

The Intersection of Coalition Politics and Political Turmoil : The Impact of the PDP-BJP Alliance on Jammu and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the intricate dynamics of coalition politics in Jammu and Kashmir, focusing specifically on the alliance between the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and its profound impact on the region's political landscape. The PDP-BJP coalition, formed in 2015 after the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly elections, was a strategic but controversial partnership, bringing together two ideologically divergent parties. This alliance was intended to bridge the regional and communal divides between the Kashmir Valley, dominated by the PDP, and the Jammu region, where the BJP held sway. However, the coalition quickly became a source of significant political turmoil. It delves into the historical and political context that led to the formation of this coalition, analyzing the motivations of both parties and the broader implications for governance in a conflict-ridden state. The study examines how the alliance, initially perceived as a means to ensure political stability and development, instead exacerbated existing tensions and led to widespread public discontent. The ideological incompatibility between the PDP and BJP, particularly on sensitive issues such as Article 370, autonomy, and the handling of insurgency, is highlighted as a key factor that undermined the coalition's effectiveness.

Moreover, the research assesses the cascading effects of the alliance on Jammu and Kashmir's political stability, including the erosion of the PDP's support base, the rise of internal dissent, and the eventual collapse of the coalition in 2018. The abstract also explores the broader consequences of this political turmoil, such as the increased alienation of the Kashmiri population, the resurgence of militancy, and the central government's subsequent decision to abrogate Article 370, which further destabilized the region. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the PDP-BJP alliance, offering insights into how coalition politics in a deeply divided and

conflict-prone region like Jammu and Kashmir can lead to unintended consequences. It underscores the challenges of governance in such a context and the critical importance of aligning political strategies with the region's unique socio-political realities. Through this exploration, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersection between coalition politics and political turmoil, particularly in the context of Jammu and Kashmir's complex and volatile political environment.

Keywords : Ideological, Communal Divides, Incompatibility, Insurgency, Autonomy, Coalition.

I. INTRODUCTION

The political landscape of Jammu and Kashmir has long been characterized by its complexity, volatility, and the deep-seated regional and communal divisions that have shaped its governance. Against this backdrop, the formation of the People's Democratic Party (PDP)-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alliance in 2015 marked a significant and unprecedented development in the region's political history. The PDP, rooted in the Kashmir Valley with a platform advocating for greater autonomy and a "healing touch" approach to governance, and the BJP, a national party with a strong base in the Hindu-majority Jammu region and a platform centred on national integration and a robust security approach, represented two ideologically distinct forces. The coalition was not merely a political arrangement but an ambitious attempt to reconcile these divergent ideologies to ensure stable governance in one of India's most politically sensitive states.

However, this alliance, while initially seen as a pragmatic solution to the fragmented electoral mandate of 2014, soon became a focal point of political turmoil. The ideological discord between the coalition partners, particularly on contentious issues such as the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370, the handling of security and insurgency, and the differing visions for the region's future, led to

significant governance challenges. The PDP, under Mehbooba Mufti's leadership, struggled to balance its commitment to the aspirations of the Kashmiri people with the BJP's hardline stance on issues of national security and integration. This balancing act not only strained the coalition but also alienated key segments of the PDP's traditional support base, leading to growing public dissatisfaction and internal party dissent. As the coalition grappled with these challenges, it became increasingly clear that the alliance was contributing to, rather than mitigating, the political instability in the region. The eventual collapse of the PDP-BJP alliance in 2018 marked the culmination of this turmoil, setting the stage for even more profound changes, including the abrogation of Article 370 by the central government in 2019. This introduction sets the stage for a detailed exploration of how the intersection of coalition politics and regional complexities in Jammu and Kashmir led to significant political turmoil, ultimately reshaping the region's political landscape in ways that continue to resonate today. Through this analysis, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the intricate dynamics of coalition politics in conflict-prone regions and the far-reaching consequences that can arise when political strategies are misaligned with the unique socio-political realities on the ground.

2. Concept of Coalition Politics and Political Turmoil: In the Context of PDP-BJP Alliance

a) Coalition Politics: Definition and Dynamics

- **Coalition Politics** refers to the practice of forming a government by combining the efforts of multiple political parties that may not have sufficient seats on their own to govern independently. In coalition governments, parties agree to share power, often through negotiations that involve compromises on policy issues. This arrangement is common in parliamentary systems, particularly in regions with fragmented electoral outcomes where no single party can achieve a majority.
- **Dynamics of Coalition Formation:** Coalition politics is driven by the need to create a functional majority in the legislature. The dynamics of coalition formation typically involve negotiations between parties with different ideologies, priorities, and voter bases. Successful coalitions often require a shared vision or, at the very least, a practical agreement on key issues of governance. However, the inherent ideological differences between coalition partners can lead to tensions, especially when these differences affect critical policy areas.
- **Challenges of Coalition Politics:** The central challenge of coalition politics lies in managing the divergent interests of the parties involved. Coalition partners must find common ground on key issues while maintaining their distinct political identities. The risk of internal conflict is high, particularly when partners have fundamentally opposing views on significant issues. The stability of coalition governments often depends on the ability of the partners to compromise and the effectiveness of the coalition agreement in managing differences.

