

Regionalism in India

POWERED BY:



REGIONALISM

In the most legitimate of its form, regionalism takes the form of a demand for a separate state of their own. This sort of regionalism was spearheaded by the Telugu speaking residents of the erstwhile Madras. Another form of regionalism is the parochialism manifested in both in its benevolent form and tight fist. In the former, we have the example of Bengali Bhadrakols, who claim their cultural superiority over other Indians. However, it takes the form of violence too where by one state throttle employment opportunities of the people coming from the other states like it was evident during the Shiv Sena's regime. The other form can be the one where one sect demands secession from the Indian union. This is the most dangerous and threatening form of regionalism creating centrifugal forces. The Khalistan movement and the present militant movement in Kashmir can be categorized under this category

Regionalism in India: trajectory

Regionalism in India in the post independence period can be identified in three patterns, all three being those of accommodation of regional identities via statehood. In this pattern, the formation of regional parties on affiliations of regions and other identities accruing to a particular region are also noticeable.

The 1950s were a time where there emerged a cult of intense mass mobilization with the state responding with the institutional package of statehood to the warring factions. The demand of Potti Sriramulu for the creation of Andhra Pradesh, and his death upon fasting, forced Nehru, to comply with similar demands from other parts of the country. Consequently, the states reorganization commission recommended the formation new states and 3 union territories on the basis of language.

The second pattern was seen during 1970s and 80's, whereby the main focus was reorganization of the north east. The main reason behind the reorganization was the tribal insurgency. The states reorganization act, 1971, imparted full statehood to Tripura, Manipur and Sikkim, and made the tribal districts of Arunachal and Meghalaya into a union territory. In 1986, these were upgraded to statehood along with Goa being formed on linguistic lines (Konkani) in 1987.

Third was the movements for the three new states (created in 2000)—Chhattisgarh out of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand out of Bihar and Uttaranchal out of Uttar Pradesh. The basis for the creation of these states is said to be socio-political and not linguistic. The most recent to be drawn on the same lines is Telangana in 2014.

CAUSES OF REGIONALISM

The cult the Indian government followed soon after independence i.e. to impose an overarching ideology, language and a culture, particularly of the north, enraged the rest of the population. The south began resisting the imposition of Hindi as the official language. Similarly in Assam, an anti foreigner movement was started to preserve their exclusive identity markers.

The failure of the Indian states to meet the economic and development needs of a particular region, and the persistent feeling amongst them that they are being discriminated against, has led to the growth of regionalism.

The desire for a greater autonomy for their region besides paving way for federalism has fuelled regionalism too. The role of regional elites becomes important to analyze in this respect. Political parties like DMK, AIADMK, Asom Gana Parishad have capitalized on the regional issues and local aspirations and instilling in the people that the central government is trying to maintaining regional imbalances.

The interaction of the forces of modernization and the half modern and half steeped in orthodoxy section, hasn't bore good results either. The incapability to transform into a fully-fledged liberal democracy, various groups has failed to identify their group interest with the national interest.

What has the government done?

The constitution doesn't provide for any categorization of states, but recognizing some regions as historically disadvantaged with respect to others. The special category state was introduced by the 5th finance commission

in 1969. It provides for additional Central assistance and tax concessions. The National Development Council granted this status based on a number of features including hilly and difficult terrain, presence of sizeable tribal population, strategic location along international borders, economic and infrastructural backwardness etc.

In September 2013, Raghuram Rajan, recommended a new index of backwardness to determine- which state need special help from central government. It is composed of 10 equally weighted indicators. According to that, Orissa and Bihar are the most backward states.

The 14th finance commission has increased the share of the divisible pool to the states from 32% to 42%. Besides enjoying concessions in income tax and custom duties, assistance to Centrally Sponsored Schemes for SCS States was given with 90% Central share and 10% State share. The government has been regularly investing in schemes focusing on development of infrastructure and poverty eradication, rural development, health, family planning. Schemes like MGNREGA, Roshni bear a testimony to government's efforts in this regard.

Government at centre and states gives incentives to private players to develop in backward states through subsidies, taxation, etc. Nationalization of banks, granting new banking licenses, few other steps for inclusive development and balanced regional development.

REPERCUSSIONS

Regionalism induced violence disturbs the whole society. It impacts the development of human resource has direct implication on the economy of the nation. Affected societies remain aloof from the mainstream development.

Regionalism also brings about political instability in the era of coalition politics, with the constant threat of losing majority on account of a regional partner backing out. Not only this, national policies now seem to be dominated by regional demands.

It gives internal security challenges by the insurgent groups, who propagate the feelings of regionalism against the mainstream politico-administrative setup of the country.

Regionalism becomes a hurdle in the international diplomacy, especially at the borders. E.g. Mamata Banerjee's opposition to the Land Boundary agreement and Teesta River Water sharing had impacts on India's strategic position not only at the bilateral level but at the global level too.

Regions form an intrinsic part of our nation. The need is for a greater spirit of accommodation on part of the central government.

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