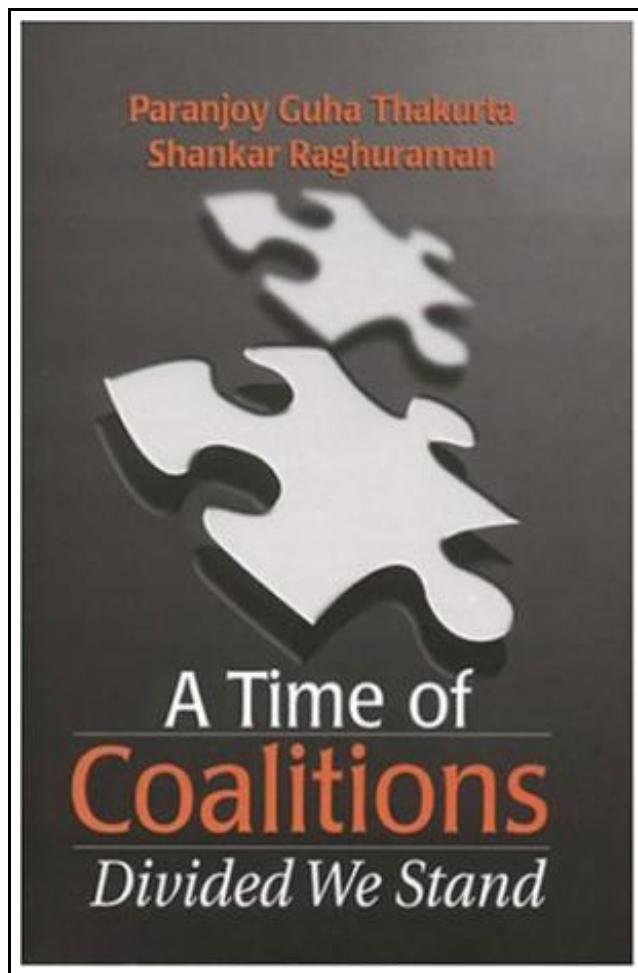


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Sage Publications, New Delhi, India, 2004. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Dust Jacket Condition: New. First Edition. This topical and absorbing book, written by two eminent journalists, convincingly argues against two commonly held beliefs concerning Indian politics. Their basic premise is that India has come a long way from the time when a single party, the Congress, dominated our polity. Instead, it has given way to multi-party configurations or coalitions which, they demonstrate, are neither temporary nor an aberrationcoalitions are here to stay, they say, at least in the foreseeable future. Second, they expertly dismiss the view that Indias polity is essentially bipolar, led by either of the two largest partiesthe Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress Partyand that other political parties have no option but to choose which of these two they will align themselves with. The authors take the view that coalition governments are in fact better equipped to deal with the tensions of a divided society while single-party governments tend to both centralise and homogenise. Among the numerous issues and trends cogently discussed are: - the rise of the BJP from the time it was virtually wiped out of Parliament in 1984, and its current faction-ridden character - the dramatic decline of the Congress, especially the fact that the minorities and oppressed groups, once its largest constituency, are now deserting it in large numbers - the continuing fragmentation of the Indian polity and the rise of regional parties which are not necessarily narrow and partisan, but capable of looking at issues from a wider perspective - the changing tactics of the Left and their internal differences - the crucial question of whether coalitions can provide stable Union governments - the possibility of alternate political formationsheaded neither by the BJP nor the Congresscoming to power at the centre -...

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