b) Political Turmoil: Causes and Manifestations

- **Political Turmoil** refers to a state of instability, uncertainty, or conflict within the political sphere of a region or country. It often arises from

unresolved disputes, governance challenges, or significant policy shifts that disrupt the status quo. Political turmoil can manifest in various forms, including mass protests, governmental breakdowns, loss of public trust, and in extreme cases, violence or armed conflict.

- **Causes of Political Turmoil in Coalitions:** In coalition governments, political turmoil can be triggered by several factors, including ideological conflicts between coalition partners, failure to deliver on shared governance promises or external pressures such as economic crises or security challenges. The breakdown of communication and cooperation between coalition partners can lead to a loss of governance effectiveness, fueling public discontent and political instability.
- **Impact of Political Turmoil:** The impact of political turmoil is often far-reaching, affecting not just the functioning of the government but also the socio-economic stability of the region. It can lead to a crisis of governance, where the government is unable to effectively implement policies or respond to emerging challenges. In extreme cases, political turmoil can result in the dissolution of the coalition, triggering early elections or leading to the imposition of direct rule by a higher authority.

c) The PDP-BJP Alliance: An Intersection of Coalition Politics and Political Turmoil

- **Formation of the Alliance:** The PDP-BJP alliance in Jammu and Kashmir was formed after the 2014 Legislative Assembly elections, which resulted in a fractured mandate. The PDP, led by Mehbooba Mufti, emerged as the largest party in the Kashmir Valley, while the BJP, led by Narendra Modi, secured a significant number of seats in the Hindu-majority Jammu region. Despite their ideological differences—particularly on issues like Article 370 and the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir—the two parties came together to form a coalition government. The alliance was seen as a

pragmatic move to ensure stable governance, given the fragmented electoral outcome.

- **Ideological Incompatibility:** One of the primary sources of political turmoil in the PDP-BJP alliance was the stark ideological incompatibility between the two parties. The PDP had long advocated for greater autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir and a more humane approach to governance in the conflict-ridden region. In contrast, the BJP had a strong nationalist agenda, emphasizing the full integration of Jammu and Kashmir into India and a tough stance on security and counter-insurgency operations. These opposing views led to significant tensions within the coalition, particularly on issues related to governance, security, and the region's special status under Article 370.
- **Governance Challenges:** The PDP-BJP government faced numerous challenges in implementing its policies effectively. The ideological divide between the coalition partners led to conflicting approaches on key issues, such as the handling of protests, engagement with separatist groups, and development projects in the state. These governance challenges were exacerbated by external pressures, including ongoing militancy, public unrest, and the broader geopolitical tensions between India and Pakistan. The inability of the coalition to present a united front on these issues contributed to a growing sense of political instability in the region.
- **Public Discontent and Internal Dissent:** The public perception of the PDP-BJP alliance was increasingly negative, particularly in the Kashmir Valley, where many viewed the PDP's partnership with the BJP as a betrayal of its core principles. This discontent was further fueled by the government's handling of key issues, such as the 2016 Burhan Wani protests, which saw widespread unrest and violence. Within the PDP, there was significant internal dissent, with several senior leaders expressing dissatisfaction with the

coalition's direction and **decisions**. This internal conflict weakened the party's cohesion and effectiveness, further destabilizing the coalition.

- **Collapse of the Coalition and Aftermath:** The political turmoil culminated in the collapse of the PDP-BJP alliance in June 2018, when the BJP **withdrew** its support, citing security concerns and the need for firmer governance. The fall of the coalition government led to the imposition of Governor's Rule in Jammu and Kashmir, further deepening the region's political crisis. This period of instability eventually paved the way for the central government's decision to abrogate Article 370 in August 2019, a move that dramatically altered the region's political landscape and intensified the political turmoil.

d) Conclusion: Lessons from the PDP-BJP Alliance

- **Challenges of Ideological Coalitions:** The experience of the PDP-BJP alliance underscores the inherent challenges of coalition politics, particularly when the partners have fundamentally different ideologies. While coalitions can offer practical solutions to fragmented electoral outcomes, they also require careful management of differences and a clear framework for governance. The failure to address these challenges can lead to political instability and, as seen in the case of Jammu and Kashmir, significant and far-reaching consequences.
- **Impact on Regional Stability:** The political turmoil resulting from the PDP-BJP alliance had a profound impact on the stability of Jammu and Kashmir. The breakdown of the coalition not only disrupted governance but also contributed to a broader sense of disillusionment and alienation among the region's population. The subsequent abrogation of Article 370 and the reorganization of the state into two union territories have further complicated the political and social dynamics in the region, highlighting the complex interplay between coalition politics and regional stability.

