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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS



APRIL 25

1. Are freebies really a curse?(**THE HINDU BUSINESSLINE**)
2. North vs South-a manufactured fault line(**THE INDIAN EXPRESS**)
3. The moral eclipse of politics in the modern age (**THE HINDU**)
4. We need both delimitation and devolution(**BUSINESS STANDARD**)



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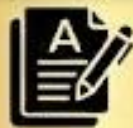
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Are freebies really a curse?

THE BENEFITS. Direct cash handouts score over capex in raising demand for goods and services. They empower women



MADAN SABNAVIS

The recent State Assembly elections have once again seen announcements of cash transfers, which has attracted the attention of economists. Such giveaways, or freebies, are considered a drain on the State exchequer. But, is there another side to this issue which we are missing?

Unlike the Centre, States are bound by fiscal deficit norms, usually 3-3.5 per cent of GDP. If this is higher at the time of announcement of their respective Budgets, States would have to seek the Centre or the RBI's permission. Therefore, it is hard to say that overall fiscal ratios are inevitably breached by such expenditures.

Second, cash transfers in the form of direct payments or subsidies are implemented by both the Centre and States. In fact, the Centre has a larger budget and deficit ratio relative to States and hence can provide greater support through centrally sponsored schemes which involve food subsidy, cash payments to farmers, employment programmes, among others.

CAPEX TRADE-OFF

Third, critics bring up the trade-off between capex and revenue expenditure. Freebies are considered non-productive while capex generates future output by forging strong backward linkages with industries involved in supplying inputs.

Arguably, cash transfers are not really unproductive as the cash given is usually spent, since it is usually dispensed to the lower income groups. This adds to the consumption chain and drives the demand for goods and services.

A significant part of rural demand, which has supported growth in the consumer goods industry, can be attributed to such transfers. States also often give sewing machines, cycles, laptops to womenfolk, which spur demand in the industries concerned — just as construction of a road adds to demand for steel and cement.

EMPOWERING WOMEN

Fourth, cash transfers are supposed to create a moral hazard, affecting the incentive to work. This argument may be weak because it has been seen that cash handouts to women help them to run their households.



INCOME BOOST. Direct cash transfers benefit the target group by freeing expenditure on other goods

Further, free transport for girls and women empower them as it helps them attend school and commute to their place of work. Free transport prevents school dropouts especially in rural households. In rural areas, especially in the lower income groups, households do not want to invest in education for girls. Free transport enables such empowerment.

Fifth, the Centre runs a free food scheme which costs ₹2 lakh crore. This game-changing scheme has provided

Cash transfers are definitely a step in providing a basic income especially for low-income households. This is also a way of bringing about redistributive justice in a country with considerable income inequality

access to food and freed up money that can be spent on other goods and services.

The free food scheme has helped people rise above the poverty line. It has also spurred a shift in consumption pattern from food to non-food items, which is revealed in the household consumption expenditure survey (also used for recalibrating the CPI index).

Sixth, the Centre has been running the rural employment scheme for over two decades with outlays of ₹80,000 crore to ₹1 lakh crore on an annual basis. The idea of the MGNREGS programme was to provide some employment to the farmers during the off season. The high funds utilisation of the scheme is a pointer to the lack of job opportunities in rural areas.

The demand also perhaps shows that the trickle down approach, which is theoretically supposed to unfold as the economy grows, has not worked in the desired manner in the farm sector.

Seventh, direct cash transfers to targeted people are more beneficial than

capital expenditure which benefits only the skilled force through the backward linkages. For example an outlay on a road increases demand for steel and cement which will increase demand for labour and result in higher employment in these sectors.

However, besides taking time to play out, the benefit of such spending goes mainly to those who have the skill sets to join this sector. Cash transfers are agnostic to the qualification of the recipient and only considers their income level.

Therefore, there are convincing arguments in support of government cash transfers. They directly help the targeted beneficiaries. They do not depend on other conditions working out as in the case of capex.

In fact if capex involves use of imported material, the benefit for domestic employment may be limited. The multiplier effects of capital expenditure may not always materialise. But cash transfers do benefit industries that see more demand from greater spending, leading to second-order investment opportunities.

UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

There is also a growing consensus over the need for a universal basic income, especially in developing countries. Cash transfers are definitely a step in providing a basic income especially for low-income households.

They are also a way of bringing about redistributive justice in a country with considerable inequality of income.

As long as these transfers are well targeted, they cannot really be regarded as objectionable. With the proliferation of digitisation in the country, identification of the beneficiaries has become easier.

But the more crucial question is for how long can the government provide such transfers? Until such time that the growth impulses are able to create more universal employment, such support will be required. But it is also true that such transfers can provide perverse incentives for not seeking work or education.

In the West, governments gave generous doles during Covid to people who had lost jobs. Now, it has become difficult to withdraw them and beneficiaries have stopped looking for work. This is a risk for sure, though in the near future it is not an issue for India, given the challenges in job creation at the lower level.

The writer is Chief Economist, Bank of India. Views expressed are personal

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Capital Expenditure (Capex)**

Spending that creates physical or financial assets – roads, bridges, schools, public sector equity. Capex is seen as productive because it builds infrastructure that can generate future income and employment. For instance, building a rural road links farms to markets and raises long-term output.

- **Revenue Expenditure**

Recurring spending that does not create assets – salaries, pensions, interest payments, and subsidies. Cash transfers fall under this head. Critics argue that too much revenue spending starves the government of funds for asset-building.

- **Universal Basic Income (UBI)**

A periodic, unconditional cash payment to every citizen. The idea is to provide a floor for survival and dignity, replacing myriad fragmented subsidies. Cash transfers that target low-income groups are seen as a stepping stone toward a de-facto basic income for the poor.

- **Moral Hazard**

A situation where protection from risk encourages risky or irresponsible behaviour. With cash handouts, the worry is that able-bodied recipients may choose not to work, knowing they will receive money anyway. The article argues this risk is low in India's current job-scarce reality but long-term caution is needed.

- **Multiplier Effect**

An economic concept where an initial injection of spending leads to a larger increase in national income. Cash transfers put money directly in the hands of the poor, who spend almost all of it, boosting demand for everyday goods. That demand spurs production and can create jobs – the classic Keynesian multiplier.

- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) / JAM Trinity**

Jan Dhan bank accounts, Aadhaar identification, and Mobile connectivity. This digital infrastructure allows cash subsidies to be transferred directly to beneficiaries' bank accounts, cutting out middlemen and leakages. It makes targeted cash delivery feasible and transparent.

- **Backward and Forward Linkages**

When a road is built (capex), it raises demand for cement, steel, and labour – that is a backward linkage. Cash transfers create forward linkages: the recipient buys food, clothes, or cycles, and the seller's income rises, enhancing overall consumption. Both generate economic activity but through different channels.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis re-examines whether “freebies” are truly a curse or, in fact, a legitimate tool for demand stimulation and social justice. The analysis rests on seven pillars:

- **Fiscal Discipline Not Necessarily Breached**

States are bound by fiscal deficit limits (3-3.5% of GSDP). They cannot run deficits at will. Any breach needs central or RBI consent. So the claim that freebies automatically wreck state finances is exaggerated; many states accommodate these expenditures within permissible borrowing limits.

- **Centre Bears a Larger Burden**

The Union government runs massive cash-transfer schemes – free food under PMGKAY (costing nearly ₹2 lakh crore), cash to farmers under PM-KISAN, and the MGNREGA wage outlay. The centre’s deficit ratio is larger than the states’. If cash transfers were inherently ruinous, the centre’s own model would be untenable. The selective criticism of states often misses this larger picture.

- **Capex vs. Revenue Debate Reframed**

The traditional view is that capex is productive; revenue expenditure is wasteful. However, cash transfers are not “unproductive” merely by accounting definition. They generate consumption demand, which in turn signals producers to invest. When a state gives a sewing machine or a cycle to a woman, it directly spurs demand in those industries – akin to how road construction raises demand for cement. The difference lies in the target group: cash transfers put purchasing power directly with the poor rather than with skilled labour and capital.

- **Women’s Empowerment as a Positive Externality**

Transfers aimed at women – cash handouts, free bus passes, cycles, laptops – do more than raise consumption. They improve mobility, school attendance, and decision-making power within households. Free transport, especially in rural areas, prevents girls from dropping out when families are reluctant to invest in their education. Such empowerment has inter-generational benefits.

- **Free Food Frees Up Household Budgets**

The centre’s free foodgrains scheme releases money that the poor would have otherwise spent on food. That money is then diverted to non-food items – better nutrition, health, education. Household Consumption Expenditure Survey data confirm a shift from food to non-food spending, which raises the standard of living and recalibrates poverty measures.

- **MGNREGA Demonstrates Persistent Rural Distress**

With annual outlays of ₹80,000-1,00,000 crore, MGNREGA’s high utilisation signals a deep lack of rural employment. The trickle-down effect of growth has not reached the farm sector. Cash-for-work is therefore not a luxury but a necessity to prevent destitution during the off-season. It also supports soil and water conservation assets, blending consumption support with asset creation.

- **Cash Transfers Are Agnostic to Skill, Capex Benefits Skilled Labour**

An infrastructure project increases demand for skilled and semi-skilled workers, but leaves out the unskilled poor who cannot enter that labour market. Cash transfers, by contrast, reach anyone identified as poor regardless of qualification. This makes them a direct, fast tool for redistributive justice, while capex’s multiplier is often slow and uncertain, especially when imported inputs are used.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-Independence Context**

Famine relief and grain distribution were early forms of state support. British India's dole during famines was minimal and often tied to punitive labour. The concept of the state as a provider of a minimum standard of living was debated in the Constituent Assembly, inspired by the Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 41 – right to public assistance in case of unemployment, old age, sickness).

- **Planned Economy Era (1951-1990)**

The focus was on public investment – dams, steel plants, heavy industries. Subsidies were embedded in the system: food subsidy through the Public Distribution System (PDS), fertiliser subsidy, rural electrification at low rates. These were not called “freebies”; they were instruments of social policy. The expansion of PDS in the 1970s and '80s, mid-day meals in schools, and employment guarantee schemes in Maharashtra (1972) established the principle of direct state support.

