

# Comparative study of the Regimes NDA and UPA in Indian Politics

## Abstract

This paper makes a comparative analysis of two different coalitions i.e. the NDA and the UPA. It examines the partisanship and power sharing followed in the NDA and UPA coalitions, analysis the components of the common minimum program and working of the two coalitions. The pulls and pressures felt on these two coalitions are also highlighted to assess the challenging and prospects of coalition politics in India.

**Keywords:** Manifestoes, Politics, Coalition, Multi-Party System, Elections.

## Introduction

Coalitions have become an inevitable feature of Indian politics even though they existed earlier in different forms. Coalition government is formed when no single party is able to reach the position of being the majority party to form the government and when one party joins another party to contest the elections and form the government. Coalitions or party alliances may be formed prior to elections or after the election making it a political concept. Thus, according to Cambridge Advanced Dictionary coalition is considered to be the "union of different political parties or groups for a particular purpose usually for a limited time" which implies that two or more actors have communicated and agreed to coordinate their actions. Over the past two decades, India has been experimenting with various coalition governments at the national and regional level. Party system in India at the national level since 1998 has been loosely bipolar divided between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition and the Congress led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) coalition. These two coalitions are a patchwork of parties having state specific base. *The paper is main objective of performance evaluation of the regimes of NDA and UPA alliances in Indian politics.*

The era of bi-party coalition system existed in this period. At least, for the time being, there are two main coalitions/alliances such as the UPA and the NDA, led by Congress Party and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), respectively. There are other players, such as the CPI (M) led Third Front, Fourth Front, BSP, TDP and AIADMK etc, and other regional parties, but have limited say in the Indian political system. These two formations are playing the major role.

The outcome of 11th-1996, 12th-1998, 13th-1999, 14th-2004 and 15th-2009 Lok Sabha elections respectively, revealed that most of the seats in the popular House, won by NDA and UPA formed governments at the Centre as well as in most of the states. The mandate of 13th Lok Sabha in 1999 was fractured, as earlier one, having thirty eight political parties, represented in Lower House, twenty three of them having less than five members each, and thirteen had only one seat each.<sup>1</sup> The NDA consisting of more than twenty-four parties, secured a clear decisive majority in the House of People. The 13th Lok Sabha was, more or less a replica of 12th Lok Sabha, which seemed very significant shift in the power of balance.

The NDA, first time took the taste of power for just thirteen days in 1996, as the BJP emerged as a single largest party, but did not enjoy majority in the Lower House. H. D. Deve Gowda was leading United Front in June 1996, an alliance of thirteen parties, formed the government with outside support of Congress Party. Inder Kumar Gujral led United Front, later formed the next ministry in April 1997, until the BJP returned to power. Under the leadership of Vajpayee, the NDA constituted ministry in March 1998, which consisted of twelve disparate parties, drawn from different states, remained in office only for thirteen months. Then twenty four parties' combination of NDA formed Union government in October 1999, which completed its full term.



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Likewise, the UPA-I government came into power on 22 May 2004, with the help of eighteen parties, which survived with the outside support of Left parties. The UPA-II formed Union government on 22 May 2009, with the help of eleven parties unconditional outside support given by JD (S), RJD, BSP, SP and independents.<sup>2</sup> In the May 2014 elections, the mandate came in the favour of BJP led NDA. Even on its own, Bhartiya Janta Party swept to power with a historic win, picking up 282 seats and 31% of the popular vote.

The coalitions formed by NDA or UPA have been working according to common minimum programme in India, But India has witnessed frequent changes in public policies and programmes, as well as change in the pattern for governance of the country since 1996. It has also resulted into change of values and attitudes of those responsible for governance or at the helm of affairs. India did not have a good experience and experiments of coalition/alliance politics and good governance has been missing for over the past one decade. The major problem facing today is, how best and in what way the new pattern of coalition government can be made, a better instrument for good governance.

