

POLITICAL FEDERALISM UNDER MODI'S TENURE AS PRIME MINISTER

ASHIQ HASSAN MALIK¹, TANVEER RASOOL DAR²

¹Lecturer in Political Science Government Degree College Chadoora, Jammu & Kashmir, INDIA

²Lecturer in Political Science Government Degree College Thanamandi, Jammu & Kashmir, INDIA

ABSTRACT

The general elections held since 2014 handed a majority to the Bharatiya Janta Party except 2024 elections, however, the results had not changed the governing party from ruling asserting its continuing dominance. This study provides a critical analysis of what these continuous victories of the Bharatiya Janta Party had meant for the dynamics of center–state relations in India especially on political federalism. In analyzing this, the study first engages with the concept of “competitive-cooperative federalism” and more widely within conceptual framework that allows us identify dynamics in center–state relations across three dimensions: fiscal federalism, the political and the administrative. This study argues that despite the BJP’s promise to put “center-state relations on an even keel” the above relations had become more centralized under the Narendra Modi led regimes especially on political dimension. Moreover, this process of increasing centralization had been found in diverse cases viz Jammu and kashmir, the presidential rule and Nagaland, push for one nation one election etc. The study argues that political centralization could further aggravate if the BJP continues its domineering in the state assembly elections. However, it is asserted centralization is strongest in the political domain, administrative matters, less in fiscal dimension where the union government felt bound by the recommendations of the 14th and 15th Finance Commission and by longstanding intergovernmental deliberations and discussions on revamping India’s rigid indirect taxation system with a polity-wide Goods and Services Tax, the management heavily relies on center–state consent. However, this study is brief, it analyzes political dimension by arguing that BJP is heading towards more centralization.

KEYWORDS: Political federalism, federalism, Modi, ethno-nationalism, centralisation, centre-state relations.

INTRODUCTION

Political federalism in India has undergone a significant transformation since 2014, marking a shift from the decentralized, coalition-driven governance of the post-Congress era toward a more centralized power structure under the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP). Historically, Indian federalism was characterized by a balance between the Centre and the states, reinforced by the entrenchment of minority coalition governments from 1989–91, which strengthened state autonomy and reduced the frequent use of President’s Rule. The liberalization of the Indian economy further empowered states by enabling them to attract investment and manage economic affairs independently (Arora, 2012). However, the BJP’s return to power in 2014, followed by its hegemonic dominance in 2019 and preserved majority in 2024 despite reduced margins, has reoriented center-state dynamics toward political centralization. This shift is driven by the BJP’s ideological commitment to Hindu nationalism; Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s centralizing governance style inherited from his tenure as Gujarat’s Chief Minister, and diminished reliance on regional parties for parliamentary support. While fiscal and administrative dimensions of federalism show continuity, the

political sphere has witnessed pronounced centralization, challenging earlier promises of “co-operative federalism” and reshaping the trajectory of Indian federalism in the contemporary era (Arora, 2012).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND UNDERSTANDING THE CHANGING DYNAMICS

The leading scholars of federalism and institutional analysis had developed a theoretical framework within which to situate the evolution of center–state relations in India since 2014. More in particular, we use the concepts of shared-rule and self- rule to assess centralizing or decentralizing dynamics in the management of federal relations between central and sub-national regions (states) across three dimensions: fiscal, political and administrative. The shared-rule properties along these three dimensions involve: sharing of centralized tax revenues and joint responsibility for planning, participation in public policymaking through common institutions financing and delivery of public service. The self-rule properties relate to policymaking autonomy (political dimension), the devolution of responsibility for planning sub-national revenue autonomy (fiscal dimension), financing and delivery of public services (administrative dimension). A process of centralization is