- **Liberalisation and the Targeted Approach (1991-2013)**

Fiscal discipline gained primacy post-1991. The FRBM Act (2003) mandated deficit targets. Cash transfers emerged through schemes like old-age pensions, but the delivery was leaky. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005), later MGNREGA, was a landmark: a rights-based direct transfer of wages. BPL-APL targeting remained flawed. The Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) model launched in 2013 used Aadhaar to plug leakage.

- **Recent Surge in State-Level Freebies (2014-2024)**

Several states announced farm loan waivers (Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab), free electricity (Delhi, Punjab), free laptops (Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu), free bus passes for women (Karnataka, Delhi, Tamil Nadu), and direct monthly cash transfers to women heads of households (e.g., “Ladli Behna” in Madhya Pradesh, Gruha Lakshmi in Karnataka). These announcements often coincide with election cycles, prompting the term “freebie culture.”

- **Judicial and Institutional Scrutiny**

In 2022, the Supreme Court observed that irrational freebies could push states toward bankruptcy and suggested creating an expert body to examine the matter. The Election Commission added “freebies” to its guidelines on Model Code of Conduct, but stopped short of banning them. The 15th Finance Commission flagged the need to distinguish between welfare expenditure and non-merit freebies.

- **Global Parallels**

During COVID-19, advanced economies such as the US and Europe gave generous cash doles. Brazil's Bolsa Família – a conditional cash transfer – dramatically reduced poverty and improved health outcomes. Pilot UBI experiments in Finland and Kenya provided evidence of the effects on work and well-being. India's state-level transfers today are part of this global rethinking of social protection.

Welfare Transfers ('Freebies')



Demand Generation

DIRECT CASH: Scores over Capex in raising demand for goods & services.



Women's Empowerment

EMPOWERING WOMEN: Free transport and cash handouts (e.g., MGNREGA) for household management and work commute.



Income & Growth

CONSUMPTION BOOST: Frees expenditure for other goods; Shift from food to non-food items.



Skill-Agnostic Support

BROAD BENEFITS: Agnostic to qualification, helps low-income groups directly.



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VS

Capital Expenditure (Capex)

Infrastructure Development

FUTURE OUTPUT: Builds physical assets like roads, bridges, power plants.



Backward Linkages

INDUSTRY DEMAND: Direct demand for core sectors like steel and cement.



Job Creation (Skilled)

SECTORAL EMPLOYMENT: Benefits mainly to those with specific, needed skill sets.



Capex multi-linkages take time to develop; benefits are skilled-specific.

'Redistributive Justice'

States must manage fiscal deficits (~3.5% GDP norm) when implementing transfers.



'Universal Basic Income' (UBI)

States must manage fiscal deficits (~3.5% GDP norm) when implementing transfers.



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- **Logical and Philosophical Base**

- **Utilitarian Logic (Maximising Welfare)**

The strongest philosophical defence is Benthamite: a rupee transferred to a poor household yields greater marginal utility than the same rupee spent on a road that may take years to benefit the poorest. If the goal is aggregate welfare maximisation, direct transfers to those with the highest propensity to consume seem logical.

- **Rawlsian Justice (Difference Principle)**

John Rawls argued that inequalities are acceptable only if they benefit the least advantaged. Cash transfers targeted at women and the poor directly improve the condition of the worst-off. In this framework, a free bus pass for a woman who would otherwise drop out of school is not a wasteful bribe but an instrument of justice.

- **Capability Approach (Amartya Sen)**

Real development means expanding people's capabilities – what they can be and do. Free transport, cycles, or a sewing machine enhance women's mobility, education, and livelihood options. These freebies become "capability-enhancing" rather than mere consumption. Sen's philosophy shifts the measure from GDP growth to human flourishing.

- **Keynesian Demand Management**


The article's logic rests on the fundamental Keynesian insight that aggregate demand shortfall causes recession and unemployment. When private investment is lukewarm, government transfers can stimulate consumption, keeping factories running and protecting jobs. The free food scheme functions as an automatic stabiliser for the economy.

- **Paternalism vs. Empowerment Debate**

Critics see cash handouts as fostering dependence; advocates see them as giving people agency. The article leans toward empowerment: cash in the hands of women allows them to decide household spending, challenging patriarchal control. The moral hazard argument, however, is grounded in the ethical concern that free support without reciprocal responsibility may erode the work ethic – a classical liberal fear.

- **Epistemological Assumption**

The arguments assume that targeted cash delivery is technically feasible with minimal leakages. This depends on the accuracy of Aadhaar-linked databases and the effectiveness of DBT. The evidence from consumption surveys is used to justify that freebies do change behaviour for the better. The philosophy of evidence-based policy underlies the claim.



- **Multidimensional analysis**

- **Social dimension**

- Transfers strengthen basic consumption security, reduce extreme poverty, improve nutrition and schooling for children.
 - Women-centric schemes (cash, transport, assets) promote gender equality and can reduce early marriages and dropouts.

- **Political dimension**

- Welfare and freebies influence electoral outcomes and campaign narratives.
 - Competitive populism may overshadow programmatic policy debates on structural reforms.

- **Legal dimension**

- Rights-based schemes like MGNREGA earlier gave citizens enforceable claims; pure “freebies” lack such legal backing and can be terminated unilaterally.
 - Supreme Court’s engagement with “freebies” raises questions of judicial overreach vs need to protect fiscal health.

- **Ethical dimension**

- Tension between paternalism (“we know what is good for you”) and autonomy (cash gives choice).
 - Duty of the state to support the vulnerable vs responsibility of citizens to contribute productively and pay taxes.

- **International dimension**

- Many countries experimented with cash transfers and UBI pilots (e.g., Brazil’s Bolsa Família-type programmes, UBI pilots in Europe and India).
 - Covid-era massive doles in advanced economies demonstrated both the stabilising role of cash and the political difficulty of withdrawal.
 - India’s Aadhaar-enabled DBT is often cited globally as a model for large-scale digital welfare delivery.

- **Economic dimension**

- Short-run: Cash transfers boost aggregate demand, particularly in rural and low-income segments.
 - Medium-term: If financed by cutting capex, potential growth may slow down; if financed by rationalising inefficient subsidies, net effect can be positive.
 - Long-term: UBI-type schemes raise big questions on labour supply, taxation, and the structure of the welfare state.

- **Linkages with NCERTs**

- Class 9 Economics, “Poverty as a Challenge”
 - Discussion on poverty, anti-poverty measures, role of public distribution and employment schemes.
- Class 10 Economics, “Development” and “Sectors of the Indian Economy”
 - Concepts of development, public investment, employment generation, and government’s role in welfare.
- Class 11 Economics (Indian Economic Development)
 - Chapters on “Poverty”, “Rural Development”, “Employment”, “Infrastructure”, and “Human Capital Formation”.
- Class 11 Political Science, “Constitution as a Living Document” and “Rights in the Indian Constitution”
 - Connect to rights-based welfare (MGNREGA, NFSA) and DPSPs.
- Class 12 Economics (Indian Economic Development)
 - “Government Budget and the Economy”: revenue vs capital expenditure, fiscal deficit.
- Class 12 Political Science, “Politics of Planned Development”, “Contemporary South Asia”, “Challenges of Economic Development”
 - Welfare state, development models, and democracy-welfare linkages.



- **Linkages with UPSC CSE syllabus**

- **GS-1**

- Society: poverty, inequality, women and child issues, social empowerment.
- Role of welfare in changing family and gender relations.

- **GS-2**

- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections and performance; mechanisms, laws, institutions.
- Issues relating to poverty and hunger; PDS, NFSA, MGNREGA/its replacement.
- Functions and responsibilities of the Union and States; devolution of finances; FRBM norms.
- Role of civil services and institutions in implementing welfare schemes.

- **GS-3**

- Indian Economy: inclusive growth and issues arising from it.
- Government budgeting; fiscal deficit, revenue vs capital expenditure.
- Employment and skill development; rural distress.
- Issues of subsidies, leakage, DBT, and cash transfers.
- Effects of liberalisation on poverty and inequality, role of public investment.

- **GS-4 (Ethics)**

- Ethics in public administration: use of public funds, accountability, transparency.
- Attitude of civil servants towards poor and weaker sections – empathy, compassion vs paternalism.
- Justice, equality, and human values in policy design.

- **Way Forward**

- **Define “Welfare” vs. “Non-Merit Freebie” Objectively**

Constitute an independent fiscal council at state level (as recommended by the 15th Finance Commission) to categorise expenditure based on outcomes – improvements in nutrition, school retention, female labour force participation. Only outcome-proven schemes should be retained.

- **Sunset Clauses and Periodic Review**

Every cash transfer scheme should have a built-in sunset clause (e.g., five years). Renewal must be based on a third-party impact evaluation. This prevents rent-seeking and perpetual fiscal burden.

- **Consolidate Fragmented Schemes into a Unified Minimum Income Platform**

Instead of tiny, scattered cash transfers, states should integrate them into a single income-support platform. This reduces administrative costs, ensures better targeting, and becomes a stepping stone to a quasi-UBI for the most vulnerable.

- **Conditional Cash Transfers for Human Capital Formation**

Link transfers to verifiable actions – school attendance, vaccination, nutrition-monitoring for children, skill training enrolment. Delhi’s cash incentive for girl-child education can be a model. This addresses the moral hazard critique by making the transfer a reward for responsible behaviour.

- **Ring-Fence Capital Expenditure**

States could adopt a golden rule – borrow only to finance capex, while revenue spending must be covered by own revenues. This ensures that welfare transfers do not eat into the infrastructure budget. The centre can incentivise this through performance-linked grants.

- **Strengthen DBT and Grievance Redressal**

While JAM has reduced leakage, exclusion errors remain. A robust digital feedback and appeal mechanism, backed by local language interfaces and assisted banking correspondents, will ensure that genuine beneficiaries are not left out and that payments are regular.

- **Political Consensus Through the Inter-State Council**

The freebies debate should be taken up at the Inter-State Council or NITI Aayog’s Governing Council to evolve a common understanding. A “model code” for fiscal promises in manifestos, adopted voluntarily, could balance democratic choice with fiscal sanity.

