Punjab Politics
Contesting Identities and Forging Coalitions

PRAMOD KUMAR

Punjab's political dynamics is characterised by a spectrum within which there is a movement from contesting identities resulting in confrontations to these identities, through mutual accommodations and forging coalitions. It is not a linear process; it also faces reversals back to confrontations, and then moves forward again to coalitions. The identities of religion, nation, language, class and caste have been particularly at play in this dynamic arena of Punjab politics.

Pramod Kumar (krpramod.idc@gmail.com) is with the Institute for Development and Communication, Chandigarh and Chair, Punjab Governance Reforms Commission.

Forging alliances between differing political parties has been a practised tradition in Punjab, more than many other Indian states. Political parties with competing support bases have sometimes merged with each other or coalitions have been forged among political parties representing well-defined and competing social segments. These alliances have been shaped and nurtured by political, economic and demographic contexts, and can be located in three historically evolved axes that provided contextual articulation to a common structural base. The axes comprise: one, stunting or encouraging identity assertions; two, majoritarian ambitions, and minority aspirations and apprehensions; and three, intermeshed religio-caste and class articulations. These axes have provided sufficient conditions for competitive political spaces, and their interaction with the economy, politics and social processes has led to the emergence of coalition of interests. This complexity has posed a challenge to political analysts to locate the dominant identity in a particular context. If in one context, it leads to the observation that the "predominant(ing) tendency in Punjab legislative politics has been towards political communal coalition building" (Brass 1974: 362), in another context, there is a celebration of the emergence of a secular Punjabi identity (Singh and Thandi 1999; Singh 2012).

'Dwarfed' or Encouraged Identity Assertions

The political parties in their interaction with the sociopolitical and economic dynamics have either stunted or boosted the expression of identities—secular, communal and exclusive religious identities. The manifestation of competing identities shows that these are shaped by the politico-economic context and the dynamism of the political spectrum. Communal identities along with the religious group identities and class-based articulations have coexisted. Separate religious identities acquired expression through various movements like *Shuddhi* by Arya Samaj, *Amrit Parchar* by Singh Sabha, and *Tabligh* and *Tanzeem* by Ahmadiyya sect of Islam.

The consolidation of religious group identities was attempted through purification of own practices and beliefs along with a critique of others' practices and beliefs. However, these religious or caste contestations have coexisted with struggles on secular issues. The various forms of Punjabi identity that have evolved had progressive inputs from various currents of the freedom movement—*Kukas, Ghadar Lehar, Babbar Akalis* and *Kirti Kisan*. Progressive movements launched for redistribution of income through struggles for changes in land relations have been an important tendency in the progressive orientation of Punjabi identity. The movements against the Biswadars (high revenue officials), abolition of the Ala Malkiyat Act (superior ownership), transformation of tenants into peasant proprietors, the "Abadkar" (settlers) movement, and the "land to the tiller" movement were launched in Punjab after independence (Singh 1984).

Simultaneously, regional and linguistic demands, secular in themselves, were filtered through the religious prism from 1960s to 1980s. Particularistic aspects were used for inter-religious mobilisation by politics while universalistic cultural patterns were underplayed. The most obvious examples were, on one hand, the secular demand for Punjabi Suba and, on the other, sectarian mobilisations such as the Hindi agitation and the Khalistan movement.

Along with these assertions, in the later post-terrorism phase, Punjabi identity became a dominant mode of political articulation. The Moga Declaration, in particular, that was adopted by the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) by emphasising Punjab, Punjabi and Punjabiat was a shining testimony to the

space available to a secular Punjabi identity.[1]

Competing Demographic Identities?

The second axis is located in the distinct population composition.

> The Hindus struggled with majority–minority complex, perceiving themselves to be a majority in India and a minority in the reorganised Punjab. The Sikhs alternated with a minority–majority complex being a majority in Punjab and minority in India. (Kumar 1982: 27)

Singh conceptualised the dialectic of the minority–majority dimension of Punjab politics as "the duality of minority persecution complex and majority arrogance complex" (1982: 46). Singh (1982) and Kumar's (1982) articulation of "minority persecution complex" and "majority arrogance complex" was rooted in the acknowledgement of political economy and the material reality of demography.