It is pertinent to mention here that good governance is the need of the hour. It is absolutely imperative to have good governance with well defined aims and objectives around national agenda. Therefore, everybody has her or his own definition of what constitutes good governance, what should constitute the issues like greater transparency and accountability, greater federalism in polity and

economy, better division of the benefits of economic growth among the weaker sections of the society etc.<sup>3</sup> Which combination of coalition government led by the NDA or the UPA delivered better political governance in India, is not an easy question to answer. The BJP headed NDA and Congress led UPA in their first innings in the government, prepared National Agenda for Governance (NAG) and National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP), respectively, in consultation with their partners respectively. It was also ensured by both the national parties and their respective allies that they adhere to the NCMP to run administration.

Therefore, the compulsion of coalition politics forced the BJP to give up the idea of implementing its individual electoral manifesto and to evolve a common programme for the NDA government. The BJP prepared a common minimum programme for governance, known as a National Agenda for Governance (NAG), which was acceptable to all partners of the NDA.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the UPA did the same in May 2004 and made National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP), which too appeased Left Parties on the issue of economic reforms, particularly on the issue of FDI in various sectors. It was also agreed by consensus through NCMP that privatization would take place on consultative, as well as case by case basis, which should go to increase competitiveness, not to decrease, it. The NCMP was framed keeping in mind the sectional interests of the smaller constituents of the UPA.

**Table 1: A Comparison of Common Agenda of Governance of the NDA and the UPA-I and UPA-II Governments**

<b>NDA's NAG</b>	<b>UPA's NCMP</b>
<b>Governance</b> To give stable, honest, transparent and efficient government.	<b>Governance</b> To provide a government, which would be corruption-free, transparent and accountable all the time.
<b>Economy</b> (A) The NDA agenda ensured that Indian economy would grow on the principles of "India should be built by Indian." The government would reappraise and revitalize the reforms and give a strong 'swadeshithrusf'. The GDP would grow at the rate of seven to eight percentage and control deficits as well as fiscal revenue. (B) Increase saving up to thirty percentage of the GDP.	<b>Fiscal Policy/Capital Markets/ Economic Reforms</b> (A) The economy would grow at least seven to eight percentagerates insustained manner. (B) Eliminating the revenue deficit of the Centre by 2009. (C) Introduce VAT. (D) The FII would been courage and SEBI would be strengthened further. (E) The economic reforms are need of the hour, which would be carried out in agriculture, industry and service sector.
<b>Agriculture</b> (A) allocate sixty percentages of the planfunds for and effect public investment inagriculture, etc. (B) Special effort would be made toboost animal husbandry and dairying.	<b>Agriculture</b> (A) The crop and livestock insurance schemes would be made more effective.
<b>Water Policy</b> (A) The NDA would adopt a national water policy, which will settle water disputes among the states and their time bound implementation.	<b>Water Resources</b> (A) The assessment of the feasibility of linking the rivers of the country, starting with the South boundriver
<b>'Berozgari Hatao'</b> Would eradicate unemployment and generate more avenues for employment.	<b>Employment</b> (A) The UPA-I planned to enact the National Employment Guarantee Act to provide a legal guarantee for at least 100 days of employment. (B) Expanding credit facilities, small scale industry

