

## Regionalism as an Internal Security Challenge in India- Explained Pointwise

Regional movements in India have often transcended into separatist movements like the Bodoland movement. This has often posed grave threats to the Internal security of India. In this article, we will further delve into the issue in detail.

### What is Regionalism?

**Regionalism** refers to the **collective identity, loyalty, and shared purpose** of people in a **specific geographical region**, often rooted in **common language, culture, and historical experiences**. In its **positive form**, regionalism fosters unity, brotherhood, and the protection of regional interests, promoting the **welfare and development** of the state and its people. However, in its **negative form**, it may lead to **excessive regional loyalty**, creating divisive tendencies that threaten the **unity and integrity** of the nation posing as an internal security challenge in India.

### History of Regional Movements in India

- **Origin in Colonial Era:** Regional consciousness emerged from **colonial policies**, differential treatment of **princely states vs. presidencies**, and **economic neglect**, which created **regional disparities**.
- **Movements in Southern India:** Regionalism gained momentum with the **Dravida Movement** (Non-Brahmin movement) in the 1940s demanding an **independent Tamil state**, later inspiring the call for a **separate Andhra**.
- **Potti Sri Ramulu's Role:** The death of **Potti Sri Ramulu** during the 1954 fast for **Andhra statehood** triggered mass political **regionalism** across India.
- **States Reorganisation Committee:** Widespread revolts led to the **States Reorganisation Committee** (headed by **Fazal Ali**), recommending **linguistic reorganisation**; the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956** made linguistic states a reality.
- **Insurgencies in Northeast India:** Tribal insurgencies in the 1970s–80s resulted in the **North-Eastern States Reorganisation Act, 1971**, granting **statehood** to Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya and later elevating Mizoram and **Arunachal Pradesh** to states (1986).
- **21st Century Changes:** Strong regional deprivation movements in the 2000s led to the creation of **Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand**; in **2014**, **Telangana** was carved out of Andhra Pradesh.

### Forms of Regionalism in India

- **Cultural Regionalism:** Arises from the urge to preserve a region's **cultural, linguistic, and historical identity**. In India's diverse socio-cultural landscape, regions seek recognition of their uniqueness.
  - The demand for **Telangana** reflected its distinct **cultural identity** within **Andhra Pradesh**.
- **Economic Regionalism:** Driven by perceptions of **economic disadvantage**, inadequate **resource allocation**, and lack of **development**. Regions demand a larger share of resources and greater economic autonomy.
  - Calls for separate states in regions of **Bihar** or **Uttar Pradesh** often stem from such economic concerns.
- **Political Regionalism:** Refers to the assertion of **regional political power**, with leaders mobilizing regional sentiments for autonomy or influence. Parties like **Shiv Sena, Akali Dal, and DMK** advance regional agendas and challenge national parties such as the **INC** and **BJP**.
- **Secessionist Regionalism:** The most extreme form, where regions seek **complete independence** due to historical **cultural, religious, or political marginalization**. Key examples include the **Kashmir conflict** and insurgencies in the **Northeastern states**.

### Factors Behind Regionalism in India

- **Linguistic and Cultural Identity:** Regionalism often stems from strong **linguistic** or **cultural consciousness**. For instance, the **Dravidian movement** in Tamil Nadu was driven primarily by linguistic identity.
- **Ethnocentrism:** Native populations may claim **exclusive ownership** over regional issues, creating an **insider- outsider divide**. The idea of **Marathi Manoos** in Maharashtra exemplifies this exclusionary sentiment toward migrants from other states.
- **Tribal Identity:** Distinct **socio-economic conditions** and **tribal cultural practices** can reinforce regional aspirations. The demand for **Jharkhand's creation** was rooted partly in its unique tribal heritage.
- **Unequal Distribution of Resources:** Perceived **regional neglect** or **underdevelopment** can intensify regionalist demands. The rise of the **Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF)** in Darjeeling reflected grievances over disparities with South Bengal.
- **Development and Administrative Issues:** Feelings of **marginalization** in **policy decisions**, whether in **resource allocation, employment, or infrastructure**, also fuel regional assertions. Such concerns played a major role in the formation of **Telangana** from Andhra Pradesh.

