

Coalition governments in Jammu and Kashmir with special reference to the alliance of PDP and BJP.

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Abstract

Federalism is an instrument of power sharing between independent authorities' viz. union and state. Coalition government is also a means of power sharing. Logically both federalism and coalition government should be complimentary to each other. As the object of sharing of power is common in both, a student of politics or law may gather the impression that coalition government is always supportive of federal form of government or constitution and sometime also gives more opportunity for expression of ideas and democratic rights to small and regional parties. In this way it seems that coalition government promotes democracy and representative administration. But there are some grey areas also of the coalition politics like sometimes the coalition which are formed after declaration of election which give rise to 'horse trading' for the purpose of proving majority on the floor of house of representatives. The paper discusses the development of coalition politics in J&K, and explores some solutions how the grey areas in coalition politics can be minimized.

Keywords: BJP, PDP, coalition, J&K, alliance, development

Introduction

Jammu and Kashmir state has witnessed five coalition governments in since 1947, only the National Conference-Congress alliance (2009-2015) lasted a full term. Others collapsed mid-way, triggering instability. A timeline: 2015-2018: PDP- BJP form a coalition of two parties that are ideologically poles apart but brought together by a hung assembly. While the PDP got all of its 28 seats in Muslim-majority Kashmir, the BJP romped home to an unprecedented victory in Hindu-dominated Jammu. The two stitched up a power-sharing pact but cracks surfaced soon after. 2009-2015: National Conference and Congress form an alliance government and take turns for the chief minister's post. 2002-2008: The PDP and Congress stitch up a coalition government with rotational chief ministership of three years each. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed is at the helm upto November 2006 and paves the way for Ghulam Nabi Azad of Congress. But the coalition collapses after PDP pulls out in 2008 over the allotment of Kashmir land to the Amarnath Shrine Board. 1982-86: After the death of his father Sheikh Abdullah, National Conference president Farooq Abdullah wins elections and gets a majority. The Congress engineered defections in NC and topples the Farooq government. His brother-in-law Ghulam Ahmad Shah is propped up as chief minister with the backing of Congress. But, the government fails to complete its tenure. 1975-77: The year 1975 is witness to an accord between National Conference leader Sheikh Abdullah and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi allowing the former to become chief minister after more than two decades. In 1977, the Congress withdraws support to Sheikh, leading to dissolution of assembly.

Methodology

The information for this dissertation has been chiefly collected from the primary and secondary sources which include: Books, Journals, News Papers, government reports and Internet.

▪ Government Formation

Three days after the results, the JKN approached the BJP for a meeting to try and form a government. As part of the deal, Nirmal Kumar Singh was to be the chief minister and JKN's MLA Ali Mohammad Sagar was to be his deputy. The deal fell through after a revolt in the JKN. The BJP also rejected this deal, citing morality issues.

In the following days, the JKN also announced its intention to support the PDP from outside by submitting a letter to Governor Narinder Nath Vohra after the dialogue with the BJP fell through. The PDP refused.

A week after the results, the PDP and the BJP officially started talks. Both parties had a two-member team to form a Common Minimum Programme (CMP). The PDP was represented by Naeem Akhtar and Haseeb Drabu, while Ram Madhav and Nirmal Kumar Singh represented the BJP. Minister of State in the PMO, Jitendra Singh, supervised the dialogue.

Omar Abdullah resigned as chief minister on 24 December. The Governor accepted his resignation, but asked him to continue in an interim capacity until the formation of a new government. President's rule was imposed on 1 January 2015.

After dealing with issues, both parties turned their attention to the composition of the cabinet. The PDP was initially reluctant for a three-year rotation of the chief minister's

post, but later agreed. There were also issues related to the joining of the government by separatist-turned-politician Sajjad Lone. In the run-up to the election, he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and praised him by calling him "big brother." The BJP reciprocated by not running a candidate against Lone for the Handwara seat, from where he won, and got elected to the assembly for the first time.

