to a harmonious relationship between the legislature and executive, in a new democracy with a nation building aspirations. Such assumptions, in part, also reflect the contentment of the Constitution makers with the working of parliamentary system. The possibility of fragmentation of the party system in future and its impact on legislature executive relationship never dawned upon them. The expectation of the harmonious relationship between the legislature and executive could be fulfilled during the Nehruvian era, despite an overwhelming presence of the Congress party. This was primarily because of the dominance of the Congress party in the Parliament and across the states as well as the consensus on the legacy of India's struggle for independence and the acceptability of leadership of Nehru, that could transcend ideological divide in politics and imparted certain moderation to the legislature executive relationship. The harmony, however, was short lived and even during this period it was evident that the balance remained tilted heavily towards the executive, owing to the preponderant presence of the Congress and the divided and fragmented character of opposition. Nevertheless, the harmony contributed in the strengthening roots of democracy in India.

The phenomenal change in the political complexion of the House as well as change of governments in several Congress ruled states consequent to the constitution of the Fourth Lok Sabha (1967) led to the gradual decline of the harmony and its

replacement with conflict. Further, the split of the Congress party in 1969 disturbed the fine balance that traditionally existed between the parliamentary wing and the organizational wing of the party. This balance could never be restored. Despite this, the Parliament remained most efficient in terms of business transacted till late 1960s, as compared to the subsequent periods. This period, though it was characterized by presence of Prime Ministers with a dominating majority in the House, yet witnessed the Cabinet functioning in a collective and collegial spirit. It can be partly attributed to the leadership style of Nehru, Shastri and Indira Gandhi (first tenure) as well as the presence of several Congress stalwarts in the Cabinet who remained profoundly influential within the Cabinet. Moreover, the character of the Congress party exhibited greater resilience by accommodating the concerns of the opposition. Opposition as an alternative to the Congress hardly developed as the party allowed for the presence of diverse ideological factions within it. . In fact, the opposition remained internal to the Congress and the party broadly practiced internal democracy.

The ascendance of Indira Gandhi since her second tenure (1967) and the split of the party in 1969 marked the moment of centralization and personalization of Indian politics. The subsequent deinstitutionalization of the party became the major factor in marginalizing the party and making the leader ever strong. It resulted in the era of prime ministerial governments. The Cabinet was marginalized while the legislature was suppressed, owing to the plebiscitary character of the successive elections that resulted in the PM wielding an enormous independent political base. The nature of majority that the successive governments carried eventually made the Parliament weak. The Prime Ministerial dominance of the Cabinet and the executive control of the Parliament pertinently describes the period of 1970s and 1980s which also includes the tenure of Rajiv Gandhi. The brief interlude of the Janata Party was an exception to the broad trend that characterized the legislature executive relationship and the functioning of the Union Cabinet during this period.

The fragmentation of the party system and proliferation of political parties considerably transformed the legislature executive relationship. Two distinct periods can be earmarked in this context: the period from 1989-2009 when successive minority governments were formed, whether single party minority government or a coalition minority government. While the period, 1989-99 was witness to marked political instability, with frequent turnover of governments and the constitution of

successive Lok Sabha; the period beyond 1999 had two successive stable governments that could completed its full term. During the former period, the legislature remained fragmented and divided, and the governments were weak and instable (barring the exception of Rao government from 1991 to 1996). The working of the Cabinet also underwent transformation during these two periods, as compared to the previous periods characterized by one party dominance.

During the period of 1989-1999 divided governments and fragmented Parliament resulted in a consistent confrontationist relationship between the legislature and executive. Significant political decisions could be taken and policies be implemented by the executive, owing in part to the legislature immobilization. The period beyond 1999 continued to witness the strengthening of the executive and the balance remained tilted towards it. In the backdrop of the above, the functioning of the Cabinet during the period under consideration represents both continuity as well as change when compared to the preceding periods. First, the essential centrality of the leadership style of the Prime Minister in imparting distinctness to the functioning of Cabinet, in a decisive manner, is still the norm. Secondly, political clout and independent political base enjoyed by the Prime Minister matters is significant in determining the pattern of relationship between the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues.

Despite these fundamental continuities, the functioning of the Cabinet has undergone deep changes. The proliferation of political parties brought in political heterogeneity to the character of Cabinet and contributed in making the Cabinet more representative, as it started to accommodate members from the regional and state based parties, in a profound manner. It must, however, be noted that the ministers from allies, in particular, do not owe their position in the Cabinet to the PM but to their respective parties. In turn, this fundamentally transforms the status and the position that the Prime Minister enjoys. Moreover, it creates the problem of consensus management and ministerial coordination. The present study suggests that the status and position of the Prime Minister has not witnessed a decline rather it has undergone a transformation, from the Ninth Lok Sabha to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha, as it adapted to the rise and consolidation of coalition politics and culture in India. Despite the divisions and dissensions that characterize the functioning of different Cabinets during the period under consideration, it has become more deliberative and collegial.

The absence of any strong evidence towards the centralization of power, as witnessed during 1970s and 1980s, along with the involvement of fairly large number of ministers in making of significant political decisions and shaping of public policies- through GoMs- indicates towards a more participatory Cabinet during this period.

The period witnessed the emergence of new mechanisms apart from the resilience of the existing essential procedure of the Cabinet Committees. The two mechanisms, the Coordination Committee and the Group of Ministers were instrumental in sustaining the coalition and managing political consensus and inter-ministerial coordination. While the Coordination Committees and agreements over the Common Minimum Programme are mechanisms external to the Cabinet, the GoMs have been an internal Cabinet procedure.

The Coordination Committees have involved multiple parties in devising and maintaining the consensus around the implementation of a Common Minimum Programme. It remained instrumental in ensuring political consensus, thereby imparting stability and strength to the government.

The GoMs and Cabinet Committees are procedures internal to Cabinet. While the Cabinet Committees existed since Nehru's period, the GoMs as a mechanism emerged during the period under consideration. Taken together, the Cabinet Committees as well as the GoMs have contributed to the strengthening of the position and status of Prime Minister. Despite bearing unique personalities and having diverse political base, successive Prime Ministers have relied upon these two Cabinet procedures as a mechanism to strengthen his position. The Prime Ministerial government remains a thing of past as there exist no evidence of centralization and personalization of power during the period under consideration. In the present phase of Indian politics, the status and position of the Prime Minister stands transformed. The Prime Minister and his core ministers that includes Minister of Finance, Minister of Home Affairs, Minister of Defence and Minister of External Affairs have remained quite influential in the functioning of the Cabinet. It becomes evident in the dispersion of their influence in the Cabinet Committees and Group of Ministers.

The stability and the strengthening of the minority government since 1999, has marginalized the Parliament from ensuring an effective control over the government. During this period, the Parliament has become least efficient in terms of business



transacted as compared to the periods of Majoritarian Parliamentarianism. The surfacing of innovative mechanisms at the government's end like the GoMs or the Coordination Committees has strengthened the executive. At the same time a concomitant procedural initiative in the Parliament, to enable legislative assertion, is certainly missing and that has certainly added to a strengthened executive. The last of the procedural reforms in the Parliament was the setting up of DRSCs but it has not substantially contributed in making the Parliament more autonomous. Moreover, party affiliations and loyalty has led to surfacing of a binary government opposition relationship in its functioning.

The study adopted the framework developed by Matthew Shugart to understand the pattern of legislature executive relationship and it is expected that it can significantly contribute to develop an insight into factors that may cause an executive in a parliamentary system to gain strength and which eventually leads to the domination of executive, even though the basic nature of relationship between legislature and executive is transactional.

The study surveyed the existing literature on the functioning of Cabinet and tried to analyze the functioning of the Cabinet in India in this context. Studies by Richard Crossman, Ivor Jennings, Patrick Gordon Walker, R.A.W. Rhodes, Simon James, Michael Laver and Kenneth Shepsle, Kenny William le apart from few others have significantly been useful in this regard. The present study utilized the studies mentioned above and contributes to fill up the gap that exists in Indian context. For instance, the study utilizes the notion of 'Inner Cabinet' derived from the writings of Ivor Jennings and presents its salience during the phase of minority coalition Cabinets in India. A more pertinent question about the changing pattern of Prime Ministerial domination of the Cabinet as well as the Parliament could be interrogated through an understanding of the writings by Crossman, Walker and Rhodes. Similarly, the recent writings by Kenny William le have been instrumental in understanding how the Prime Ministers used the existing essential Cabinet procedures of Cabinet Committees as a strategic tool to enhance his position and status in the Cabinet. The same seems to hold true in case of the emergence of new mechanism like the Group of Ministers.



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## APPENDIX I

### Meeting With Leaders of Various Parties/Groups in the Parliament, 1998-2014

Sl No.	Date	Subject	Presided by	Concerned Ministry	Remarks
1.	22.5.98	Electoral Reforms	Ministry of Home Affairs	Ministry of Law Justice & Company Affairs	
2.	10.7.98	Reservation of Women in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies in States	Prime Minister	Ministry of Law Justice & Company Affairs	
3.	9.12.1998	Women Reservation Bill	Prime Minister	Ministry of Law Justice & Company Affairs	
4.	29.5.99	Situation arising out of illegal presence of infiltrators in the Kargil sector of J & K	Prime Minister	Ministry of Defence	
5.	28.6.99	Developments in Kargil	Prime Minister	Ministry of Defence	
6.	13.12.99	Constitution 79 <sup>th</sup> Amendment Bill, 1952 (Two children norm for legislators)	Minister of Parliamentary Affairs	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	
7.	22.12.99	Reservation of Women in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies in States	Prime Minister	Ministry of Law Justice & Company Affairs	
8.	25.4.2000	Draught situation in country	Prime Minister	Ministry of Agriculture	
9.	8.5.00	Prevailing situation in Sri Lanka	Prime Minister	Ministry of External Affairs	
10.	13.5.00	Further Extension of Freeze on Delimitation of Electoral Constituencies	Minister of Law Justice & Company Affairs	Ministry of Law Justice & Company Affairs	
11.	3.2.2001	Situation arising out of devastating earthquake in Gujarat	Prime Minister	Ministry of Agriculture	
12.	18.2.01	First meeting of the National Committee on Disaster Management	Prime Minister	Ministry of Agriculture	
13.	21.2.01	Situation in Jammu & Kashmir (Unilateral ceasefire declared by Government of India)	Prime Minister	Ministry of Home Affairs	
14.	14.4.01	Normal Functioning of Parliament	Prime Minister	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs	
15.	19.5.01	The Constitution (87 <sup>th</sup> Amendment) Bill, 1999 (Panchayati Raj)	Prime Minister	Ministry of Rural Development	
16.	9.7.01	Discussion on the visit of Shri Parvez Musharraf, (President of Pakistan), Agra Summit	Prime Minister	Ministry of External Affairs	

Sl No.	Date	Subject	Presided by	Concerned Ministry	Remarks
17.	19.7.01	Outcome of Agra Summit	Prime Minister	Ministry of External Affairs	
18.	13.9.01	Electoral Reforms	Minister of Law Justice & Company Affairs	Ministry of Law Justice & Company Affairs	
19.	15.9.01	Terrorist Attack in America	Prime Minister	Ministry of External Affairs	
20.	30.10.01	American Military Action in Afghanistan	Prime Minister	Ministry of External Affairs	
21.	4.12.01	Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance, 2001 (POTO)	Prime Minister	Ministry of Home Affairs	
22.	30.12.01	Present Status on Indo-Pak Relations	Prime Minister	Ministry of External Affairs	
23.	26.2.2002	Ayodhya Issue	Prime Minister	Ministry of Home Affairs	
24.	8.7.02	Electoral Reforms in the light of the recent judgement passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India	Minister of Law & Justice	Ministry of Law & Justice	
25.	2.8.02	Electoral Reforms in the light of the recent judgement passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India	Minister of Home Affairs	Ministry of Law & Justice	
26.	7.3.2003	Women's Reservation Bill	Prime Minister	Minister of Law & Justice	
27.	10.3.03	Evolving situation with regard to Iraq (American military action on Iraq)	Prime Minister	Ministry of External Affairs	
28.	13.3.03	Delimitation of Electoral Constituencies	Minister of Parliamentary Affairs	Ministry of Law & Justice	
29.	22.3.03	Current Situation in Iraq	Prime Minister	Ministry of External Affairs	
30.	25.7.03	Public Distribution System	Prime Minister	Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution	
31.	29.10.03	Electoral Reforms (System of Open Ballot for elections to the Council of States and other Issues)	Minister of Law & Justice	Ministry of Law & Justice	
32.	9.1.2005	Situation Arising out of Tsunami Disaster on 26.10.2004 Souther part	Prime Minister	Ministry of Home Affairs (Disaster Management)	
33	23.11.2009	Rising prices of essential commodities	Minister of Finance	Ministry of Agriculture	
34	15.9.2010	Situation arising out of Jammu & Kashmir	Prime Minister	Ministry of Home Affairs	Home Minister led the Delegation of All Party Leaders during 20-22 Sept. 2010 in Jammu & Kashmir
35	8.2.2011	Smoothly Running of	Minister of	Ministry of	

Sl No.	Date	Subject	Presided by	Concerned Ministry	Remarks
		Parliament	Finance	Parliamentary Affairs	
36	3.7.2011	Lokpal Bill	Prime Minister	Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs has coordinated with the Prime Minister Office for conducting the all party meeting
37	24.8.11	Lokpal Bill	Prime Minister	Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs has coordinated with the Prime Minister Office for conducting the all party meeting
38	29.11.11	Smoothly Running of Parliament	Minister of Finance	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs	
39	7.12.11	Smoothly Running of Parliament	Minister of Finance	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs	
40	14.12.11	Lokpal Bill	Prime Minister	Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs has coordinated with the Prime Minister Office for conducting the all party meeting
41	23.3.2012	Lokpal Bill	Prime Minister	Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs has coordinated with the Prime Minister Office for conducting the all party meeting
42	21.8.12	Reservation in Promotions SCs & STs in the Posts and Services	Prime Minister	Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs has coordinated with the Prime Minister Office for conducting the all party meeting
43	26.11.12	Smoothly Running of Parliament	Minister of Finance	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs	
44	9.4.2103	Land Acquisition Bill	Home Minister	Minister of Rural Development	
45	1.8.2013	Smooth functioning of Parliament	Minister of Finance	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs	
46	13.8.13	Smooth functioning of the Monsoon Session	Minister of Parliamentary Affairs	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs	
47	2.12.13	Smooth functioning of the Winter Session	Minister of Parliamentary Affairs	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs	
48	3.2.2014	Smooth functioning of the Winter Session	Minister of Parliamentary Affairs	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs	

Source: Statistical Handbook (2019) Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India.