Another formulation of this minority–majority complex tended to overplay the psychological/subjective dimension ("perception" and "fear") and underestimated the material foundations of this political phenomenon: "majority and minority status then were not determined by statistics but perception, and perception was more often than not shaped by underlying fears" (Jones 2006: 21). The duality of minority persecution complex and majority arrogance complex shapes both the contestation between the Sikh-dominated Akali Dal and the Hindu-dominated BJP as well as the electoral compulsions for reliance on coalition strategies to capture political and economic power. In their contestation strategies, the political parties claiming to represent the interests of the Hindus and the Sikhs reinforced the apprehensions, prejudices and fears of their respective support bases to enhance their electoral interests. However, to provide rationale for political cooperation, the Sikh-dominated Akali Dal and the Hindu-dominated BJP invoked communal arithmetic and moved ahead to form the coalitions.

In fact, the formation of such political alliances had a history behind it that stretched back to the period of colonial Punjab. The uneasy but, many times, historically necessary alliances between the Congress and the Muslim League in the colonial era were such alliances. In the post-1966 reorganised Punjab, such "unity of the opposites" alliances were between Akali Dal and the Bharatiya Jan Sangh. The ideological explanation given by the SAD and the Jan Sangh in post-reorganisation Punjab to form coalitions was that "to protect and promote their exclusive support bases, the coalition was essential."[2]

Not surprisingly, this coalition of the opposites existed within the organisational structure of the Congress party too which claims to be secular. The Congress represented a coalition of Sikh leaders (who were votaries of Punjabi Suba) with Hindu leaders (who were in the forefront of the Hindi agitation and in favour of *Maha Punjab)*. To illustrate, from 1967 to 2012 assembly elections, Akali Dal had 95% Sikh legislators, BJP had 88% Hindus, while the Congress party represented both, that is, 59% Sikhs and 40% Hindu legislators (Table 1).

However, in pre-elections coalition phase (1977–2012), the Akalis gave more representations to the Hindus and the BJP to the Sikhs as compared to post-elections coalitions (1967–72).

The religio-caste identity and demographic context, therefore, continue to provide conducive ground for coalition politics.

Religio-caste and Class Axis

The religious reforms movements among the Sikhs and Hindus (Singh Sabha and Arya Samaj, respectively) radically transformed the behavioural aspects of inter- and intra-caste practices which formed the third axis. This provided regional dimension to caste dynamics in Punjab. The Scheduled Castes (SCs) acquired more social and political bargaining space. They found representation across political parties rather than merely in a caste-based political party such as the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). The long-term implications of SCs finding accommodation in the mainstream Punjab parties has been that the BSP's

Table 1: Religion and Party-wise Legislators Elected in Punjab Assembly Elections, 1967–2012

Year	Religion	Major Parties		
		BJP	INC	SAD
1967 to 1972 post-election coalitions	Hindu	16	56	1
		94.12	36.84	1.10
	Sikh	1	94	89
		5.88	61.84	97.80
1977 to 2012 pre-election coalitions	Hindu	78	151	21
		86.67	41.37	5.36
	Sikh	12	209	368
		13.33	57.26	93.88
1967 to 2012	Hindu	94	207	22
		87.85	40.04	4.55
	Sikh	13	303	457
		12.15	58.61	94.62

All figures in decimal points are percentages.
Source: Punjab Vidhan Sabha Compendium of Who's Who of Members (1967–2007) and field interviews (2007–12).

Table 2: Caste-wise Representation in Punjab State Assembly Given by Different Parties in the Last 11 Elections, 1967–2012

Year	Caste	Major Parties				
		BJP	INC	SAD	Others	Total
1967 to 2012	SC	17	114	138	45	314
		15.89	22.05	28.57	31.91	25.16
	OBC	8	49	32	23	112
		7.48	9.48	6.63	16.31	8.97
	Jat	9	204	279	54	546
		8.41	39.46	57.76	38.30	43.75
	Other	73	150	34	19	276
		68.22	29.01	7.04	13.48	22.12
		107	517	483	141	1,248
	Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Affidavits of the candidates submitted while filing nomination with the Election Commission of India.

vote share has been continuously declining. It has come down from 7.98% in 1997 to 4.29% in 2012 assembly elections.