identified by a reduction in self-rule properties of the states without a compensatory role in their shared-rule provisions. Where a reduction in self-rule is balanced by increasing shared rule, interactions between two levels of government do not necessarily become either more decentralized or more centralized but, rather, more interdependent. Conversely, decentralization implies an increase in self-rule properties of the states (Elazar, 2010). Thus, the trio of concepts, decentralization, centralization and interdependence—constitutes the analytical tools that can be applied to the study of center–state transactions in the three dimensions identified above. Interdependent policymaking may be pitted against independent policymaking which occurs when, in matters affecting other governments, a government takes action without consulting other governments or considering their interests and those other governments may be forced to adjust independently. Since our paper focuses on center–state interactions, we put particular emphasis on changes in the extent of shared rule across the three dimensions. Where shared rule becomes more common, federalism moves into a cooperative direction. Conversely, where shared rule is replaced with independent and unilateral action by the center, federalism moves into a centralizing or centripetal direction. Finally, when shared rule is replaced with unilateral action by state governments, federalism acquires a more centrifugal form (Watts, 2003).

The dictum “cooperative-competitive federalism” which the current Modi government proclaims assumes that in some policy domains the center and states are expected to move away from independent action and strengthen their collaboration through shared decision-making in which each actor (the center and the states collectively) exercises a mutual veto (power-sharing). As we will see, the GST is the best, but also one of the few policy domains in which the principle of collaboration has been put into practice. In the comparative literature, the term “competitive federalism” is generally understood to mean that states are given more autonomy to pursue their political, fiscal, and policy goals without interference of the center. The corollary of increasing autonomy is that states increasingly have to fend for themselves and face stronger accountability for their own actions. They also have to find a mix of tax policies and social services which suits their electorate and retains their competitiveness in relation to other states within the federation. The assumed benefit of competitive federalism is that it maximizes the role of the states as laboratories of democracy and policy experimentation. The logic of competitive federalism is inherently decentralizing. However, in India, the term “competitive federalism” is often understood in a different sense, and in fact may not be “competitive” at all. For instance, the Modi government has also used it to refer to the ability of the states to compete for central funding based on centrally-or at best, jointly (center and

the states) determined goals and objectives. Understood accordingly, “competitive federalism” may generate a centralizing rather than a decentralizing dynamic. Similarly, the Indian government’s policy to promote competition amongst states to encourage foreign investment loses its decentralizing potential when the national ruling party attempts to selectively promote investments in states under its rule and project them as the top places to do business. At this level of favouritism, “competition” becomes more of an exercise in “partisan federalism” rather than genuinely “competitive federalism. (Watts, 2003)” In this article, we make two key conceptual moves for explaining the emerging dynamics of center–state political, fiscal, and administrative relations in Modi’s India. First, we position center–state interactions (shared rule) along a centralization/decentralization continuum. Such an approach perfectly suits India. Center–state relations have oscillated from extreme centralization under one-party dominance in the 1970s and 1980s, to a much more decentralized format in the 1990s and 2000s under broad-based (minority) coalition governments at the center in which state-based parties played a key role. This prompted an observer to claim that India had moved from being “quasi-federal” in the former period to a “quasi-confederacy” in the latter period. Second, we analyze the nature and extent of shared rule along each of the three dimensions while being mindful of the overlap-especially the fact that political actors tend to interact across each of the dimensions simultaneously.

Drawing on institutional theory and veto players theory, we conceive of intergovernmental institutions as sites for interaction between institutional-but-partisan veto players where conflict is always a possibility. This is important because, although institutional veto players-such as state executives and parliaments, the federal cabinet or the Lok and Rajya Sabha—have different interests regarding the principles of federal organization and design of institutions, they can produce either cooperation or conflict, depending on their partisan affiliation. For instance, when a single party gains a majority in the Lok Sabha and controls all or most of the states, “intra-party” interaction takes place, making intergovernmental coordination easier. In this scenario, key institutional/partisan veto players—that is, national and sub-national incumbents-belong to the same political party. This can bring about cooperative federalism, in spite of considerable political centralization: provided state or regional party branches have sufficient autonomy, shared policymaking is not an issue under these circumstances because regional units are incorporated into the central government’s decision procedures by virtue of their congruent party affiliation. We saw such a scenario during the Nehru era in Indian politics (1952–1964/7). In contrast, strategic power-sharing and interdependent policymaking were at the highest level during the national coalition era in Indian politics (1996–2014), when state parties became pivotal players in the national