## APPENDIX II

### Cabinet Ministers With Their Respective Cabinet Committees & GoMs - V P Singh Government

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Shri Devi Lal, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Agriculture	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Panchayati Raj Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs Cabinet Committee on Export Strategy & Performance Cabinet Committee on Trade & Investment	
Prof. Madhu Dandavate, Minister of Finance	Cabinet Committee on President's Address Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on Punjab & Jammu & Kashmir Cabinet Committee on Right to Work Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs Cabinet Committee to consider the report of the Commission on Centre State Relations Composition of the Cabinet Committee on 15- Point Programme for Minority Welfare Sub-Committee of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee to consider the recommendations of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Backward Classes Commission (Mandal Commission) Cabinet Committee on Export Strategy & Performance Cabinet Committee on Trade & Investment Cabinet Sub-Committee on Drug Abuse Control Cabinet Committee to organize mass education efforts regarding the Gulf crisis	GoM on Apex Level Body for Science & Technology
Shri Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Minister of Home Affairs	Cabinet Committee on Punjab & Jammu & Kashmir Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs Cabinet Committee to consider the report of the Commission on Centre State Relations	

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
	<p>Composition of the Cabinet Committee on 15- Point Programme for Minority Welfare</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Appointments</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Right to Information</p> <p>Cabinet Sub-Committee on Drug Abuse Control</p> <p>Cabinet Committee to consider the recommendations of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Backward Classes Commission (Mandal Commission)</p>	
Shri I.K. Gujral, Minister of External Affairs	<p>Cabinet Committee on President's Address</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Punjab &amp; Jammu &amp; Kashmir</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Right to Information</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Export Strategy &amp; Performance</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Trade &amp; Investment</p> <p>Cabinet Sub-Committee on Drug Abuse Control</p> <p>Cabinet Sub-Committee to deal with the problems of Indian nationals in the Gulf</p> <p>Cabinet Committee to organize mass education efforts regarding the Gulf crisis</p>	
Shri Ajit Singh, Minister of Industry	<p>Cabinet Committee on President's Address</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Prices</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs</p> <p>Sub-Committee of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Export Strategy &amp; Performance</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Trade &amp; Investment</p>	
Shri R.K. Hegde, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission	<p>Cabinet Committee on President's Address</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Right to Information</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Right to Work</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Panchayati Raj</p>	GoM on Apex Level Body for Science & Technology

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
	<p>Cabinet Committee to consider the report of the Commission on Centre State Relations</p> <p>Composition of the Cabinet Committee on 15- Point Programme for Minority Welfare</p> <p>Sub-Committee of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee to consider the recommendations of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Backward Classes Commission (Mandal Commission)</p>	
Shri Arun Kumar Nehru, Minister of Commerce & Tourism	<p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Prices</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Export Strategy &amp; Performance</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Trade &amp; Investment</p>	
Shri Arif Mohd. Khan, Minister of Energy with additional charge of the Ministry of Civil Aviation	<p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Prices</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs</p> <p>Composition of the Cabinet Committee on 15- Point Programme for Minority Welfare</p> <p>Sub-Committee of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Accommodation</p> <p>Cabinet Sub-Committee to deal with the problems of Indian nationals in the Gulf</p>	
Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy, Minister of Petroleum & Chemicals	<p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Prices</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs</p> <p>Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy, Minister of Petroleum &amp; Chemicals</p> <p>Cabinet Committee to organize mass education efforts regarding the Gulf crisis</p>	
Shri Nathu Ram Mirdha, Minister of Food & Civil Supplies	<p>Cabinet Committee on Prices</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Panchayati Raj</p>	
Shri George Fernandes, Minister of Railways	<p>Cabinet Committee on Punjab &amp; Jammu &amp; Kashmir</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Right to Information</p>	

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
	<p>Cabinet Committee on Right to Work  Composition of the Cabinet  Committee on 15- Point Programme  for Minority Welfare  Sub-Committee of the Cabinet  Committee on Economic Affairs</p>	
<p>Shri P. Upendra,  Minister of Information  &amp; Broadcasting &amp;  Parliamentary Affairs</p>	<p>Cabinet Committee on Right to  Information  Cabinet Committee on Panchayati Raj  Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary  Affairs  Cabinet Committee to consider the  report of the Commission on Centre  State Relations  Cabinet Committee on  Accommodation  Cabinet Committee to organize mass  education efforts regarding the Gulf  crisis</p>	
<p>Shri K. P.  Unnikrishnan, Minister  of Surface Transport  with additional charge  of the Ministry of  Communications</p>	<p>Cabinet Committee on Right to  Information  Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary  Affairs  Sub-Committee of the Cabinet  Committee on Economic Affairs  Cabinet Sub-Committee to deal with  the problems of Indian nationals in the  Gulf</p>	
<p>Shri Sharad Yadav,  Minister of Textiles  with additional charge  of the Ministry of Food  Processing Industries</p>	<p>Cabinet Committee on Right to Work  Cabinet Committee on Panchayati Raj  Cabinet Committee to consider the  recommendations of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Backward  Classes Commission (Mandal  Commission)  Cabinet Committee on  Accommodation  Cabinet Committee on Export Strategy  &amp; Performance  Cabinet Committee on Trade &amp;  Investment</p>	
<p>Shri Dinesh Goswami,  Minister of Steel &amp;  Mines with the  additional charge of the  Ministry of Law &amp;  Justice</p>	<p>Cabinet Committee on Right to Work  Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary  Affairs  Composition of the Cabinet  Committee on 15- Point Programme  for Minority Welfare  Sub-Committee of the Cabinet  Committee on Economic Affairs  Cabinet Committee to consider the  recommendations of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Backward  Classes Commission (Mandal  Commission)</p>	

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Shri Ram Vilas Paswan, Minister of Labour & Welfare	Cabinet Committee on Right to Work Cabinet Committee on Panchayati Raj Composition of the Cabinet Committee on 15- Point Programme for Minority Welfare Cabinet Committee to consider the recommendations of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Backward Classes Commission (Mandal Commission) Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Sub-Committee on Drug Abuse Control	GoM to deal with the problems of tribals vis-a-vis the implementation of Forests Laws
Shri Murasoli Maran, Minister of Urban Development	Cabinet Committee on Right to Work Cabinet Committee on Accommodation	
Shri Nilamani Routray, Minister of Health & Family Welfare	Cabinet Committee on Panchayati Raj Cabinet Sub-Committee on Drug Abuse Control	
Prof. M. G. K. Menon, Minister of State in the Ministry of Science & Technology with additional charge of the Minister of State in the Department of Education in the Ministry of Human Resource Development	Cabinet Sub-Committee on Drug Abuse Control	GoM on Apex Level Body for Science & Technology
Shri Arangil Sreedharan, Minister of State in the Ministry of Commerce	Cabinet Sub-Committee to deal with the problems of Indian nationals in the Gulf	
Shri Hari Kishore Singh, Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs	Cabinet Sub-Committee to deal with the problems of Indian nationals in the Gulf	
Smt. Maneka Gandhi, Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment and Forests with additional charge of Minister of State in the Ministry of Programme Implementation		GoM to deal with the problems of tribals vis-a-vis the implementation of Forests Laws
Dr. Raja Ramanna, Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence.		GoM on Apex Level Body for Science & Technology

Author's own calculation.

Source: RTI filed in the Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India.



## APPENDIX III

### Cabinet Ministers With Their Respective Cabinet Committees & GoMs - Chandra Shekhar Government

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Prime Minister	Political Affairs Appointments 15-Point Programme for Minority Welfare Economic Affairs Trade & Investment Expenditure	
Shri Devi Lal, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture & Tourism	Political Affairs Appointments 15-Point Programme for Minority Welfare Economic Affairs Trade & Investment Expenditure	
Shri Vidya Charan Shukla, Minister of External Affairs	Political Affairs Trade & Investment Parliamentary Affairs	
Shri Yashwant Sinha, Minister of Finance	Political Affairs Prices 15-Point Programme for Minority Welfare Accommodation Economic Affairs Trade & Investment Parliamentary Affairs Expenditure	GoM on the Bachawat Wage Board
Shri Subramanian Swamy, Minister of Commerce with additional charge of the Ministry of Law & Justice	Political Affairs Prices 15-Point Programme for Minority Welfare Economic Affairs Trade & Investment Parliamentary Affairs Expenditure	GoM on Legal Affairs GoM on the Bachawat Wage Board
Shri Hukumdeo Narayan Yadav, Minister of Textiles and Food Processing Industries	Prices 15-Point Programme for Minority Welfare Parliamentary Affairs	
Shri Rao Birendra Singh, Minister of Food and Civil Supplies.	Prices Expenditure	
Shri Satya Prakash Malviya, Minister of Petroleum & Chemicals and Parliamentary Affairs.	Prices Accommodation Economic Affairs Parliamentary Affairs Expenditure	

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Shri Rajmangal Pande, Minister of Human Resource Development.	15-Point Programme for Minority Welfare	GoM on Legal Affairs
Shri Shakeelur Rehman, Minister of Health and Family Welfare	15-Point Programme for Minority Welfare	
Shri Ramji Lal Suman, Minister of State in the Ministry of Labour and Minister of State in the Ministry of Welfare.	15-Point Programme for Minority Welfare (Special Invitee)	GoM on the Bachawat Wage Board
Shri Subodh Kant Sahay, Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs and Minister of State in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.	15-Point Programme for Minority Welfare (Special Invitee)	GoM on the Bachawat Wage Board
Shri Daulat Ram Saran, Minister of Urban Development.	Accommodation	
Shri Kalyan Singh Kalvi, Minister of Energy	Economic Affairs	
Shri Ashoke Kumar Sen, Minister of Steel and Mines.		GoM on Legal Affairs
Shri Kamal Morarka, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office		GoM on the Bachawat Wage Board

Author's own calculation.

Source: RTI filed in the Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India.



## APPENDIX IV

### Cabinet Ministers With Their Respective Cabinet Committees & GoMs -PVN Rao Government

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
PV Narasimha Rao, Prime Minister	Cabinet committee on Appointments Cabinet committee on Political Affairs Cabinet committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet committee on Trade and Investment Cabinet committee on natural Calamities Cabinet committee on Expenditure Cabinet committee on Foreign investment Cabinet Committee on minority welfare Cabinet committee on Science and Technology Setting up of	
S. B. Chavan, Minister of Home Affairs.	Cabinet committee on Appointments Cabinet committee on Political Affairs Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet committee on Expenditure	GOM on 'Statues for Mahatma Gandhi, ShriJawaharlal Nehru and Smt. Indira Gandhi.' GOM on Follow-up action on Justice Varma Commission of inquiry Report GOM on Restoration of political process in Jammu and Kashmir. GOM on Legislation for amending Indian Panel Code.
Arjun Singh, Minister of Human Resource Development	Cabinet committee on natural Calamities Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet committee on Science and Technology Setting up of	GOM of Minister on "Panchayati Raj Institutions- Constitution Amendment Bill & other matters" GOM on 'Statues for Mahatma Gandhi, ShriJawaharlal Nehru and Smt. Indira Gandhi.' GOM on Follow-up action on Justice Varma Commission of inquiry Report
B. Shankaranand, Minister of Patroleum and Natural gas	Cabinet committee on Political Affairs Cabinet committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet committee on	

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
	Prices Cabinet Committee on minority welfare	
Madhavsinh Solanki, Minister of External Affairs	Cabinet committee on Political Affairs	
Manmohan Singh, Minister of Finance	Cabinet committee on Political Affairs Cabinet committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet committee on Prices Cabinet committee on Trade and Investment Cabinet committee on natural Calamities Cabinet committee on Expenditure Cabinet committee on Infrastructure Cabinet committee on Foreign investment Cabinet committee on Science and Technology Setting up of	GOM to Augmentation of Central Road Fund. GOM on Report of the Committee of Ministers on National Policy on PDS. GOM on Review of Public enterprises. GOM on "Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster relating thereto." GOM on Ocean Transportation of Cargo under the control of Government/Public Sector Undertakings-review of the policy regarding
Sharad Pawar, Minister of Defence	Cabinet committee on Political Affairs Cabinet committee on natural Calamities Cabinet committee on Expenditure	
Balram Jakhar, Minister of Agriculture	Cabinet committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet committee on Prices Cabinet committee on Trade and Investment Cabinet committee on natural Calamities Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet committee on Science and Technology Setting up of	GOM on Report of the Committee of Ministers on National Policy on PDS. GOM on Involvement of Industry in Afforestation of Degraded Forest Lands
C. K Jaffar Sharief, Minister of Railways	Cabinet committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet committee on Prices Cabinet committee on Infrastructure Cabinet Committee on minority welfare	GOM to recommendation specific measures to cut delays in the implementation of Central Sector projects-setting up of GOM on Report of the Committee of Ministers on National Policy on PDS. GOM on Legislation for amending Indian Panel Code.

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Madhav Rao Schindia, Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism	Cabinet committee on Economic Affairs	GOM on Legislation for amending Indian Panel Code. GOM on “Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster relating thereto.
P. Chidambaram, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Commerce.	Cabinet committee on Prices Cabinet committee on Trade and Investment Cabinet committee on Foreign investment	GOM on Restoration of political process in Jammu and Kashmir. GOM on Review of Public enterprises. GOM on National Quality Council. GOM on Ocean Transportation of Cargo under the control of Government/Public Sector Undertakings-review of the policy regarding GOM on Involvement of Industry in Afforestation of Degraded Forest Lands
Tarun Gogoi Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of food.	Cabinet committee on Prices Cabinet committee on natural Calamities	
Kamalendu Ahmed, Minister of state in the Ministry of Civil Supplies and Public Distribution	Cabinet committee on Prices Cabinet committee on natural Calamities	
M. L. Fotedar, Minister of Health and Family Welfare	Cabinet committee on natural Calamities Cabinet committee on Expenditure	GOM on ‘Statues for Mahatma Gandhi, ShriJawaharlal Nehru and Smt. Indira Gandhi.’
Vidyacharan Shukla, Minister of Water resources	Cabinet committee on natural Calamities Cabinet committee on Expenditure	GOM on Follow-up action on Justice Varma Commission of inquiry Report GOM to Augmentation of Central Road Fund. GOM on Report of the Committee of Ministers on National Policy on PDS. GOM on Legislation for amending Indian Panel Code. GOM on National Quality Council. GOM on Involvement of Industry in Afforestation of Degraded Forest Lands
H. R. Bharadwaj, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Planning and Programme Implementation	Cabinet committee on Expenditure Cabinet committee on Infrastructure	GOM on Follow-up action on Justice Varma Commission of inquiry Report GOM to Augmentation of Central Road Fund. GOM on Legislation for

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		amending Indian Panel Code. GOM on “Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster relating thereto.
Pranab Mukherjee, Deputy chairman, Planning Commission	Cabinet committee on Infrastructure Cabinet committee on natural Calamities Cabinet committee on Science and Technology Setting up of	GOM to recommendation specific measures to cut delays in the implementation of Central Sector projects- setting up of GOM to Augmentation of Central Road Fund. GOM on Restoration of political process in Jammu and Kashmir. GOM on Report of the Committee of Ministers on National Policy on PDS. GOM on Review of Public enterprises. GOM on National Quality Council.
Ajit Kumar Panja, Minister of State (Independent Charge ) of ministry of Information and Broadcasting.	Cabinet committee on natural Calamities Cabinet Committee on Accommodation	GOM to recommendation specific measures to cut delays in the implementation of Central Sector projects- setting up of
K. Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy, Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation	GOM of Minister on “Panchayati Raj Institutions- Constitution Amendment Bill & other matters”
Ghulam Nabi Azad, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	
Sheila Kaul, Minister of Urban Development	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation	GOM of Minister on “Panchayati Raj Institutions- Constitution Amendment Bill & other matters” GOM on ‘Statues for Mahatma Gandhi, ShriJawaharlal Nehru and Smt. Indira Gandhi.’
Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, Minister of state in the Ministry of parliamentary Affairs and Minister of state in the Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	
balram Singh Yadav, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Mines	Cabinet committee on Infrastructure	
Kalp Nath Rai, Minister of	Cabinet committee on	

