Polity & Governance · GS - II

How can India reconcile the principle of population-based electoral representation with the need to preserve federal balance during delimitation?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 26/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Delimitation, Article 82, Article 170, democratic equality, demographic transition, federal representation, regional disparities

Model Answer

The constitutional dilemma

Delimitation seeks to ensure that constituencies reflect population changes and that votes have broadly comparable representational value. However, in a federal democracy, a purely population-based approach can create tensions between electoral equality and the political balance among States.

Competing principles

1. **Democratic equality:** Article 81 and Article 82 provide the constitutional framework for Lok Sabha composition and delimitation. Population-based representation seeks to reduce disparities in constituency size.

2. **Federal equity:** States have different demographic trajectories. States that have invested in education, healthcare and population stabilisation may fear losing relative representation compared with faster-growing States.

3. **Regional diversity:** A substantial shift in parliamentary representation can influence the relative political voice of regions in national policymaking.

4. **Constitutional continuity:** The constitutional freeze on certain readjustments, extended through the 84th and 87th Amendments, reflects the attempt to balance population representation with demographic and federal considerations. The existing freeze on inter-State seat allocation is linked to publication of figures from the first census after 2026.

Towards a balanced approach

A credible delimitation exercise should incorporate transparent constitutional criteria, reliable census data and meaningful consultation with States. Parliament may consider mechanisms that recognise demographic performance without permanently undermining the principle of equal representation.

The process should also ensure that Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes retain constitutionally mandated political representation and that constituency boundaries remain administratively workable.

Conclusion

Delimitation is not merely a technical exercise in redrawing electoral boundaries; it is a constitutional negotiation between democratic equality and federal accommodation. Its legitimacy will depend on transparency, fairness and cooperative federalism.

BECOME IAS
AI POWERED UPSC PREP