Read more- [Regionalism in India](#)

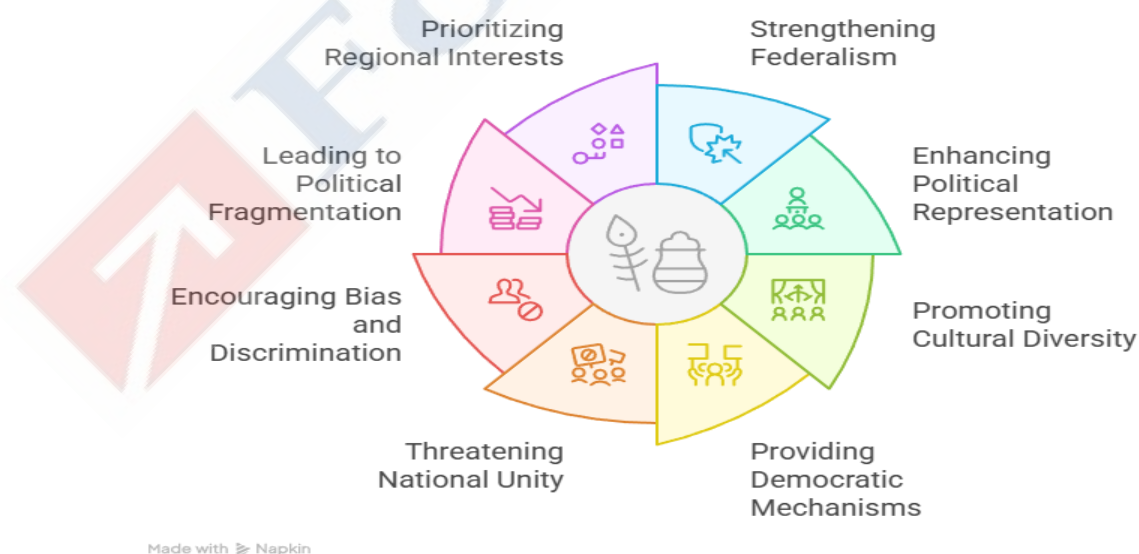
### Impact of Regionalism on Internal Security of India

- **Rise of Separatist Movements:** Extreme forms of regionalism can escalate into **secessionist demands**, threatening territorial integrity.
  - Examples include movements in **Kashmir, Khalistan Movement in Punjab (1980s)**, and parts of the **Northeast (Greater Nagalim)**, which have led to insurgency and prolonged security operations.
- **Intensification of Insurgencies:** Regional grievances like **economic neglect, cultural alienation, or administrative discrimination** often fuel **insurgencies**.
  - The **Northeast insurgencies** and tribal uprisings in **central India** reflect how regional identity can transform into armed resistance.
- **Ethnic and Communal Conflicts:** Regionalism strengthens **ethnic identities**, sometimes leading to clashes between communities competing for land, jobs, and political space.
  - Conflicts like **Bodo vs. non-Bodo, Meitei vs. Kuki**, and **Naga territorial claims** pose serious internal security challenges.
- **Migration-Related Tensions:** The “**sons of the soil**” sentiment results in hostility toward migrants, leading to targeted violence, riots, and mass displacement.
  - Such tensions have surfaced in **Maharashtra, Assam, and Manipur**, disrupting law and order.
- **Challenges to Law and Order:** Regional parties or pressure groups may orchestrate **bandhs, blockades, and violent protests** to assert regional demands, disrupting governance and straining police and administrative machinery.
  - Example: prolonged **blockades in Manipur**.
- **Political Radicalization:** Regional political mobilization sometimes adopts **radical narratives** to gain **local support**, contributing to **polarization** and undermining national cohesion. This increases the vulnerability of youth to extremist recruitment.
- **Strain on Federal Relations:** Contestation over resources like **water sharing, boundary disputes, development funds** often escalates into inter-state tensions, requiring central intervention and complicating national security management.

- For example **Cauvery River Dispute** between **Karnataka** and **Tamil Nadu**.
- **Economic Disruptions Affecting Security:**  
Persistent regional unrest discourages investment, affects infrastructure projects, and creates **zones of economic stagnation**, which insurgent groups exploit to expand influence.

Positive Impact	Negative Impact
Strengthens <b>federalism</b> by enabling states to assert their <b>rights</b> and <b>autonomy</b> .	Threatens <b>national unity</b> by fostering <b>divisive sentiments</b> and <b>secessionist tendencies</b> .
Enhances <b>political representation</b> by bringing <b>local issues</b> and <b>marginalized groups</b> into mainstream politics.	Encourages <b>bias</b> and <b>discrimination</b> through <b>identity-based politics</b> and hostility toward <b>migrants</b> .
Promotes <b>cultural diversity</b> by preserving regional <b>languages, traditions, and customs</b> .	Leads to <b>political fragmentation</b> , making it harder to form <b>stable governments</b> .
Provides <b>democratic mechanisms</b> for addressing <b>regional grievances</b> , reducing chances of <b>violent conflict</b> .	Prioritizes <b>regional interests</b> over <b>national interests</b> , causing <b>resource allocation imbalances</b> and policy distortions.