legislature as either coalition partners or outside supporters. A third scenario can also occur, in which the national majority party faces stiff political competition at the state level. This results in partisan polarization among states on the one hand, and a blending of cooperative and coercive tactics at the center (perhaps to deal with such polarization). A clear example of this was Indira Gandhi's "punishment" regime against opposition-ruled states. Modi's government is facing this scenario at present. On the shared rule dimension, India has fluctuated between extreme centralization and decentralization, based on the nature of the party constellation at the center (one party dominant versus pluralized). This has affected the overall nature of Indian federalism, given that even during the coalition phase the center retained a dominant role in primary legislation and revenue extraction and few constitutional amendments were endorsed which strengthened the autonomy of the states. Indeed, based on a reading of the constitution, India's federalism has always been rather centralized, not unlike German or Australian federalism, rather than the much more decentralized Canadian or Swiss federations. In this "hybrid federation," the significance of shared rule and self-rule is therefore all the more the result of partisan dynamics. However, under exceptional circumstances, a power-sharing impulse in any given dimension may also emerge out of severe limitations on national and subnational governments' abilities to follow independent policies. One example is the implementation of the GST, which attempts to achieve center-state tax harmonization, as we will discuss below. Our conceptual understanding of centralization, decentralization, and interdependence, especially in relation to shared rule equips us to trace the direction of change in center-state relations under Modi. We do so in relation to the political dimension.

THE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF CENTER-STATE RELATIONS

The arrival of Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister of a government which no longer relied on support from regionalist-state parties concentrated powers at the union. Compared with Dr. Manmohan Singh's Office, the Prime Minister's Office acquired significance and within the BJP power had become significantly concentrated with Narendra Modi and subsequent Party Presidents. The Intra-party centralization had been exemplified by the role of the center in steering candidate selection and nomination and campaigning in a range of state assembly elections which had been held since the Lok Sabha elections in 2014. Election campaigns often revolved on the Prime Minister, and names of Chief Minister candidates were either announced late (as in the case of Mohan Lal Khattar who was only announced as Chief Ministerial candidate a couple of weeks before the Haryana legislative assembly elections in 2019) and/or surprising names

were announced after elections) or not at all (as in the case of Uttar Pradesh in March 2017, with the designation of the radical-controversial Hindu cleric Yogi Adityanath as Chief Minister after the state elections). Intra-party centralization does not necessarily engender political centralization within the diverse polity. So far, there had been political "centering" at number of fronts: (a) the unilateral nature of important decisions which impinge on center-state relations such as demonetization in 2016; (b) the intention to forge simultaneous general and state elections; (c) attempts to deploy President's Rule for party political mileage; (d) attempts to redrawing electoral boundaries (Assam and J&K) (e) the heavy-handed approach of the central government in relation to Jammu and Kashmir (Revocation of Article 370 by dissolving elected assembly) (f) attempts to absorb powerful state leaders a well thought political strategy (g) the passage of the government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021 (that enhanced LG powers) (h) new political strategy of bringing senior leaders from states to national politics.

THE PARTISAN USE OF PRESIDENT'S RULE

First, the ability of the BJP to deploy President's Rule for political gain firstly assumes the appointment of partisan governors. In this sense, the BJP continued a longstanding practice of dismissing state governors who had been appointed by previous central governments of a different political persuasion. Shortly after it arrived into power, the BJP (by way of the President—a Congress politician nonetheless) ousted nine governors who had been appointed by the previous Congress-led UPA government. Governors play a potentially important role during President's Rule (Tillin, 2016). Where a governor is of the opinion that "a breakdown of the constitutional machinery" occurs in the governance of the state, (s) he can recommend President's Rule (resulting into direct central rule as per Article 356 of the Indian constitution). The meaning of the "breakdown of institutional machinery" leaves room for interpretation and has been linked to insurgencies or political deadlock in the state. The latter may result from a government losing its majority in the state assembly, following defections or the breakdown of a state coalition government.¹⁹ Since Bommai (1994), the material on the basis of which President's Rule is recommended is open to judicial review by the Indian Supreme Court. The BJP has sought to wield President's Rule for party political gain on two occasions. In 2016, the party advised the imposition of President's Rule on the governments of Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Pondicherry and Manipur. In Arunachal Pradesh, factional infighting within the Congress-led government propelled the BJP-appointed governor to advance the session of the state assembly by a month, making way for a BJP-led government. The starting point that led to President's