- **Nudge Policy Toward Employment-Linked Transfers**

Gradually shift from unconditional cash to income-augmenting programmes – urban MGNREGA-like guarantees, subsidised apprenticeships, self-help group capitalisation. This ensures the dignity of work while maintaining a consumption floor.

- **All Previous Years' UPSC and APSC Questions**

- **UPSC CSE – Mains (GS Papers)**

- *GS-II*

- 2022: "Discuss the role of the Election Commission in regulating election manifestos, especially in the context of freebies." (15 marks)
- 2021: "Has the expansion of DBT and JAM trinity achieved the objectives of plugging leakages in subsidy delivery? Critically evaluate." (15 marks)
- 2019: "Do you think the model of targeted cash transfers can replace the public distribution system in India? Substantiate." (15 marks)
- 2018: "E-governance in the form of DBT has not only brought transparency but also empowered the marginalised. Elaborate." (15 marks)

- *GS-III*

- 2022: "Distinguish between capital budget and revenue budget. Explain the components of revenue budget." (10 marks)
- 2020: "What are the implications of rising revenue expenditure on Indian economy? Discuss with reference to fiscal federalism." (15 marks)
- 2019: "Enumerate the indirect taxes which have been subsumed in GST. Also, comment on the revenue implications of GST on state finances." (15 marks)
- 2017: "Among several factors for India's potential growth, the savings rate is the most effective one. Do you agree? What are the other factors?" (with sub-question on public savings and revenue-capital divide).
- 2016: "Discuss the role of the Finance Commission in maintaining fiscal discipline in India." (15 marks)

- *GS-IV (Ethics)*

- 2021: "A Public Information Officer receives applications for information on a cash transfer scheme. He fears it may expose political motives. What should he do? Discuss ethical dilemmas." (Case study, 20 marks)
- 2019: "The principle of 'maximum good of maximum number' fails to serve the poor. Comment." (10 marks)

North vs South — a manufactured fault line



RAM RAJYA
By RAM MAJHAJ

BYPASSING the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, which was intended to facilitate implementation of the 10th Amendment passed in 2015 — which gave states 50 per cent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies — the Opposition has done great injustice not only to the women of the country but also to states in South and East India. The 15th Amendment was to implement the reservation based on the 2011 Census and not wait for the results of the 2026 Census. Any sensible leader would have recognised it as the ruling party's responsibility. The next Census will almost certainly throw up a demographic scenario in which states in South and East India would see their population figures declining due to factors like better implementation of family planning programmes and greater out-migration. On the other hand, there is a likelihood of the population figures rising in the Hindi heartland.

ough estimates indicate that reservations in South and East India — Andhra Pradesh (4), Madhya Pradesh (3), Tamil Nadu (4), Karnataka (2), Kerala (7), Odisha (4) and West Bengal (4) — could together lose up to 20 seats in the new scenario, while states where the BJP is stronger, like Uttar Pradesh (12), Bihar (10), Madhya Pradesh (6), and Rajasthan (7), could see a gain of 34 seats. If the BJP were to look at its own electoral interest, it would have waited for the new Census to get a definition in motion. However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered to implement delimitation based on the 2011 Census, which would have retained the status quo in terms of the number of seats in each state due to the 25-year freeze in place since 2001. As far as the proposed overall number of seats was concerned, he offered a per cent increase so that



states in South and East India would have gained seats in the same ratio as those in the North.

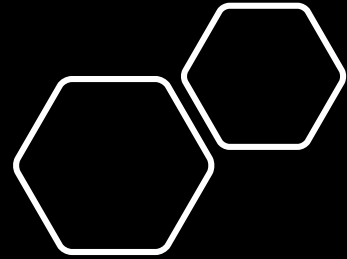
The Opposition put forth the specious argument that the new delimitation exercise would be an injustice to South India because it would increase the gap in the number of seats between South and North. There are no political seats called "South" or "North" India. There are only geographical seats. The Opposition's effort to create a political divide on these lines is reprehensible and dangerous.

Incidentally, not all parties fell for the exercise. In Andhra Pradesh — Yeddy Surja, YSR Congress and Janta Sima — refused to toe the Opposition line and stood by the government in Parliament. But there is a need to ensure that the "injustice to the South" narrative is stopped in the bud.

There have been instances in the past when some in the South raised their voice against perceived injustice. There was a strong anti-Bihar movement in Tamil Nadu for decades after independence, fueling anti-North India sentiment. In the 1980s, the Yeddy film icon, NT Rama Rao raised the slogan of self-respect of the Telugu people and rode to power on the wave created by that sentiment. He even challenged the very idea of the "Centre". In recent times, there were efforts to mobilise the southern states in the name of economic injustice (the high GST and other budgetary provisions). Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah openly criticised the central government for "financial strangulation of peripheral states". Tamil Nadu CM K. Stalin indicated that the Centre's policies based on the "integration" concept are "a direct attack on the diversity of South India". He insisted that India is "a union of states, not a monolith". Finance ministers of some southern Indian states held a couple of meetings in recent years, and they seem to have formed an informal pressure group within the GST Council.

All this indicates that there is a persistent effort to create a sense of inferiority in the southern states, it has not reached a dangerous level yet, but that doesn't call for complacent handling of the sentiment. This has become even more essential given the fact that the delimitation exercise will now have to take place based on the new Census, which is bound to generate more heat and dust.

Authorities consider the North-South divide "a very serious matter" and know that it "may lead to the breakup of India". The South has never given any reason for one to feel that way. It has always upheld the integrity of India. But in the larger national interest, it is important to listen to the southern leadership over delimitation and develop mechanisms making them onboard.





- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Delimitation:** The act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats to represent changes in population. It ensures the principle of "One Vote, One Value."

- **106th Amendment Act (2023):** Also known as the *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam*, it mandates 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.

- **131st Amendment Bill (Defeated):** A proposed legislative move intended to implement women's reservation based on the 2011 Census rather than waiting for the post-2026 Census figures.

- **Demographic Dividend vs. Demographic Penalty:** A situation where states that successfully implemented family planning (mostly Southern/Eastern) fear losing political influence to states with higher birth rates (mostly Northern).

- **Pro-rata Increase:** A proportional distribution. In this context, it refers to increasing seat numbers across all states equally to maintain the existing balance of power despite population shifts.

- **Finance Commission (Article 280):** A constitutional body that defines the financial relations between the Centre and States. Recent commissions have used the 2011 Census for tax devolution, sparking "equity vs. efficiency" debates.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **Core Thesis**

- The central argument posits that the "North-South divide" is a politically manufactured narrative that threatens national integrity. However, it acknowledges that the upcoming delimitation—based on the first Census after 2026—will be a high-friction event requiring sensitive handling.

- **Key Points**

- **Missed Opportunity for Consensus:** The defeat of the 131st Amendment is presented as a missed chance to implement women's reservation immediately using 2011 data, which would have bypassed the current demographic anxiety.

- **Projected Seat Shifts:** Rough estimates suggest a massive shift in political gravity. Northern states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar could gain over 20 seats combined, while Southern states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala could see a net loss in their relative share of power.

- **Economic and Linguistic Friction:** The article highlights that grievances in the South are often mobilized around "financial strangulation" (GST/Budgetary allocations) and linguistic identity (anti-Hindi sentiments).

- **Constitutional Integrity:** It argues that India is a "Union of States" and that political units like "North" or "South" have no legal standing, despite being powerful emotional constructs.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Constitutional Framework (1950):** The original Constitution mandated readjustment of seats after every census. This was done after 1951, 1961, and 1971 censuses.
- **The 42nd Amendment Freeze (1976):** During the Emergency, the Constitution was amended to freeze the allocation of Lok Sabha seats to states and the division of territorial constituencies within each state based on the 1971 census. The stated rationale was to incentivize population control, as states reducing fertility would not lose seats, and states failing to do so would not gain. This freeze was to last till the year 2000.
- **Extension of Freeze (84th Amendment, 2001):** The freeze was extended for another 25 years, until 2026. The government of the day wanted to ensure that population control policies persisted without political disincentives. The current Lok Sabha composition is still frozen based on 1971 population ratios.
- **Emergence of Regional Disparities:** Over decades, southern states saw rapid demographic transition (lower Total Fertility Rates), while northern states lagged. By the 2010s, the gap became stark. The 2011 census showed slowing growth in the south.
- **The GST and Fiscal Grievance (2017 onwards):** The Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, based on destination-based consumption, was seen by manufacturing-heavy southern states as unfairly benefiting consuming northern states. Finance ministers from Kerala, Karnataka, etc., began coordinating their stance in the GST Council, creating an informal pressure group.
- **15th Finance Commission Controversy (2018-2020):** The use of 2011 census population data (instead of 1971) in the ToR for the 15th Finance Commission triggered a huge political uproar from southern states, who saw it as a precursor to political representation changes and a direct fiscal penalty for population control.
- **Delimitation Debate Intensifies (2023):** The 106th Amendment (women's reservation) made the reality of a post-2026 delimitation immediate and concrete. The delayed census and the timeline for women's reservation created a political flashpoint.
- **The 131st Amendment Attempt (2024):** The government attempted to break the deadlock by introducing a Bill to use the 2011 census data for the women's reservation delimitation, ensuring immediate implementation without waiting for a new census that could shift seat distribution. The Bill was defeated in Parliament, with the Opposition insisting that the "injustice to the South" narrative needed to be addressed holistically.