Further, the adoption of local religio-cultural rituals and practices by the low castes provided leverage to political parties to co-opt otherwise discriminated castes. In the lower rung of caste hierarchy, the SCs do not constitute a captive vote bank of any political party. However, numerically, they are proportionately represented in the state politics. Of the 1,248 legislators between 1967 and 2012, SCs constituted 25.16%, Other Backward Classes 8.97%, and Jat Sikhs 43% (Table 2, p 45).

The absence of caste as a defining parameter of social position meant an "uncertain religious allegiance" of the SCs (Brass 1974: 399). It is relevant to point out that they got representation in all the political parties, including the Jat-dominated SAD. For instance, out of the total 11 assembly elections in Punjab, in six, more SC legislators were elected on the Akali ticket than any other party. In 1969 (44%), 1977 (48%), 1985 (62%), 1997 (77%), 2007 (55%) and 2012 (62%) were represented in the Akali Dal. In remaining five elections, the Congress gave higher representation to the SC legislators—in 1967 (52%), in 1972 (61%), in 1980 (45%), in 1992 (63%) and in 2002 (48%) were represented in the Congress party (Kumar 2014: 247). The SC presence was reflected in the BJP also. Around 16% of the SC members between 1967 and 2012 belonged to the BJP. This clearly shows that a majority of the SC legislators got elected from political parties other than the BSP and the communist parties.

The emerging SC identity architecture is operational in multiple cultural spaces and is in the process of evolving a master narrative. The crucial elements of this identity formation are a selective adaptation of dominant cultural standards to blur the exclusivity and thereby, restore a sense of pride in the community, and shift the site of subjugation and abuse from the public domain. These multiple spatial activities that entail a negation of polluting aspects coexist along with forging positive identity to restore a sense of dignity.

Politics in Punjab continued to vacillate between the extremes of religio-caste identity to secular Punjabi identity as per the electoral and political needs. The four phases of electoral politics capture the contextual dynamisms which form the reservoir for democratic choices. The first phase from 1947 to mid-1960s can be characterised as a consensus building among parties for the formation of a separate language-based state leading to mergers among political parties (such as once, a temporary one, between Congress and Akali Dal in the 1950s). The second phase between 1966 and 1980 shaped alliances in reorganised Punjabi-speaking state where the Sikhs becoming a majority changed the political material reality. The coalitions were based on exclusive support bases and were formed to counter the one party political dominance of the Congress party. The third phase, between 1980 and 1992 with a surge of violence witnessed a whittling down of competitive electoral politics. The fourth phase after 1992 saw a resurgence of democracy and assertion of secular Punjabi identity and formation of pre-election coalitions.

Formation on Linguistic Basis

The first phase between 1947 and 1966 shaped the state formation on linguistic basis. The SAD launched a decade-long struggle for "language-based Punjabi Suba, but at the popular level they tended to mix religion with language" (Singh 2014: 59). The Government of India appointed the States Reorganisation Commission in 1953 which maintained that "Punjabi was not sufficiently distinct from Hindi and the demand for a Punjabi-speaking state was a disguise for religious-based Sikh state" (GOI 1955: 141). The Hindi agitation which demanded Maha Punjab was launched. Communal overtones remained explicit, though without tensions, between the two communal groups. Finally, in the 1966 reorganisation, Punjab was reconstituted as a Punjabi-speaking state where the Sikhs became a majority community. The geographical and linguistic reorganisation, however, could not address the political issues of genuine federation, resolution of water dispute and transfer of remaining

Punjabi-speaking areas. This provided a basis to the initiation of coalition politics in Punjab.