Both parties announced on 25 February that the CMP was almost ready, in a joint press conference called by BJP national President Amit Shah and PDP President Mehbooba Mufti. They also stated that the ideological differences had been "ironed out" and both parties were now working on the formation of a cabinet. The dialogue between both parties ended successfully on 18 February - two months and 5 days after beginning of talks Kamal (2004) ^[3].

The new PDP-BJP government took the oath of office on 1 March in the Zorawar Singh Stadium of Jammu, with Mufti Mohammad Sayeed as chief minister for the full term of six years and Nirmal Kumar Singh as his deputy by Rajinder (1998) ^[2]. Modi was also present for the occasion. Twelve cabinet ministers from each party were also sworn-in. This was the first time that the BJP was a coalition partner in the Jammu and Kashmir government. Lone and independent MLA for Udhampur, Pawan Kumar Gupta, were also sworn-in as cabinet ministers from the BJP's quota.

▪ **PDP-BJP government agenda in Jammu and Kashmir**

The PDP and the BJP released their common minimum programme (CMP) for running the coalition government in Jammu and Kashmir.

▪ **The 15 highlights of the CMP**

1. To meet the political and economic objectives of the alliance, it is important to create an environment of peace, certainty and stability
2. The government will be transformed into a 'smart government' which will be pro-active, transparent and accountable.
3. It shall be the mission of the government to be the most ethical state in the country from the present day position of being the most corrupt state.
4. The overall economic policy will align the economic structure of Jammu and Kashmir with its own resources, skills and society.
5. The government will ensure genuine autonomy of institutions of probity which include the state accountability commission, vigilance commission, which will be re-designated as transparency commission and an organisation which deals with the Right to Information Act.
6. Following the principles of "Insaniyat, Kashmiriyat and Jamhooriyat" of the earlier NDA government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the state government will facilitate and help initiate a sustained and meaningful dialogue with all internal stakeholders which include political groups irrespective of their ideological views and predilections. The dialogue will seek to build a broad based consensus on resolution of all outstanding issues of the state.
7. The government will examine the need for de-notifying disturbed areas which will as a consequence enable the union government to take a final view on the

continuation of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in these areas.

8. Article 370: The present position will be maintained on all constitutional provisions including special status.
9. Dialogue with Hurriyat Conference: The coalition government will facilitate sustained dialogue with all stakeholders irrespective of their ideological views.
10. All the land other than those given to the security forces on the basis of lease, licenses and acquisition under the provision of the land acquisition act shall be returned to the rightful owners except in a situation where retaining the land is absolutely imperative in view of a specific security requirement.
11. The government will work out a one-time settlement for refugees from Pakistan occupied Kashmir of 1947, 1965 and 1971.
12. The government will take measures for sustenance and livelihood of the West Pakistan refugees.
13. It will extend all benefits accruing to the people living on the Line of Control (LoC) to the people living on the international border.
14. It will secure a share in the profits of NHPC emanating from Jammu and Kashmir's waters to the state government.
15. It will reverse all royalty agreements with NHPC.

▪ **BJP dumped PDP in Jammu and Kashmir- Breakup**

The "unnatural alliance" between the BJP and the PDP. The BJP pulled out of the Mehbooba Mufti government of Jammu and Kashmir. The decision to walk out of the Jammu and Kashmir government was taken in a meeting convened by BJP president Amit Shah (Malhotra 2000) ^[6]. The meeting was attended by all the BJP ministers in the Jammu and Kashmir government. BJP state chief Ravinder Raina and party general secretary in charge of organisation Ashok Kaul were also present in the meeting held in New Delhi. The BJP-PDP alliance had strained over a range of issues with the saffron party ministers and leaders in Jammu and Kashmir complaining against Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti's style of functioning. The BJP leaders alleged that Mufti had been taking unilateral decisions.