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COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS: UNTANGLING INDIA'S "NORTH-SOUTH" FAULT LINE IN FEDERALISM AND DEMOGRAPHY

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KEY TERMS & HISTORICAL CONTEXT



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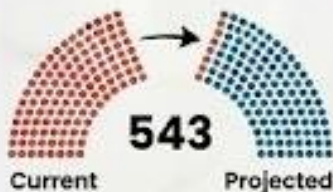
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DELIMITATION CHALLENGES

• KEY-POINT:



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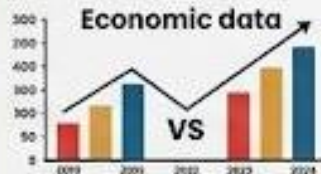
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FEDERALISM DYNAMICS (SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL)



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• Aging population (cont) economic mattwn populating in proum egury: bata



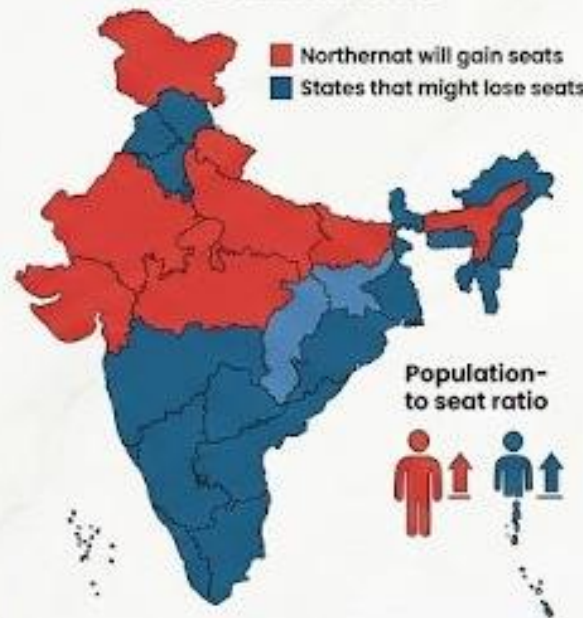
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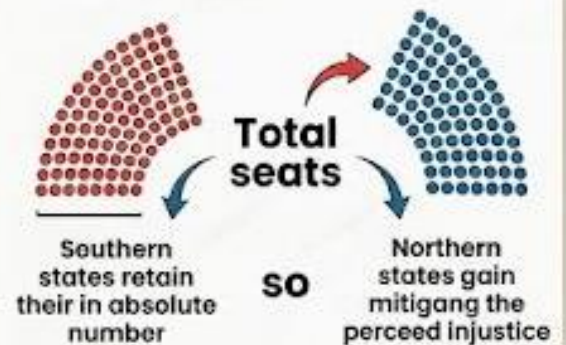


• Political power power on the states
• Political on-power to the government

A. POPULATION VS. POLITICAL REPRESENTATION



B. PROPOSED "PRO-RATA" HYBRID INCREASE



MULTIDIMENSIONAL CHALLENGES & ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

• Multidimensional challenges & Southern states retain to drficult to southern states ethical considerations

WAY FORWARD (BALANCED SOLUTIONS)



RISE ABOVE THE REST



- **Logical and Philosophical Base**

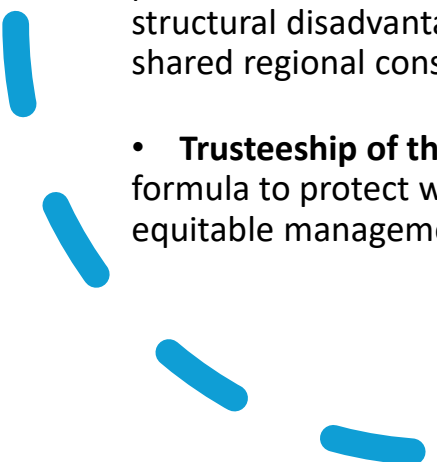
- **Principle of Equal Representation (“One Person, One Vote”):** The fundamental democratic logic behind delimitation is political equality. Every individual must have equal representation. If a constituency in Kerala has half the population of one in Uttar Pradesh, the voter in Kerala effectively has a more powerful vote. Delimitation seeks to rectify this mathematical inequality.

- **Federal Contract vs. Majoritarian Democracy:** The Indian Constitution is not a simple majoritarian document; it is a federal compact. It balances vote equality with representation for diverse territorial units. The philosophical assumption is that states, as units, have a stake in the Union’s decision-making, and their voice should not be diluted solely due to demographic success.

- **Incentive Structures in Policy:** The long-standing freeze is rooted in the logic that public policy should incentivize desired behaviour. If a state reduces its population, it should be rewarded, not punished with lost representation. Removing this premise might undermine nationwide population control efforts.

- **Manufactured Identities vs. Organic Grievances:** The article’s core philosophical argument is that “South” and “North” are manufactured political units. Yet, the counter-philosophy holds that such regional identities emerge organically when a bloc of states experiences common structural disadvantages. The question is whether the grievance is an artificial construct by political elites or a genuine articulation of a shared regional consciousness.

- **Trusteeship of the Nation:** The argument hints at a trusteeship model where Prime Minister Modi, like a guardian, offered a “pro rata” formula to protect weaker (in population) states, akin to the Lok Sabha’s role as the “house of the people” where the Executive proposes equitable management of diversity.



- **Multidimensional Analysis**

- **(A) Social Dimension**

- Potential for regional polarisation, stereotype reinforcement (“lazy South”, “backward North” etc.), and erosion of pan-Indian solidarity.
 - However, it also opens discussion on social policies—education, health, fertility—showing how governance choices shape demographic futures.

- **(B) Political Dimension**

- Reallocation of seats will alter coalition arithmetic, cabinet composition, and leadership pipelines in national politics.
 - Stronger representation for high-population States may reshape issue priorities (agriculture, rural infrastructure, employment) in Parliament.

- **(C) Legal Dimension**

- Involves constitutional amendments, delimitation statutes, and possible judicial review on grounds of violating basic structure principles.
 - Could lead to re-examination of the balance between Lok Sabha (population-based) and Rajya Sabha (State-based) representation.

- **(D) Ethical Dimension**

- Raises questions: Is it ethical to lock in over-representation for some citizens indefinitely? Is it ethical to reduce the voice of States that followed national family planning directives?
 - Ethics of inter-generational justice: can present generations bind future ones to outdated demographic ratios?

- **(E) International Dimension**

- Federal representation and malapportionment debates exist in other federations (e.g., US Senate vs House, Australia, Canada), providing comparative lessons.
 - India’s handling of the issue will shape its global image as a large, complex democracy capable of institutional adjustment.

- **(F) Economic Dimension**

- Strongly linked to debates on fiscal federalism, tax devolution, and “net contributor” vs “net recipient” States.
 - Representation is power: seat distribution can affect policy priorities, resource allocation, and bargaining over economic reforms.

Linkages with NCERTs

Class 9 – Democratic Politics I

- Chapters on “What is Democracy?” and “Electoral Politics” explain representation, constituencies, and fairness in elections, which underpin delimitation debates.

Class 10 – Democratic Politics II

- Chapters on “Working of Institutions” and “Federalism” provide the conceptual foundation for Centre–State relations and power-sharing.

Class 11 – Indian Constitution at Work (Political Science)

- Chapters: “Constitution as a Living Document”, “Federalism”, and “Election and Representation” directly relate to Articles 81, 82, 280, and the logic of delimitation.

Class 12 – Politics in India since Independence

- Chapters on “Regional Aspirations” and “Recent Developments in Indian Politics” help contextualise how regional identities (including Southern parties) engage with the Centre.

Class 12 – Indian Economic Development

- Units on regional disparities and poverty link to fiscal federalism and inter-State resource transfers.

Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus

GS Paper 1

- Salient features of Indian Society, regionalism, and communalism—understanding regional assertions and identity politics.
- Post-independence consolidation and reorganisation of States.

GS Paper 2 (Most Direct)

- Indian Constitution: features, amendments, significant provisions.
- Functioning of Parliament, representation of States, and role of Delimitation Commission.
- Centre–State relations, federalism, and devolution of powers and finances.
- Role of constitutional and quasi-judicial bodies (Finance Commission, Delimitation Commission).

GS Paper 3

- Inclusive growth and regional disparities.
- Resource mobilisation, budgeting, and fiscal federalism.

GS Paper 4 (Ethics)

- Ethical issues in public policy design: equity vs efficiency, inter-generational fairness, conflict of interest between regions.
- Values of justice, fairness, objectivity, and impartiality in governance.

Way Forward

Transparent, Data-Driven Debate

- Move away from emotionally charged slogans; present clear data on population, representation ratios, tax contributions, and fiscal transfers.
- Set up a high-level expert committee including demographers, economists, constitutional experts, and representatives of all regions.

Phased and Predictable Delimitation

- Implement seat reallocation in phases over multiple electoral cycles to reduce political shocks.
- Provide advance constitutional timelines so parties and States can adjust.

Strengthening Federal Safeguards

- Re-examine Rajya Sabha representation to ensure it effectively protects State interests, especially of less populous but high-performing regions.
- Consider strengthening inter-State councils and the GST Council as forums for negotiating fiscal and representational concerns.

Reform of Fiscal Federalism

- Continue to refine Finance Commission formulas to reward demographic performance and governance outcomes, not merely population size.
- Encourage States towards cooperative, not competitive, narratives about resource-sharing.

Ethical and Civic Education

- Promote civic education on federalism and representation so that citizens understand trade-offs, rather than being swayed solely by regional populism.
- Encourage media to highlight nuanced perspectives and avoid sensational “North vs South” framing.

- **UPSC Mains – GS Paper 2**

- 2013: “Discuss the possible factors that inhibit India from enacting for its citizens a uniform civil code as provided for in the Directive Principles of State Policy.” (Federalism, constitutional change – structurally similar.)
- 2016: “Discuss the role of the Finance Commission in the Centre–State fiscal relations.” (Direct link to fiscal federalism.)
- 2018: “Whether the Supreme Court judgment on the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act has reinforced the principle of independence of judiciary or made the executive stronger? Discuss.” (Constitutional amendment and basic structure, methodologically relevant.)
- 2020: “Critically examine the role of the 15th Finance Commission in addressing regional imbalances in India.” (Direct relevance to current fiscal debates.)
- 2021: “How have the recommendations of the Finance Commission of India enabled the States to improve their fiscal position?” (Fiscal federalism context.)
- 2022: “Do you think that the role of the Governor is mainly that of a ‘rubber stamp’? Justify your answer.” (Centre–State friction, relevant as a federal case study template.)

- **UPSC Mains – Essay**

- Several past essays on “Cooperative federalism”, “Regionalism and national integration”, “Real development is about widening people’s choices, not just incomes” are thematically close.

- **UPSC Prelims**

- Questions on Finance Commission, Delimitation Commission, 42nd and 84th Amendments, and Articles 80–82, 280 recur periodically.