Post-election Coalitions

The main thrust of these coalitions was anti-centrism and anti-Congressism. Along with this, the green revolution in agriculture led to the economic empowerment of Jat peasantry and shifted the power balance in their favour from urban Khatri Sikh particularly within the Akali Dal. In the state legislature, in 1967 the representation of Jat peasantry rose to 50% with a decrease in the representation of the urban Sikh traders. This trend continued, and in the 1997 assembly elections, the SAD had 75% and the Congress 45% Jat peasant legislators. The peasantry having acquired political and economic power asserted for greater state autonomy to branch out in industry and trade. The demand for greater autonomy was raised in 1973, and acquired character of a movement by 1978. In fact, the SAD election manifesto of 1967 did ask for greater state autonomy and demanded a constitutional position akin to Jammu and Kashmir. It further went on to demand the merger of Punjabi-speaking areas (Singh 1967: 2).

Between 1967 and 1969, four post-election coalitions were formed. Taagepera and Shugart[3] analysis of 1967–77 election results shows that the votes were mainly shared by four political parties, but seats were shared by three political parties which came down to two in 1972. The electoral volatility dipped in 1972[4] (Kumar 2014: 307). This worked to the advantage of the Congress. In other elections, political parties found recourse in post-election coalitions.

The first was a multiparty post-election coalition. The main coalition partners were the Akali Dal (Sant Fateh Singh) with 24 seats and the Jan Sangh with nine seats (Table 3, p 47). This coalition was also joined by the communist parties, the Republican Party and the Akali Dal (Master Tara Singh). This was a minority coalition government. This government could not last long and with the Congress support, a single-party minority government led by Lachhman Singh Gill was formed.

Table 3: Post-electoral Coalitions in Punjab, 1967–69

Year	Party	Seats Contested Number	Seats Won	Vote %
1967	BJS	49	9	9.84
	ADM	61	2	4.2
	ADS	59	24	20.48
	CPI(M)	13	3	3.26
	RPI	17	3	1.79
	PSP	9	0	0.51
	CPI	19	5	5.2
	INC	102	48	37.45
	Others	18	1	1.22
	IND	255	9	16.05
1969	BJS	30	8	9.01
	SAD	65	43	29.36
	CPI	28	4	4.84
	CPI(M)	10	2	3.07
	SSP	7	2	0.83
	SWA	6	1	0.91
	INC	103	38	39.18
	Others	62	2	3.92
	IND	160	4	8.89

BJS stands for Bharatiya Jan Sangh, ADM for Akali Dal (Master), ADS for Akali Dal (Sant), SAD for Shiromani Akali Dal, CPI(M) for Communist Party of India (Marxist), CPI for Communist Party of India, PSP for Praja Socialist Party, SSP for Samyukta Socialist Party, SWA for Swatantra Party, INC for Indian National Congress, RPI for Republican Party of India, and IND for Independents (non-party).
Source: Kumar (2014: 241).

The third post-election coalition was formed after the 1969 elections. The main partners were the Akalis and the Jan Sangh. Unlike the earlier 1967 coalition, the communists and the republicans did not join the coalition government but supported it from outside. This coalition survived 13 months. The contentious issues like the teaching of Punjabi language, transfer of Chandigarh and centre–state relations, etc, rocked these coalitions.

A fourth coalition, also a minority one, came into being within the fifth vidhan sabha, with Prakash Singh Badal as chief minister (Kumar 2014: 259).

The pragmatic politics of forming post-election coalitions cautioned the political parties against communally-divisive slogans and mixing of religion with language. In the wake of the green revolution, the economic issues like efficient delivery of agricultural inputs, ensuring a minimum support price and augmentation of income of the farmers and landless labourers acquired political space. These coalitions were artificial constructs of ideologically divergent and competing political parties. As a consequence, these were politically unstable and electorally unpopular. Having experienced unsustainable governments, the voters in the 1980 assembly elections, responded to the Congress party's national political programme of the welfare state to mitigate poverty.[5]

De-legitimisation of Democratic Institutions

The phase of the 1980s marks Punjab's tragic tryst with politics. The communalisation and politics of drift led to the killing of thousands of innocents, violation of the sanctity of religious places, assassination of leaders, fake encounters, and the 1984 carnage against Sikhs. The genuine demands like autonomy, territorial claims, and religious rights were blatantly suppressed. The liberal voices were silenced and extreme politics was patronised. The corollary being that people who were a threat to the system were patronised and those who were a threat to the legislative power were lodged in the jails. The extremists seized the initiative and demand for independent Sikh state became loud.