	and self-employment.
<b>Food Security and Price Stability</b> (A) The NDA would ensure food security for all; create a hunger free India next five years. (B) Introduce reforms in the PDS as well as ensure price stability by necessary legislations.	<b>Food and Nutrition Security</b> (A) The UPA-I would work out a comprehensive medium term strategy for food and nutrition security. (B) To strengthen Public Distribution System (PDS), particularly in the poorest and backward blocks of the country.
<b>Education</b> (A) Gradually increase non- governmental and governmental spending on education up to six percentage of the GDP. (B) The primary education up to the level of fifth standard would be made free and compulsory.	<b>Education</b> (A) To raise public spending on education of six percentage of GDP, with at least half amount being spent on primary and secondary sectors. (B) The National Commission on Education would be constituted.
<b>Constitutional and Legal Reforms</b> (A) To set up Commission to review the Constitution of India.  (B) The NDA would set-up National Judicial Commission, which recommend judicial appointments in Supreme Court and High Court and draw up a code of ethics for judiciary.	<b>Regional Development, Centre-State Relations</b> (A) To set up a new Commission to review Center-State relations, keeping in view with new changes. (B) To make National (NDC) more effective instrument of 'cooperative federalism.' Further, Inter-State Council would also be activated.
<b>National Security and Nuclear Policy</b> (A) The NDA is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all citizens across the country. (B) The government would re-evaluate the nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons.	<b>Defense and Internal Security</b> (A) Modernization of the armed forces. (B) To maintain a credible nuclear weapons programme. (C) The issue of one-rank, one pension would be re-examined. (D) Repealing POTA, while strictly enforcing existing laws.
<b>FDI</b> (A) To encourage FDI in core areas, so that, to supplement the national efforts and discourage FDI in non-priority areas.	<b>Industry/Public Sector</b> A. The FDI was continuing in areas of infrastructure, high technology as well as export, where local assets and employment would be created on significant scale. B. The UPA government would never take decision on Employees Provident Fund (EPF), without consultations and approval of the EPF Board.
<b>Lok Pal Bill</b> The NDA government would enact the Lok Pal Bill, with adequate powers to deal with corruption charges against anyone, including the Prime Minister.	<b>Administrative Reforms</b> A. To enact Lok Pal Bill into law. B. The RTI would be made more progressive, participatory and meaningful.
<b>Environment</b> To prepare an appropriate legal framework for the protection of the environment.	
<b>Women Reservation</b> (A) The NDA would ensure thirty three percentage reservations of seats in Parliament and state assemblies for women.	<b>Women</b> (A) To introduce legislation for one-third (1/3) reservation for women in Lok Sabha and state assemblies. (B) The legislation on domestic violence and against gender discrimination would be acted.
<b>Social Security Measures</b> The construction of twenty lakh additional houses annually, ensure potable drinking water for all and strive to achieve health for all by diverse programmes; present a national charter for children and ensure <i>Samajik Nayay</i> (social Justice): National Charter for Social Justice for STs, SCs, and OBCs.	<b>Social Security Measures</b> The midday meal scheme would be introduced in primary and secondary level schools, funded by Central Government; raise public spending on health to at least two to three percentage of the GDP; ensure availability of life saving drugs at reasonable prices; eliminate child labour, ensure facilities for schooling and extend special care to girl child; enactment of reservation Act to codify all reservations..
<b>Genuine Secularism</b> (A) To uphold the Indian tradition of <i>sarva path samadara</i> (equal respect for all faiths).	<b>Panchayati Raj</b> (A) The funds given to States for Panchayats would neither be delayed nor diverted. (B) The Gram Sabha to be empowered to emerge as the foundation of

	Panchayati Raj.
<b>'Prasar Bharti'</b> (A) To improve Prasar Bharti Act. (B) To restrict foreign equity holding in private television broadcasting up to twenty percent.	<b>Jammu and Kashmir as well as North East</b> (A) Article 370 to be respected in letter and spirit. (B) Holding dialogue with all groups and different shades of opinion in Jammu and Kashmir in consultation with the state government. (C) The Northeastern Council would be strengthened.
<b>International Relations</b> (A) To promote peaceful relationship with all neighbouring countries on reciprocal basis. (B) The NDA would promote and strengthen regional and civilian groups on the lines of SAARC and ASEAN. (C) The NDA would assert more robustly India's national interests in WTO.	<b>Foreign Policy and International Organization</b> (A) To pursue an independent foreign policy, to promote multi-polarity in international relations. (B) Close tie-up with its neighbours especially in South Asia and strengthen SAARC. (C) To fully protect the national interests particularly of farmers in all WTO negotiations.
	<b>Social Harmony, Welfare of Minorities</b> (A) Amend the Constitution to establish a commission for minority educational institution. (B) Adequate fund would be provided to the National Minorities Development Corporation to ensure its effective functioning. (C) To strive for recognition and promotion of Urdu language under Article 345 and 347 of the Constitution.

