

Uttarakhand Political Instability: A Bane of small states

Mohit kalra

*Research Scholar, Department of Political Science,
Radhey Hari Govt. P.G. College, Kashipur, 244713
Kumaun University, Nainital, Uttarakhand, 263002*

ABSTRACT

This paper studies the lack of vision of political parties to make Uttarakhand self sustain state. Uttarakhand remains politically unstable since its formation. The ecologically-sensitive state is crying for government interventions on several fronts. Hundreds of villages in the state have been a rapid trend of migration, especially by youth. The present study is based on the primary and secondary sources of data. Data is mostly taken from official government websites, books and other research works till date. This study area was chosen because after 20 years of formation, the Development in the state was at the back step. We used the content analysis method in this case study. The need for responsible tourism and construction in the mountains has long been overlooked. Besides unemployment and migration, lack in power and other infrastructures like road constitute major electoral issues in the state. This study helps parties to look over their drawbacks and the motive behind the formation of state really worth it.

KEYWORDS: *self-sustain, politically unstable, ecologically-sensitive, unemployment, migration.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Political instability can be defined in three ways: A first approach is to define it as the propensity for regime or government change. A second is to focus on the incidence of political upheaval or violence in a society, such as assassinations, demonstrations, and so forth. A third approach focuses on instability in policies rather than instability in regimes (i.e., the degree to which fundamental policies of, for instance, property rights are subject to frequent changes).

When Uttarakhand became a separate state on November 9, 2000, BJP leader Nityanand Swami was sworn in to head the interim government. But before he could complete one year, power tussle emerged between swami and koshyari as a result, the party asked him to resign to make way for his cabinet colleague Bhagat Singh Koshyari. Changing the Chief Minister did not help the BJP in the Assembly elections of 2002. The Congress emerged victorious, and N.D.Tiwari, a seasoned politician who had been Chief Minister of undivided Uttar Pradesh thrice, was sworn in to lead the government in Dehradun. Return of the BJP and instability in 2007 results in power sharing between Maj Gen B C Khanduri (retd) and Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'. Back to Congress and more instability in 2012, again results in power Vijay Bahuguna and Harish Rawat. Before 5th assembly elections after completing 4 year tenure Trivendra Singh Rawat also resigned and we saw 2 more CM candidate before elections.

Sharp divide within the hill state between the regions of Kumaon and Garhwal, plays a big role in the state's inherent political instability. The Kumaon-Garhwal problem has been an issue that has haunted Congress in Uttarakhand. Harish Rawat, a Kumaoni leader, almost lost his chair due to defections from Garhwali leaders within the Congress. It has continued to create problems for the BJP as well¹

History

1952, the demand of the hill people for distinct identity remained a cry in wilderness for want of proper political support. It was probably in that year that the Communist Party of India for the first time took up the cause of granting autonomy to the hill district of Uttar Pradesh on the linguistic and geographical grounds. In 1957, the former ruler of Tehri State, Manavendra Shah, then a Member of Parliament, spearheaded a movement for a separate hill state, but that did not go much farther. Until 1994, several regional parties came into being and vanished, people held rallies and protest marches for the separate hill state, but nothing came out. Nevertheless, by that time the demand for a separate state of Uttarakhand had taken a definite shape of very strong movement of the people-a veritable dharmyudha- far above the party lines, in which not only the men, but also the women and children vowed to sacrifice themselves.²

In fact, the role of political parties in the Uttarakhand movement had been very dubious and counter productive. So long as the Movement remained free from their involvement, it went very well, but with their interference, it ran out of steam. The cause of Uttaranchal had by that time transcended the taken a form of the national and humanitarian cause. regional arena and The callous attitude of the Uttar Pradesh Government and the further

fuelled the ominous silence of the Central leadership agitation. The government officials, students, housewives, ex servicemen, farmers and labourers, all came out on the roads. The climax of atrocities on the people reached on 14 October 1994 unleashed a reign of terror at Narsan night, when the police (Hardwar) and Rampur Tiraha (Muzaffarnagar) by impounding them were brutally the vehicles carrying demonstrators. Many of killed, their belongings looted and the women raped and killed. Oppressive measures adopted by the alien rulers on the freedom colonial past seemed seekers of the dwarfed against the brutalities unleashed by the government of the people' in 'our' Independent India. National Women Commission and Human Right Commission protested against the massacre and rape of the innocents.³