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Power and Non-conventional Energy Sources	Infrastructure	
P.A. Sangma Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Coal., Minister of Labour	Cabinet committee on Infrastructure	GOM on Review of Public enterprises.
Rajesh Pilot, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Communications	Cabinet committee on Infrastructure	GOM on Involvement of Industry in Afforestation of Degraded Forest Lands
Santosh Mohan Dev, Minister of State (independent Charge) of the Ministry of Steel.	Cabinet committee on Infrastructure Cabinet Committee on minority welfare	GOM on Ocean Transportation of Cargo under the control of Government/Public Sector Undertakings-review of the policy regarding
P.K. Thungon, minister of State in the Ministry of Industry	Cabinet committee on Infrastructure Cabinet committee on Science and Technology Setting up of	
N. K. P. Slave, Minister of Power.		GOM to recommendation specific measures to cut delays in the implementation of Central Sector projects-setting up of GOM on Legislation for amending Indian Panel Code. GOM on Ocean Transportation of Cargo under the control of Government/Public Sector Undertakings-review of the policy regarding
Capt. Satish Sharma, Minister of State (IC) of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.		GOM to recommendation specific measures to cut delays in the implementation of Central Sector projects-setting up of GOM on Follow-up action on Justice Varma Commission of inquiry Report GOM to Augmentation of Central Road Fund. GOM on Report of the Committee of Ministers on National Policy on PDS. GOM on Ocean Transportation of Cargo under the control of Government/Public Sector Undertakings-review of the

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		policy regarding
GiridharGomango, Minister of State (IC) of the Ministry of Planning and Programme Implementation		GOM to recommendation specific measures to cut delays in the implementation of Central Sector projects-setting up of
G. VenkatSwamy, Minister of State in the Ministry of Rural Development	Cabinet committee on Science and Technology Setting up of	GOM of Minister on “Panchayati Raj Institutions-Constitution Amendment Bill & other matters”
JagdishTytler, Minister of State (IC) of the Ministry of Surface Transport.		GOM on Follow-up action on Justice Varma Commission of inquiry Report GOM to Augmentation of Central Road Fund.
Dinesh Singh, Minister without portfolio		GOM on Restoration of political process in Jammu and Kashmir.
K. P. Singh Deo, Minister of State (IC) of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.		GOM on Restoration of political process in Jammu and Kashmir.
Bhuvnesh Chaturvedi, Minister of State in the Prime Minister’s office and Minister of State in the Departments of Atomic Energy and Space and Minister of State in the Ministry of Science and Technology.	Cabinet committee on Science and Technology Setting up of	GOM on Restoration of political process in Jammu and Kashmir.
Mallikarjun, Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence and Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs		GOM on Restoration of political process in Jammu and Kashmir.
R. L. Bhatia, Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs.		GOM on Restoration of political process in Jammu and Kashmir.
Buta Singh, Minister of Civil Supplies Consumer Affairs and Public Distributions		GOM on Report of the Committee of Ministers on National Policy on PDS. GOM on National Quality Council.
Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav, Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers.		GOM on “Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster relating thereto.
Eduardo Faleiro, Minister of State in the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.		GOM on “Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster relating thereto.
Tanwant Singh Keer, Minister incharge of Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster Relief and		GOM on “Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster relating thereto.

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Rehabilitation, Department, Govt. of MP.		
K. Karunakaran, Minister of industry		GOM on National Quality Council. GOM on Involvement of Industry in Afforestation of Degraded Forest Lands
Krishna Sahi, Minister of State in the Ministry of Industry (Department of Industrial Development) and Minister of State in the Ministry of Industry (Department of Heavy Industry)		GOM on National Quality Council.
M. Rajashekhar Murthy, Minister of State (IC) of the Ministry of Surface Transport		GOM on Ocean Transportation of Cargo under the control of Government/Public Sector Undertakings-review of the policy regarding
Ajit Singh, Minister of Food.		GOM on Ocean Transportation of Cargo under the control of Government/Public Sector Undertakings-review of the policy regarding
Jagannath Mishra, Minister of Rural Areas and Employment.		GOM on Involvement of Industry in Afforestation of Degraded Forest Lands
Sitaram Keshri, Minister of Welfare	Cabinet Committee on minority welfare	GOM on Involvement of Industry in Afforestation of Degraded Forest Lands
Margaret Alva, Minister of State in the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and pensions.	Cabinet Committee on minority welfare	

Author's own calculation.

Source: RTI filed in the Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India.





## APPENDIX V

### Cabinet Ministers With Their Respective Cabinet Committees & GoMs - Devegowda Government

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
H D Devegowda, Prime Minister	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs Cabinet Committee on foreign Investment Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe Cabinet Committee on Appointments	
Devendra Prasad Yadav, Minister of Food and Minister of Civil Supplies, Consumer affairs and Public Distribution and Minister of Commerce.	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices	
Murasoli Maran, Minister of Industry	Cabinet Committee on foreign Investment Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of	
P. Chidambaram, Minister of Finance and Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs Cabinet Committee on foreign Investment Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of	GOM on “Bhopal Gas leak Disaster” (revise)
Yerran Naidu, Minister of Rural Areas and Employment.	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of Cabinet Committee on Schedule	

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
	Caste and Schedule Tribe	
Balwant Singh Ramoowalia, Minister of Welfare and Minister of Labour.	Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe	
C.M. Ibrahim, Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism and Minister of Information and Broadcasting.	Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs	
I.K. Gujral, Minister of External Affairs and Minister of water Resources.	Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	
Mulayam Singh Yadav, Minister of Defence	Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of	
Ram Vilas Paswan, Minister of Railways and Parliamentary Affairs.	Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure	
Chaturanan Mishra, Minister of Agriculture.	Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of	
Bolla Buli Ramaiah, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Commerce	Cabinet Committee on Prices	
Indrajit Gupta, Minister of Home Affairs	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe	
S. R. Bommai, Minister of Human Resource Development	Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe	
Janeswar Mishra, Minister of Water Resources	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	
Srikant Kumar Jena, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minister of Tourism.	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	
U. Venkateswarlu, Minister of State in the Ministry of Urban Affairs and Employment and	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Prices	

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.	(Special Invitee) Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe	
Yoginder K. Alagh, Minister of State (Independent charge) of the Ministry of Planning and Programme Implementation and Minister of state (Independent charge) of the Ministry of Science and Technology	Cabinet Committee on Prices (Special Invitee) Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of	
Birendra Prasad Baishya, Minister of Steel and Minister of Mines	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	
R. L. Jalappa, Minister of Textiles.	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	
T.G. Venkataraman, Minister of Surface Transport.	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure	
Ramakant D. Khalap, Minister of State (Independent charge) of the Department of Legal Affairs, Legislative Department and Department of Justice.	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	GOM on “Bhopal Gas leak Disaster”
S. R. Balasubramoniyam, Minister of State in the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions and Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	
Madhu Dandavate, Deputy bchairman, Planning Commission.	Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe (Special Invitee)	
M. Arunachalam, Minister of Labour	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe	
Smt. Kanti Singh, Minister of State (Independent charge) of the Ministry of coal	Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure	
S. Venugopalachari, Minister of state in the Ministry of Power and Minister of state in the Ministry of Non-conventional Energy Sources.	Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure (Special Invitee)	
T. R. Baalu, Minister of state in the Ministry of Petroleum and	Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure (Special Invitee)	

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Natural Gas.		
Jai Narayan Prasad Nishad, Minister of state (independent Charge) of the Ministry of Environment and forests.	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe	
Shees Ram Ola, Minister of State (IC) of the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.		GOM on “Bhopal Gas leak Disaster”
Tanwant Singh Keer, Minister incharge of Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation, Department, Govt. of MP		GOM on “Bhopal Gas leak Disaster”

Author's own calculation.

Source: RTI filed in the Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India.

## APPENDIX VI

### Cabinet Ministers With Their Respective Cabinet Committees & GoMs – I K Gujral Government

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
I.K.Gujral, Prime Minister	Cabinet Committee on Appointments Cabinet Committee on foreign Investment Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of Cabinet Committee on Security Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs	GOM on Report of the 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission- Processing of. GOM on 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission.
Murasoli Maran, Minister of Industry	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on foreign Investment Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices	GOM on Report of the 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission- Processing of. GOM on 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission. GOM on Central legislation for the welfare of Agricultural Workers
Chaturanan Mishra, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of civil Supplies, Consumer affairs and Public Distribution and Minister of Food	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices	GOM on Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited (IDPL) GOM on Central legislation for the welfare of Agricultural Workers
Janeswar Mishra, Minister of Water Resources.	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	
Srikant Kumar Jena, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minister of Tourism.	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	GOM on Central legislation for the welfare of Agricultural Workers
U. Venkateswarlu, Minister of State in the Ministry of Urban Affairs and Employment and Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe Cabinet Committee on Prices (Special Invitee)	
Indrajit Gupta, Minister of Home Affairs.	Cabinet Committee on Appointments	GOM on Report of the 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission-

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indias independence Cabinet Committee on Security Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe	Processing of. GOM on 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission.
P. Chidambaram, Minister of Finance	Cabinet Committee on foreign Investment Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of India’s independence Cabinet Committee on Security Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices	GOM on Bhopal Gas leak Disaster. GOM on Report of the 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission- Processing of. GOM on 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission. GOM on Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited (IDPL)
Ram Vilas Paswan, Minister of Railways.	Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices	GOM on Report of the 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission- Processing of. GOM on 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission.
Balwant Singh Ramoowalia, Minister of Welfare	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe	GOM on Central legislation for the welfare of Agricultural Workers
Birendra Prasad Baishya, Minister of Steel and Minister of Mines	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure	GOM on Central legislation for the welfare of Agricultural Workers
R. L. Jalappa, Minister of Textiles	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	
T.G. Venkataraman, Minister of Surface Transport	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure	
Ramakant D. Khalap, Minister of State (Independent charge) of the Ministry of Law and Justice.	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	GOM on Bhopal Gas leak Disaster.
Prof. Saifuddin Soz, Minister of Environment and Forest.	Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe	
Smt. Kanti Singh, Minister of State (Independent charge) of the Ministry of coal.	Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure	
S. R. Bommai, Minister of	Cabinet Committee on Schedule	

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Human Resource Development.	Caste and Schedule Tribe Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indias independence	
Yerran Naidu K., Minister of Rural Areas and Employment	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	
Madhu Dandavate, Deputy chairman, Planning Commission.	Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (Special Invitee) Cabinet Committee on Prices Affairs (Special Invitee) Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe Affairs (Special Invitee) Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure Affairs (Special Invitee)	
S. Venugopalachari, Minister of state in the Ministry of Power	Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure(Special Invitee)	
T. R. Baalu, Minister of state in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.	Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure(Special Invitee)	
Mulayam Singh Yadav, Minister of Defence.	Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of India’s independence Cabinet Committee on Security	GOM on Report of the 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission- Processing of. GOM on 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission.
Yoginder K. Alagh, Minister of State (Independent charge) of the Ministry of Planning and Programme Implementation and Minister of state (Independent charge) of the Ministry of Science and Technology	Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology – Setting up of Cabinet Committee on Prices (Special Invitee)	
C.M. Ibrahim, Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism	Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of India’s independence	
Bolla Buli Ramaiah, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Commerce.	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices	GOM on Central legislation for the welfare of Agricultural Workers
S. Jaipal Reddy, Minister of Information and Broadcasting.	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Schedule	

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
	Caste and Schedule Tribe	
S. R. Balasubramoniyam, Minister of State in the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions and Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	GOM on Report of the 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission- Processing of. GOM on 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission.
M. Arunachalam, Minister of Labour	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe	GOM on Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited (IDPL)
Shees Ram Ola, Minister of State (IC) of the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.		GOM on Bhopal Gas leak Disaster.
Tanwant Singh Keer, Minister incharge of Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation, Department, Govt. of MP		GOM on Bhopal Gas leak Disaster.
Beni Prasad Varma. Minister of Communication.		GOM on Report of the 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission- Processing of. GOM on 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission.
M. P. Veerendra Kumar, Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance.		GOM on Report of the 5 <sup>th</sup> Central Pay Commission- Processing of. <u>Special Invitee</u> GOM on Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited (IDPL) GOM on Central legislation for the welfare of Agricultural Workers

Author's own calculation.

Source: RTI filed in the Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India.



## APPENDIX VII

### Cabinet Ministers With Their Respective Cabinet Committees & GoMs -Vajpayee2 Government

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Madan Lal Khurana, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minister of Tourism.	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Foreign Trade	Regulation of the period of absence of regular employees and Extra-departmental Agents of Department of Posts due to Postal strike from 8/9 <sup>th</sup> of to 16 <sup>th</sup> July, 1998. GOM on Tourism Industry and trade GOM on Amendment to the Salary , allowances and Pensions of Members of Parliament Act, 1954 & Rules framed there under
S. S. Barnala, Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers and Minister of Food.	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices	National Population Policy Bhopal Gas leak disaster GOM to devise the strategy for liquidation of Outstanding statutory dues of workers employed in CPSUs
Ram Jethmalani, Minister of Urban Development.	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Prices	GOM on National Policy on R&R of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of Compulsory acquisition of land GOM on Freedom of Information Bill
M. Thambi Durai, Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs.	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure Cabinet Committee on Foreign Trade	The Aquaculture Authority Bill, 1998 GOM on Tourism Industry and trade National Population Policy Bhopal Gas leak disaster GOM to devise the strategy for liquidation of Outstanding statutory dues of workers employed in CPSUs
Sushma Swaraj, Minister of Information and Broadcasting.	Cabinet Committee on Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of India's independence	Approval for refinements, funding patterns etc. of the Balika Samridhi Yojana Regulation of the period of absence of regular employees and Extra-departmental Agents of Department of Posts due to Postal strike from 8/9 <sup>th</sup> of to 16 <sup>th</sup> July, 1998. GOM to examine the Recommendations contained in the report of the National Task force on information technology and Software Development GOM – Final Report of the Jain Commission of Inquiry- for Examination & preparation of action taken report there on and Placing in Parliament