**Source:** www.frontline.in

It was observed that the NAG and the NCMP had some similarity in respect of some specific programmes/policies. The documents prepared by both the alliances fixed the target to achieve seven to eight percent GDP rate, increase investment in agriculture sector, increase spending on education up to six percent of the GDP, consented to set up Commission on Centre-State relations, firmly committed to enact 'Lok Pal Bill' and one-third (1/3) reservation for women in legislature (Women Reservation Bill). It is also explicit from their NCMP that the BJP and the INC were committed to maintain a credible nuclear weapon programme for the security and safety of the country, and pursue an independent foreign policy in order to strengthen relations with neighbouring countries. Both the coalitions were in favour of introducing FDI in various sectors of the economy including retail.

The first thirteen months rule of the BJP/NDA from March 1998 to April 1999 was considered too short to achieve goals. But, within two months, after assuming office, Vajpayee ministry conducted five underground nuclear tests at Pokharan range, between May 11 and May 13, 1998. The BJP leadership claimed that the first and foremost task was to make India a nuclear weapon state a vital commitment made in every election manifesto of the party.<sup>5</sup>

The second major step taken by NDA's Prime Minister was to normalize relations with Pakistan. For that purpose, A.B. Vajpayee visited Lahore "by bus" from Amritsar to Lahore, on 20 February 1999, and signed the Lahore Declaration. However, the 'peace bus' was hijacked and took to Kargil War. That was entirely due to the peculiar power dynamics in Pakistan. The intruders from Pakistan side were found occupying the high mountains within the Indian side of control

(LOC) in Kargil sector of Kashmir. The Indian army launched 'Operation Vijay' to liberate Indian Territory. Finally, Indian soldiers achieved the feat on 26 July 1999, after seventy-four days of struggle. That day is celebrated each year as Kargil victory day or 'Vijay Diwas'. Furthermore, the NDA released a brochure titled "charter of commitments and our achievements", which mentioned thirteen months' achievements of the NDA Government.<sup>6</sup>

In the second term, from October 1999 to May 2004, the NDA Cabinet had more time than earlier coalition government to solve the problems of the country. Sh. Ravi Shankar Prasad, then Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting presented updated version of the booklet, which highlighted the special initiatives and important achievements of the National Democratic Alliance under the leadership of Prime Minister, Atal Bihar Vajpayee, who was going to uninterruptedly complete his full five years term. It was the first non-Congress Government to do so. The Prime Minister's path-breaking visit to Pakistan, to attend the SAARC summit in India's quest for peace, economic boom with GDP rising at rate of 8.4 percentage in second quarter of 2003-04, and foreign exchange reserves going up past \$ 100 billion, brought feel good factor across the country. Belying all apprehensions about shrinking job market, the NDA ministry created eighty four lakh jobs and self employment opportunities every year.<sup>7</sup>

In July 2001, the NDA government took initiatives to normalize relations with Pakistan, by inviting military ruler/President, General Pervez Musharraf at Agra to restart peace talks and to reduce tension between two countries.

The other crucial step taken by A.B. Vajpayee was to visit China from 22-27 June 2003. More importantly, his tour signalled a potential rapprochement with China, notably with the intent to

put contentious border issues aside while favouring areas of mutual economic interests by signing a joint declaration on "Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation between India and China" on 23 June 2003. But, New Delhi failed to receive reciprocal Chinese recognition of India's 1975 annexation of Sikkim like Tibet. However, both sides agreed to implement existing agreements on border issues including those that provided clarification of the Line of Actual Control (LAC).<sup>8</sup>

As regards the domestic front, the BJP led NDA Government tried to fulfill its promises, enlisted in the NAG by creating three new states- Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand in November 2000 and by granting full statehood status to Delhi.<sup>9</sup> This legislation ignited a new controversy not only from the opposition ranks, but also from within the ruling coalition in Uttar Pradesh.