As a consequence of these developments, the arguments advanced was that if assembly elections were held it would allow extremists to capture power. During this phase, electoral volatility was high. Between 1985 and 1992, electoral volatility was at 37 (Table 4, p 48). This clearly shows that the politics became less competitive as moderate politics was rendered irrelevant.

The success of the Simranjit Singh Mann-led extremist group in 1989 Parliament elections was cited as evidence regarding the danger of holding elections, notwithstanding the fact that in these elections the moderate political parties secured more than 60% of the votes. There were divergent views on this issue. These were expressed in a series of articles written in various newspapers. The leading newspaper of Punjab, *Tribune,* launched a campaign for the revival of democratic institutions.

A group of leading academics issued an appeal published in *Tribune*:

While early elections are a must, elections should not be seen as the only democratic exercise nor should they be restricted to sending representatives to the Lok Sabha and the State Assembly ... Incidentally any opposition to holding elections now or in the immediate future suffers from an inbuilt flaw and also contains a danger ... Related to this is the very real need of setting up a Civil Liberties and Democratic Rights Commission in the State. It should be entrusted with the task of dealing with cases of police and administrative atrocities on the common man and also crimes committed by individual terrorists against fellow citizens (Kumar et al 1990: 1).

There was also a realisation to build consensus against terrorism among political parties. Political actors also realised that democracy was the only antidote to terrorism. The earlier redundant moderate political parties faced the dilemma of democracy, that is, it would lead to the revival of competition for legislative power. Historically, moderate politics has been using extreme politics to eliminate competition. It is pertinent to note that there was an understanding to encourage Akalis to boycott the elections and allow the Congress to form the government and fight terrorism.[6] The Akalis boycotted the elections. The elections to state assembly were held in 1992. This election was crucial as it initiated a revival of a democratic process. But the need was felt to make it more representative. This election was termed as an "apology for a representative character of democratic polity" (Kumar and Yadav 1992: 3).

Pre-election Coalitions in Resurgent Democracy

The aftermath of terrorism shaped conditions for political mobilisation around secular lines and post-election coalitions paved the way for pre-election coalitions. The Akalis and the BJP combined on the one hand, and the Congress and the communist parties on the other.

In the 1997 assembly election, the SAD and the BJP contested on 92 and 22 seats respectively. Out of the contested seats, the SAD won 75 and was runner-up on 16 seats, whereas, the BJP won 18 and finished second on four seats. Based on the 1997 assembly election results, the SAD and the BJP should have contested on 91 and 22 seats respectively in 2002, but the BJP got one more seat (5% beyond quota) and the SAD also got one more seat

to contest (1% beyond quota). The Communist Party of India (CPI) and Congress also repeated their pre-election alliance of 1997 in 2002. In 2002, CPI got three more seats to contest (38% beyond quota) and Congress contested on 25 more seats in 2002 which was 31% beyond their quota of earlier performance (Table 5).

However, in 2002 assembly elections, the SAD and the BJP contested on 92 and 23 seats respectively. Out of the contested seats, SAD won 41 and was runner-up on 44 losing on seven seats; whereas, the BJP won three, finished second on 18 and lost two seats. Similarly, in 2007 assembly elections, the SAD and the BJP contested on 94 and 23 seats respectively, in which SAD won 49 and was runner-up on 44 and one seat was lost; whereas the BJP won 19 and finished second on four seats. In 2012, the SAD won 56 and the BJP won 12 seats.

In these elections, the SAD and the BJP got almost an equal percentage of seats beyond their quota. But, in 2014 parliamentary elections, the SAD got 4% more and the BJP got 15% less than their quota. This trend is having long-term implications on the continuation of this alliance in the present form.