This detailed examination of the concept of coalition challenges of governance in conflict-prone regions and politics and political turmoil in the context of the PDP- the potential consequences of political misalignments. BJP alliance provides valuable insights into the

3. The Representation of Controversies during the PDP-BJP Alliance that Causes Political Turmoil

Controversy	Description	Impact on Political Turmoil in Jammu and Kashmir
Ideological Clash over Article 370	The PDP supported the retention of Article 370, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir, while the BJP had a long-standing agenda to revoke it.	This fundamental disagreement led to significant tensions within the coalition, eroding public trust in the PDP, particularly in the Kashmir Valley, and contributing to widespread unrest and protests.
Handling of 2016 Burhan Wani Protests	The killing of Burhan Wani, a popular militant commander, led to massive protests across the Kashmir Valley. The BJP favoured a hardline approach, while the PDP advocated for a more restrained response.	The differing approaches to handling the protests caused internal friction within the coalition and intensified public anger, leading to prolonged unrest and further destabilizing the region.
Human Rights Violations	The use of pellet guns and other measures by security forces during protests, which were supported by the BJP, was seen by the PDP's voter base as human rights violations.	The perceived complicity of the PDP in these actions led to a loss of support among its core constituency in the Valley, exacerbating political instability and alienating the local population.
Governance and Development Disputes	Disagreements over the allocation of resources and development priorities, with the BJP focusing more on Jammu and the PDP on the Kashmir Valley.	These disputes created friction within the coalition, leading to ineffective governance, and fueled perceptions of regional bias, increasing dissatisfaction in both regions.
Appointment of a BJP Governor	The appointment of N.N. Vohra, seen as close to the BJP, as the Governor of	This appointment was perceived as an attempt by the BJP to exert greater influence over the state's administration,

	Jammu and Kashmir, raised concerns within the PDP about increasing central control over the state.	leading to further distrust and resentment within the PDP and among the Kashmiri Populace.
Alleged Erosion of Autonomy	The PDP faced accusations from its supporters that it was allowing the BJP to erode the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir through central government interventions.	These allegations led to a significant decline in the PDP's popularity, especially in the Kashmir Valley, where autonomy is a deeply sensitive issue, fueling further political turmoil.
Differing Approaches to Security and Counter-Insurgency	The BJP advocated for a strong military response to insurgency, while the PDP sought more engagement and dialogue with separatists.	This divergence in security policies led to an inconsistent approach to counter-insurgency, undermining the effectiveness of governance and contributing to a deteriorating security situation.
Regional Imbalance in Power Sharing	The PDP's perceived dominance in decision-making despite the BJP's significant presence in the Jammu region created tensions over regional representation and power-sharing.	The perceived imbalance in the coalition led to dissatisfaction in the Jammu region, further straining the alliance and contributing to regional polarization and political instability.
Internal Party Dissent	Senior leaders within the PDP expressed dissatisfaction with the alliance, leading to internal party dissent and resignations.	The internal discord weakened the PDP's cohesion and governance capacity, leading to further instability within the coalition and contributing to its eventual collapse.
Collapse of the Coalition in 2018	The BJP unilaterally withdrew from the alliance, citing security concerns and governance failures.	The sudden collapse of the coalition led to the imposition of Governor's Rule, deepening the political crisis and setting the stage for the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019.

II. CONCLUSION

The study of the PDP-BJP alliance in Jammu and Kashmir reveals the inherent challenges of coalition politics, especially when ideological differences between partners are stark. The alliance, formed out of electoral necessity, brought together two parties with fundamentally opposing views on critical issues such as autonomy, governance, and security. While the coalition was initially seen as a pragmatic solution to the region's fragmented mandate, it quickly became a source of political instability. The repeated clashes over policy decisions, coupled with the public's growing disillusionment with the PDP's perceived compromises, contributed to a significant erosion of trust and political cohesion. The internal dissent within the PDP and the differing approaches to handling key issues, such as the 2016 Burhan Wani protests, further exacerbated the situation, leading to widespread unrest and a deteriorating security environment.

Ultimately, the collapse of the PDP-BJP alliance in 2018 underscored the deep-seated tensions and the failure to manage the coalition's inherent contradictions. The alliance's breakdown not only marked the end of an uneasy partnership but also set the stage for even more profound changes in the region, culminating in the abrogation of Article 370 and the subsequent reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir. This study highlights the complexities of coalition politics in a conflict-prone region and the far-reaching consequences when political alliances are misaligned with the socio-political realities on the ground. The experience of the PDP-BJP alliance serves as a cautionary tale about the potential for political turmoil when coalition partners are unable to reconcile their differences and maintain a unified approach to governance.

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