Another important development at that time was that in order to secure the integrity and safety of country, Vajpayee Government had rejected Jammu and Kashmir assembly autonomy resolution, sponsored by ruling National Conference To stop terrorist activities with firm hand, particularly after the attack on Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001, the NDA government managed to pass the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) from the joint session of both Houses Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in March 2002. The opposition parties opposed the Bill on the ground that it was anti-minority/anti-Muslim. It gave very vast powers to police in investigation of suspected terrorist activities, including possibly compelling evidence from journalists.<sup>10</sup>

However, BJP led NDA government was still determined to continue with economic reforms. It introduced Insurance Regulatory and Development (IRDA) Bill in December 1999, which made provisions for the entry of private and foreign companies into the insurance business, thereby ending the monopoly of the public sector viz, Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) and General Insurance Company (GIC). In February 2000, the Vajpayee Cabinet enhanced ceiling on foreign direct investments (FDI) by twenty-three to 100 percentage in eight sectors, including mining, films, drugs and pharmaceuticals etc.

It is observed that the Indian economy demonstrated good growth, with little inflation, and interest rates were comparatively low in the fiscal year, 2003-04. The foreign exchange resumed at over \$ ninety billion. India became a net creditor to International Monetary Fund, with its contribution being used to help Brazil. The telephone network was widening; the stocks were reaching the peak level, and the corporate sector yielding huge profits.<sup>11</sup> On the whole, there were regular reforms in almost every sector, including banking, taxation, fiscal management, stock markets, pharmaceutical industries and electricity etc.

Finally, between 1999 and 2004, the NDA government adopted more liberal policy to emerging Indian economy by linking with world market, making strong relations with United States, Russia, Japan and China. The Vajpayee government also took number of measures to reduce conflict between India

and Pakistan as well as working on free trade area with ASEAN. Three new states were also created during the stewardship of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. It was the aura of Vajpayee that led India to blast into 'nuke club'. Infusing stability at a difficult time and leading the country to much needed stability and statesmanship, was because A.B. Vajpayee's ability to keep motley and factions of twenty-four parties' coalition for six years. However, the NDA government did its best. The electorate found it was 'not enough'. It was really unpalatable for NDA that it could not muster popularity under Vajpayee. In spite of these remarkable achievements, the NDA government failed to secure the mandate in 14th Lok Sabha 2004. The falling interest rates, voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) and growing unemployment were the primary reasons for the BJP rout. These issues took away urban voters from the BJP.<sup>12</sup>

In 2004 elections, UPA-I replaced NDA government 2004 general elections presented a gloomy picture of governance. With the exit of the NDA, the Congress Party led formation-UPA assumed power under the leadership of Manmohan Singh on 22 May 2004. By the time, negotiations about government formation had also begun, earnestly among the constituents of the UPA, as well as the Left parties supporting it, on putting together the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP).<sup>13</sup> However, the number of significant economic policy issues and other issues, set apart the Left-of-center policies of the Congress led UPA, from those that were followed by the NDA.

The UPA-I government was formed to run administration according to pre-fixed programmes (NCMP). The Congress and its allies got good number of seats in urban areas as well as in rural parts of the country. Manmohan Singh presented UPA-I Government report to the people on 22 May 2008, after completion of four years of the Government. The formal presentation of report was setting a new standard for accountability and transparency in governance. Prime Minister announced that the UPA-I ministry was mainly implementing all the commitments made in NCMP. The Manmohan Singh Government launched various "flagship and other programmes" particularly Bharat Nirman (India build), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM),<sup>14</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), modified Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) with expanded Mid-Day Meal (MDM) programmes, projecting itself as the profounder of 'inclusive growth'.

The UPA-I Government was also appreciated for two major initiatives to its credit, one related to instituting a common system of value added tax, with the same rate of tax, i.e. four percentage and 12.5 percentage, with effect from 1 April 2006 among the various states and other step was statutorily created MGNREGA, which was funded by the Central Government. Several States refused to adopt the radical change in tax system. Ashutosh Varshney argues that MGNREGA and twenty-seven percentage reservation for Other Backward Classes

in government aided institutions of higher education, including IIT and IIM were the anti-market steps.<sup>54</sup>

During this period, there was enactment of Right to Information Act (RTI) 2005- a historic legislation. It made provisions that Indian citizens, now, enjoy "right to demand information", if desired, and every public authority is liable to share information within specific period. It could bring a sense of empowerment among citizens by starting the process of transparent and inclusive governance. Passing RTI led to create transparency in administration. Then, the UPA-II government started proposing an amendment to take political parties out of the ambit of RTI Act. It was very strange for the political parties, which aspired to form the government and pass laws affecting the lives of citizens of the country. It was not considered as public authority.<sup>15</sup>

