

**Foundation Course**  
**Semester 1**  
**6. Regionalism, Linguistic Differences and Conflicts**

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**Meaning of Regionalism:**

There are various aspects that unite people living in a particular region. A region is characterized by a common language, culture, demographic composition, geographical features, social, historical and political backgrounds. Hence a person tends to be very loyal to a distinct region more than to the country. Regionalism implies excessive loyalty to one's region or state that tends to pose a danger to national unity. There are differences between the natural resources, endowments and even the levels of development of various regions. These inequalities are actually intensified by politicians who for their vested interests have directed resources for development of certain states and not others. Within states certain regions are favoured while others are neglected. These regional imbalances fuelled by political motivations are responsible for regional conflicts in India.

Regional conflicts have assumed extreme forms from time to time whether it be the demand for autonomy, river disputes or boundary disputes;

Separatist agitations – The Kashmir debate has been raging for several decades now. The people of Kashmir always live in a state of fear as internal fundamentalist threats and cross border terrorism seems to have become a daily reality for them. Telangana's demands in Andhra Pradesh, anti-Hindi stance as well as demand for state-hood by Tamil Nadu have done irreparable damage to the national identity. Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal were states created because of the inter-state disparities.

1. Inter-state river water disputes – the Cauvery and Krishna river water issue between Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have led to blood shed in the recent past. Punjab and Haryana have clashed over the issue of Ravi- Beas waters.

2. Border disputes - For ex. Belgaum which lies on the border of Karnataka and Maharashtra has a large Marathi speaking population and was caught in a linguistic conflict with Karnataka.

## **6.2 Development of Regionalism**

1. Efforts should be made by the Central and State governments to promote national unity and solidarity.
2. States should be willing to co-operate with each other to resolve their disputes in the larger interest of the nation. Cultural, Sports and literary exchanges between states should be encouraged to foster regional co-operation.
3. Fiscal and other incentives must be given to industrialists and businesses for setting up their plants and operations in backward areas to further their development. Eg. Subsidies and tax exemptions.
4. Special Area Development programmes should be undertaken in tribal, hilly and desert regions for their growth.
5. There should be well coordinated planning between the Centre and states for fair allocation of funds for regional development.
6. There should be just and equitable distribution of natural resources.

## **6.3 Causes for growth for Regionalism and Linguistic conflicts**

The causes of regional disputes basically lay in the inter-state disparities and are briefly explained as follows: There are inter-state disparities in the per capita incomes of

1. various states. Certain states like Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat enjoy higher levels of Per Capita Income while the BIMARU states i.e. Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa have low levels of PCI. The gap in purchasing power creates discontent.

2. There are disparities in degree of urbanization of states. A higher level of urbanization implies higher industrial development and therefore greater economic, social and political progress.

3. Disparities in Agricultural production brought about by erratic Rainfall in some and heavy monsoons as well as sufficient irrigation facilities in other regions imply a huge gap in their annual produce and hence farmers in Punjab are richer to those in Rajasthan.

4. The industrial growth across states differs widely leading to better employment opportunities and greater economic progress of certain states over others.

5. The cities and townships in developed states have far more and Sophisticated infrastructural facilities compared to states lagging in development.

The states with a rich historical background may look down upon other states which tends to stir regional conflicts. Furthermore there are prejudices and stereotypes that increase the interstate divide.

## **Linguistic Conflicts & Regional conflicts**

As we have already seen earlier, India is a multi-lingual country. It is a nation of 28 states and 7 union territories whereas many as 1652 languages are spoken. The states in India were created based on linguistic barriers and hence an integral part of the state's identity.

The First Official Language Commission was appointed by the Government of India. On its recommendation English, the principal official language, was to be replaced by Hindi, the subsidiary official language after 1965. However when the Commission's report was published in 1958, it created disappointment and unrest among the southern states of the country. They were opposed to Hindi being imposed on them as the official language and preferred the use of English. To contain possible outbreak of riots, the then Prime Minister Pandit. J. Nehru, pacified the angered states in the Lok Sabha saying Hindi would not be imposed on the non-Hindi speaking states and that English would continue to be an associate language for an indefinite period.

Later when the Official Language Bill was passed in the Parliament in 1963 and Hindi adopted as the principal official language of the union in 1965, anti-Hindi riots erupted in South India and W. Bengal against the Hindi speaking. The agitation became strong with Tamil Nadu asking for statehood and several of these states threatening withdrawal of political support to the Congress in the Parliament. Finally to control the situation from going out of hand, the Central Government agreed to reform the Act and made a statutory guarantee to the non-Hindi speaking states that English would not be replaced by Hindi for any official purposes.

However as a reaction to this move, anti-English riots broke out in Delhi and other parts of North India and turned violent against the English speaking. It spurred retaliation in the south. Besides the Hindi vs English riots, other states have also experienced linguistic conflicts. For eg. U.P., Maharashtra had disputes with Goa and Belgaum. Goa wished to assume two official languages viz. Konkani and Marathi, whereas the Belgaum Municipal Corporation clashed with the Karnataka government when it wanted to adopt Marathi and not Kannada as its official state language.

## **Effects of Regionalism and Linguistic Conflicts**

As of today the Union of India has adopted a Bi-lingual policy, where English and Hindi are both adopted by the government for official purposes and for use in Parliament. The Official Language Amendment Act 1968 has made provisions to control linguistic riots in the future.

The Act allows optional use of Hindi or the State Official Language in addition to English. States, which have not adopted Hindi as their official language, can continue with the use of English for communication between the Union and the State. Between States where either State may not accept Hindi, any communication has to be accompanied with its translation in English. States may adopt their regional language as their official language and use it as a medium of instruction in higher education. Candidates appearing for competitive examinations of the U.P.S.C. are given the freedom to write in their own

regional language. Efforts are taken to promote use of Hindi among non-Hindi speaking people.