In 1997, 2007 and 2012, the Akali–BJP coalition formed the government. In 2002, the Congress and the CPI coalition captured power.

During 1997 to 2012 phase, for two periods, that is, 1997–2002 and 2002–07, electoral volatility was again at an average of 14, but from 2007–12, there was a sharp fall in electoral volatility

to 5.66 that repeated the incumbent government in 2012 (Table 6).

However, in the 2014 Parliament elections, electoral volatility multiplied from 11 between 2004 and 2009 to 25 between 2009 and 2014. This shows a shift in party preference in Punjab. At the national level, the shift worked to the advantage of the BJP, whereas, in Punjab, the new political formation AAP was the beneficiary of the electoral instability (Kumar 2015: 215).

During this phase, a qualitative shift took place from post-election coalitions to pre-election coalitions. The shift has also created conditions for the emergence of new political formations redefining the terms of reference of the coalitions. Political parties, which had been historically articulating the language question on communal lines, shifted their stance. "Punjabi being our mother tongue is the state language of Punjab. Every Punjabi is proud of the richness of the Punjabi language and culture" (Akali Dal—Bharatiya Janata Party Common Minimum Programme 1997: 6).

Table 4: Pedersen Index of Electoral Volatility (1980–92)

1980 to 1992 Assembly Elections	1980 to 1985	1985 to 1992
Total net change (TNC)	34.70	74.30c
Pedersen index of electoral volatility	17.35	37.15

Source: Calculated from Election Commission data 1980–92.

Table 6: Pedersen Index of Electoral Volatility (1997–2012)

1997 to 2012 Assembly Elections	1997 to 2002	2002 to 2007	2007 to 2012
Total net change (TNC)	28.38	28.09	11.33
Pedersen index of electoral volatility	14.19	14.05	5.66

Source: Calculated from Election Commission Reports 1997–2012.

Table 5: Bargaining Power of Alliance Partners—Proportions of Seats Allocated beyond Normal Quota

(2002 based on 1997, 2007 based on 2002 and 2012 based on 2007 Assembly Election)

Alliance in 2002 Assembly Election	Number of Seats Contested in 2002 Assembly Election	Performance			
		Winner	Runner	Seat Managed beyond Quota	
				Seats	Percentage
BJP	23	18	4	1	5
SAD	92	75	16	1	1
CPI	11	2	6	3	38
Congress	105	14	66	25	31
Alliance in 2007 Assembly Election	Number of Seats Contested in 2007 Assembly Election	Performance in 2007 Assembly Elections			
BJP	23	3	18	2	10
SAD	94	41	44	9	11
Alliance in 2012 Assembly Election	Number of Seats Contested in 2012 Assembly Election	Performance in 2012 Assembly Elections			
BJP	23	19	4	0	0
SAD	94	49	44	1	1

Source: Calculated from Election Commission Reports, 1997–2012.

This was a qualitative shift in the stand of the Akalis. In pre-1992 phase, the articulations were on communal lines as Punjabi was presented as the language of the Sikhs and the Hindus were labelled as traitors because it was alleged that they did not own Punjabi as their mother tongue. Similarly, the non-fulfilment of demands like transfer of Chandigarh, Punjabi-speaking areas and sharing of river waters were articulated earlier as discrimination against Sikhs. However, in the 1995 policy programme of the Akalis, these were raised as discrimination against Punjab, and to realise these, it was argued that struggles would have to be launched in the spirit of Punjabiat.

Another major shift was a change in the BJP's position from supporting a strong centre to advocacy of federation of states. Representation to all the existing fault lines of religion and caste by the competing political parties also emerged as a trend in electoral parties. For instance, the Jat Sikh-dominated SAD could win the 2012 elections by facilitating 11 urban Hindus and 21 SCs to win on Akali ticket. The BJP that largely represents urban Hindu traders in Punjab politics gave representation to the Sikhs. Similarly, Congress made inroads into the SAD support base of rural Jat Sikhs by fielding an equal number of rural Jat Sikhs (Table 1).