In the ensuing months, India called for sixth EU-India summit in September 2005 and carried forward to some extent the existing important partnership. Tony Blair, British Prime Minister during EU-India summit, also supported the Indo-US agreement on civil nuclear cooperation, while Germany collaborated with India on Security Council reforms. Any positive development in Indo-Pakistan relations was considered unnecessary in the wake of devastating terrorist attacks in Mumbai on 26 November 2008. The UPA-I Government also organized a summit of fourteen African countries in New Delhi, to woo Africa as a source for raw material and market.<sup>16</sup>

Briefly, the UPA's National Common Minimum Programme, also impacted very briefly on foreign policy. In practice, the UPA-I government, like NDA focused on maintain relations with United States, Pakistan and China. The rest of the foreign policy in NCMP was not given any importance. Further, Manmohan Singh Government (UPA-I), tried to give expression to multi-polarity by participating in two sets of triangular diplomacy, India-Brazil-South Africa and India-China-Russia, following the previous government's lead. The UPA-I like its predecessor, paid relatively little attention towards small South Asian countries.<sup>17</sup>

In totality, the NDA and the UPA were managing foreign policy in different ways. The NDA was more realistic in its focus on relative power and military instrument of influence, whereas the UPA-I was more Nehruvian in its emphasis on negotiations and diplomacy. There was some basic difference in the approaches of NDA and UPA because NDA did not entirely ignore negotiations and diplomacy and the UPA was not altogether neglectful of power and force.

The UPA-II government carried out all the reforms, which it was unable to carry out in the first term, because of its dependence on the Left Parties. Manmohan Singh in his second innings was able to carry on most of the flagship programmes and he started various new projects such as UID (unique identification) or Aadhaar, Rashtriya Madyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, (RMSA) Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana, Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana,

Mission Clean Ganga, Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission, Saakshar Bharat, Rashtriya Krishi Yojana, Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaram Yojana, Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram and DBT till October 2013 for the nation. The UPA-II government announced another scheme in the field of higher education known as Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyaan (RUSA), on the eve of assembly elections in five states, namely Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Delhi and Mizoram held in November/December 2013, to attract the young voters.<sup>18</sup>

Apart from this, the UPA-II implemented in its true spirit, the Right to Education Act 2009 (the right of children to get free compulsory elementary education), introduced Direct Tax Code Bill in Parliament and passed Anand Karaj (Marriage) Amendment Bill, 2012.<sup>19</sup> Another pending bill such as Anti-Rape Bill March 2013, Land Acquisition Bill August 2013, National Food Security Bill September 2013 (NFSB) and Pension Bill were also passed by the Parliament. These Bills were passed within few days seen as "game changer" initiatives of UPA-II like MGNREGA, in next 16th Lok Sabha elections 2014. Manmohan Singh Government was in a hurry to launch food security schemes/ programmes by an ordinance on 5 July 2013, which attracted wide ranging criticism.<sup>20</sup> Then, the UPA-II Government launched food security scheme on 20 August 2013 accompanied by an advertisement blitzkrieg, even as the Bill was pending in Parliament, left no one in doubt that the move had a lot to do with "electoral security", rather than 'food security'.

The National Food Security Bill (NFSB) passed by the Government of India was also seen violating federal rights as it gave right to Central Government to notify date for reforms in public distribution systems (PDS). In fact, several state governments including AIADMK Government of Tamil Nadu objected to the notification made in unilateral manner. The coverage was determined by the Planning Commission, that is, the Bill proposed seventy-five percentage of the rural population and fifty percentage of the urban population under the present 'target public distribution system' to be covered. However, the Bill was revised later on under pressure.<sup>21</sup> The Samajwadi Party's (SP) other key supporters of the UPA-II also alleged that the state government was totally bypassed. Further, the DMK, Trinamool Congress, SP and Left Parties had opposed Pension Bill also on several counts, especially on putting the social security money in the volatile stock market and allowing FDI to manage these hard-earned funds. However, to the utmost strangeness, the Pension Bill was supported by principal opposition party BJP, on the ground that the country was staring at an economic crisis and also the bill was first conceived during NDA regime.