The moral eclipse of politics in the modern age

When Aristotle grounded politics in ethics, he was diagnosing a structural condition of legitimacy far beyond a mere moral statement. The polis, in his conception, exists not merely to secure bare life but also to enable a flourishing civil society where human potential can be realised. Divorce political authority from this ethical telos, and it collapses into an organised system of domination.

The Pope-Trump issue

It is precisely this ethical stripping away that defines our present political condition. When Pope Leo XIV invokes the Gospels to call for restraint, peace, or an end to war, his appeals are often received not as profound ethical reflection but as naive political interference. The discomfort that the Pope's moral interventions seemed to provoke in U.S. President Donald Trump found a strange and telling afterlife in the viral meme portraying Mr. Trump as Christ – a gesture that feels less like a real satire and more like a quick defensive move to hide his vulnerability.

Mr. Trump's other post, where he puts himself in proximity with Jesus Christ, seeks spiritual endorsement, camouflaging authority in sacred language so as to appear beyond criticism. The joke, in its grotesque excess, betrays an unease with moral authority itself, as if ethical critique must be trivialised, distorted, or mended into oblivion to keep it under check. What it ultimately hints at is a deeper cultural anxiety: in the absence of genuine moral legitimacy, naked power begins to crave an aura of inviolability even at the cost of lampooning the very transcendent values it dislodges and undermines.

The disjunction between moral authority and political self-presentation becomes particularly stark in Mr. Trump's public life, which has been shadowed by multiple allegations of sexual misconduct that gained prominence during the #Me Too movement, as well as by his documented social association with sex-criminal financier Jeffrey Epstein, which continues to invite scrutiny. Moreover, his remarks about his daughter, Ivanka Trump, were widely criticised as inappropriate. These are not incidental controversies but part of a broader pattern that complicates any claim to moral seriousness, making attempts to cloak political authority in the language or imagery of spiritual virtue not only incongruous but also deeply revealing of the anxieties they seek to conceal.

On a broader question of morality, when it is deliberately excluded from the political sphere, it is replaced by an altogether different ethic, grounded in the politics of expediency and a struggle framed as absolute good versus evil. It simply replaces one moral framework with another, often a more insidious one. Across



Shelley Walla

Taught cultural and literary theory at Punjab University Chandigarh

democratic societies today, this substitution is increasingly visible in the rhetoric that hypocritically denounces elitism while tacitly endorsing the concentration of wealth and power in fewer hands. The problem, then, is not that morality has vanished from politics but that it has become incoherent, splintered into rival visions that clash without resolution.

War and a dehumanisation

The most acute manifestation of politics' moral collapse is war, which functions as both a geopolitical event and an epistemic and ethical failure – a profound breakdown in the capacity to imagine the other as a bearer of irrefutable human dignity. Its precondition is dehumanisation, the subtle mutilation of ideas that renders mass destruction not only permissible but necessary.

We are reminded of this in the great ethical traditions of political thought that have repeatedly attempted to anchor power within the bounds of justice. John Rawls's "theory of justice" as fairness stands as one such monumental effort. His famous "veil of ignorance" thought experiment asks us to imagine political principles chosen without foreknowledge of our own position in society, be it rich or poor, powerful or marginalised. A just society, Rawls suggests, can only emerge when we deliberately suspend the privileges of identity, circumstance, and advantage, reasoning as equals behind the veil.

If Rawls diagnoses the absence of justice in institutional design, Bertrand Russell offers a more unsettling anthropological diagnosis. Human beings, he argued, are fundamentally driven by acquisitiveness, rivalry, vanity, and an insatiable desire for power. These primal impulses, when unrestrained by robust ethical norms and traditions, inevitably produce precisely the kind of political order we now inhabit.

History offers repeated and grim confirmation of this pattern. The assassination of Julius Caesar, often romantically framed as a noble defence of republican liberty against tyranny, also marks a pivotal moment when moral clarity was ruthlessly subordinated to political calculation. The conspirators justified their violence in the lofty name of freedom and the common good, yet the result was neither renewal nor stability, but a cascade of civil war and imperial consolidation.

Twentieth century history deepens this rupture to apocalyptic depths. The firebombing of Dresden and the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in the 1940s, were staggering military events with moral catastrophes of unprecedented scale. They revealed the horrifying extent to which modern industrialised states can rationalise mass civilian deaths through the antiseptic language of

strategic necessity and wartime pragmatism. It is tempting to consign such logics to the dustbin of history, a relic of a more barbaric age. However, the protracted wars in Gaza and Ukraine, alongside escalating tensions involving Iran and Lebanon, continue to demonstrate how effortlessly political language sanitises unimaginable suffering, framing it as collateral or inevitable. What is absent across these contexts is not raw intelligence or tactical acumen but empathy or the vital capacity to recognise the other as fully human, worthy of the same moral consideration we claim for ourselves.

Understandably, politics often operates at a deliberate distance from its own human consequences, and nowhere is this more evident than in the evolving ethics of war itself. In the Hellenic imagination, whether in the mythic world of Homer's *The Iliad* or the historical memory of the Peloponnesian War (431 to 404 BCE), combat, however brutal and unforgiving, retained a residual moral proximity. Warriors confronted one another face to face, recognising, however fleetingly, the humanity, valour, and shared suffering of the enemy. War still permitted rare moments of ethical interruption, where grief, supplication, or mutual respect could unsettle the cycle of violence. By stark contrast, modern warfare, as Jean Baudrillard provocatively argued in *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, is conducted at such technological, psychological, and symbolic remove that the enemy vanishes into pure abstraction. Bombs dropped from 30,000 feet do not encounter warm human bodies, bleeding and pleading, but disembodied data points and cold statistics on screens.

Bring back the ethics in politics

The challenge, therefore, is not to moralise politics in some superficial sense, but to reconstitute its deepest ethical foundations. This calls for an education oriented toward critical thought and moral imagination rather than rote obedience, as well as a public sphere that privileges truth and deliberation over spectacle and viral outrage. More importantly, it also requires a deliberate return to those intellectual traditions that steadfastly refused the false separation of ethics from politics.

The Pope's interventions, then, should not be dismissed as anachronistic moralism out of step with a cynical age. His anti-war stand serves as a vital reminder that politics was never meant to be morally silent or neutral. To reject that reminder is to accept a diminished, hollow conception of politics in which power becomes its own justification and ethics an optional, ornamental supplement. The question, then, is not whether morality should enter politics. It is whether politics can survive without it.

Pope Leo XIV's anti-war stance is a reminder that politics was never meant to be morally silent or neutral

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Ethical Telos**

The idea that every institution or practice has an inherent purpose or end (telos) rooted in moral good. For Aristotle, the telos of the polis is not survival but *eudaimonia*—human flourishing. When politics abandons this moral purpose, it turns into an instrument of mere domination. Think of a school whose purpose shifts from educating children to just generating revenue; the institution loses its ethical anchor.

- **Moral Legitimacy**

The widespread acceptance that a ruler's authority is justified because it serves the common good, not because it is merely powerful. Legitimacy rests on congruence between a regime's actions and shared ethical values. When leaders lack this, they often seek symbolic substitutes like religious imagery to manufacture an aura of inviolability.

- **Politics of Expediency**

A decision-making approach where actions are judged solely by immediate practical advantage or political survival, not by rightness or justice. It produces a morality of convenience in which ends justify means, and principles are continuously adjusted to suit the moment. For instance, defending democratic norms when in opposition but undermining them when in power.

- **Veil of Ignorance**

John Rawls' thought experiment where one designs a society without knowing one's future position in it—rich or poor, able or disabled, majority or minority. This exercise strips away self-interest, compelling the choice of fair principles that protect everyone. The moment real-world politics forgets this imaginative empathy, justice becomes a weapon of the strong.

- **Dehumanisation**

The psychological and rhetorical process of stripping a person or group of their humanity, reducing them to abstractions (“collateral damage”, “enemy combatants”, “illegals”). It is the essential precondition for justifying mass violence, because killing a fully human other is psychologically and morally costly. Distance technology, bureaucratic language, and propaganda accelerate dehumanisation.

- **Aura of Inviolability**

The manufactured sense that a leader or power structure is beyond moral critique, almost sacred. When genuine moral authority is missing, this aura is constructed through memes, mythology, or ritual—like merging a politician's image with a divine figure—to pre-empt ethical interrogation. It signals a deep cultural anxiety that naked power cannot survive sustained moral scrutiny.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **The Crisis of Legitimacy**

- The core thesis is that politics is inherently an ethical enterprise. When political authority is stripped of its ethical goal (*telos*), it stops being a tool for civil society and becomes an "organized system of domination."

- **The "Aura of Inviolability"**

- The analysis suggests that modern leaders often use religious or spiritual imagery not out of genuine belief, but as a "defensive move." By wrapping themselves in the "sacred," they attempt to become immune to ethical critique. This is described as a "grotesque excess" where memes and hyperbole replace serious moral accountability.

- **The Replacement of Morality**

- Morality hasn't vanished; it has been *substituted*. In modern populism, a "politics of expediency" replaces traditional ethics. This new framework frames everything as a struggle between absolute good and absolute evil, often hiding the concentration of wealth and power behind a mask of "anti-elitism."

- **War as Ethical Collapse**

- War is presented as the ultimate failure of the moral imagination. The transition from "face-to-face" combat to "technological remove" (Baudrillard's perspective) has sanitized suffering, turning human tragedies into "cold statistics."

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Classical foundations (c. 4th century BCE)**

Aristotle's *Politics* establishes the ethical teleology of the *polis*. For him, a good political community enables citizens to live virtuously. This idea shapes Western political thought for centuries, influencing Roman republican ideals and medieval Christian political philosophy (Aquinas synthesised Aristotle with Christian ethics).

- **Early modern rupture (16th–17th centuries)**

Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1513) marks a deliberate severance of politics from conventional ethics, advocating that a ruler must learn “how not to be good” when necessity demands. This becomes the foundational text for expediency-based statecraft. The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) cements state sovereignty, gradually relegating moral authority to the domestic sphere while international politics embraces *raison d'état*.

- **Enlightenment re-grounding (18th century)**

Thinkers like Kant re-introduce universal morality into politics through the categorical imperative and the concept of perpetual peace. The American and French revolutions assert that political legitimacy rests on inalienable rights, effectively re-ethicalising the state's purpose.

