Polity & Governance · GS - II

Assess the constitutional and federal challenges involved in reconciling population-based representation with the principle of equitable political representation among Indian states.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 27/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Federalism, delimitation, Articles 81 and 82, population control, regional representation, democratic equality, cooperative federalism

Model Answer

India's delimitation debate reflects a fundamental tension between the principle of population-based representation and the need to preserve the political balance among states.

The constitutional principle

Article 81 provides the framework for representation in the Lok Sabha, while Article 82 provides for readjustment of constituencies after each census. The 42nd Amendment froze inter-state seat allocation based on the 1971 Census. Subsequent amendments extended this arrangement, with the 84th Amendment continuing the freeze until the first census after 2026.

The competing federal concerns

1. **Democratic equality:** States with larger populations argue that representation should broadly reflect the number of citizens represented by each MP.

2. **Population-control concerns:** Southern states argue that reducing their relative representation could penalise them for achieving demographic stabilisation through education, healthcare and family-planning measures.
3. **Federal balance:** A substantial shift in parliamentary seats could alter the relative political influence of states in national decision-making.
4. **Political legitimacy:** Perceived regional disparities may intensify tensions between the Union and states and weaken confidence in cooperative federalism.

Reconciling representation and fairness

The challenge is not to abandon population-based representation but to prevent demographic change from undermining federal equity. A transparent delimitation process should involve broad consultation with states and clear communication of its constitutional basis.

Possible approaches include examining the size of the Lok Sabha, ensuring fair representation across regions and considering mechanisms that protect the voice of states with lower population growth, subject to constitutional requirements.

Ultimately, delimitation must uphold democratic equality while maintaining the federal compact that binds India's diverse states.

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