### The Dual Nature of Regionalism in India



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## Measures Taken by the Government to Reduce Negative Impact of Regionalism in India

- **Constitutional Measures**

- **Federal Structure:** The Constitution establishes **cooperative federalism**, accommodating regional aspirations through division of powers between the Union and States.
- **Special Provisions (Article 371 Series):** Article 371A for Nagaland, 371B for Assam, 371C for Manipur, 371F for Sikkim, 371G for Mizoram, etc., ensuring protection of **tribal customs**, administrative autonomy, and cultural identity.
- **Fifth and Sixth Schedules:** Provide self-governance for **Scheduled Areas** and **Tribal Areas**, particularly in **Northeast India**, reducing alienation.
- **Inter-State Council:** Facilitates **coordination**, dialogue, and conflict resolution between states and the Centre.

- **Legal and Institutional Measures**

- **Linguistic Reorganisation of States (1956):** The **States Reorganisation Act** reorganized boundaries on **linguistic lines**, reducing linguistic tensions.
- **Zonal Councils:** Established to promote **regional cooperation**, reduce inter-state conflicts, and strengthen national integration.
- **National Human Rights Commission & Minorities Commission:** Address grievances and protect vulnerable groups affected by regional discrimination.

- **Policy Measures**

- **National Integration Council (1961):** Formed to counter **communalism, casteism, linguism, and regionalism**, and promote national harmony.
- **Industrial Policy Resolutions & Economic Policies:** Aimed at reducing **regional economic disparities** by promoting balanced industrial growth.
- **Finance Commission Grants:** State-specific grants, revenue-sharing, and fiscal devolution to support **equitable development** across states.

- **Developmental and Administrative Measures**

- **Targeted Development Programs:** For example, **Aspirational Districts Programme**, Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF), North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme, aimed at bridging the development gap and reducing regional inequality.
- **Infrastructure Investments:** Expansion of **railways, highways, ports, and digital infrastructure** to connect underdeveloped regions.
- **Special Packages:** Bihar, Bundelkhand, Vidarbha, and Northeast states receive **special assistance** to address chronic backwardness.

- **Security and Governance Measures**

- **Peace Accords & Autonomy Arrangements:** For example **Mizo Accord (1986)**, Bodo Accords, Naga Peace Framework, providing autonomy and power-sharing to reduce secessionist tendencies.
- **Strengthening Local Governance:** Empowering **Panchayati Raj Institutions** and **Autonomous Councils** to address local needs effectively.

- **Social & Cultural Measures**

- **Promotion of National Integration:** Cultural exchange programs, national service schemes, and celebration of **Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat** to promote inter-regional understanding.
- **Language Policy:** Recognition of **22 languages** in the **Eighth Schedule** to respect India's linguistic diversity and prevent linguistic alienation.

#### Way Forward

- **Fostering National Unity:** Promote an **inclusive national identity** through education and strengthen **cultural exchange programmes** to build a shared national outlook.
- **Cultural Integration:** Encourage frequent **intercultural interactions** to break regional barriers and deepen **nationalist spirit**. Initiatives like **Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat** enhance inter-state understanding and cooperation.
- **Strengthening Federalism:** Empower **states** and **local bodies** and advance **Cooperative Federalism** to accommodate regional aspirations within the national framework.
- **Inclusive Development:** Implement **targeted development programmes** and **infrastructure projects** to reduce regional inequalities, boost economic growth, and create employment in backward areas.

**Functional Autonomy:** Ensure **state autonomy** by limiting Union interference to situations of genuine **national interest**, thereby respecting the spirit of federalism.

#### Conclusion

Regionalism in India functions as a **double-edged phenomenon**. When channelled constructively, it strengthens **inclusive governance**, **deepens democratic participation**, and safeguards **cultural identities**. But when allowed to escalate or be politicized, it can undermine **national cohesion** and fuel divisive tendencies.

India must adopt a **balanced strategy** by addressing legitimate regional aspirations through **constitutional provisions**, **economic development**, and **autonomy frameworks**, while firmly resisting **extremist** or **secessionist** impulses. This balanced approach can turn regionalism from a challenge into a driver of **national unity and progress**.

Source- [PIB](#)