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## Statesmanship, not brinkmanship : Political Reason for Perennial Kashmir Crisis

### Why in news:-

- Municipal Election saw only 35.1% turnout for the entire State, with Kashmiri participation dropping to a low single-digit percentage.
- Near-zero voter turnout in the Valley shows a sign of perennial Kashmir crisis and failure to resolve it by India even after more than 70 years of Independence.

### Reason for low turnout:-

- Boycott by the two main regional parties, the National Conference and the Peoples Democratic Party.
  - Their immediate protest was over the legal challenge in the Supreme Court to Article 35(A) of the Constitution that accords special powers to the Jammu and Kashmir legislature to decide who are the permanent residents of the State and on whom special rights and privileges can be conferred.
- Pressure from militants.

### Implication of low turnout:-

- Despite being local body polls, negligible public participation in them is significant, especially since only four years ago, the State had witnessed the highest voter turnout in 27 years.

- The reversal is discouraging, as even between periods of intense protests, Assembly and parliamentary election saw increased turnouts despite boycott calls by separatist group.
- It shows the democratic expression of frustration of the Kashmiri people not by the government but by the entire system which is not good for Kashmir Development.

### **Political Reason for perennial Kashmir crisis :-**

- **Adopting the Maximalist approach for short term by National Political Party in Power which hampers State's Politics and there by its security.**
  - Centre has responsibility to maintain stability in the State. However, as leaders of large national parties, they also saw Jammu and Kashmir as a fertile political ground which could be used to expand the bases of their parties. As done in other state but Kashmir case is different this cost the stability in the State.
    - Kashmir is sensitive State,
    - Central government enjoys enormous and extraordinary powers because of the security situation. This **power disparity** not only increases the likelihood of its abuse but also generates suspicion of abuse in the minds of the Kashmiri people.
  - The trade-off between these two impulses has been always difficult to negotiate.

- **For Example, (case study):** In Fact, even the initial birth of the Kashmir insurgency in the late 1980s can be traced back to Indira Gandhi's decision to adopt such a maximalist approach.
- From the late 1970s, the Congress in the State began a steady campaign against the Abdullah government, accusing it of maladministration and corruption.
  - This long-running feud weakened the legitimacy of both parties, thus creating the space for extremism to grow.
  - Inspired by the 1979 Iranian revolution, Kashmiri fundamentalists had begun mobilising and the Abdullah-Congress fight allowed them to gain political traction.
  - By the mid-1980s, both sides had been discredited. The Congress was seen as abusing its power for political gains; Abdullah was seen as a weak leader because of his failed attempt to walk the tight-rope between fighting the government of India and still remaining pro-India.
  - The vacuum thus created was filled by extremist groups. The Muslim United Front, an alliance of Islamic right-wing parties, expanded its vote share from a mere 6.4% in 1983 to 32% in 1987, in the Valley.
- **Continuing Trend:** Instead of solely focussing on stabilising the situation, current government also tried to derive maximum political gains from the situation.

- Within the State, it has pursued a blatantly-cynical and communally-coloured coalition politics;
  - outside the State, it has led a campaign to end the “special status” of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Put together, this **maximalist approach has dramatically destabilised the State’s politics, and thereby its security.**

**Way Ahead:-**

- There is **huge power disparity between**, New Delhi and Kashmir as compared to other Centre-State relation, so **New Delhi needs to appear more benign than usual.**
- **Sacrificing its short-term political gains, the National Party at power should look towards the long-term stability of the State by moderating its own political appetite.**

**THANK YOU**

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