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister	<p>Appointments Committee of the Cabinet</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Security</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Foreign Investment</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Foreign Trade</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment</p>	
L.K Advani, Home Minister	<p>Appointments Committee of the Cabinet</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Security</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of India's independence</p>	<p>GOM on Freedom of Information Bill</p> <p>GOM on the demand of DANICS and DANIPS to accept the recommendations of the fifth pay commission.</p> <p>GOM on Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) for Delhi. (Revise)</p> <p>GOM on Amendment to the Salary , allowances and Pensions of Members of Parliament Act, 1954 &amp; Rules framed there under</p> <p>GOM – Final Report of the Jain Commission of Inquiry- for Examination &amp; preparation of action taken report there on and Placing in Parliament</p> <p>GOM to Consider matters relating to the Recommendation of the 5<sup>th</sup> Central pay Commission</p> <p>GOM to consider issues connected with DTH broadcasting</p>
George Fernandes, Minister of Defence.	<p>Cabinet Committee on Security</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of India's independence</p>	<p>GOM on Freedom of Information Bill</p> <p>Regulation of the period of absence of regular employees and Extra-departmental Agents of Department of Posts due to Postal strike from 8/9<sup>th</sup> of to 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1998.</p> <p>The Aquaculture Authority Bill, 1998</p> <p>GOM to examine the Recommendations contained in the report of the National Task force on information technology and Software Development</p> <p>GOM – Final Report of the Jain Commission of Inquiry- for Examination &amp; preparation of</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		<p>action taken report there on and Placing in Parliament</p> <p>GOM to consider issues connected with DTH broadcasting</p> <p>GOM on Investment by Overseas Corporate Bodies (OCB) in housing , real estate and urban infrastructure sectors and opening up of these for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)</p>
Yashwant Sinha, Minister of Finance	<p>Cabinet Committee on Security</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Foreign Investment</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Prices</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of India's independence</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Foreign Trade</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities</p>	<p>Disinvestment Programme for 1998-99</p> <p>GOM to Finding of the evaluation studies on the Ganga Action Plan. Approval for refinements, funding patterns etc. of the Balika Samridhi Yojana</p> <p>Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) for Delhi</p> <p>Regulation of the period of absence of regular employees and Extra-departmental Agents of Department of Posts due to Postal strike from 8/9<sup>th</sup> of to 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1998.</p> <p>GOM on the demand of DANICS and DANIPS to accept the recommendations of the fifth pay commission.</p> <p>GOM on Proposal for amendment in Section 56 under Part V (Application of the Act to co-operative Banks) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 (10 of 1949)</p> <p>Bhopal Gas leak disaster</p> <p>GOM to study various demands of the group C &amp; group D Employees working in the Central Government Hospitals as well as in the various offices under the Directorate general of Health Services including CGHS</p> <p>GOM to examine the Recommendations contained in the report of the National Task force on information technology and Software Development</p> <p>GOM on Amendment to the Salary , allowances and Pensions of Members of Parliament Act, 1954 &amp; Rules framed there under</p> <p>GOM to Consider matters relating to the Recommendation of the 5<sup>th</sup> Central pay Commission</p> <p>GOM to consider the recommendations of the Prime Ministers Council on Trade and Industry &amp; the Special subject groups made there under</p> <p>GOM to consider issues connected</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		with DTH broadcasting GOM to devise the strategy for liquidation of Outstanding statutory dues of workers employed in CPSUs GOM to consider the recommendations of the Prime Minister's council on Trade and Industry and the special Subject Groups made thereunder GOM on Investment by Overseas Corporate Bodies (OCB) in housing , real estate and urban infrastructure sectors and opening up of these for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)
Sikandar Bakht, Minister of Industry	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Foreign Investment Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology Cabinet Committee on Foreign Trade Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment	Disinvestment Programme for 1998-99 GOM to consider the recommendations of the Prime Ministers Council on Trade and Industry & the Special subject groups made there under GOM to devise the strategy for liquidation of Outstanding statutory dues of workers employed in CPSUs GOM to consider the recommendations of the Prime Minister's council on Trade and Industry and the special Subject Groups made thereunder
Ramkrishna Hegde, Minister of Commerce	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on Foreign Trade	GOM on Proposal for amendment in Section 56 under Part V (Application of the Act to co-operative Banks) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 (10 of 1949) The Aquaculture Authority Bill, 1998
Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, Minister of Human Resource Development and Minister of Science and Technology.	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of India's independence Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment	Disinvestment Programme for 1998-99 GOM to Finding of the evaluation studies on the Ganga Action Plan. Approval for refinements, funding patterns etc. of the Balika Samridhi Yojana GOM on the demand of DANICS and DANIPS to accept the recommendations of the fifth pay commission. National Population Policy GOM to examine the Recommendations contained in the report of the National Task force on information technology and Software Development GOM on Amendment to the Salary , allowances and Pensions of Members of Parliament Act, 1954

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		<p>&amp; Rules framed there under GOM – Final Report of the Jain Commission of Inquiry- for Examination &amp; preparation of action taken report there on and Placing in Parliament</p> <p>GOM to Consider matters relating to the Recommendation of the 5<sup>th</sup> Central pay Commission</p> <p>GOM on Investment by Overseas Corporate Bodies (OCB) in housing , real estate and urban infrastructure sectors and opening up of these for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)</p>
K. Ramamurthy, Minister of Petroleum and natural Gas	<p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure</p>	<p>GOM on Proposal for amendment in Section 56 under Part V (Application of the Act to co-operative Banks) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 (10 of 1949)</p>
R. Kumaramangalam, Minister of Power	<p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology</p>	<p>GOM on National Policy on Resettlement &amp; Rehabilitation of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of compulsory acquisition of land</p> <p>GOM on Amendment to the Salary , allowances and Pensions of Members of Parliament Act, 1954</p> <p>&amp; Rules framed there under GOM to devise the strategy for liquidation of Outstanding statutory dues of workers employed in CPSUs</p>
Babagouda Patil, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment	<p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities</p>	<p>GOM on National Policy on Resettlement &amp; Rehabilitation of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of compulsory acquisition of land</p>
Jaswant Singh, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission	<p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (Special Invite)</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities (Special Invite)</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology (Special Invite)</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment (Special Invite)</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Prices (Special Invite)</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure (Special Invite)</p>	<p>Disinvestment Programme for 1998-99</p> <p>Approval for refinements, funding patterns etc. of the Balika Samridhi Yojana</p> <p>GOM on Proposal for amendment in Section 56 under Part V (Application of the Act to co-operative Banks) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 (10 of 1949)</p> <p>GOM on Tourism Industry and trade</p> <p>GOM to Consider matters relating to the Recommendation of the 5<sup>th</sup> Central pay Commission</p> <p>GOM to consider the recommendations of the Prime Ministers Council on Trade and Industry &amp; the Special subject</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		groups made there under GOM on Freedom of Information Bill GOM to consider the recommendations of the Prime Minister's council on Trade and Industry and the special Subject Groups made thereunder GOM on Investment by Overseas Corporate Bodies (OCB) in housing , real estate and urban infrastructure sectors and opening up of these for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)
Sompal, Minister of State in the Minister of Agriculture	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (Special Invite) Cabinet Committee on Prices(Special Invite) Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology(Special Invite) Cabinet Committee on Foreign Trade(Special Invite)	GOM to Finding of the evaluation studies on the Ganga Action Plan GOM on Proposal for amendment in Section 56 under Part V (Application of the Act to co-operative Banks) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 (10 of 1949) GOM on National Policy on Resettlement & Rehabilitation of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of compulsory acquisition of land The Aquaculture Authority Bill, 1998 GOM on Amendment to the Salary , allowances and Pensions of Members of Parliament Act, 1954 & Rules framed there under
Ananth Kumar, Minister of Civil Aviation	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of India's independence	GOM on Tourism Industry and trade GOM – Final Report of the Jain Commission of Inquiry- for Examination & preparation of action taken report there on and Placing in Parliament
Nitish Kumar, Minister of Railways	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure	GOM to Finding of the evaluation studies on the Ganga Action Plan. Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) for Delhi GOM on National Policy on Resettlement & Rehabilitation of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of compulsory acquisition of land GOM on Tourism Industry and trade National Population Policy GOM on Amendment to the Salary , allowances and Pensions of Members of Parliament Act, 1954 & Rules framed there under
Naveen Patnaik, Minister of Steel and Mines	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure	

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Suresh Prabhu, Minister of Environment and Forests.	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure Cabinet Committee on Foreign Trade	GOM to Finding of the evaluation studies on the Ganga Action Plan. The Aquaculture Authority Bill, 1998 National Population Policy GOM to Consider matters relating to the Recommendation of the 5 <sup>th</sup> Central pay Commission
Kashiram Rana, Minister of Textiles	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Foreign Trade Cabinet Committee on Prices	GOM to devise the strategy for liquidation of Outstanding statutory dues of workers employed in CPSUs
R. K. Kumar, Minister of state in the Ministry of Finance (Banking, Revenue and Insurance) and Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	
Ram Naik, Minister of state in the Ministry of Railways, Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Minister of State in the Ministry of Planning and Programme Implementation.	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure	
Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Minister of state in the ministry of Petroleum and natural Gas.	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (Special Invitee)	
Dilip Ray, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Coal	Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure	
Dalit Ezhilmalai, Minister of State (Independent charge) of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities	National Population Policy GOM to study various demands of the group C & group D Employees working in the Central Government Hospitals as well as in the various offices under the Directorate general of Health Services including CGHS
Satyanarayan Jatiya, Minister of Labour	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities	Regulation of the period of absence of regular employees and Extra-departmental Agents of Department of Posts due to Postal strike from 8/9 <sup>th</sup> of to 16 <sup>th</sup> July, 1998. GOM to devise the strategy for liquidation of Outstanding statutory dues of workers employed in CPSUs
Smt Maneka Gandhi, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of Ministry of Welfare	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities	GOM to Finding of the evaluation studies on the Ganga Action Plan.
Omak Apang, Minister of State in the Ministry of Tourism.	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities (Special Invite)	

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Uma Bharati, Minister of State in the Ministry of Human Resource Development.	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities (Special Invite)	National Population Policy
Babulal Marandi, Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment and Forests	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities (Special Invite)	
Mukhtar Naqvi, Minister of State in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities (Special Invite)	
Vasundhara Raje	Cabinet Committee on Foreign Trade (Special Invite)	GOM on Freedom of Information Bill
Vijay Kapur, Lt. Governor Delhi.		Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) for Delhi. <u>Permanent Invitees</u>
Shiela Dixit, CM, Delhi.		Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) for Delhi. <u>Permanent Invitees</u>
Kadambur M. R. Janarthanan, Minister of State in the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions and Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance (Banking, Revenue, and Insurance)		Regulation of the period of absence of regular employees and Extra-departmental Agents of Department of Posts due to Postal strike from 8/9 <sup>th</sup> of to 16 <sup>th</sup> July, 1998. GOM on the demand of DANICS and DANIPS to accept the recommendations of the fifth pay commission. GOM to study various demands of the group C & group D Employees working in the Central Government Hospitals as well as in the various offices under the Directorate general of Health Services including CGHS GOM to Consider matters relating to the Recommendation of the 5 <sup>th</sup> Central pay Commission
Jagmohan, Minister of Communication.		GOM on Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) for Delhi. (Revise) GOM to consider issues connected with DTH broadcasting GOM on Finding of the evaluation studies on the Ganga Action Plan GOM on Investment by Overseas Corporate Bodies (OCB) in housing , real estate and urban infrastructure sectors and opening up of these for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)
K.C. Pant, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission		National Population Policy GOM to devise the strategy for liquidation of Outstanding statutory dues of workers employed in CPSUs



	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		GOM on National Policy on R&R of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of Compulsory acquisition of land GOM on Finding of the evaluation studies on the Ganga Action Plan
Tanwant Singh Keer Minister in charge of Bhopal gas leak disaster, relief and rehabilitation department, Govt. of MP		Bhopal Gas leak disaster
Pramod Mahajan, Minister of I&B		GOM to consider issues connected with DTH broadcasting GOM on Freedom of Information Bill GOM on Investment by Overseas Corporate Bodies (OCB) in housing , real estate and urban infrastructure sectors and opening up of these for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Author's own calculation.

Source: RTI filed in the Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India.