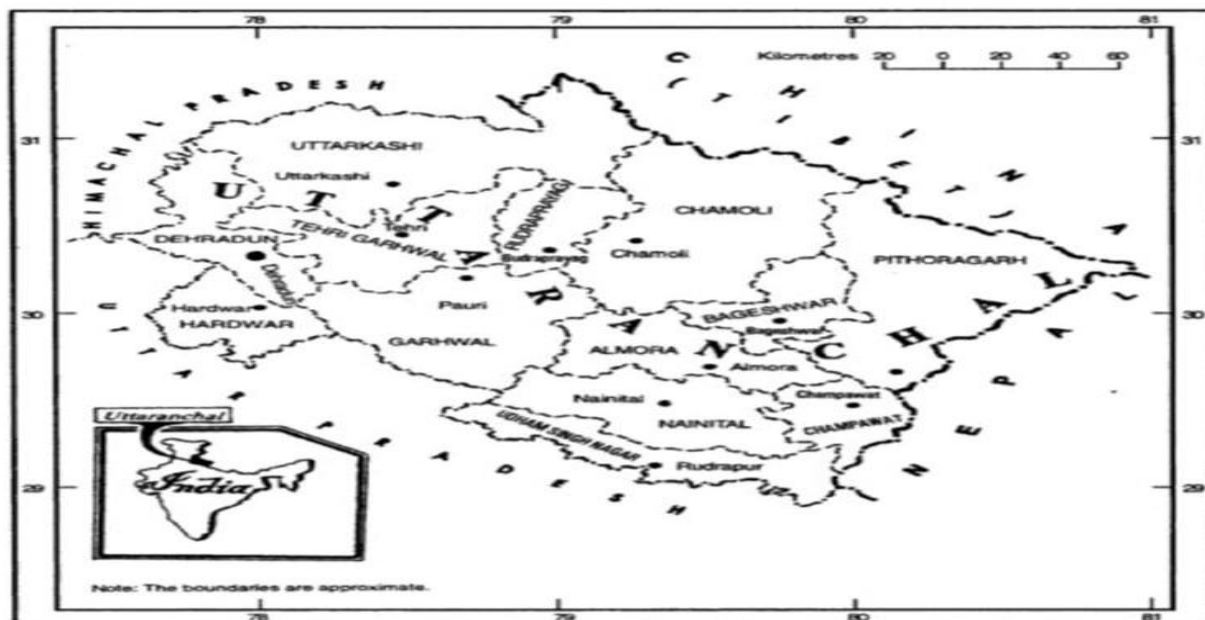
Hill Districts of Uttar Pradesh

II. EMERGENCE OF UTTARAKHAND

Soon the political parties infiltrated into the Movement and it with confusion. It seemed to dither away engulfed the whole of from its goal like a rudderless ship in the stormy waters. The over their political leaders of different parties, in order to dominate rivals, indulged in sabotaging the movement. In that confusion, "movement of the people seemed to loose its moorings. The Nevertheless, the massacre and rape of the innocent people at fall out had created such Narsan and Rampur Tiraha and their an overwhelming impact on the Governments at Lucknow and New Delhi that those were left with no choice but to submit to mandate.⁴

Therefore, before the political parties sabotaged the movement, the Uttar Pradesh Government passed a resolution for the creation of a separate hill state. The Lok Sabha passed a bill for the creation of new hill state out of Uttar Pradesh. The Rajya Sabha approved that bill on 10th August 2000 and it received assent of the President of India on 28th August, 2000. With that, a new hill state was born.

Surjit Singh Barnala became the first Governor of the new state on 30th October 2000. It was proposed that the interim state government should take oath of office on 1 November 2000, but government it was deferred until 9th November, when the interim headed by Nityanand Swami assumed office. Thus, a new state Uttarakhand became functional at Dehradun, the provisional state capital.⁵



Uttarakhand 2001

Political timeline of Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand came into existence as a separate state in November 2000. In 20 years since then, Uttarakhand has seen just one chief minister complete the full tenure of five years.⁶

1. Nityanand Swami

Nityanand Swami of the BJP formed the first government in Uttarakhand after the state was formed. Swami stayed in power for 11 days short of one year and four months ahead of the first Uttarakhand Assembly election in 2002. He was replaced by BS Koshiyari, the present governor of Maharashtra

2. BS Koshiyari

Koshiyari took over the reins from Nityanand Swami but lost in the 2002 Assembly elections. Major General BC Khanduri was given the chief minister post by the BJP which won 35 of the 70 seats in 2007 elections.

3. Narayan Dutt Tiwari

Narayan Dutt Tiwari, who passed away in 2018, led a Congress government that was voted to power in the first assembly election in 2002. The Congress had a slender majority with 36 MLAs in the assembly. But Tiwari steered his government to full term.

4. BC Khanduri

Khanduri remained the chief minister for just two years and four months. Khanduri had launched a massive anti-corruption drive and an austerity campaign besides announcing a powerful Lokayukta bringing every public authority including the chief minister under the proposed bill.

5. Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'

Nishank remained the chief minister of Uttarakhand for two years and two months. BJP brought back BC Khanduri six months ahead of the Uttarakhand Assembly election in 2012. However, the change of leadership could not help the BJP retain power in Uttarakhand.