▪ **The five reasons that led to BJP-PDP break up: Mehbooba's Kashmir-centric approach**

At the time of formation of the BJP-PDP government in 2015, the election had resulted in a fractured mandate. The BJP won a majority of seats in Jammu while PDP emerged largest in the Kashmir Valley. But with Mehbooba Mufti replacing father Mufti Mohammed Sayeed after the latter's death, the BJP resented an increasing focus of the government on Kashmir Valley.

The BJP complained that under Mehbooba Mufti, Kashmir Valley was being pampered at the cost of other regions of the state. The BJP does not have a strong presence in the Kashmir Valley while the regions of its influence were being allegedly ignored. The BJP felt cornered in Jammu region which is the stronghold of the party.

Rise in militancy

The BJP said that the Mehbooba Mufti government failed to contain militancy and radicalisation of youth in the Kashmir Valley." The situation in Kashmir Valley has deteriorated. Radicalisation is on the rise," Ram Madhav, the BJP general

secretary and in-charge of Jammu and Kashmir, said today (June 19) in New Delhi (Siwach (1994).

The decision to withdraw from the government came a day after suspension of ceasefire in Kashmir Valley. Mehbooba Mufti is understood to have demanded extension of ceasefire in Kashmir Valley. The Centre had suspended operations against the terrorist outfits during Ramzan.

However, terror activities continued in the Valley. Noted journalist Shujaat Bukhari and army jawan Aurangzeb were killed by the terrorists during the period of ceasefire in the Kashmir Valley.

KATHUA Rape and Murder

The rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Kathua was a big dampener for the BJP-PDP alliance. The PDP was critical of the BJP going soft on the alleged party supporters of the accused. The local BJP leaders wanted a CBI inquiry into the incident while Mehbooba Mufti preferred probe by the Jammu and Kashmir Police (Mukhtar 1999) ^[8].

In the days following the Kathua rape and murder, the BJP was being seen losing ground in Jammu region. The incident had gained a communal twist with rallies being held in support and against the accused.

Unilateral decisions by Mehbooba Mufti

The BJP leaders of Jammu and Kashmir are believed to have complained to the central leadership that Mehbooba Mufti was taking unilateral decisions in the matter of governance and the saffron party was not being given due importance.

PDP took the unilateral decision to release stone pelters, not to relocate Bakkarwalas from the government's land and doling out land grants to religious outfit Ahle Hadees. On the other hand, the BJP could not secure any relief for those named in cases filed in incidents Related to Amarnath land movement.

2019 Lok Sabha Elections

Resolving the Kashmir issue was one of the poll promises of the BJP in 2014. However, the situation on the ground has worsened in the past four years -- both in the Valley and along the Line of Control. In a year's time, the BJP will be seeking votes and if the situation in the Kashmir Valley doesn't improve, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's image of a strong leader would take a beating.

The BJP-led government has advocated a hawkish policy towards Kashmiri separatists and militants. The PDP was being seen as an obstruction in carrying out anti-terror plans devised by the security forces. With Governor's rule in Jammu and Kashmir, the Modi government would be in a better position to implement its policy to tackle separatism and militancy in the Valley.

Conclusion

Coalition governments in Jammu and Kashmir have always been unstable. Since 1947, of the five coalition governments that the state witnessed, only the National Conference-Congress alliance from 2009 to 2015 lasted a full term. The other four collapsed mid-way, triggering long spells of violence, instability and democratic vacuum. With a history of central government interventions, unstable coalition government formations are not new to the sensitive state. The BJP and PDP were unlikely allies to start with — one a hard nationalist party and the other often termed “soft

separatist” by the BJP during the 2014 election campaign for the state assembly – and the fact that the “Agenda for Alliance” they negotiated as the basic text of their government remained unimplemented was further proof of their incompatibility. And yet, we should be clear about one thing — the BJP's decision to withdraw from the coalition is nothing less than an abdication of political responsibility on the part of the party.

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