## APPENDIX VIII

### Cabinet Ministers With Their Respective Cabinet Committees & GoMs -Vajpayee3 Government

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister.	<p>Appointment committee of the cabinet</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Prices</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on WTO Matters</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Environment</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Reforms</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Security</p>	<p>GOM of Ministers on Commemoration of 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic</p>
L.K Advani, Home Minister	<p>Appointment committee of the cabinet</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Prices</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Reforms</p>	<p>GOM on Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) for Delhi. (Reconstitution)</p> <p>GOM to Consider matters relating to the recommendations of the Fifth Central pay Commission (Reconstitution)</p> <p>GOM on Freedom of Information Bill (Reconstitution)</p> <p>GOM on Central Vigilance Commission Bill , 1999</p> <p>GOM of Ministers on Commemoration of 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic</p> <p>Group of Ministers to consider issues connected with Direct-to-Home(DTH) Broadcasting</p> <p>GOM on Lokpal Bill , 1999</p> <p>GOM to Amendment of “The Persons with Disabilities( Equal Opportunities , Protection of Rights and Full</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
	Cabinet Committee on Security	<p>Participation) Act , 1995'' (Act no. 1 of 1996)</p> <p>GOM to Strengthening the Small Scale Industries (SSI) sector in the context of progressive dismantling of Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) and consequent increase in international competition</p> <p>GOM to Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19 (1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951</p> <p>Empowered GOM on Disaster Management</p> <p>(ii) Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19(1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951.</p> <p>GOM to (i) Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19 (1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951</p> <p>Code of Ethics for Government Servants- Consideration by Group of Ministers.</p> <p>GOM on the setting up National Commission for Schedule Tribes.</p>
Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, Minister of Human Resource Development and Minister of Science and Technology	<p>Cabinet Committee on Accomodation</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on WTO Matters</p>	<p>GOM to Consider matters relating to the recommendations of the Fifth Central pay Commission (Reconstitution)</p> <p>GOM of Ministers on Commemoration of 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic</p> <p>GOM on Scientific Matters</p> <p>GOM on Corporation of Department of Telecom Services matters regarding</p> <p>GOM to Formulation of National Policy for the Empowerment of Woman</p> <p>GOM on (i) Revival package in respect to Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Ltd. (HFC) for the submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR)</p> <p>(ii) Revival package in respect of Fertilizer Corporation of India Limited (FCI) for the submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR)</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		<p>(iii) Revised rehabilitation revival package in respect of Project s &amp; Development India Limited (PDIL) for submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR).</p> <p>(IV) Revival/Rehabilitation package for Pyrites, Phosphates &amp; Chemical Limited (PPCL)</p> <p>GOM on Renewal Energy Policy Statement</p> <p>GOM to Setting up of a National Institute for Tribal Affairs.</p>
Jagmohan, Minister of Urban Development.	<p>Cabinet Committee on Accommodation</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Environment</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (Special Invitee)</p>	<p>GOM on Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) for Delhi. (Reconstitution)</p> <p>GOM on Tourism Industry and trade</p> <p>GOM on Management of Surplus Salt in Mumbai</p> <p>GOM to Setting up of a National Institute for Tribal Affairs</p>
Suresh Prabhu, Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers.	<p>Cabinet Committee on Accommodation</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on WTO Matters</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Environment</p>	<p>GOM on Bhopal Gas leak Disaster (Reconstitution)</p> <p>GOM to Consider matters relating to the recommendations of the Fifth Central pay Commission (Reconstitution)</p> <p>GOM to Policy Paper to promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President's address to Parliament.</p> <p>GOM to The Electricity Bill , 2000 to consolidate and amend the existing Electricity Laws namely , the Indian Electricity Act , 1910 , the Electricity (Supply) Act , 1948 and Electricity Regulation Commissions Act , 1998.</p> <p>GOM to examine Strategy for Liquidation of Outstanding Statutory Dues of Workers employed in Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) (revise)</p> <p>GOM to</p> <p>GOM to Renewable Energy Statement.</p> <p>GOM on the demand of the Trade Unions in the Coal Industry</p> <p>GOM to</p> <p>GOM on Policy paper to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President's address to Parliament</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Mamta Banerjee, Minister of Railways	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on Environment	GOM on Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) for Delhi. (Reconstitution) GOM on Tourism Industry and trade GOM on National Policy on Resettlement & Rehabilitation of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of compulsory acquisition of land GOM of Ministers on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic GOM to Formulation of National Policy for the Empowerment of Woman GOM on the demand of the Trade Unions in the Coal Industry Empowered GOM on Disaster Management
P. R. Kumarmangalam, Minister of Power	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology Cabinet Committee on Environment	GOM on National Policy on Resettlement & Rehabilitation of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of compulsory acquisition of land GOM on Scientific Matters GOM on Repeal of Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985 GOM on (1)Amendment to The Industrial Disputes Act , 1947 (2) New Legislation for Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service of Contact Labour in India GOM to Grant of Interest Subsidy for Electrification of Tribal and Dalit Bastis to Rural Electrification Corporation GOM on Payment of Wages Act , 1936 – Proposals for Amendments GOM to The Electricity Bill , 2000 to consolidate and amen the existing Electricity Laws namely , the Indian Electricity Act , 1910 , the Electricity (Supply) Act , 1948 and Electricity Regulation Commissions Act , 1998.
Pramod Mahajan, Minister of parliamentary affairs and Minister of Water Resources	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on information Technology	GOM on National Policy on Resettlement & Rehabilitation of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of compulsory acquisition of land (Reconstitution) GOM on Freedom of Information Bill (Reconstitution) GOM on Central Vigilance Commission Bill , 1999 GOM of Ministers on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		<p>Group of Ministers to consider issues connected with Direct-to-Home(DTH) Broadcasting</p> <p>GOM on Scientific Matters</p> <p>GOM on (1)Amendment to The Industrial Disputes Act , 1947</p> <p>(2) New Legislation for Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service of Contract Labour in India</p> <p>GOM to Grant of Interest Subsidy for Electrification of Tribal and Dalit Bastis to Rural Electrification Corporation</p> <p>GOM on Lokpal Bill , 1999</p> <p>GOM on Payment of Wages Act , 1936 – Proposals for Amendments</p> <p>GOM to Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19 (1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951</p> <p>GOM to examine Strategy for Liquidation of Outstanding Statutory Dues of Workers employed in Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) (revise)</p> <p>GOM to Introduction of Joint Venture Partner(s) in RailTel Corporation of India Limited (RCIL)- a Corporation under the Ministry of Railways.</p> <p>(ii) Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19(1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951.</p> <p>(iii) Code of Ethics for Government Servants – Consideration by Group of Ministers</p> <p>GOM on Policy to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President’s address to Parliament</p> <p>GOM on Management of Surplus Salt in Mumbai</p> <p>GOM to (i) Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19 (1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951</p> <p>GOM on Policy paper to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President’s address to</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		Parliament GOM on Policy to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President's address to Parliament
Murasoli Maran, Minister of Commerce and Industry	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on WTO Matters Cabinet Committee on information Technology Cabinet Committee on Environment	GOM on Central Vigilance Commission Bill , 1999 GOM to Policy Paper to promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President's address to Parliament. GOM on Scientific Matters GOM on Repeal of Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985 GOM on (1)Amendment to The Industrial Disputes Act , 1947 (2) New Legislation for Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service of Contact Labour in India GOM on Payment of Wages Act , 1936 – Proposals for Amendments GOM to Turnaround Plan of HMT Limited GOM on Corporation of Department of Telecom Services matters regarding GOM to Withdrawal of Quantitative Restrictions on the import of agricultural commodities under the WTO regime with the effect from 1.4.2001. GOM to Amendment of “The Persons with Disabilities( Equal Opportunities , Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act , 1995” (Act no. 1 of 1996) GOM on Policy to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President's address to Parliament GOM to Strengthening the Small Scale Industries (SSI) sector in the context of progressive dismantling of Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) and consequent increase in international competition GOM on Labour Reforms GOM on Integrated Food Laws GOM on Formulation of new pricing policy for Urea units. GOM to Strategy for Liquidation of Outstanding statutory dues of workers employed in CPSUs GOM on Policy paper to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President's address to Parliament GOM on Policy to Promote Foreign



	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President's address to Parliament (ii) Price Support Operations undertaken by NAFED for procurement of Oilseeds and Pulses
Ram Naik, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment Cabinet Committee on Environment	GOM on (i) Revival package in respect to Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Ltd. (HFC) for the submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) (ii) Revival package in respect of Fertilizer Corporation of India Limited (FCI) for the submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) (iii) Revised rehabilitation revival package in respect of Project s & Development India Limited (PDIL) for submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR). (IV) Revival/Rehabilitation package for Pyrites, Phosphates & Chemical Limited (PPCL) GOM on Management of Surplus Salt in Mumbai GOM on Fixation of Natural gas prices for the period up to 1.10.2003
Nitish Kumar, Minister of Surface Transport.	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology	GOM on National Policy on Resettlement & Rehabilitation of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of compulsory acquisition of land (Reconstitution) GOM on Central Vigilance Commission Bill, 1999 GOM to Inland Water Transport – Policy Framework and Strategy for Development GOM to Empowered GOM on Disaster Management GOM to Introduction of Joint Venture Partner(s) in RailTel Corporation of India Limited (RCIL)- a Corporation under the Ministry of Railways. GOM on Drought like situation and scarcity of drinking water in some parts of the country GOM on Management of Surplus Salt in Mumbai
Naveen Patnaik, Minister of Mines and Minerals.	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee	

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
	on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment	
Sunder Lal Patwa, Minister of Rural Development	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs	GOM on National Policy on Resettlement & Rehabilitation of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of compulsory acquisition of land (Reconstitution)
Yashwant Sinha, Minister of Finance	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment Cabinet Committee on WTO Matters Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic Cabinet Committee on Environment Cabinet Committee on Economic Reforms Cabinet Committee on Security	GOM on Bhopal Gas leak Disaster (Reconstitution) GOM on Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) for Delhi. (Reconstitution) GOM to Consider matters relating to the recommendations of the Fifth Central pay Commission (Reconstitution) GOM on Central Vigilance Commission Bill , 1999 GOM of Ministers on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic Group of Ministers to consider issues connected with Direct-to-Home(DTH) Broadcasting GOM to Policy Paper to promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President's address to Parliament. GOM on Scientific Matters GOM on Repeal of Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985 GOM on (1)Amendment to The Industrial Disputes Act , 1947 (2) New Legislation for Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service of Contact Labour in India GOM to Grant of Interest Subsidy for Electrification of Tribal and Dalit Bastis to Rural Electrification Corporation GOM on Payment of Wages Act , 1936 – Proposals for Amendments GOM to The Electricity Bill , 2000 to consolidate and amend the existing Electricity Laws namely , the Indian Electricity Act , 1910 , the Electricity (Supply) Act , 1948 and Electricity Regulation Commissions Act , 1998. GOM to Amendment of “The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities , Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act , 1995” (Act no. 1 of 1996)

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		<p>GOM to Turnaround Plan of HMT Limited</p> <p>GOM on Action plan for sick subsidiaries of National Textile Corporation Ltd.</p> <p>GOM to Strengthening the Small Scale Industries (SSI) sector in the context of progressive dismantling of Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) and consequent increase in international competition</p> <p>GOM on Corporation of Department of Telecom Services matters regarding</p> <p>GOM to Inland Water Transport – Policy Framework and Strategy for Development</p> <p>GOM to examine Strategy for Liquidation of Outstanding Statutory Dues of Workers employed in Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) (revise)</p> <p>GOM to Renewable Energy Statement.</p> <p>GOM on the demand of the Trade Unions in the Coal Industry</p> <p>GOM to Introduction of Joint Venture Partner(s) in RailTel Corporation of India Limited (RCIL)- a Corporation under the Ministry of Railways.</p> <p>GOM on Drought like situation and scarcity of drinking water in some parts of the country</p> <p>Proposal to amend the Companies Act, 1956 to enable formation of “Producer Companies”</p> <p>GOM to Withdrawal of Quantitative Restrictions on the import of agricultural commodities under the WTO regime with the effect from 1.4.2001.</p> <p>GOM on (i) Revival package in respect to Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Ltd. (HFC) for the submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR)</p> <p>(ii) Revival package in respect of Fertilizer Corporation of India Limited (FCI) for the submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR)</p> <p>(iii) Revised rehabilitation revival package in respect of Project s &amp;Development India Limited(PDIL) for submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR).</p> <p>(IV)Revival/Rehabilitation package for Pyrites, Phosphates &amp; Chemical Limited</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		(PPCL) GOM on Labour Reforms GOM on Policy to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President's address to Parliament GOM on Ex- Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS). GOM to (i) Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19 (1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951 GOM on Policy paper to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President's address to Parliament GOM on Policy to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President's address to Parliament GOM on Telecom Matters.
K.C. Pant, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (Special Invitee) Cabinet Committee on Prices (Special Invitee) Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities (Special Invitee) Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment Cabinet Committee on Economic Reforms Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic (Special Invitee) Cabinet Committee on Security	GOM on Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) for Delhi. (Reconstitution) GOM on National Policy on Resettlement & Rehabilitation of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of compulsory acquisition of land GOM of Ministers on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic (Reconstitution) GOM on Scientific Matters GOM on (1) Amendment to The Industrial Disputes Act , 1947 (2) New Legislation for Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service of Contract Labour in India GOM to Grant of Interest Subsidy for Electrification of Tribal and Dalit Bastis to Rural Electrification Corporation GOM on Payment of Wages Act , 1936 – Proposals for Amendments GOM to The Electricity Bill , 2000 to consolidate and amend the existing Electricity Laws namely , the Indian Electricity Act , 1910 , the Electricity (Supply) Act , 1948 and Electricity Regulation Commissions Act , 1998. GOM to Amendment of “The Persons with Disabilities( Equal Opportunities , Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act , 1995” (Act no. 1 of 1996) GOM to Turnaround Plan of HMT

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		<p>Limited</p> <p>GOM to Strengthening the Small Scale Industries (SSI) sector in the context of progressive dismantling of Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) and consequent increase in international competition</p> <p>GOM to Formulation of National Policy for the Empowerment of Woman</p> <p>GOM to Inland Water Transport – Policy Framework and Strategy for Development</p> <p>GOM to</p> <p>GOM to examine Strategy for Liquidation of Outstanding Statutory Dues of Workers employed in Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) (revise)</p> <p>Empowered GOM on Disaster Management</p> <p>GOM to Introduction of Joint Venture Partner(s) in RailTel Corporation of India Limited (RCIL)- a Corporation under the Ministry of Railways.</p> <p>GOM on Drought like situation and scarcity of drinking water in some parts of the country</p> <p>GOM to Withdrawal of Quantitative Restrictions on the import of agricultural commodities under the WTO regime with the effect from 1.4.2001.</p> <p>GOM on the setting up of National Old Age Social and Income Authority</p> <p>GOM on Labour Reforms</p> <p>GOM on Management of Surplus Salt in Mumbai</p> <p>GOM on Renewal Energy Policy Statement</p> <p>GOM to Setting up of a National Institute for Tribal Affairs</p> <p>GOM on Formulation of new pricing policy for Urea units.</p> <p>GOM on the setting up National Commission for Schedule Tribes.</p> <p>(ii) Price Support Operations undertaken by NAFED for procurement of Oilseeds and Pulses</p> <p>GOM on Policy and Institutional Reforms</p> <p>GOM on Fixation of Natural gas prices for the period up to 1.10.2003</p>
S.B.P.B.K. Satyanarayan Rao, Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs(Special Invitee)	GOM on National Policy on Resettlement & Rehabilitation of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of compulsory

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
	Cabinet Committee on Prices (Special Invitee) Cabinet Committee on WTO Matters	acquisition of land (Reconstitution)
Hukumdeo Narayan Yadav, Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture.	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs(Special Invitee)	
Ananth Kumar, Minister of Culture and Youth Affairs and Sports.	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic	GOM on Tourism Industry and trade GOM of Ministers on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic GOM to Turnaround Plan of HMT Limited GOM to Inland Water Transport – Policy Framework and Strategy for Development GOM on Management of Surplus Salt in Mumbai GOM on the setting up National Commission for Schedule Tribes.
T.R. Baalu, Minister of Environment and Forests	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on WTO Matters Cabinet Committee on Environment	GOM to Inland Water Transport – Policy Framework and Strategy for Development
Ram Jethmalani, Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs	GOM on Bhopal Gas leak Disaster (Reconstitution) GOM on National Policy on Resettlement & Rehabilitation of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of compulsory acquisition of land (Reconstitution) GOM on Freedom of Information Bill (Reconstitution) GOM on Central Vigilance Commission Bill , 1999 GOM on Lokpal Bill , 1999 GOM to Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19 (1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951
Arun Jaitley, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on information	GOM on Central Vigilance Commission Bill , 1999 GOM on Tourism Industry and trade GOM on Freedom of Information Bill (REVISED)

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
	Technology Cabinet Committee on Economic Reforms	GOM of Ministers on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic Group of Ministers to consider issues connected with Direct-to-Home(DTH) Broadcasting GOM to Amendment of “The Persons with Disabilities( Equal Opportunities , Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act , 1995” (Act no. 1 of 1996) GOM on Action plan for sick subsidiaries of National Textile Corporation Ltd. GOM to Formulation of National Policy for the Empowerment of Woman (ii) Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19 (1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951 (ii) Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19(1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951. (iii) Code of Ethics for Government Servants – Consideration by Group of Ministers Proposal to amend the Companies Act, 1956 to enable formation of “Producer Companies” GOM on Labour Reforms GOM on Management of Surplus Salt in Mumbai GOM on Telecom Matters.
Rajagopal, Minister of state in the Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs.	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (special Invitee)	
Santosh Gangwar, Minister of State in the Ministry of Science and Technology	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (special Invitee)	
Sriram Chauhan, Minister of state in the Ministry of parliamentary affairs	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (special Invitee)	
Faggan Singh Kulaste, Minister of state in the Ministry of parliamentary affairs	Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (special Invitee)	

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Ram Vilas Paswan, Minister of Communications	Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology Cabinet Committee on information Technology	Group of Ministers to consider issues connected with Direct-to-Home(DTH) Broadcasting GOM to Policy Paper to promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President's address to Parliament. GOM on Corporation of Department of Telecom Services matters regarding Empowered GOM on Disaster Management GOM to Introduction of Joint Venture Partner(s) in RailTel Corporation of India Limited (RCIL)- a Corporation under the Ministry of Railways.
Kashiram Rana, Minister of Textiles.	Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on WTO Matters	GOM on (1)Amendment to The Industrial Disputes Act , 1947 (2) New Legislation for Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service of Contact Labour in India GOM on Payment of Wages Act , 1936 – Proposals for Amendments GOM on Action plan for sick subsidiaries of National Textile Corporation Ltd. GOM to Strengthening the Small Scale Industries (SSI) sector in the context of progressive dismantling of Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) and consequent increase in international competition GOM to examine Strategy for Liquidation of Outstanding Statutory Dues of Workers employed in Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) (revise) Empowered GOM on Disaster Management
Shanta Kumar, Minister of Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution.	Cabinet Committee on Prices	Empowered GOM on Disaster Management GOM to (i) Withdrawal of Quantitative Restrictions on the import of agricultural commodities under the WTO regime with the effect from 1.4.2001. (ii) Price Support Operations undertaken by NAFED for procurement of Oilseeds and Pulses
George Fernandes, Minister of Defence	Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes	GOM on Freedom of Information Bill (Reconstitution) GOM of Ministers on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic Group of Ministers to consider issues