6. Vijay Bahuguna

2012 Assembly election resulted in a hung assembly with the Congress winning 32 seats and the BJP 31. However, with the support of BSP and Uttarakhand Kranti Dal MLA and three Independent legislators, took over powers in the state.

Vijay Bahuguna, who is now in the BJP – his tenure was cut short by the devastating impact of Uttarakhand floods of 2013. He was severely criticised for his handling of the rescue operation and also of the post-disaster rehabilitation and rebuilding processes.

7. Harish Rawat

Harish Rawat replaced Vijay Bahuguna as Uttarakhand chief minister – two months short of his completing two years tenure as CM. Rawat's government faced a crisis in 2016 during the state budget presentation when nine Congress MLAs rebelled and sought a division of votes on the Budget. The speaker refused, and the Budget was passed. In his tenure President's Rule was imposed in the state on March 27, 2016.

8. Trivendra Singh Rawat

Trivendra Singh Rawat had the longest continuous stay in power in Uttarakhand after Narayan Dutt Tiwari. He faced the charges of corruption and nepotism not from his rivals but his own party leaders and MLAs. This came after the Uttarakhand High Court in October 2020 ordered a probe against him in a case of corruption.

9. Tirath Singh Rawat

The former state Minister of Education, Tirath Singh Rawat, was sworn-in as the chief minister on March 10 this year. His term, while lasting a mere 115 days, saw its fair share of controversies.

10. Pushkar Singh Dhama

The 10th chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama, was sworn into office on July 4. The BJP leader is the youngest CM in the state's brief and chequered history. Dhama promises include having a corruption-free government, effective control of the COVID-19 pandemic in the state as well as speedy and transparent services using information technology.

III. UTTARAKHAND POLITICALLY UNSTABLE SINCE FORMATION

Range from political instability, to what was once inelegantly called 'horse-trading', to the containment capacity of the anti-defection law, to the regrettable tendency of parties controlling the Central government to inexorably expand their writ. There is, however, another concern that needs to be registered in this context, the readiness of State leaders to violate their own obligations as representatives of the political public, and vitiate democracy.⁷

Uttarakhand falls into a different category because it is inhabited by hill people, many of them belonging to the upper castes. The region came into the limelight when in the 1970s local communities mobilised against transfer of forest resources to commercial companies. The Chipko movement in the Kumaon and the Garhwal regions became famous for novel modes of protest and awareness of environmental harm. People protested against appropriation of resources and actions that impinged upon their bare survival. The demand for statehood on the ground of special needs was articulated by leaders in national parties, and gained momentum in the late 1990s.

In Uttarakhand the inhabitants of the hill districts eke out a bare living. They survive because of remittances from the rest of the country. The chasm between the needs of the people who struggle for survival, action and inaction by representatives, and lack of remedial justice has compromised representative democracy enormously. The issue is not only one of federalism; defections from one party to another indicate renunciation of the basic obligations of representatives, even as their own people starve.⁸

IV. OTHER CHALLENGING ISSUES :

• Climate change and threat of lake burst

Uttarakhand is bearing the brunt of climate change. There is evidence to claim that the 2013 Uttarakhand floods were a result of glacial lake outburst above the Kedarnath shrine. Himalayan dams, located closer to glacial lakes, are likely to experience overwhelming flood in near future, but none of the glacial lakes are being monitored. In fact, the issue has not featured in the poll campaigns or manifestos of the Congress and the BJP. There is a need for creating a mechanism wherein these mapped lakes are monitored regularly for any change to prevent major mishap on account of lake bursts.

• Water Crisis

A series of dams on the Bhagirathi River turns rivers into a tiny stream during the lean season. Even small ponds, which provide water to farmlands, have mostly dried up in the last decade. Moreover, scientists are now apprehensive that massive forest fires the groundwater table and cause severe water crisis in the hill may deplete state. The government has been allegedly focusing only on water distribution and not on reviving the sources that are drying up. No effort is being made to treat catchment areas to maintain and protect the source.

• Illegal Mining

It was only recently that Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote to the state government to take steps to stop illegal mining in a village near Pithoragarh town. The villagers are concerned about the natural drinking water resources, forests and land getting affected due to mining activities. According to reports, farmland has been dug up to 30 feet (10 times the permissible limit) and sand and stone removed from river bed.

• Hydropower Projects

Hydropower projects in Uttarakhand have long been under scanner with locals linking rampant construction of dams in a geologically fragile and biodiversity area to destruction of river-- rich based livelihoods and traditional irrigation systems. These projects caused floods that killed hundreds and left thousands homeless in Uttarakhand. It also said that the projects caused "irreversible damage" to the environment. Despite this, political parties have come out strongly in favour of dams.