- **Industrialised warfare and moral crisis (20th century)**

The two World Wars shatter the idea that technological progress naturally advances moral sensibility. The firebombing of Dresden (1945) and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1945) demonstrate the capacity of modern states to rationalise mass civilian death through strategic language. The Holocaust reveals the ultimate horror of bureaucratised dehumanisation. The post-war order, with the UN Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), attempts to re-anchor international politics in ethical norms.

- **Late 20th century: Rawls' liberal hope and Baudrillard's postmodern despair**

John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (1971) revives the ethical tradition with a procedural fairness model. Around the same time, the Vietnam War and later the Gulf War (1991) spur critiques like Baudrillard's, arguing that media-mediated warfare has rendered the enemy a simulation, deepening moral disengagement.

- **Present condition (21st century)**

The post-9/11 “War on Terror”, the rise of populist strongmen, and the polarisation of democratic societies showcase the ethics-vacuum thesis. Leaders openly mock traditional moral restraints, yet simultaneously seek to cloak themselves in messianic imagery. The conflict in Ukraine, the Gaza war, and the weaponisation of migration have made dehumanisation an overt political tactic. The Pope's statements have repeatedly been dismissed as political naivety by those who view morality as an obstacle to power.



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AXIA COMPETITIVE EXAM CENTRE

RESTORING ETHICAL ANCHOR: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF ETHICS & POLITICS

FOR UPSC CSE PREPARATION - AXIA IAS ACADEMY PRESENTS

1 PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS



ARISTOTELIAN TELOS:
State exists for 'Good Life'



RAWLSIAN JUST SOCIETY:
Veil of Ignorance for Fairness



PRIMAL IMPULSES:
Acquintiveness, Rivalry, Power



2 DIAGNOSING THE ETHICAL STRIPPING



MEME-IFICATION OF AUTHORITY



SUBSUMPTION OF ETHICS

3 HISTORICAL EVOLUTION



ANCIENT GREECE
(Virtue Ethics)



ROME
(Caesar, Politics of Power)



20th C. INDUSTRIAL WARFARE
(Strategy over Ethics)



MODERN TECHNOLOGICAL WARFARE
(Abstraction of the Other)

3 HISTORICAL EVOLUTION



ANCIENT GREECE
(Virtue Ethics)



ROME
(Caesar, Politics of Power)



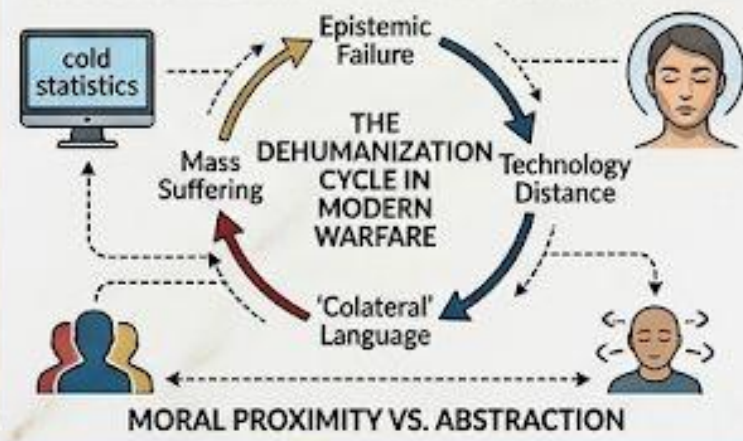
20th C. INDUSTRIAL WARFARE
(Strategy over Ethics)



MODERN TECHNOLOGICAL WARFARE
(Abstraction of the Other)

4 KEY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

THE DEHUMANIZATION CYCLE IN MODERN WARFARE



5 WAY FORWARD: THE ETHICAL TURN



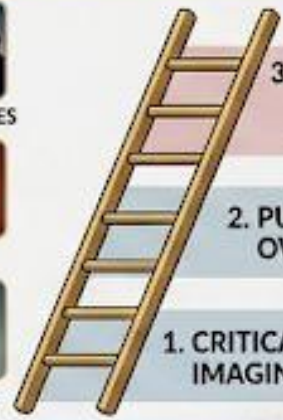
FRAGMENTED SOCIETIES



POWER CONCENTRATION



SOCIAL ANXIETY



3. INSTITUTIONAL REFORM & ETHICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

2. PUBLIC DELIBERATION OVER SPECTACLE

1. CRITICAL THOUGHT & MORAL IMAGINATION IN EDUCATION

- **Logical and Philosophical Base**

- **Teleological logic (Aristotle)**

Everything has a purpose. The state's purpose is virtuous living. Therefore, a state that abandons virtue ceases to be a genuine state, becoming a mere alliance for mutual protection—a logic that forces us to evaluate regimes not just by order but by the quality of life they enable.

- **Deontological fairness (Rawls)**

Justice emerges when we design rules without knowing our own position. This requires a thought experiment that deliberately strips away privilege. The ethical demand is to treat others as ends, never merely as means. When policy-making discards this “veil of ignorance,” it inevitably entrenches the powerful.

- **Anthropological realism (Bertrand Russell)**

Humans are driven by acquisitiveness, rivalry, vanity, and lust for power. These impulses, if not checked by robust ethical norms, will dominate public life. Politics thus requires a deliberate and continuous ethical taming of human nature—ethics is not natural; it must be cultivated.

- **Dehumanisation as an epistemic failure**

Violence against another presupposes that the other is not fully human. This is not merely a moral failure but a cognitive and linguistic one: we lose the capacity to see the other's face (Levinas). Modern technology accelerates this by mediating the enemy through screens and statistics. The precondition of war is therefore a collapse of moral imagination.

- **Substitution thesis (ethical vacuum filled)**

The philosophical move here is to reject the notion of moral neutrality. Every political act rests on some normative framework. When universal ethics is expelled, it is not emptiness that remains but a Hobbesian war of all against all dressed in the language of righteousness. Thus, the choice is never between morality and politics; it is between one morality and another.

- **The paradox of craving transcendence**

When leaders drain politics of authentic moral substance, a psychological vacuum remains. They then attempt to refill it with fabricated sacredness—memes as deities, rallies as liturgical events. This reveals that the human need for meaning and transcendence does not disappear; it gets distorted. The philosophical insight is that power seeking inviolability cannot escape the very moral categories it has undermined.

- **Multidimensional analysis**

- **Social dimension**

- Dehumanisation in war and politics corrodes empathy and normalises “us vs them”.
- Everyday political culture (memes, trolling, hate speech) shapes social trust and inter-group relations.

- **Political dimension**

- Legitimacy crises, populism, and authoritarian trends often arise when citizens feel politics is morally bankrupt.
- Moral authority figures and institutions—courts, independent media, religious or philosophical voices—may be delegitimised as “anti-national”, “elitist”, or “interfering”.

- **Legal dimension**

- International humanitarian law and human rights frameworks embody ethical limits but are frequently violated or selectively applied.
- Domestic constitutional provisions on rights, secularism, and rule of law become battlegrounds between ethical commitments and power politics.

- **Ethical dimension**

- Core debates:
 - Is politics about effectiveness or virtue?
 - Can “dirty hands” be justified for larger goods?
 - How much compromise with injustice is permissible?
- Ethics of war, surveillance, propaganda, and inequality all converge here.

- **International dimension**

- Global conflicts reveal gaps between stated ethical commitments and actual conduct (e.g., civilian protection vs strategic bombing).
- Soft power increasingly depends on perceived moral conduct, not just culture and economy.

- **Economic dimension**

- Concentration of wealth and corporate power shapes policy agendas, often in tension with distributive justice.
- Ethical politics would require questioning models that tolerate extreme inequality and sacrifice welfare for growth.

- Linkages with NCERTs
- **Political Science (Class 11, “Political Theory”):**
 - Chapters on “Political Theory: An Introduction”, “Freedom”, “Equality”, “Justice”.
 - Directly linked to Rawlsian justice, legitimacy, and the purpose of politics.
- **Political Science (Class 12, “Contemporary World Politics”):**
 - Chapters on “Security in the Contemporary World”, “Globalisation”.
 - Use for ethics of war, humanitarian law, and moral dimensions of global politics.
- **Sociology (Class 11 & 12):**
 - “Culture and Socialisation”, “Social Change and Development”, “Mass Media and Communications”.
 - Relevant for dehumanisation, media’s role in shaping moral imagination, and war’s social impact.
- **History (Class 10–12):**
 - World Wars, Hiroshima/Nagasaki, Cold War and decolonisation.
 - Use to ground ethical discussions in concrete historical events.
- **Economics (Class 11–12):**
 - “Indian Economy” chapters on poverty, inequality, human development.
 - Connect with justice as fairness and ethical evaluation of growth models.



- **Linkages with UPSC CSE syllabus**

- **GS-1**

- World history: World Wars, nuclear bombings, decolonisation.
 - Indian society: Communalism, regionalism, social cohesion—impacted by ethical quality of politics.

- **GS-2**

- Polity and governance:
 - Role of constitutional values in limiting power.
 - Issues of legitimacy, populism, use of religion in politics.
 - International relations:
 - Humanitarian law, ethics of intervention, civilian protection in conflicts.

- **GS-3**

- Internal security:
 - Radicalisation, terrorism and counter-terrorism ethics.
 - Science and tech/defence:
 - Drones, AI, cyber warfare and their ethical regulation.

- **GS-4 (Ethics)**

- Ethics in public and private relationships.
 - Political attitudes, moral integrity, probity in governance.
 - Moral and political philosophers (Aristotle, Rawls, Russell).
 - Case studies on war decisions, media conduct, use of religious imagery.