Punjab's electoral politics has shown signs of blurring religious and caste fault lines. The electoral discourse tends to mobilise voters as population and (de)construct them as homogeneous groups and collectivities. "It tends to blur the hierarchical power positions based on religio-caste, class and ethnicity. The electoral mobilisations are based on catch-all categories to maximise votes" (Kumar 2016: 276). This has provided an inlet to a third party, that is, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) into Punjab politics. The AAP has raised issues reflecting commonalities of experiences of the citizens belonging to various segments of society, and their interaction with the state on issues such as corruption and drug abuse.

Further, citizens are defined as farmers, elders, youth, women, traders, etc,

for co-opting them into the electoral discourse. There is a menu card (menufesto) for farmers, traders, students, SCs, industrialists, women, rather than a manifesto which by definition is a "declaration of principles, policies, intentions and, of course, ideological persuasions" (Kumar 2016: 6). There is also an emphasis on the welfare of various categories of citizens, and on the citizens' experience of exclusion from interaction with the government rather than the exclusion from the market.

In short, electoral politics in Punjab has become fluid. In the pre-election coalition phase, the SAD could multiply its support base by making policy interventions compatible with their ideological persuasion, whereas, the BJP has not articulated the claims of their urban support into policy formation. The SAD's non-Panthic, development and governance reforms plank and the BJP's emergence at the national level has added a new flavour to inter-party coalitions. There is a change in the political strategy of the BJP to branch out in regions by regionalising its own agenda, leadership and symbols. This strategy is likely to have long-term implications on coalition politics in Punjab.

The emergence of regional space for inter-party relationship is the salient feature of contemporary Punjab politics. This space nurtures regional dimensions to act as the core of political formations and shall increasingly act as a filter for national political parties to operate in Punjab through alliances and coalitions for defining their future political strategies.

NOTES

1   The Moga Declaration adopted on 14 April 1995 stated, "the spirit of Punjabiat would be strengthened so that these matters get projected as common problems of the entire Punjabis rather than a section thereof" (Singh 1995: 4).

2   This explanation was offered by a senior BJP leader Balramji Das Tandon in an interview with me on 10 September 2010. He opined that the coalition between the Akalis and the BJP was essential for peace as the Akalis represented Sikh interests and the BJP, Hindu interests.

3   Taagepara and Shugart Index: The effective number of parties, in terms of percentage of votes and seats secured by parties in elections to the directly elected chamber of Parliament, is calculated for all the general elections using the Taagepera and Shugart procedure ($N = 1/\sum Pi^2$ where Pi is the fractional share of i-th party and $\sum$ stand for the summation of overall components).

4   Electoral volatility measured by the Pedersen Index is computed by adding the absolute value of change in percentage of votes gained and lost by each party from one election to the next, then dividing the sum by 2. Thus, in a party system with "n" parties, electoral volatility is = TNC/2, where TNC is total net change in party support. The electoral volatility thus has a range of "0" (perfect stability of electoral support to parties, where no party gained or lost votes) to "100" (perfect instability, where there is total shift of voters from one party to the other).

5   The Congress party could win 63 of the 117 seats in 1980 assembly elections. It had an overall vote share of 49.1% which is the largest it ever had between 1967 and 2012. SAD won 37 of the 73 seats it contested. The CPI won nine seats and CPI(M) five seats in this election—their best electoral performance ever in Punjab. The BJP could win only one of the 41 seats it contested.

6   This generally unknown aspect of the 1992 "boycott" of the assembly elections by Akali Dal came to light through our interactions with several key political actors, importantly, with K P S Gill, the police chief of Punjab, in August and September 1991. Gill was the ardent supporter of building consensus against terrorism and was convinced that an unhealthy competition should be avoided. Hence, the boycott by the Akalis was encouraged and perhaps engineered. Akalis "boycotted" the 1992 assembly elections but actively participated in local body elections subsequently. A resolution was passed by 29 organisations, including Akali Dal and Bharatiya Kisan Union on 1 September 1991 in Anandpur Sahib to boycott the elections till the demands of Punjab were conceded.

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