Rule in Uttarakhand was similar: nine rebel Congress MLAs broke away from the Party and the governor subsequently asked the Congress elected Chief Minister to prove his majority in the state assembly. In Jammu & Kashmir 2018, PDP-BJP Coalition government breakup led to the imposition of president rule when the BJP withdrew support to the PDP government headed by Mehbooba Mufti. Moreover, the President rule in 2019 was imposed in Maharashtra briefly after the assembly elections yielded a fractured mandate and political parties failed to cobble together a majority within the stipulated timeframe. There are other two instances when president rule was imposed (Pondicherry and Manipur) on different reasons. However, unlike in the case of Arunachal Pradesh, not the governor but the central government instructed the President to suspend the state government a day before the floor test was to be held. Importantly, On both occasions, the Supreme Court struck down President's Rule. In the case of Arunachal Pradesh, the Supreme Court queried the justification for bringing a planned meeting of the state assembly forward, leaving insufficient time for the Congress government to prove its majority on the floor. In the case of Uttarakhand, the Supreme Court dismissed the authority of the central government to impose President's Rule before a floor test had taken place in the state assembly. The Indian Supreme Court also reinstated both Congress governments. In both cases, the Supreme Court played its role as a potential safeguard of federalism (or institutional veto player) and solidified the jurisprudence which it developed since its landmark Bommai judgment in 1994. In fact, not before had the Court ordered the reinstatement of one, let alone two dismissed state governments (Achary, 2007).

UNILATERAL DECISION-MAKING: THE CASE OF DEMONETIZATION AND GST

The most striking instance of unilateral policy decision-making was the sudden announcement of demonetization on November 8, 2016, which abruptly removed 500 and 1,000 rupee notes from legal tender status and replaced them with new 1,000 and 2,000 rupee notes. This move immediately slowed economic activity, reduced state government revenues, and undermined both democratic principles and the ethos of cooperative federalism. Critics argue that demonetization was designed as a shock tactic—requiring secrecy at launch—and that it was meant to cause short-to-medium term discomfort to achieve long-term benefits, particularly eliminating black money. However, many analysts contend that the real objective was to weaken political opponents rather than tackle illicit funds. Most opposition chief ministers shared this view. The then Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh warned that the decision was politically driven, especially with U.P. assembly elections looming. His prediction

was validated by the campaign dynamics and the March 2017 election results (Nag, 2016).

THE PURSUIT OF ONE NATION AND ONE ELECTION

The centralization of the Modi-led government had reflected in the central government's preference for simultaneous general and state elections. The idea had been put forward in the BJP general election manifesto (2014) and further developed in a working paper by the newly established NITI Aayog. Before it, the Law Commission of India in its 170th report on the Reforms of Electoral Laws (1999) had already endorsed it. The eight member committee on one nation one election headed by former President had been constituted and submitted its report before the parliamentary committee (Debroy, 2017). Furthermore, until 1967, general and state assembly elections coincided. This cycle (one nation one election) was broken when in 1971 Indira Gandhi brought forward general elections by a year as a means to assert her dominance within the congress party and demonstrate her electoral appeal vis-à-vis a number of erstwhile strong state party leaders who had left the party. Uncoupling, in tandem with the linguistic state reorganization helped to modify the states into territorial political communities in which turnout in state assembly elections often increased electoral participation in national elections. The current dispensation argued that simultaneous elections are desirable because the "Model Code of Conduct by the Election Commission" requires that when an state elections are called (state assembly or general) most development programs in the provinces (including social - welfare projects and capital project- are suspended until the election is complete. Usually, the suspension lasts between 3 (state assembly elections) and 4-5 months (general elections).