• **Human Animal Conflicts**

Around 400 people, 800 leopards, 90 tigers and 280 elephants have reportedly died in man-animal conflicts. This man-animal conflict has its origin in shrinking and fragmented wildlife habitats and degrading forests that are unable to meet human and wildlife demands. A Down To Earth story reported how government is finding it difficult to solve the problem due to limited capacity of forest department and burgeoning human population around the Protected Areas.

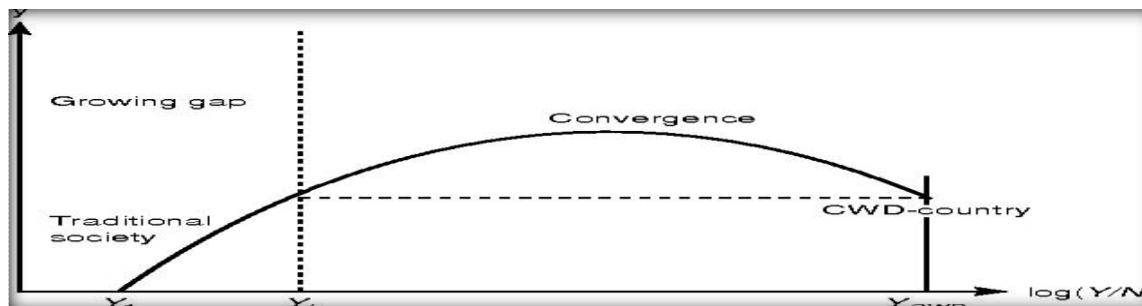
• **Migration**

Countering migration from the state has become an emotive issue. A part of the problem is this: the total number of people unemployed has nearly doubled to 938,000 in 2015-16 from 565,000 five years ago. Going by media reports, out of the 16,793 villages, about 3,000 hardly have any residents. Hundreds of villages in the state have seen a rapid trend of migration, especially by the youth due to lack of education and employment opportunities.⁹

Economic growth and political stability

Economic growth and political stability are deeply interconnected. On the one hand, the uncertainty associated with an unstable political environment may reduce investment and the pace of economic development. On the other hand, poor economic performance may lead to government collapse and political unrest. Democratic regimes, like all political regimes, are fragile. Irrespective of political regimes, if a country does not need to worry about conflicts and radical changes of regimes, the people can concentrate on working, saving, and investing.

Political stability can take the form of complacency and stagnation that does not allow competition. The principles of competition do not only apply to business. Competition can be applied in everything – political systems, education, business, innovation, even arts. Political stability in this case refers to the lack of real competition for the governing elite. When political stability comes with having one party or a coalition of parties in office for a long time, it may eventually be detrimental. The economy may do well in terms of attracting foreign direct investment because stability means a predictable political environment. However, other aspects of the society might suffer because of complacency, lack of competition, and opacity. The economy eventually suffers because of these. Consequently, stable governments do not necessarily lead to higher economic growth.¹⁰



V. CONCLUSION

Political analysts feel the relatively smaller size of Assembly makes poaching and defections easier in smaller states and elections being fought on very local issues in the formative years of the state ensured that the representation is divided among smaller parties and local leaders, who acted as per their whims. While in Uttarakhand, political instability was more due to competing ambitions and caste rivalry within leaders of national parties, BJP and Congress.

Uttarakhand has inherited many evils through umbilical chord from the mother state. Moreover, lately so many teething troubles have erupted. The age-old challenges of denudation of the hills through unchecked felling of trees and destructive mining, destruction of biosphere by large river-taming projects, unchecked tourism with its pernicious fallout on the social, moral and cultural inheritance of the region and prohibition are some of the burning problems that need thorough cleansing operation. It is expected that the Government of Uttarakhand shall not believe the aspirations of its courageous people. If at all the history has any lesson, that is better not to repeat it.

REFERENCES

- [1]. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/congress-vs-bjp-tussle-for-power-grows-in-uttarakhand-top-developments/liveblog/51462267.cms>
- [2]. Handaa, O.C. “ History of Uttaranchal”.
- [3]. S.P. Uttarakhand ka Itihas , in 8 volumes, Dogadda, 1965, 1977.
- [4]. Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers, Dehradun, Baron, Dangli Prasad (ed.) Lucknow, 1979.

- [5]. Das, Banarsi (ed.) Uttar Pradesh district Gazetteers, Nainital, Lucknow 1992.
- [6]. <https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-twenty-years-eight-cms-story-of-political-instability-in-uttarakhand-2880245>
- [7]. <https://m.economictimes.com/news/politicsandnation/uttarakhandpoliticallyunstableinceformation/articleshow/51577198.cms>
- [8]. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/The-ironies-of-small-States/article14260708.ece>
- [9]. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/governance/uttarakhandasproblemspileupyouthsseewisdominmigration57333>
- [10]. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/can-political-stability-hurt-economic-growth>