In spite of these pulls and pressures, the UPA-II Government decided to go ahead with big bang economic reforms by firmly allowing fifty-one percentage FDI in multi brand retail sector, forty-nine percentages in aviation and 100 percentage FDI in the cash-and-carry format business. Besides it,

Manmohan Singh Government also revised caps in broadcasting sectors from forty-nine to seventy-four percentage and that the limit would stay at twenty-six percentages in TV news channels, FM radio and content providers. The UPA-II government further decided to sell its stake in four PSUs, namely Hindustan Copper, Oil India, and NALCO, which was expected to fetch around rupees 15000 crores.<sup>22</sup> All these economic reforms initiatives were welcomed with a sigh of relief by many. But the BJP and other opposition parties charged the government that the FDI in retail trade would destroy India's small business and traders, on which millions of poor and lower classes depend. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh pointed out that this as BJP's arrogance and highlighted that UPA's ten years (2004 to 2014) record was better than NDA 1998 to 2004 rule.

On the external front, Manmohan Singh Government took several measures to improve relations with neighbouring countries and major powers. The Indo-US ties entered into a new face when American President Barack Obama visited India on 6 November 2010. He made it very clear that his top priority was to strengthen Indo-US economic partnership by promoting trade, increasing exports and creating jobs at home.

India also improved its relationships with Afghanistan by entering into "Treaty of Cooperation and Friendship" in 2011. Manmohan Singh Government forcefully participated in 16th Non-Aligned Movement summit held at Tehran, Iran in August 2012, in spite of U.S. strictures to scale down relations. The UPA-II ministry solved several technical border problems with Bangladesh to underscore non-reciprocal basis of India's relations with smaller countries in South Asia. Further, Manmohan Singh Government developed strong economic and security relationships with the Southeast Asian (ASEAN) countries and forged an important partnership as well as economic cooperation with Vietnam, despite opposition from Beijing.<sup>23</sup>

It is matter of great satisfaction that to start with, the robust economy, inclusive growth, better delivery of governance and improved relations with a changing and challenging world, were the key performance areas achievements of the five years rule of UPA-II from 2009 to 2014.

On the whole, large population had yet not benefitted significantly from inclusive growth of the UPA-I and II like India shining of the NDA. The UPA-II thus failed to address, even in a preliminary way, the issue of inflation, unemployment and inclusive growth, which were promised by the Congress Party during 15th Lok Sabha elections.<sup>24</sup>

The Manmohan Singh regime reached the lowest point of performance in its ten years tenure in May 2014, when another scandal 'Railgate' was exposed by media. India Today, opinion poll rated the UPA-II as the most corrupt government of the last thirty-five years. The issue of corruption was leitmotif of the UPA-II Government, starting with Commonwealth Games, Adarsh Housing, CVC

appointment, 2G, helicopter scam, Coalgate and then Railgate scams.

Corruption was rampant in UPA-II Ministry, for example, A. Raja, on 14 November 2010, Dayanidhi Maran on 7 July 2011 and Virbhadra Singh on 26 June 2012 had to quit UPA-II Cabinet on corruption charges. Pawan Kumar Bansal and Ashwani Kumar also resigned from Manmohan Singh Government as Cabinet ministers on grounds of corruption, on 10 May 2013. Subodh Kant Sahai and M.S. Gill were dropped from the UPA-II. Sriprakash Jaiswal and Salman Khurshid were also under the scanner of various investigative agencies. Not only the above list, the Prime Minister Office (PMO), itself came in the line of fire due to unwarranted intervention in Coalgate scam, which was investigated by CBI.<sup>25</sup>

The UPA-II Government had been surrounded by problems and scams one after the other, a series of avoidable administrative gaffes, soaring food inflation and reeling under remarks from pro-active judiciary. Both, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Congress Party chief, Sonia Gandhi were looking certainly very bad in their efforts to revive the party's credibility. Their efforts to remove the most corrupt tag, through the effective preaching of its pro-poor agenda, did not appear to have worked well ice.