	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
	and Schedule Tribes and Minorities Cabinet Committee on Security	connected with Direct-to-Home(DTH) Broadcasting GOM on Scientific Matters GOM on Lokpal Bill , 1999 GOM to Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19 (1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951 Empowered GOM on Disaster Management GOM on Ex- Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS). GOM on Telecom Matters.
Satyanarayan Jatiya, Minister of Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities	GOM on (1)Amendment to The Industrial Disputes Act , 1947 (2) New Legislation for Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service of Contact Labour in India GOM on Payment of Wages Act , 1936 – Proposals for Amendments GOM on Action plan for sick subsidiaries of National Textile Corporation Ltd. GOM on Corporation of Department of Telecom Services matters regarding GOM to Repeal of Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act , 1985 GOM to examine Strategy for Liquidation of Outstanding Statutory Dues of Workers employed in Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) (revise) Constitution of GOM on the Demands of the Trade Unions in the Coal Industry GOM on the setting up of National Old Age Social and Income Authority GOM on the setting up National Commission for Schedule Tribes.
Jual Oram, minister of tribal Affairs.	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities	GOM to Grant of Interest Subsidy for Electrification of Tribal and Dalit Bastis to Rural Electrification Corporation GOM on the setting up National Commission for Schedule Tribes. GOM to Setting up of a National Institute for Tribal Affairs.
Smt Maneka Gandhi, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities	GOM to Amendment of “The Persons with Disabilities( Equal Opportunities , Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act , 1995” (Act no. 1 of 1996)

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		GOM to Formulation of National Policy for the Empowerment of Woman (revise) GOM on the setting up of National Old Age Social and Income Authority
Syed Shahnawaz Hussain, Minister of state in the Department of Food Processing Industries.	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities (Special Invitee)	
Bangaru Laxman, Minister of state in the Ministry of Planning and Minister of state in the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities (Special Invitee)	
Babulal Marandi, Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment and Forests.	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities (Special Invitee)	
Luni Lall, Minister of state in the Ministry of Labour	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities (Special Invitee)	
Omar Abdullah, Minister of state in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities (Special Invitee)	
Th. Chaoba Singh, Minister of state in the Ministry of Culture, Youth Affairs and Sports.	Cabinet Committee on Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes and Minorities (Special Invitee)	
Manohar Joshi, minister of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises	Cabinet Committee on Science and Technology Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment	GOM on Repeal of Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985 GOM on Payment of Wages Act , 1936 – Proposals for Amendments GOM to Turnaround Plan of HMT Limited GOM to Inland Water Transport – Policy Framework and Strategy for Development GOM to examine Strategy for Liquidation of Outstanding Statutory Dues of Workers employed in Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs)

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		(revise) GOM on (i) Revival package in respect to Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Ltd. (HFC) for the submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) (ii) Revival package in respect of Fertilizer Corporation of India Limited (FCI) for the submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) (iii) Revised rehabilitation revival package in respect of Project s & Development India Limited (PDIL) for submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR). (IV) Revival/Rehabilitation package for Pyrites, Phosphates & Chemical Limited (PPCL) GOM on Management of Surplus Salt in Mumbai
Sharad Yadav, Minister of Civil Aviation.	Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment	GOM on Tourism Industry and trade GOM on Labour Reforms GOM on Management of Surplus Salt in Mumbai  (ii) Price Support Operations undertaken by NAFED for procurement of Oilseeds and Pulses GOM on Integrated Food Laws.
Jaswant Singh, Minister of External Affairs	Cabinet Committee on WTO Matters Cabinet Committee on Security	GOM to Consider matters relating to the recommendations of the Fifth Central pay Commission (Reconstitution) GOM on Freedom of Information Bill (Reconstitution) GOM to Policy Paper to promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President's address to Parliament. GOM on Lokpal Bill , 1999 GOM to Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19 (1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951 (ii) Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19 (1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		<p>( iii) Code of Ethics for Government Servants – Consideration by Group of Ministers</p> <p>GOM on Policy to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President’s address to Parliament</p> <p>GOM on Integrated Food Laws</p> <p>GOM to Setting up of a National Institute for Tribal Affairs</p> <p>GOM on Formulation of new pricing policy for Urea units.</p> <p>GOM on Ex- Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS).</p> <p>GOM on Policy and Institutional Reforms</p> <p>GOM on the setting up National Commission for Schedule Tribes.</p> <p>GOM on Policy paper to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President’s address to Parliament</p> <p>(i) Price Support Operations undertaken by NAFED for procurement of Oilseeds and Pulses</p> <p>GOM on Policy to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President’s address to Parliament</p> <p>GOM on Telecom Matters.</p>
Sukhdev Singh, Dhindsa, Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports and Minister of Mines	Cabinet Committee on Environment	<p>GOM of Ministers on Commemoration of 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic</p> <p>GOM on (i) Revival package in respect to Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Ltd. (HFC) for the submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR)</p> <p>(ii) Revival package in respect of Fertilizer Corporation of India Limited (FCI) for the submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR)</p> <p>(iii) Revised rehabilitation revival package in respect of Project s &amp;Development India Limited(PDIL) for submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR).</p> <p>(IV)Revival/Rehabilitation package for Pyrites, Phosphates &amp; Chemical Limited (PPCL)</p> <p>GOM on Formulation of new pricing policy for Urea units.</p> <p>GOM on Fixation of Natural gas prices for the period up to 1.10.2003</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Rajnath Singh, Minister of Surface Transport	Cabinet Committee on Environment	GOM on (1)Amendment to The Industrial Disputes Act , 1947 (2) New Legislation for Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service of Contract Labour in India GOM on Payment of Wages Act , 1936 – Proposals for Amendments GOM to Inland Water Transport – Policy Framework and Strategy for Development GOM to examine Strategy for Liquidation of Outstanding Statutory Dues of Workers employed in Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) (revise)
C.P. Thakur, Minister of Health and Family Welfare	Cabinet Committee on Environment	GOM to Formulation of National Policy for the Empowerment of Woman  Empowered GOM on Disaster Management
Ved Prakash Goyal, minister of Shipping		GOM on Management of Surplus Salt in Mumbai GOM on Formulation of new pricing policy for Urea units.
M. Venkaiah Naidu, Minister of Rural Development	Cabinet Committee on Economic Reforms	GOM on Drought like situation and scarcity of drinking water in some parts of the country Proposal to amend the Companies Act, 1956 to enable formation of “Producer Companies” GOM to Withdrawal of Quantitative Restrictions on the import of agricultural commodities under the WTO regime with the effect from 1.4.2001. GOM on the setting up of National Old Age Social and Income Authority
Arun Shourie, Minister of Disinvestment and Minister of Development of NorthEastern region	Cabinet Committee on Economic Reforms	GOM of Ministers on Commemoration of 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Republic GOM to The Electricity Bill , 2000 to consolidate and amend the existing Electricity Laws namely , the Indian Electricity Act , 1910 , the Electricity (Supply) Act , 1948 and Electricity Regulation Commissions Act , 1998. GOM on Action plan for sick subsidiaries of National Textile Corporation Ltd. GOM to Formulation of National Policy for the Empowerment of Woman (ii) Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19 (1) of the

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		<p>Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951</p> <p>GOM to Introduction of Joint Venture Partner(s) in RailTel Corporation of India Limited (RCIL)- a Corporation under the Ministry of Railways.</p> <p>(ii) Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19(1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951.</p> <p>(iii) Code of Ethics for Government Servants – Consideration by Group of Ministers</p> <p>GOM on (i) Revival package in respect to Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Ltd. (HFC) for the submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR)</p> <p>(ii) Revival package in respect of Fertilizer Corporation of India Limited (FCI) for the submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR)</p> <p>(iii) Revised rehabilitation revival package in respect of Project s &amp;Development India Limited(PDIL) for submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR).</p> <p>(IV)Revival/Rehabilitation package for Pyrites, Phosphates &amp; Chemical Limited (PPCL)</p> <p>GOM on Formulation of new pricing policy for Urea units.</p> <p>GOM to (i) Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19 (1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951</p> <p>GOM on Policy and Institutional Reforms.</p> <p>GOM on Fixation of Natural gas prices for the period up to 1.10.2003</p> <p>GOM on Telecom Matters.</p>
Ajit Singh, Minister of Agriculture	Cabinet Committee on Economic Reforms	<p>Proposal to amend the Companies Act, 1956 to enable formation of “Producer Companies”</p> <p>GOM to Withdrawal of Quantitative Restrictions on the import of agricultural commodities under the WTO regime with the effect from 1.4.2001.</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		<p>GOM on the setting up of National Old Age Social and Income Authority</p> <p>GOM on (i) Revival package in respect to Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Ltd. (HFC) for the submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR)</p> <p>(ii) Revival package in respect of Fertilizer Corporation of India Limited (FCI) for the submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR)</p> <p>(iii) Revised rehabilitation revival package in respect of Project s &amp;Development India Limited(PDIL) for submission to the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR).</p> <p>(IV)Revival/Rehabilitation package for Pyrites, Phosphates &amp; Chemical Limited (PPCL)</p> <p>GOM on Integrated Food Laws</p> <p>GOM to examine Drought like situation and scarcity of drinking water in some parts of the country</p> <p>(ii) Price Support Operations undertaken by NAFED for procurement of Oilseeds and Pulses</p>
Arjun Charan Sethi, Minister of Water Resources		GOM on Drought like situation and scarcity of drinking water in some parts of the country
Vasundhara Raje, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Small Scale Industries, Minister of State in the Ministry of Personnel Grievances and Pensions, Ministry of Planning, Department of Atomic Energy and Department of Space	Cabinet Committee on Economic Reforms (Special Invitee)	<p>GOM to Consider matters relating to the recommendations of the Fifth Central pay Commission (Reconstitution)</p> <p>GOM on Freedom of Information Bill (Reconstitution)</p> <p>GOM on Central Vigilance Commission Bill , 1999</p> <p>Group of Ministers to consider issues connected with Direct-to-Home(DTH) Broadcasting</p> <p>GOM to Policy Paper to promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President’s address to Parliament.</p> <p>GOM to Amendment of “The Persons with Disabilities( Equal Opportunities , Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act , 1995” (Act no. 1 of 1996)</p> <p>GOM to Strengthening the Small Scale Industries (SSI) sector in the context of progressive dismantling of Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) and consequent</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		<p>increase in international competition</p> <p>GOM on Corporation of Department of Telecom Services matters regarding</p> <p>(i) Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19 (1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951</p> <p>(ii) Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19(1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951.</p> <p>(iii) Code of Ethics for Government Servants – Consideration by Group of Ministers</p> <p>GOM on the setting up of National Old Age Social and Income Authority</p> <p>GOM on Labour Reforms</p> <p>GOM on Policy to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President’s address to Parliament</p> <p>GOM to (i) Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19 (1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951</p> <p>GOM on Policy paper to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President’s address to Parliament</p> <p>GOM on Policy to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President’s address to Parliament</p>
Arif Akil, State Minister (Independent Charge) in the Department of Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Department, Govt. of MP		GOM on Bhopal Gas leak Disaster (Reconstitution)
Vijay Kapoor, Lt. Governor, Delhi		GOM on Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) for Delhi. (Reconstitution) Permanent Invitees
Shiela Dikshit, CM Delhi		GOM on Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) for Delhi. (Reconstitution) Permanent Invitees
Uma Bharti, Minister of (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Tourism		GOM on Tourism Industry and trade GOM to Withdrawal of Quantitative Restrictions on the import of agricultural



	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
		commodities under the WTO regime with the effect from 1.4.2001. (ii) Price Support Operations undertaken by NAFED for procurement of Oilseeds and Pulses
Subhas Maharia, Ministry of State in the Ministry of Rural Development		GOM on National Policy on Resettlement & Rehabilitation of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of compulsory acquisition of land(Reconstitution) <u>Special Invitee</u>
A.Raja, Minister of State in the Minister in the Ministry of Rural Development		GOM on National Policy on Resettlement & Rehabilitation of persons or families adversely affected or displaced on account of compulsory acquisition of land (Reconstitution) <u>Special Invitee</u>
Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India.		GOM on Scientific Matters <u>SPECIAL INVITEE</u>
O. Rajagopala, Minister of State in the Ministry of Law of Justice Company Affairs Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.		GOM to Formulation of National Policy for the Empowerment of Woman
M. Kannappan , Minister of State (IC) of the Minister of Non- Conventional Energy Sources.		GOM to Renewable Energy Statement.
N.T. Shanmugam , Minister of State (IC) of the Ministry of Coal		GOM to Renewable Energy Statement. GOM on the demand of the Trade Unions in the Coal Industry GOM on Integrated Food Laws.
K. Jana Krishnamurthy, Minister of Law and Justice		GOM on Integrated Food Laws GOM to (i) Introduction of the Anti Corruption and Election Law (Amendment) Bill, 2000 amending Section 19 (1) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 8 of the Representation of People Act, 1951. GOM on the setting up National Commission for Schedule Tribes. GOM on Policy and Institutional Reforms

	<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	<b>GoM</b>
Anant Gangaram Geete, Minster of Power		GOM on Policy to Promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in pursuance of the President's address to Parliament GOM on Fixation of Natural gas prices for the period up to 1.10.2003
Ravi Shankar Prasad, Minister of State in the Ministry of Coal and Mines and Minister of State in the Ministry of Law and Justice		GOM on Telecom Matters
Shatrughan Sinha, Minister of Health and Family Welfare		GOM on Integrated Food Laws GOM on Ex- Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS).

Author's own calculation.

Source: RTI filed in the Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India.