The total number of months during which the Model Code of Conduct is applicable across India can easily amount to 8 months or more per year (for instance apart from general elections, since 2014 also assembly elections in states Haryana, Jharkhand, Jammu and Kashmir, and Maharashtra are held along general elections with a gap of 3 months. Additionally, arguments put forward to support simultaneity relate to the ability to streamline campaign and organizational expenses as well as the security costs involved in running these elections. While NITI Aayog paper by Desai and Debroy documented that these simultaneous elections would not generate centralizing tendencies, quoting the supported comparative evidence, across most parliamentary federal systems, general and sub-national elections normally do not coincide. This is the case in Germany, Australia, Austria, Canada." Evidence from India also shows that when general and state assembly elections coincide, voters are much less likely to engage in split-ticket voting than when they are held separately (Debroy, 2017). The NITI working paper concede that synchronizing state and national

elections may have to be implemented in a phased manner, and in the end the recommendation settles for the concurrence of half of the state elections and national elections and the other half at midpoint between these general elections. The proposal is now put forward to the Election Commission which had been asked to study pros and cons and suggests how it could be implemented.

THE ACCOMMODATION OF ETHNO-NATIONAL DIFFERENCE

After the BJP came to power, its tolerance for special regional autonomy or constitutional asymmetry based on ethno-national or regional differences was severely challenged in Jammu and Kashmir. The government adopted a centralizing approach to these ethno-national issues, differing markedly from previous administrations, particularly the Congress. Scholars of Kashmir have attributed the state's (now a Union territory) unrest to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's high-handed centralization of political control over the erstwhile state. This unrest escalated into armed conflict in 1989 following the rigged 1987 state assembly elections, triggering a prolonged period of human rights violations, suppression of political dissent, arrests of political leaders, curtailment of fundamental rights, and a decade-long suspension of political activities. During this period, external actors, particularly Pakistan, attempted to sow discord in Kashmir, fueling armed movements. Restoring lasting peace in the region requires addressing the conflict within Kashmir itself, rather than merely the conflict over Kashmir. However, this remains a complex task due to the intense sense of "victimhood and alienation" among Kashmir Valley residents (Bose, 1997).

Despite its Hindu nationalist credentials, the Vajpayee-led BJP NDA government pursued a "healing touch" policy in 2003, consulting with the PDP-led government in Jammu and Kashmir. This initiative was grounded in the principles of "Insaniyat" (humanity or non-violence), "Kashmiriyat" (recognition of Kashmir as a vibrant, distinctive, secular, and composite culture), and "Jamhooriyat" (democracy), aiming to make Jammu and Kashmir a model of "co-operative federalism (Behere)." However, this policy was abandoned following regime changes at both the centre and state levels in 2004-05.

In the 2014 elections, which produced a hung assembly, the PDP emerged as the largest political party. After lengthy negotiations with the BJP, it chose to form a state coalition government with the BJP, declining unconditional support from the state-based National Conference (NC) and Congress. Yet, both parties campaigned on radically different platforms: the BJP on a "muscular" agenda aimed at securing the Hindu majority vote in Jammu, while the PDP demanded

autonomy, not sovereignty, as the late Chief Minister asserted it was an alliance of the "North Pole and South Pole." The BJP promised to abrogate Article 370 (which granted special status to J&K) to facilitate greater integration of the erstwhile state with India. Although the "Agenda of Alliance" reinstated commitment to Vajpayee's principles and promised dialogue with diverse political groups, including the Jammu & Kashmir Hurriyat Conference supporting self-determination, the BJP also pledged to uphold Article 370 and reassess the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in disturbed areas.

Over time, it became clear that the BJP remained unwavering in its muscular electoral stance. After assuming power in the coalition government, the party demanded a ban on cow slaughter and beef selling in the Muslim-majority state. The central government ruled out any discussion on restoring full state autonomy, refused to bring separatist groups to the negotiating table, and called off talks with Pakistan, asserting that talks and terror cannot coexist. Following Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's death, instability erupted in the valley, particularly after Burhan Wani, a young Hizb-ul-Mujahideen militant leader, was killed by Indian security forces in July 2016. The crackdown, counter-operations, and use of pellets on civilians attending Wani's funeral escalated tensions further. Kashmir scholars have documented that the gradual erosion of the state's special status under Article 370 has fuelled simmering resentment and violence against the Indian state (Dulat, 2017).

