Date –10- December 2024

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEMS OF INDIA AND FRANCE

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The French government has collapsed following a no-confidence vote that ousted Prime Minister Michel Barnier just three months after his appointment by President Emmanuel Macron. MPs overwhelmingly supported the motion against Barnier, who had used special powers to push his budget through without a parliamentary vote, sparking controversy. This marks the first time since 1962 that the French government has fallen due to a no-confidence vote. The collapse adds to the political instability in France, which has been further complicated by the results of the summer snap elections, where no single party gained a majority in parliament.

NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION:

A no-confidence motion is a formal mechanism used in parliamentary systems to evaluate whether an executive, typically the head of government or the cabinet, retains the support of the majority in the legislature. It is a crucial constitutional element ensuring the accountability of the executive to the legislature.

PURPOSE OF A NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION

Assess Fitness to Govern: Allows the legislature to determine if the executive is fit to continue holding office.

Maintain Legislative Majority: Ensures the executive's mandate is valid only if it has majority support in the legislative body.

Promote Accountability: Holds the executive responsible for its actions and policies before the representatives of the people.

Remove or Reorganize the Government: If passed, the motion can lead to the resignation of the prime minister, individual ministers, or the entire cabinet.

Protect Democratic Principles: Prevents an executive from continuing in power without the confidence of the legislature, safeguarding the democratic process.

NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION IN INDIA:

Introduction in Lok Sabha Only: A no-confidence motion can only be introduced in the Lok Sabha. It requires the support of at least 50 members for the Speaker to consider it.

Debate and Voting Process: The Speaker allows time for debate after admitting the motion. If the majority of members vote in favor, the motion is passed, and all ministers are expected to resign.

First No-Confidence Motion: Introduced by J. B. Kripalani against Jawaharlal Nehru's government in August 1963, after the Sino-Indian War.

Historical Context: As of August 2023, 31 no-confidence motions have been moved. Indira Gandhi faced the most (15), followed by Lal Bahadur Shastri and P. V. Narasimha Rao (3 each).

Notable Outcomes: Atal Bihari Vajpayee lost a motion by one vote (269–270) in April 1999. Prime Ministers Morarji Desai (1979), V. P. Singh, and H. D. Deve Gowda were removed via no-confidence motions.

Recent Motions: Narendra Modi's government faced no-confidence motions in 2018 and 2023, both of which failed.

Impact of Anti-Defection Law: Even with the Anti-Defection Law, no-confidence motions can succeed if more than one-third of the ruling party's members defect.

COMPARISON OF INDIAN AND FRENCH POLITICAL SYSTEMS
KEY CONTRASTING FEATURES OF THE INDIAN AND FRENCH POLITICAL SYSTEMS:
----
1. Head of State vs. Head of Government: In India, the President is primarily a ceremonial figure with limited powers, while the Prime Minister holds significant executive authority and is responsible for running the government. In contrast, France's President possesses substantial powers, including appointing the Prime Minister and presiding over the Council of Ministers. This distinction highlights India's parliamentary nature versus France's semi-presidential system where both roles hold considerable influence.

2. Political Parties and Multiparty System: India features a vibrant multiparty system with numerous regional parties alongside national ones like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Indian National Congress (INC). This diversity reflects India's federal structure and regional identities. France also has multiple political parties but typically operates within a two-round electoral system that often leads to two dominant parties emerging in elections—historically represented by parties like La République En Marche! and The Republicans.

3. Federalism vs. Unitarism: India is a federal state where power is divided between central and state governments as outlined in its Constitution. Each state has its own government with legislative powers over certain subjects. Conversely, France operates under a unitary system where most powers reside with the central government; local authorities have limited autonomy compared to Indian states.

4. Role of Religion in Politics: India's political landscape is significantly influenced by religion due to its diverse population comprising various faiths such as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, etc., leading to

religious-based political parties like Shiv Sena or All India Muslim League historically influencing politics. In contrast, France maintains strict secularism (laïcité), separating religion from state affairs; this principle shapes French political discourse significantly.

5. Civil Society Engagement: Civil society plays an active role in both countries but manifests differently due to cultural contexts. In India, numerous NGOs advocate for social issues ranging from human rights to environmental concerns; however, they often face challenges regarding regulatory scrutiny from authorities. In France, civil society organizations are robustly integrated into policy discussions but operate within frameworks that emphasize public debate and civic engagement.

6. Electoral System Mechanics: India employs first-past-the-post voting for Lok Sabha elections which can lead to disproportional representation due to vote-splitting among multiple candidates in constituencies. Conversely, France uses a two-round system for legislative elections where if no candidate achieves an absolute majority in the first round, a second round occurs between top candidates, ensuring broader representation.

7. Political Accountability Mechanisms: In India, mechanisms such as parliamentary questions sessions allow MPs to hold ministers accountable directly during sessions; additionally, anti-corruption bodies exist though effectiveness varies widely across states and levels of governance. In France, too there are accountability measures through parliamentary inquiries, but they tend to be less frequent than in India due to different political culture dynamics surrounding accountability practices.

SIMILAR FEATURES OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEMS OF INDIA AND FRANCE

1. Democratic Polity: Both India and France operate under democratic systems. India follows a parliamentary democracy where representatives are elected by the people, while France has a semi-presidential system with an elected president and parliament. In both systems, sovereignty resides with the citizens, exercised through regular elections.

2. Constitutional Framework: India's governance is based on its 1950 Constitution, emphasizing justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. France's Constitution of the Fifth Republic (1958) establishes similar democratic values while reflecting its unique history.

3. Bicameral Legislature: Both nations have bicameral legislatures. In India, the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha represent the two chambers, while in France, they are the National Assembly and Senate, with direct and indirect elections for their members.

4. Independent Judiciary: Both countries uphold judicial independence. India's Supreme Court ensures constitutional compliance and fundamental rights, while France's judiciary operates free from legislative or executive influence to maintain justice.

5. Coalition Politics: Multi-party systems in both nations often lead to coalition governments. In India, this is common at state and national levels, while in France, post-election alliances are formed to achieve a majority.

6. Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity: These shared ideals shape both societies. India's Constitution promotes unity in diversity and equality regardless of caste or creed, while France's motto reflects its revolutionary ethos and commitment to civil rights.

7. Secularism: India's secularism fosters harmony among diverse religions, treating all faiths equally, whereas France's laïcité strictly separates religion from the state to ensure neutrality. Both approaches aim to protect freedoms and maintain social order.

CONCLUSION:

India and France, as democratic nations, share core principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, reflected in their governance structures and societal values. However, their distinct historical trajectories have shaped

contrasting political features, such as federalism versus unitarism and differing approaches to secularism and electoral mechanisms, demonstrating how democracies adapt to diverse cultural and historical contexts.

PRELIMS QUESTION:
- -
Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The No-Confidence motion in India is moved in the lower house only
2. The No-Confidence motion is never been passed in the Indian Parliament
3. The No-Confidence motion in India led to the dissolution of the Lower House of Parliament.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

A. Only one
B. Only two
C. All three
D. None

ANSWER: A

MAINS QUESTIONS:
- -
Q. Compare and contrast the political systems of India and France, focusing on their democratic structures, electoral mechanisms, and governance models.

(Answer in 250 words)

Munde Dhananjay Navnath