It is observed that the UPA-II was lacking any guiding principles like Common Minimum Programme (CMP) and controlling mechanism as National Advisory Committee (NAC) and Coordinating Committee like previous coalition governments of the UPA-I and the NDA. Sudhir Kumar Panwar, President, Kisan Jagriti Manch and political observer points out that in the absence of CMP, there was no cooperation and coordination of government policies and there was an atmosphere of 'ad hocism' in the governance. The lack of synchronization could be seen even within the Congress Party, not to speak of other constituents in the UPA.

The regional and small parties particularly the SP, RJD, TDP and BJD, were preparing for the idea of Third Front. These regional forces and others like BSP opposed the UPA one day and support it another day. Clearly, ad hocism throughout across the board helped UPA-II chug along despite its failures and foibles. Whether the UPA brand of ad hocism prevailed over others, was moot question in relation to upcoming political battles. The above facts show that the BJP led NDA and the Congress Party run UPA-I and II claimed in their report cards that they had laudable performance during their tenures in the office. They tried to build a progressive and modern India.

#### **Conclusion**

The Bharatiya Janata Party and Congress Party led NDA and UPA governments respectively; made their best efforts or meet the goals particularly on economic front and their working had been satisfactory. They failed badly in social welfare facilities particularly in health and education. Both the governments (NDA and UPA), followed almost similar kinds of new liberal economic policies and tactics, when, they were in office or in the opposition. The

BJP had then opposed new economic policy of P. V. Narasimha Rao and United Front governments, but it followed same kind of economic policy when came into power in 1998. For example, the BJP had earlier opposed the Insurance Regulatory Bill in 1997 but the Bill was passed by the NDA in 1999. In a similar way, the Congress Party assailed the NDA government's economic policies and raised slogans against NDA, what aam aadmi (common man) got from the India Shining story. The role was got reversed, when UPA came into power in 2004 and BJP became the largest opposition party.

The UPA in its first term from 2004 to 2009, tried to be proactive in implementing the NCMP through MGNREGA and closed Ministry of Disinvestment under the mutual agreement between the Congress party and Left parties. Later on, the UPA-I signed treaty with USA on Civil Nuclear Deal, inspite of the resistance from Left Front. The UPA-II in its second inning was more serious about on 'inclusive growth' and allowed FDI in many new sectors including retail. The BJP along with other opposition parties opposed the decision of UPA-II to allow FDI in retail sector etc and called Bharat bandh (all India strike). More or less, the differences between BJP and Congress were getting blurred on the economic issues.

Both the regimes of NDA and UPA (I,) and (II) acted under great stress and strain and withdrew many decisions under the withdrawal threat given by one coalition partner or the other. It has been due to lack of clear majority of one party. The regional parties as LJP, NC, AIADMK, DMK, Trinamool Congress held positions alternatively both in the NDA and in the UPA and Left parties (outside supporter of UPA-I), etc, put the Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh governments on tenterhooks from one issue (such as POTA, price hike of petroleum products and FDI etc) to another. In one way, these regional parties had no national perspective and thought in terms of power but no common goals as well. They were the root cause of political instability in India.

Similarly, the corruption cases and scandals eroded the credibility and legitimacy of both the governments of A.B Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh. The NDA and the UPA were deeply involved in various scams. The people were stunned, when 2G scam was exposed by Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). Prime Minister Manmohan Singh being portrayed as a tragic, lonely figure and the UPA as the most corrupt government by Washington Post.<sup>26</sup> These exposes produced a powerful nationwide anti-corruption movement in 2011, and as a result of it, the campaign seriously weakened the UPA. All these scandals spoke volumes of the inaction of the governments of the NDA and the UPA-I and II. No political party was seriously talking all these scandals. The politicians and their parties too were busy with inner party battle and had no inclination to talk about real issues on public mind at the moment. Inflation, Naxalism, corruption, price rise, terrorism, internal and external security, poverty and hunger were still the real issues, which needed to be addressed more vigorously.

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