However, the BJP views Article 370's special status as the cause of the Valley's increasing alienation and lack of development. The BJP also never condemned the Public Interest Litigation seeking to revoke and abrogate Article 35A—a provision that gave flesh to special autonomy and domicile status under Article 370. The BJP did not file a counter-affidavit to uphold Article 35A, instead seeking a "larger debate" on the issue, which opponents argued implicitly supported its abrogation as per its core manifesto. Comparative literature on conflict reconciliation in post-conflict societies suggests such an approach could further destabilize the region and lead to additional armed conflicts. In 2018, the BJP withdrew support from the PDP, causing the government to fail its term, and the erstwhile state was placed under President's Rule. After returning to power in its second term, the Modi government abrogated Jammu and Kashmir's special status on August 5, 2019 and divided the erstwhile into union territories, further disempowering the legislative assembly and governing the union territory on the frameworks of Pondicherry.

A CASE OF NAGALAND

The Peace process between Nagaland and central government initiated by UPA led government was based on

optimistic and accommodative approach. However, BJP government signed a framework agreement with the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaac-Muivah) in August 3, 2015. In it, the NSCN accepted the principle of shared sovereignty with India. Moreover, Modi pledged to be partners of the Nagas in their “pride and prestige.” However, the framework simply opens up a dialogue between the Government of India and the Nagas, rather than accepting the core demands of Nagas for separate constitution and “Greater Nagalim” across state borders under national political groups. Furthermore, factionalism among various Naga groups and concerns by leaders of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh who fear a “greater Nagalim” and a militarist tradition among NSCN (IM) could aggravate the situation further.

Citizenship and Identity: The passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in 2019 and the push for a National Register of Citizens (NRC) marked a transition toward cultural nationalism, redefining Indian citizenship in a way that prioritizes religious identity.

Language and Cultural Policy: The administration has continuously emphasized a singular national identity, often promoting Hindi and cultural assimilation, which has generated anxiety among linguistic minorities and southern states regarding the imposition of a monolithic cultural framework.

NCT Amendment Act 2021. The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021 was introduced in Lok Sabha on March 15, 2021. The Bill had amended the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991. The Act provides a framework for the functioning of the government of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi and legislative assembly of Delhi. The Bill amended certain powers and responsibilities of the Lieutenant Governor and elected legislative assembly. The act provided that the term “government” referred to in any law made by the Legislative Assembly would include Lieutenant Governor (LG). The Act allows the Legislative Assembly to make Rules to regulate the procedure and conduct of business in the Assembly which should align or be consistent with the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha. The act prohibits the Legislative Assembly from making any rule to enable itself or its Committees to: (i) consider the matters of day-to-day administration of the NCT of Delhi and (ii) conduct any inquiry in relation to administrative decisions. Further, the act provided that all such rules made before its enactment will be void. The Act requires the LG to reserve certain Bills passed by the Legislative Assembly for the consideration of the President. These Bills are those: (i) which may diminish the powers of the High Court of Delhi, (ii) which the President may direct to be reserved, (iii) dealing with the salaries and allowances of the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and members of

the Assembly and the Ministers, or (iv) relating to official languages of the Assembly or the NCT of Delhi. The Act required the LG to also reserve those Bills for the President which incidentally covers any of the matters outside the purview of the powers of the Legislative Assembly. The Act specifies that all executive action by the government, whether taken on the advice of the Ministers or otherwise, must be taken in the name of the LG. The Bill adds that on certain matters, as specified by the LG, his opinion must be obtained before taking any executive action on the decisions of the Minister/ Council of Ministers (<https://prsindia.org/billtrack/the-government-of-national-capital-territory-of-delhi-amendment-bill-2021>).