- Way forward
- **Re-centering constitutional morality**
 - Use constitutional values as the primary ethical compass in political decision-making and public rhetoric.
 - Strengthen institutions (courts, ECI, information commissions) that uphold these values against majoritarian or expedient pressures.
- **Ethics and critical thinking in education**
 - Integrate ethics, philosophy, and civic reasoning in school and college curricula, not just as moral science but as critical engagement.
 - Encourage simulations (e.g., “veil of ignorance” classroom exercises) to develop perspective-taking and fairness reasoning.
- **Media and digital reform**
 - Incentivise quality journalism, fact-checking, and slow, in-depth reporting on conflicts.
 - Regulate political advertising and deepfakes, especially those using religious imagery, to prevent manipulation and trivialisation of moral discourse.
- **Ethical frameworks for war and security**
 - Update doctrines and rules of engagement to reflect stricter civilian protection, transparency, and accountability in use of force.
 - Build multi-stakeholder oversight (parliaments, courts, independent commissions) over new military technologies (drones, AI targeting).
- **Cultivating moral leadership**
 - Reform political party practices (candidate selection, internal democracy, codes of conduct).
 - Highlight and reward leaders who demonstrate character, humility, and genuine responsiveness to ethical critique, rather than those who rely on spectacle.
- **Strengthening plural moral dialogue**
 - Encourage genuine dialogue among secular, religious and philosophical traditions about shared ethical minimums (dignity, non-violence, fairness), instead of mutual demonisation.
 - Protect space for conscientious objection, whistle-blowing, and peaceful dissent as expressions of moral conscience.

UPSC – GS and Essay

Essay:

- “Moral attitudes of the public are more important than laws in controlling corruption.”
- “Values are not what humanity is, but what humanity ought to be.”
- “Technology: the engine of economic growth or a threat to human values?”

GS-2 (Polity & IR):

- Questions on constitutional morality, secularism, role of pressure groups and civil society, crisis of credibility of institutions.
- Questions on humanitarian intervention, protection of civilians, and UN’s role in peace and security.

GS-3:

- Questions on cyber security, internal security threats, misuse of social media.
- Questions on science and tech in warfare, ethical concerns of emerging technologies.

GS-4 (Ethics):

- “What do you understand by political attitude? How does it shape public policies?”
- Questions on conflict of interest, ethical dilemmas in public office, integrity vs compromise.
- Case studies involving riots, communal violence, and decisions on use of force.

We need both delimitation and devolution

One cannot keep kicking two contentious cans down the road forever



BEYOND IDEOLOGY

R JAGANNATHAN

The Modi government could have entirely avoided the political brouhaha over the women's reservation constitutional amendment, given that it had built no consensus around it. It is not right for any government to suddenly spring a constitutional amendment with such far-reaching consequences. At the very least, it would have given the government a sense of the House and avoided embarrassment.

Now, not only women's reservation but also the equally important process of delimitation of constituencies, as mandated by the Constitution, will become a political football. The government has no option but to seek consensus once the Census results are out.

For democracies to thrive, many things have to work in unison. But at the core, there is a simple formula: $D \times D = D$ Square. Democ-

racies are strengthened when delimitation, which is essential to maintaining the sanctity of universal franchise by periodically equalising the value of each vote, is accompanied by devolution of power. Those two Ds are critical to democratic functioning. We have kicked both cans down the road — delimitation based on population since the 1970s, and devolution since the 1950s.

The word federalism that many use to avoid dealing with the delimitation issue is not useful, for federalism is not an essential feature of democracy. You can have unitarian and federal structures, but the critical difference lies in how power is devolved so as to maximise citizen rights and governance. In a very small country, a town hall meeting would be good enough as a consultative process. In a massively diverse country like ours, devolution of power must mean that sovereignty is sensibly shared between the Centre, state and local governments. Federalism is not about asserting the rights of one tier of government over another, as the southern states are seeking to do, but to push decision-making as far down as possible in order to be closer to the citizen.

When the southern states argue that they have brought down birth rates and must, therefore, have a



ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

larger share of voice in Parliament than they are currently entitled to under the one-person, one-vote, one-value formula, they are essentially saying that power structures must be frozen, regardless of how demography has changed. If they further argue that they contribute more to the exchequer than some states that may now gain in terms of Lok Sabha seats, they are, in effect, saying: We are the rich, and we are

special. In fact, this kind of democracy existed in many parts of the world a century or more ago, where one had to own property or pay taxes in order to have the right to vote. Universal adult suffrage was devised in order to prevent the elite from deciding everything. An equivalent today would be for taxpayers in general to demand more votes than the poor, since they are bankrolling the exchequer. If this is

what the southern states are arguing in order to maintain their Lok Sabha seats, they should say so openly instead of talking of federalism.

But here's the counterpoint: You cannot know whether states want more power or more seats unless the tradeoffs are made clear. For example, if the southern states believe they must maintain their share of Parliament seats, they should not object if that same Par-

liament decides they must contribute more to subsidising the poor. Conversely, it is entirely possible that the more populous states may choose fewer Lok Sabha seats if the alternative is a reduction in subsidies from the Centre.

What if Bihar accepts that in its current state of development, more subsidies are better than more fiscal autonomy and economic powers? In that case, there would be no need to change too many seats during delimitation. Of course, the ideal solution is a bit of both.

In developing economies, the poor are always willing to trade votes in order to access economic benefits (which is why the freebie culture is growing exponentially), and the rich are willing to pay more taxes (even bribes) in order to retain their political and policy influence.

Delimitation is not going to be a painful tooth extraction exercise if the Centre brings both the populous and less populous states on one platform to work out the compromises each one is willing to make in order to produce a fair outcome on both delimitation and devolution. The least the Centre can do is to create a wishlist of tradeoffs where both more powers to states, and more seats in Parliament, are discussed together to work out a wholesome compromise. More than politics, it is economics that should drive the give-and-take between rich and poor states.

The Modi government should be clear on one thing: It must not turn delimitation or women's reservation into purely political theatre,

though some degree of that is unavoidable in our sharply divided democracy. This is no different from other democracies. We must build consensus into our vocabulary, and not majority voting as the primary route to legislative, social and economic reform.

A good place to start is by setting up a committee comprising both Bharatiya Janata Party and Opposition members to begin consultations on delimitation and women's quota before the problem gets out of hand. Broadly speaking, one can support the idea of expanding the Lok Sabha for two reasons: First is the obvious one of not making existing male politicians enemies of women's reservation. It is better to grow the pie than to merely seek to divide what is there. So the Modi formula of increasing the size of the Lok Sabha is sensible. Second, if there is to be a shift in the proportion of parliamentary seats allocated to various states based on 2027 Census results, a larger number of seats will allow even the states losing relative share from delimitation to have some additional seats. The possibility of expanding the Rajya Sabha to partially compensate states losing seats in the Lok Sabha should also be on the compromise agenda.

Democracy is not diminished by decennial changes in parliamentary seat allocations, nor will it lose if the Centre devolves more power to states, and the states further to local bodies. DxD is D Square, a win-win for all.

The author is a senior journalist



- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Delimitation:** The act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats to represent changes in population. The goal is "one vote, one value."

- *Example:* if State A's population doubles while State B's stays the same, Delimitation ensures State A gets more representatives so each MP represents roughly the same number of citizens.

- **Devolution of Power:** The statutory delegation of powers from the central government to lower levels (State and Local bodies). It isn't just about decentralization; it's about sharing sovereignty.

- **Universal Adult Suffrage:** The right of all adult citizens to vote regardless of wealth, income, gender, or social status.

- **Federalism:** A system of government where power is divided between a central authority and constituent political units (States).

- **Exchequer:** The national treasury or the funds held by the government.

- **Constitutional Amendment:** A formal change to the text of the Constitution (e.g., the 128th Amendment Bill for Women's Reservation).



- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **The Core Thesis: The D2 Formula**

- The author posits that democracy thrives only when **Delimitation (D1)** and **Devolution (D2)** work in tandem. Delimitation ensures mathematical fairness in representation, while Devolution ensures that losing "seats" at the center doesn't mean losing "agency" over one's own destiny.

- **The "Southern" Concern vs. Democratic Principles**

- **The Conflict:** Southern states (with lower birth rates) fear a loss of political clout in the Lok Sabha.

- **The Counter-Argument:** Freezing seats based on old data violates the principle of "one person, one vote." Arguing for more power based on tax contribution or population control mirrors pre-modern "elite" democracies where only property owners voted.

- **The Proposed "Wholesome Compromise"**

- **Expanding the Pie:** Instead of taking seats away, increase the total number of seats in Parliament so no state sees a net decrease in representatives.

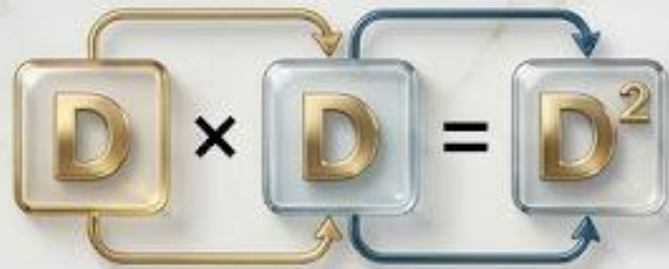
- **Economic Trade-offs:** Populous, poorer states might accept fewer seats in exchange for higher fiscal subsidies, while richer states might accept fewer seats in exchange for more legislative autonomy (Devolution).



- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- **Women's Reservation: A Chronology**
- **1996:** First Women's Reservation Bill introduced in Lok Sabha; lapsed.
- **1998 & 1999:** Re-introduced; strong opposition led to repeated failures.
- **2008:** A version reserving 33% seats for women in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies within existing seat totals passed in Rajya Sabha, but lapsed in Lok Sabha (2010).
- **Prior success at local level** – 73rd and 74th Amendments (1992) reserved one-third of seats in Panchayats and Municipalities for women, creating a successful template.
- **September 2023:** Parliament passed the 128th Constitutional Amendment Act (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam), tying implementation to a post-Census delimitation exercise.
- **Delimitation: A Long Freeze**
- **Pre-1976:** Delimitation Commissions 1952, 1963, 1973 readjusted seats based on decennial Census population figures.
- **42nd Amendment (1976):** Froze the number of Lok Sabha seats and their inter-state allocation to the **1971 Census** figures, mainly to protect States that had effectively controlled population growth.
- **84th Amendment (2001):** Extended the freeze until the first Census after 2026 (now expected 2027), while allowing re-adjustment of boundaries *within* States based on 1991 Census (further extended by 87th Amendment). The number of seats remained frozen.
- **Present:** All eyes on the 2027 Census, after which a fresh delimitation can drastically alter the political weight of States.
- **Devolution to States and Local Bodies**
- **Constitutional Provisions:** Articles 243G, 243W (Panchayats and Municipalities), 11th and 12th Schedules.
- **Fiscal Devolution:** Finance Commissions (14th and 15th FCs) increased the States' share in central taxes; yet, simultaneous erosion of State subject autonomy remains a grievance.
- **Commissions:** Sarkaria (1988) and Punchhi (2010) Commissions on Centre-State relations recommended more extensive devolution.