## APPENDIX IX

### Cabinet Ministers With Their Respective Cabinet Committees & GoMs -Manmohan Singh Government

	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
Prime Minister	Composition of Cabinet Committee on WTO matters Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs Cabinet Committee on Security Cabinet Committee on Appointments Cabinet Committee on Drought Management Composition of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs Cabinet Committee on Prices	
Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission Special Invitee Montek Singh Ahluwalia	Composition of Cabinet Committee on WTO matters Cabinet Committee on Drought Management Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on Management of Natural Resources Cabinet Committee on Tribal Affairs Composition of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs	EGOM to examine and decide on all policy issues relating to Dabhol Power Project GoM for Strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions. GoM for finalizing common inter-ministerial positions on all matters relating to the negotiations, particularly in agriculture and industrial tariffs relating to 'World Trade Organisation' EGOM regarding approval of Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme GoM on Mass Rapid Transit System for Delhi GoM to examine various issues pertaining to the functioning of Prasar Bharti. EGoM to consider the issues relating to Special Economic Zones GoM to consider issues relating to Waiver of custom duty on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and granting status of declared goods to LNG/RLNG/Natural Gas EGoM to exercise future options for import of Wheat EGoM to closely monitor the Naxal situation EGoM to collate two schemes - the National Population Register under the Citizenship Act, 1955 and the Unique Identification Number Project of the Department of Information Technology EGoM to lay down the policy for cluster development and oversee its

	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
		<p>implementation  GoM on National Pharmaceuticals Policy, 2006  EGoM on Legal opinion on the survivability of the 'Call Option' provisions of the Shareholders' Agreements entered into at the time of strategic sale of CPSE during the year 2000-03 namely, Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited, Paradeep Phosphates Limited and Jessop and Company Limited  GoM on various issues regarding sustainable use of fertilizers and pertinent subsidy and pricing issues  EGoM for facilitating expeditious decisions in all cases concerning Ultra Mega Power Projects (UMPPS).  GoM on National Civil Aviation Policy  GoM on Power Sector issues  EGoM on Gas pricing  GoM on Revamped Strategy for River Conservation under the National River Conservation Directorate, Union Ministry of Environment &amp; Forests.  GoM on Establishment of Distance Education Council  GoM on Continued implementation and third phase of expansion of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme during the 11th Five Year Plan  GoM to oversee the Modernization of the transport system in Delhi  GoM on Revival Package for Indian Drugs &amp; Pharmaceuticals Limited  GoM on Auction of 3G Spectrum</p>
Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Minister of Defence	<p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs  Composition of Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs  Composition of Cabinet Committee on WTO matters  Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs  Cabinet Committee on Security</p>	<p>Committee of Ministers on Dalit Affairs  EGOM to examine and decide on all policy issues relating to Dabhol Power Project  GoM to consider issues concerning 'Resolution dated 21st April, 2004 on Whistle blowers' and 'The Public Interest Disclosure (Protection of Informers) Bill 2004' as drafted by the Law Commission of India and make recommendations thereon  GoM for finalizing common inter-ministerial positions on all matters relating to the negotiations, particularly in agriculture and industrial tariffs relating to 'World Trade Organisation'  GoM on Mass Rapid Transit System</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
		<p>for Delhi</p> <p>EGoM to consider the issues relating to Special Economic Zones</p> <p>EGoM to exercise future options for import of Wheat</p> <p>EGoM to collate two schemes - the National Population Register under the Citizenship Act, 1955 and the Unique Identification Number Project of the Department of Information Technology</p> <p>EGoM to lay down the policy for cluster development and oversee its implementation</p> <p>EGoM on Legal opinion on the survivability of the 'Call Option' provisions of the Shareholders' Agreements entered into at the time of strategic sale of CPSE during the year 2000-03 namely, Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited, Paradeep Phosphates Limited and Jessop and Company Limited</p> <p>GoM on Setting up of a Legislative Assembly in Andaman and Nicobar Islands</p> <p>GoM To consider the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Commission</p> <p>GoM on Rehabilitation-cum-Financial Restructuring of Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL), Visakhapatnam</p> <p>GoM on Exemption of Central Police Forces Personnel from the purview of New Contributory Pension System</p> <p>GoM on the issue of Labelling Beedi bundles with warning on injury to health</p> <p>GoM on National Civil Aviation Policy</p> <p>EGoM on Gas pricing</p> <p>GoM on Auction of 3G Spectrum</p>
Shri Sharad Pawar, Minister of Agriculture & Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution	<p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs</p> <p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on WTO matters</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Accommodation</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Drought Management</p>	<p>GoM to Consider all issues relating to Sick Subsidiaries of National Textile Corporation Limited</p> <p>Committee of Ministers on Dalit Affairs</p> <p>EGoM to examine and decide on all policy issues relating to Dabhol Power Project</p> <p>GoM for Strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions.</p> <p>GoM for finalizing common inter-ministerial positions on all matters relating to the negotiations, particularly in agriculture and</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
	<p>Cabinet Committee on Prices</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Management of Natural Resources</p>	<p>industrial tariffs relating to 'World Trade Organisation'</p> <p>GoM for restructuring of the Price Stabilization Fund Scheme for Coffee, Tea, Rubber and Tobacco Growers</p> <p>EGoM to exercise future options for import of Wheat</p> <p>EGoM to lay down the policy for cluster development and oversee its implementation</p> <p>GoM on National Pharmaceuticals Policy, 2006</p> <p>GoM for management of Surplus Salt Pan Lands in Mumbai and other cities</p> <p>GoM To consider the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Commission</p> <p>GoM on various issues regarding sustainable use of fertilizers and pertinent subsidy and pricing issues</p> <p>GoM on National Civil Aviation Policy</p> <p>GoM on Continued implementation and third phase of expansion of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme during the 11th Five Year Plan</p> <p>GoM on Auction of 3G Spectrum</p>
Shri Lalu Prasad, Minister of Railways	<p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs</p>	<p>GoM on Mass Rapid Transit System for Delhi</p> <p>GoM on National Civil Aviation Policy</p> <p>GoM to oversee the Modernization of the transport system in Delhi</p> <p>GoM on Auction of 3G Spectrum</p>
Shri Ram Vilas Paswan, Minister of Chemicals & Fertilizers & Minister of Steel	<p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs</p> <p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on WTO matters</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Accommodation</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Prices</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Management of Natural Resources</p> <p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p>	<p>GoM on Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster Committee of Ministers on Dalit Affairs</p> <p>GoM for Strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions.</p> <p>GoM on National Pharmaceuticals Policy, 2006</p> <p>EGoM on Legal opinion on the survivability of the 'Call Option' provisions of the Shareholders' Agreements entered into at the time of strategic sale of CPSE during the year 2000-03 namely, Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited, Paradeep Phosphates Limited and Jessop and Company Limited</p> <p>GoM on various issues regarding sustainable use of fertilizers and pertinent subsidy and pricing issues</p> <p>EGoM on Gas pricing</p> <p>GoM on Revival Package for Indian</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
		Drugs & Pharmaceuticals Limited GoM on Auction of 3G Spectrum
Shri P. Chidambaram, Minister of Finance	<p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on WTO matters</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Security</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Drought Management</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Prices</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Management of Natural Resources</p>	<p>GoM to Consider all issues relating to Sick Subsidiaries of National Textile Corporation Limited</p> <p>Core GoM for coordinating the work related to the organization of the Commonwealth Games to be held in Delhi in 2010</p> <p>GoM for Strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions.</p> <p>GoM for finalizing common inter-ministerial positions on all matters relating to the negotiations, particularly in agriculture and industrial tariffs relating to 'World Trade Organisation'</p> <p>EGOM regarding approval of Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme</p> <p>GoM on Mass Rapid Transit System for Delhi</p> <p>GoM to examine various issues pertaining to the functioning of Prasar Bharti.</p> <p>GoM for restructuring of the Price Stabilization Fund Scheme for Coffee, Tea, Rubber and Tobacco Growers</p> <p>EGoM to consider the issues relating to Special Economic Zones</p> <p>GoM to consider issues relating to Waiver of custom duty on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and granting status of declared goods to LNG/RLNG/Natural Gas</p> <p>EGoM to exercise future options for import of Wheat</p> <p>EGoM to closely monitor the Naxal situation</p> <p>EGoM to lay down the policy for cluster development and oversee its implementation</p> <p>EGoM on Legal opinion on the survivability of the 'Call Option' provisions of the Shareholders' Agreements entered into at the time of strategic sale of CPSE during the year 2000-03 namely, Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited, Paradeep Phosphates Limited and Jessop and Company Limited</p> <p>GoM on Setting up of a Legislative Assembly in Andaman and Nicobar Islands</p> <p>GoM To consider the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Commission</p> <p>GoM on Rehabilitation-cum-</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
		<p>Financial Restructuring of Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL), Visakhapatnam</p> <p>GoM on Exemption of Central Police Forces Personnel from the purview of New Contributory Pension System</p> <p>GoM on various issues regarding sustainable use of fertilizers and pertinent subsidy and pricing issues</p> <p>GoM on Equal opportunities to the differently-abled persons</p> <p>EGoM for facilitating expeditious decisions in all cases concerning Ultra Mega Power Projects (UMPPS).</p> <p>GoM on National Civil Aviation Policy</p> <p>EGoM on Gas pricing</p> <p>GoM on Construction of Greenfield Airport - Taj International Aviation Hub</p> <p>GoM on Revamped Strategy for River Conservation under the National River Conservation Directorate, Union Ministry of Environment &amp; Forests.</p> <p>GoM on Establishment of Distance Education Council</p> <p>GoM on Continued implementation and third phase of expansion of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme during the 11th Five Year Plan</p> <p>GoM to oversee the Modernization of the transport system in Delhi</p> <p>GoM on Revival Package for Indian Drugs &amp; Pharmaceuticals Limited</p> <p>GoM on Settlement of dues of DESU period</p> <p>GoM on Auction of 3G Spectrum</p>
Shri T. R. Baalu, Minister of Road & Transport & Highways & Minister of Shipping	<p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs</p>	<p>GoM on Rehabilitation-cum-Financial Restructuring of Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL), Visakhapatnam</p> <p>GoM on National Civil Aviation Policy</p> <p>GoM to oversee the Modernization of the transport system in Delhi</p>
Shri Kamal Nath, Minister of Commerce & Industry	<p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on WTO matters</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Prices</p>	<p>GoM to Consider all issues relating to Sick Subsidiaries of National Textile Corporation Limited</p> <p>GoM on Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster</p> <p>GoM for finalizing common inter-ministerial positions on all matters relating to the negotiations, particularly in agriculture and industrial tariffs relating to 'World Trade Organisation'</p>



	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
		<p>GoM for restructuring of the Price Stabilization Fund Scheme for Coffee, Tea, Rubber and Tobacco Growers</p> <p>EGoM to consider the issues relating to Special Economic Zones</p> <p>EGoM to exercise future options for import of Wheat</p> <p>EGoM to lay down the policy for cluster development and oversee its implementation</p> <p>GoM on National Pharmaceuticals Policy, 2006</p> <p>GoM for management of Surplus Salt Pan Lands in Mumbai and other cities</p> <p>GoM To consider the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Commission</p> <p>GoM on the issue of Labelling Beedi bundles with warning on injury to health</p> <p>GoM on Establishment of Distance Education Council</p>
Shri P. M. Sayeed, Minister of Power	<p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Drought Management</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Management of Natural Resources</p>	<p>EGoM to examine and decide on all policy issues relating to Dabhol Power Project</p>
Shri Raghubansh Prasad Singh, Minister of Rural Development	<p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on WTO matters</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Drought Management</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Management of Natural Resources</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Tribal Affairs</p>	<p>Committee of Ministers on Dalit Affairs</p> <p>GoM for Strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions.</p> <p>EGoM to closely monitor the Naxal situation</p> <p>EGoM to lay down the policy for cluster development and oversee its implementation</p> <p>GoM To consider the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Commission</p> <p>GoM on Continued implementation and third phase of expansion of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme during the 11th Five Year Plan</p>
Shri Dayanidhi Maran, Minister of Communications & Information Technology	<p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs</p> <p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on WTO matters</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on</p>	<p>GoM to consider issues concerning 'Resolution dated 21st April, 2004 on Whistle blowers' and 'The Public Interest Disclosure (Protection of Informers) Bill 2004' as drafted by the Law Commission of India and make recommendations thereon</p> <p>GoM for finalizing common inter-</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
	Accommodation Cabinet Committee on Prices	ministerial positions on all matters relating to the negotiations, particularly in agriculture and industrial tariffs relating to 'World Trade Organisation' GoM to examine various issues pertaining to the functioning of Prasar Bharti. EGoM to consider the issues relating to Special Economic Zones EGoM to collate two schemes - the National Population Register under the Citizenship Act, 1955 and the Unique Identification Number Project of the Department of Information Technology EGoM on Legal opinion on the survivability of the 'Call Option' provisions of the Shareholders' Agreements entered into at the time of strategic sale of CPSE during the year 2000-03 namely, Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited, Paradeep Phosphates Limited and Jessop and Company Limited GoM for management of Surplus Salt Pan Lands in Mumbai and other cities GoM To consider the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Commission
Shri Shivraj V. Patil, Minister of Home Affairs	Composition of Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs Cabinet Committee on Security Cabinet Committee on Appointments Cabinet Committee on Tribal Affairs	Committee of Ministers on Dalit Affairs GoM to consider issues concerning 'Resolution dated 2151 April, 2004 on Whistle blowers' and 'The Public Interest Disclosure (Protection of Informers) Bill 2004' as drafted by the Law Commission of India and make recommendations thereon EGOM regarding approval of Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme GoM to examine various issues pertaining to the functioning of Prasar Bharti. GoM to address all issues arising from ongoing sealing operations by Municipal Corporation of Delhi EGoM to closely monitor the Naxal situation EGoM to collate two schemes - the National Population Register under the Citizenship Act, 1955 and the Unique Identification Number Project of the Department of Information Technology GoM on Setting up of a Legislative Assembly in Andaman and Nicobar

	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
		<p>Islands</p> <p>GoM To consider the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Commission</p> <p>GoM on Exemption of Central Police Forces Personnel from the purview of New Contributory Pension System</p> <p>GoM on Equal opportunities to the differently-abled persons</p> <p>GoM on National Civil Aviation Policy</p> <p>GoM to oversee the Modernization of the transport system in Delhi</p>
Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs & Minister of Urban Development	<p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs</p> <p>Cabinet Committee on Accommodation</p>	<p>Core GoM for coordinating the work related to the organization of the Commonwealth Games to be held in Delhi in 2010</p>
Shri H. R. Bharadwaj, Minister of Law & Justice	<p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs</p>	<p>GoM on Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster</p> <p>Committee of Ministers on Dalit Affairs</p> <p>EGOM to examine and decide on all policy issues relating to Dabhol Power Project</p> <p>GoM to consider issues concerning 'Resolution dated 2151 April, 2004 on Whistle blowers' and 'The Public Interest Disclosure (Protection of Informers) Bill 2004' as drafted by the Law Commission of India and make recommendations thereon</p> <p>GoM to examine various issues pertaining to the functioning of Prasar Bharti.</p> <p>EGoM to consider the issues relating to Special Economic Zones</p> <p>GoM to address all issues arising from ongoing sealing operations by Municipal Corporation of Delhi</p> <p>EGoM to closely monitor the Naxal situation</p> <p>EGoM to collate two schemes - the National Population Register under the Citizenship Act, 1955 and the Unique Identification Number Project of the Department of Information Technology</p> <p>GoM on National Pharmaceuticals Policy, 2006</p> <p>EGoM on Legal opinion on the survivability of the 'Call Option' provisions of the Shareholders' Agreements entered into at the time of strategic sale of CPSE during the year 2000-03 namely, Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited, Paradeep Phosphates Limited and Jessop and</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
		<p>Company Limited</p> <p>GoM for management of Surplus Salt Pan Lands in Mumbai and other cities</p> <p>GoM on Setting up of a Legislative Assembly in Andaman and Nicobar Islands</p> <p>GoM To consider the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Commission</p> <p>GoM on Equal opportunities to the differently-abled persons</p> <p>EGoM for facilitating expeditious decisions in all cases concerning Ultra Mega Power Projects (UMPPS).</p> <p>GoM on National Civil Aviation Policy</p> <p>EGoM on Gas pricing</p> <p>GoM on Construction of Greenfield Airport - Taj International Aviation Hub</p> <p>GoM on Establishment of Distance Education Council</p> <p>GoM on Auction of 3G Spectrum</p>
Shri Suresh Pachauri, Minister of State in the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions & Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs	Composition of Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (Special Invitee)	<p>GoM on Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster</p> <p>GoM to consider issues concerning 'Resolution dated 2151 April, 2004 on Whistle blowers' and 'The Public Interest Disclosure (Protection of Informers) Bill 2004' as drafted by the Law Commission of India and make recommendations thereon</p> <p>GoM to examine various issues pertaining to the functioning of Prasar Bharti.</p> <p>GoM To consider the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Commission</p> <p>GoM on Exemption of Central Police Forces Personnel from the purview of New Contributory Pension System</p> <p>GoM on Equal opportunities to the differently-abled persons</p>
Shri B. K. Handique, Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence & Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs	Composition of Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (Special Invitee)	
Shri Prithviraj Chavan, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office	<p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (Special Invitee)</p> <p>Composition of Cabinet Committee on WTO matters(Special Invitee)</p> <p>Composition of Cabinet</p>	