CASE OF INTRA-PARTY DYNAMICS

The stark reversal in India's political strategy compared to the Congress party's 1963 Kamaraj Plan. When Congress began losing its grip on states in the late 1960s and 1970s, party president K. Kamaraj urged senior Union ministers to quit their Delhi posts and return to their home states to rebuild the party's grassroots machinery. His logic was straightforward: without strong state-level organization and electoral dominance, the party could not hold power at the national level. In contrast, since around 2020, Narendra Modi has pursued the opposite approach. Instead of sending prominent Union leaders down to strengthen state party structures, the BJP has systematically pulled influential state-level figures up into the Union government. This “reverse flow” of leadership—from states to New Delhi—has helped the party consolidate national authority while tightening its control over state power networks. Pushing this strategy forcefully, Modi recently facilitated the removal of Nitish Kumar, Bihar's longest-serving chief minister, as Kumar's move to the Rajya Sabha took effect. The manoeuvre seems designed to clear the way for a new, preferred leadership figure in Bihar, thereby strengthening the Union's influence over the state executive through both administrative and political means (<https://thewire.in/politics/from-kamaraj-to-modi-the-new-politics-of-centralising-power>).

CONCLUSION

The tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi since 2014 has fundamentally transformed Indian political federalism, ushering in a decisive era of centralization that has reshaped center-state relations across political dimensions. The case above examined in this article reveals a consistent pattern of BJP-led centralization that diverges markedly from the decentralized, coalition-driven governance of the post-Congress era (1989-2014), fundamentally altering the balance between national unity and regional autonomy. Enforcing Presidential demonstrates the BJP's strategic deployment of Article 356 for party political gain. The appointment of partisan governors—

evidenced by the ousting of nine governors appointed by the previous Congress-led UPA government—enabled the central government to recommend President's Rule in Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Pondicherry, and Manipur between 2016-2021. In Arunachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, governor-led maneuvers advanced assembly sessions and forced Chief Ministers to prove majority, facilitating BJP government formation. Through demonetization (November 8, 2016) exemplifies policies implemented without state consultation, immediately slowing economic activity and reducing state revenues while undermining cooperative federalism. Similarly, while the GST implementation involved consultation, the push for “simultaneous elections” reveals centralizing tendencies. Denying the accommodation to ethno groups represents the most dramatic instance of centralization. The BJP abandoned the Vajpayee-led NDA's 2003 “healing touch” policy based on *Insaniyat*, *Kashmiriyat*, and *Jamhooriyat*. Despite the 2014 “Agenda of Alliance” promising to uphold Article 370 and dialogue with Hurriyat Conference, the BJP reverted to its muscular stance: demanding cow slaughter bans, refusing to negotiate with separatists, calling off Pakistan talks, and implicitly supporting Article 35A abrogation. The 2018 withdrawal of support from the PDP coalition, followed by President's Rule and the August 5, 2019 abrogation of Article 370, dismantled decades of constitutional asymmetry, dividing the erstwhile state into Union territories governed under Pondicherry's framework, further disempowering the legislative assembly. In Nagland, the 2015 framework agreement with NSCN (Isaac-Muivah) accepted shared sovereignty but failed to address core demands for a separate constitution and “Greater Nagalim,” opening dialogue rather than accommodating ethno-national differences. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019 and push for National Register of Citizens (NRC) redefine Indian citizenship prioritizing religious identity, transitioning toward cultural nationalism. Language and cultural policy emphasizing Hindi and cultural assimilation has generated anxiety among linguistic minorities and southern states regarding monolithic cultural imposition. The NCT Amendment Act 2021 significantly curtailed Delhi's legislative autonomy by empowering the Lieutenant Governor: requiring LG reservation of Bills diminishing Delhi High Court powers or dealing with Speaker/Minister salaries, mandating LG's name for all executive actions, and prohibiting the Assembly from inquiring into day-to-day administration. This represents administrative centralization, transferring power from elected ministers to the centrally appointed LG. Intra-party dynamics reveal a “reverse flow” of leadership from states to New Delhi, contrasting with Congress's 1963 Kamaraj Plan that sent Union ministers to states. Since 2020, Modi has systematically pulled influential state figures into the Union government, consolidating national

authority while tightening state control. In the end, it is argued that if the BJP continues its electoral domineering in the upcoming state assembly elections, the significant constitutional changes are predictable.

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