UPSC CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION PREPARATION: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

KEY CONCEPT: THE D² DEMOCRACY FORMULA



- **D₁: DELIMITATION (QUANTITY)**
 - Equalizing vote values, periodic census-based
 - 'one person, one vote' principle
- **D₂: DEVOLUTION (QUALITY)**
 - Sharing sovereignty, pushing decision-making lower
 - Centre-State-Local tier sharing



PRE-MODERN DEMOCRACY
(Property/Tax based)



MODERN DEMOCRACY
(Universal Franchise)

CHALLENGES & COMPROMISES



WOMEN'S RESERVATION

IMPLEMENTATION LINKED TO DELIMITATION & CENSUS (2026/2027)

AXIA IAS ACADEMY: YOUR STRATEGIC PARTNER

[Key Terms to Master]

- **Delimitation** -> Equalizing vote; with short definition
- **Devolution** -> Devolution courts-based sans devolution
- **Universal Adult Suffrage** -> Universal adult suffrage nature cooperation to the improvement prevention
- **Federalism** -> Federalism at conditions short definition

[NCERT & SYLLABUS LINKAGES]

| Class 11 & 12 | GS Paper 2 topics |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pol Science, Sociology • Pol Science, Sociology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GS Paper 2 topics • GS Paper 2 topics analysis • GS Paper 2 topics a 'D²' |

[WAY FORWARD: A WHOLESOME COMPROMISE]

- **Inter-State Council** role, the amlier and Inter-State council; moosome of this lactation
- **Balancing Finance Commission** allocations, to trends-preciam andhonce-strategy; finance commission
- **Strengthening state sovereignty, localized governance**
- **Localized governance, dread stietoy ballets**

[PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION ANALYSIS]

GS2 2017 & 2021 questions & GS2: qnoncative questions aut their question. notes a: "Cooperative Federalism is key".
 -> "Cooperative Federalism is key", "One Vote fundament" is fundamental"
 GS2 2017 & 2021: questions & GS2. commonions real versas the inn resident, the volum question note "Cooperative Federalism is key".
 -> "One Person, One Vote, One Value is fundamental", fundamentally

- **Logical and Philosophical Base**

- **Democracy's Equality Principle**

- The article rests on the **doctrine of universal adult franchise as a great leveller**. If seats are frozen to benefit the rich or low-birth-rate States, it recreates a form of weighted voting akin to property-based franchise that democracies abolished long ago.

- Philosophical roots: **Rousseau's** idea of the general will – the vote must represent all citizens equally, not favour an educated or richer elite.

- **Subsidiarity as the Core of Devolution**

- Instead of “federalism” as a contest of rights, the argument leans on **the principle of subsidiarity** – decisions should be taken as close to the affected citizen as possible.

- This aligns with **Gandhian gram swaraj** and the thinking of **Dr B.R. Ambedkar**, who emphasised that constitutional morality demands power be shared across multiple levels.

- **Utilitarian Bargaining**

- The “trade-offs” logic is essentially utilitarian: the greatest good can be achieved if rich and populous States negotiate seats versus subsidies.

- This reflects **rational choice theory** in political economy: stakeholders will make compromises when all options are laid on the table together.

- **Rejection of Pure Majoritarianism**

- The piece argues that constitutional democracy is not mere rule by majority vote but requires **consensus and accommodation**. This echoes the philosophy of **deliberative democracy**, where legitimacy arises from inclusive dialogue.

- **Multidimensional Analysis**

- **8.1 Social Dimension**

- Women's reservation and devolution can deepen representation of marginalised groups, including rural women and local communities.
 - At the same time, regional inequalities and identity politics (linguistic, regional) may intensify if delimitation is seen as favouring some regions over others.

- **8.2 Political Dimension**

- Delimitation and reservation alter the political map: party strategies, coalition patterns, and regional balances will shift.
 - Greater devolution might strengthen regional and local parties, forcing national parties to adapt their organisational structures.

- **8.3 Legal Dimension**

- Delimitation, reservation, and devolution are rooted in explicit constitutional provisions; ignoring them risks judicial challenges and constitutional tension.
 - Any attempt to indefinitely freeze seat distribution could face arguments about violation of the basic structure principle of democracy and equality.

- **8.4 Ethical Dimension**

- Core ethical questions:
 - Is it just to deny new generations equal vote value to protect past demographic achievements?
 - Is it acceptable to delay women's equal representation for political convenience?
 - The balance between protecting regional development incentives and upholding individual political equality is a classic justice dilemma.

- **8.5 International Dimension**

- Many democracies periodically redraw boundaries (e.g., US reapportionment and redistricting) and debate malapportionment, gerrymandering, and minority representation.
 - Women's political quotas and decentralisation are also common tools globally; India's experience with Panchayat reservations is often cited as a significant experiment.

- **8.6 Economic Dimension**

- Representation influences allocation of central funds, infrastructure projects, and policy priorities, thereby shaping regional development.
 - Devolution, if effective, can improve local service delivery, reduce leakages, and support inclusive growth, but requires adequate fiscal empowerment of lower tiers.

- Linkages with NCERTs

- **Political Science, Class 9 – “Democratic Politics”**

Chapters on democracy, political equality, and democratic institutions help explain universal adult franchise and representation.

- **Political Science, Class 10 – “Democratic Politics II”**

Chapters on “Working of Institutions,” “Federalism,” and “Gender, Religion and Caste” directly connect to Centre–state relations, women’s political representation, and social justice.

- **Political Science, Class 11 – “Indian Constitution at Work”**

Chapters on “Constitution as a Living Document,” “Local Governments,” and “Election and Representation” cover amendments, devolution, and delimitation.

- **Political Science, Class 12 – “Politics in India since Independence” and “Contemporary World Politics”**

Chapters on regional aspirations, coalition politics, and globalisation give context for regional claims, fiscal transfers, and comparative democratic practices.

- **Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus**

- **GS Paper II**

- **Polity and Governance:**

- Structure, organisation, functioning of Parliament and State Legislatures.
- Constitutional Amendments, devolution of powers, federal structure, Centre–state relations.
- Representation of women, social justice, mechanisms and institutions of democracy.

- **GS Paper I**

- **Indian Society:**

- Role of women and women’s organisations; social empowerment.
- Regionalism, diversity, demographic trends.

- **GS Paper III**

- Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.
- Government budgeting, inter-state disparities, regional development.

- **GS Paper IV (Ethics)**

- Issues in public life: fairness, justice, equity, equality of opportunity.
- Probity in governance, responsibility of public servants in upholding constitutional values.

- **Essay Paper**

- Themes on democracy, representation, gender justice, Centre–state relations, cooperative federalism, and social contract can all incorporate these debates.



Way Forward – Practical and Balanced Suggestions

Institutionalised Pre-Amendment Consultations

- Make public consultation and all-party committees a routine requirement before introducing constitutional amendments affecting representation, federal balance, or rights.
- This deepens legitimacy and reduces “surprise” politics.

Time-Bound Roadmap for Delimitation

- Once the post-2026 Census is completed, establish a clear timeline for Delimitation Commission work, with transparent criteria and public communication.
- Use expert bodies and independent observers to build trust.

Women’s Reservation with Supporting Reforms

- Implement reservation as scheduled, but also reform party internal democracy, candidate selection, and political finance to ensure women are not mere proxies.
- Provide targeted capacity-building for first-time women legislators.

Phased Devolution with Accountability

- Operationalise the 73rd and 74th Amendments by fully transferring “3 Fs” (Funds, Functions, Functionaries) to local bodies, accompanied by strong audit and social accountability mechanisms.

Negotiated Compact between States

- Place on the table explicit trade-offs: representation, fiscal transfers, and autonomy.
- Use bodies like the Inter-State Council and Finance Commission to design a transparent, rules-based framework acceptable to both high- and low-income states.

Expansion and Rebalancing of Houses

- Consider expanding Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha within manageable limits to accommodate women’s reservation and updated population ratios while limiting political disruption.
- Explore mechanisms for greater state voice in Rajya Sabha if they lose relative share in Lok Sabha.

Civic Education and Public Deliberation

- Use NCERTs, adult education, and media to explain delimitation, devolution, and representation so that citizens understand the stakes and resist populist misframing.

- **UPSC CSE Mains – GS II**

- 2013: “The role of individual MPs (Members of Parliament) has diminished over the years and as a result healthy parliamentary democracy is in peril.”
- 2015: “Discuss the possible factors that inhibit India from enacting for its citizens a Uniform Civil Code as provided for in the Directive Principles of State Policy.” (process of sensitive reforms)
- 2016: “To what extent is the Parliament of India effective in controlling the executive in India?”
- 2017: Questions on “Women’s organisations and gender issues” in GS I, and “Role of local self-governments” in GS II.
- 2018: “Assess the importance of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in the working of Indian democracy.”
- 2018: “How do pressure groups influence Indian political process?” (relevant to regional/state bargaining).
- 2019: “Do you think the creation of smaller States would make the governance more efficient? Comment.” (devolution and federalism).
- 2020: “Critically examine the role of the Finance Commission in the Centre–State fiscal relations.”
- 2021: “The jurisdiction of the Election Commission of India is not sufficient to ensure free and fair elections.” (delimitation is related to electoral fairness).
- 2022: Questions on women’s empowerment and representation in GS I and II.

- **UPSC CSE Mains – Essay & Ethics**

- Multiple essay topics on:
 - “Democracy, gender and development”
 - “Cooperative federalism,” “Balancing regional aspirations and national integration,”
 - “Real development should transform people’s lives, not just economic statistics.”
- Ethics case studies on conflict of interest, regional imbalance, and fairness in public resource allocation.



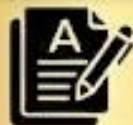
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