	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
	Committee on WTO matters(Special Invitee) Cabinet Committee on Prices(Special Invitee)	
Smt. Suryakanta Patil, Minister of State in the Ministry of Rural Development & Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs	Composition of Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (Special Invitee)	
Shri Kapil Sibal, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Science & Technology & Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Department of Ocean Development	Composition of Cabinet Committee on WTO matters	EGOM to examine and decide on all policy issues relating to Dabhol Power Project GoM to consider issues concerning 'Resolution dated 2151 April, 2004 on Whistle blowers' and 'The Public Interest Disclosure (Protection of Informers) Bill 2004' as drafted by the Law Commission of India and make recommendations thereon EGoM to consider the issues relating to Special Economic Zones GoM to address all issues arising from ongoing sealing operations by Municipal Corporation of Delhi GoM on National Pharmaceuticals Policy, 2006 EGoM on Legal opinion on the survivability of the 'Call Option' provisions of the Shareholders' Agreements entered into at the time of strategic sale of CPSE during the year 2000-03 namely, Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited, Paradeep Phosphates Limited and Jessop and Company Limited GoM for management of Surplus Salt Pan Lands in Mumbai and other cities GoM on Setting up of a Legislative Assembly in Andaman and Nicobar Islands GoM To consider the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Commission EGoM for facilitating expeditious decisions in all cases concerning Ultra Mega Power Projects (UMPPS). GoM on Construction of Greenfield Airport - Taj International Aviation Hub GoM on Establishment of Distance Education Council GoM on Settlement of dues of DESU period
Shri Shankarsinh Vaghela, Minister of Textiles	Composition of Cabinet Committee on WTO matters	GoM to Consider all issues relating to Sick Subsidiaries of National Textile Corporation Limited

	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
		EGoM to lay down the policy for cluster development and oversee its implementation
Shri Arjun Singh, Minister of HRD	Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs Cabinet Committee on Accommodation	GoM on Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster Core GoM for coordinating the work related to the organization of the Commonwealth Games to be held in Delhi in 2010 Committee of Ministers on Dalit Affairs GoM for Strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions. GoM on Establishment of Distance Education Council
Shri Laloo Prasad, Minister of Railways	Cabinet Committee on Drought Management Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on Management of Natural Resources Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs Cabinet Committee on Accommodation	
Shri K Natwar Singh, Minister of External Affairs	Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs Cabinet Committee on Security	Core GoM for coordinating the work related to the organization of the Commonwealth Games to be held in Delhi in 2010
Shri Priyaranjan Dash Munshi Minister of Water Resources	Cabinet Committee on Drought Management Cabinet Committee on Management of Natural Resources Cabinet Committee on Tribal Affairs	Committee of Ministers on Dalit Affairs GoM to examine various issues pertaining to the functioning of Prasar Bharti. GoM on the issue of Labelling Beedi bundles with warning on injury to health
Shri A Raja Minister of Environment & Forest	Cabinet Committee on Management of Natural Resources Cabinet Committee on Tribal Affairs Cabinet Committee on Drought Management	GoM for Strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions. EGoM to closely monitor the Naxal situation GoM for management of Surplus Salt Pan Lands in Mumbai and other cities GoM on Equal opportunities to the differently-abled persons GoM on Establishment of Distance Education Council GoM on Auction of 3G Spectrum
Shri Mani Shankar Aiyer, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Minister of Panchayat Raj	Cabinet Committee on Prices Cabinet Committee on Tribal Affairs	EGoM to examine and decide on all policy issues relating to Dabhol Power Project GoM for Strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions. EGoM to closely monitor the Naxal situation EGoM to collate two schemes - the National Population Register under the Citizenship Act, 1955 and the

	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
		<p>Unique Identification Number Project of the Department of Information Technology</p> <p>EGoM to lay down the policy for cluster development and oversee its implementation</p> <p>GoM on Continued implementation and third phase of expansion of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme during the 11th Five Year Plan</p>
Shri P R Kyndiah, Minister of Tribal Affairs and Minister of DoNER	Cabinet Committee on Tribal Affairs	<p>GoM for Strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions.</p> <p>EGoM to closely monitor the Naxal situation</p> <p>GoM on Setting up of a Legislative Assembly in Andaman and Nicobar Islands</p>
Dr Ambumani Ramdoss, Minister of Health and Family Welfare	Cabinet Committee on Tribal Affairs	
Shri Sis Ram Ola, Minister of Labour & Employment		<p>GoM to Consider all issues relating to Sick Subsidiaries of National Textile Corporation Limited</p> <p>GoM on Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster</p> <p>EGoM on Legal opinion on the survivability of the 'Call Option' provisions of the Shareholders' Agreements entered into at the time of strategic sale of CPSE during the year 2000-03 namely, Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited, Paradeep Phosphates Limited and Jessop and Company Limited</p>
Shri Sontosh Mohan Dev, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Heavy Industry and Public Enterprises		<p>GoM to Consider all issues relating to Sick Subsidiaries of National Textile Corporation Limited</p> <p>EGoM on Legal opinion on the survivability of the 'Call Option' provisions of the Shareholders' Agreements entered into at the time of strategic sale of CPSE during the year 2000-03 namely, Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited, Paradeep Phosphates Limited and Jessop and Company Limited</p> <p>GoM on Revival Package for Indian Drugs &amp; Pharmaceuticals Limited</p>
Shri S. Jaipal Reddy, Minister of Information & Broadcasting and Minister of Culture		<p>Core GoM for coordinating the work related to the organization of the Commonwealth Games to be held in Delhi in 2010</p> <p>GoM to consider issues concerning 'Resolution dated 21st April, 2004 on Whistle blowers' and 'The Public Interest Disclosure (Protection of Informers) Bill 2004' as drafted by the Law Commission of India and</p>

	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
		<p>make recommendations thereon</p> <p>GoM on Mass Rapid Transit System for Delhi</p> <p>GoM to examine various issues pertaining to the functioning of Prasar Bharti.</p> <p>GoM to address all issues arising from ongoing sealing operations by Municipal Corporation of Delhi</p> <p>GoM for management of Surplus Salt Pan Lands in Mumbai and other cities</p> <p>GoM on the issue of Labelling Beedi bundles with warning on injury to health</p> <p>GoM on Equal opportunities to the differently-abled persons</p> <p>GoM on National Civil Aviation Policy</p> <p>GoM on Revamped Strategy for River Conservation under the National River Conservation Directorate, Union Ministry of Environment &amp; Forests.</p> <p>GoM to oversee the Modernization of the transport system in Delhi</p>
Shri Sunil Dutt, Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports		Core GoM for coordinating the work related to the organization of the Commonwealth Games to be held in Delhi in 2010
Shri Jagdish Tytler, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of NonResident Indians Affairs		Core GoM for coordinating the work related to the organization of the Commonwealth Games to be held in Delhi in 2010
Smt. Renuka Chowdhury, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Tourism.		<p>Core GoM for coordinating the work related to the organization of the Commonwealth Games to be held in Delhi in 2010</p> <p>GoM on Equal opportunities to the differently-abled persons</p> <p>GoM on Continued implementation and third phase of expansion of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme during the 11th Five Year Plan</p>
Shri B.L. Joshi, Lt. Governor, Delhi		<p>Core GoM for coordinating the work related to the organization of the Commonwealth Games to be held in Delhi in 2010 (Special Invitee)</p> <p>GoM on Mass Rapid Transit System for Delhi (Permanent Invitee)</p> <p>GoM to address all issues arising from ongoing sealing operations by Municipal Corporation of Delhi(Special Invitee)</p> <p>GoM to oversee the Modernization of the transport system in Delhi (Special Invitee)</p>
Smt. Sheila Dixit, Chief		Core GoM for coordinating the work



	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
Minister, Delhi		related to the organization of the Commonwealth Games to be held in Delhi in 2010 (Special Invitee) GoM on Mass Rapid Transit System for Delhi (Permanent Invitee) GoM to address all issues arising from ongoing sealing operations by Municipal Corporation of Delhi(Special Invitee) GoM to oversee the Modernization of the transport system in Delhi (Special Invitee) GoM on Settlement of dues of DESU period(Special Invitee)
Shri Mahavir Prasad, Minister of Small Scale Industries and Minister of Agro & Rural Industries		Committee of Ministers on Dalit Affairs EGoM to lay down the policy for cluster development and oversee its implementation
Smt. Meira Kumar, Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment		Committee of Ministers on Dalit Affairs GoM To consider the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Commission GoM on Equal opportunities to the differently-abled persons GoM on Establishment of Distance Education Council GoM on Continued implementation and third phase of expansion of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme during the 11th Five Year Plan
Shri K. Chandra Sekhar Rao, Minister of Labour & Employment		Committee of Ministers on Dalit Affairs
Shri Prem Chand Gupta, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Company Affairs;		GoM to consider issues concerning 'Resolution dated 21st April, 2004 on Whistle blowers' and 'The Public Interest Disclosure (Protection of Informers) Bill 2004' as drafted by the Law Commission of India and make recommendations thereon GoM to examine various issues pertaining to the functioning of Prasar Bharti. EGoM on Gas pricing
Shri Ajay Maken, Minister of State in the Ministry of Urban Development		GoM on Mass Rapid Transit System for Delhi(Special Invitee)
Smt. Ambika Soni, Minister of Tourism and Culture		GoM to examine various issues pertaining to the functioning of Prasar Bharti. GoM on Setting up of a Legislative Assembly in Andaman and Nicobar Islands GoM on National Civil Aviation

	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
		Policy GoM on Continued implementation and third phase of expansion of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme during the 11th Five Year Plan
Shri Vayalar Ravi, Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs		GoM for restructuring of the Price Stabilization Fund Scheme for Coffee, Tea, Rubber and Tobacco Growers
Shri Sushilkumar Shinde, Minister of Power		GoM to consider issues relating to Waiver of custom duty on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and granting status of declared goods to LNG/RLNG/Natural Gas GoM for management of Surplus Salt Pan Lands in Mumbai and other cities EGoM for facilitating expeditious decisions in all cases concerning Ultra Mega Power Projects (UMPPS). GoM on Power Sector issues EGoM on Gas pricing GoM on Settlement of dues of DESU period
Shri Murli Deora, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas		GoM to consider issues relating to Waiver of custom duty on Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and granting status of declared goods to LNG/RLNG/Natural Gas EGoM on Gas pricing
Shri Subodh Kant Sahay, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Minister of Food Processing Industries		EGoM to lay down the policy for cluster development and oversee its implementation
Dr. Anbumani Ramdoss, Minister of Health & Family Welfare		GoM on National Pharmaceuticals Policy, 2006 GoM on the issue of Labelling Beedi bundles with warning on injury to health GoM on Equal opportunities to the differently-abled persons GoM on Continued implementation and third phase of expansion of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme during the 11th Five Year Plan GoM on Revival Package for Indian Drugs & Pharmaceuticals Limited
Shri A.K. Antony, Minister of Defence		GoM on Setting up of a Legislative Assembly in Andaman and Nicobar Islands GoM To consider the recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Commission GoM on Rehabilitation-cum-Financial Restructuring of Hindustan

	<b>Cabinet Committees</b>	<b>Group of Ministers</b>
		Shipyard Limited (HSL), Visakhapatnam GoM on Exemption of Central Police Forces Personnel from the purview of New Contributory Pension System GoM on National Civil Aviation Policy GoM on Revival Package for Indian Drugs & Pharmaceuticals Limited GoM on Auction of 3G Spectrum
Shri Oscar Fernandes, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Labour & Employment.		GoM on the issue of Labelling Beedi bundles with warning on injury to health GoM on Revival Package for Indian Drugs & Pharmaceuticals Limited
Kumari Selja, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation;		GoM on Equal opportunities to the differently-abled persons
.Shri Praful Patel, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Civil Aviation		GoM on National Civil Aviation Policy GoM on Construction of Greenfield Airport - Taj International Aviation Hub GoM to oversee the Modernization of the transport system in Delhi
Shri Vilas Muttemwar, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy		GoM on Power Sector issues
Prof. Saif-ud-din Soz, Minister of Water Resources		GoM on Revamped Strategy for River Conservation under the National River Conservation Directorate
Shri Namo Narain Meena, Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment and Forests		GoM on Revamped Strategy for River Conservation under the National River Conservation Directorate
Shri Anand Sharma, Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs and Minister of State in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.		GoM on Auction of 3G Spectrum

Author's own calculation.

Source: RTI filed in the Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India.



## **APPENDIX X**

### **Interview Schedule**

1. What are your views on the emergence of coalition politics at the Centre since 1989?
2. Do you think India should consider changing into Presidential system of Government?
3. It has been argued that the Parliament of India has declined in its status and effectiveness. Do you agree? Could you please elaborate?
4. The phase of coalition politics at the centre, since the beginning of 1990s, has led to the proliferation of political parties and today we have a multi party system. Is it a healthy trend for India? Please elaborate.
5. In the coalition era, political ideologies have lost their relevance as an issue in the formation of successive coalition governments at the Centre. Do you agree with this view? Please elaborate.
6. It has been argued that the smaller parties have gained influence and ability to determine the policies because they are vital in sustaining the majority in parliament. How do you assess this statement in regard to the functioning of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh cabinet?
7. Do you agree with the view that the coalition politics has undermined the power of the PM in regard to the constitution of Cabinet of his choice and its possible reshuffling in the future? How do you assess the Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh Cabinet in this regard? please elaborate
8. Are the issues that might bring up division within the coalition discussed informally among political parties first and then put up before the cabinet for consideration and decision? Could you please share some experience?
9. It has been agreed that the leadership and personality of PM as well as the outlook on the system of governance is fundamental to the understanding of the working of the cabinet. Do you agree this view? How do you assess the above made assertion in regard to the functioning Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh Cabinet? Please elaborate.

10. Can you please elaborate on the leadership style of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh within their respective cabinet?
11. It has been argued that the status and standing of the senior ministers play an important role in the working of Cabinet System. How do you assess the statement in regard to the function of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh Cabinet? Please elaborate.
12. How much independence do you think you had in Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh Cabinet with regard to raising an issue and discussion over policies?
13. It has been argued that the successive PMs of India evolved an informal mechanism of an 'inner cabinet' in the functioning. Do you think an inner cabinet existed even during Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh Cabinet? Please elaborate.
14. Could you please elaborate your views on the functioning of the cabinet Committees?
15. What do you think are the reasons for the emergence of institutions like Group of Ministers? Have they become indispensable and inevitable?
16. Is it about imparting efficiency and ensuring inter-ministerial coordination in the working of Cabinet or is it the compulsion of coalition politics that pulls the major party like the Congress or the BJP to devise the GOMs?
17. How do you see the future of cabinet government in India?