

Caste, Religion & Ethnicity in Indian Politics

Revise → write a little → don't break the chain.

Exam load on this unit (UPSC 2016–2025): 3 × 10-markers · 5 × 15-markers · 2 × 20-markers

I Identity Politics & Development Politics

Meaning

Identity politics = political mobilization around a shared social identity — caste, religion, language, region, ethnicity, tribe, gender or minority status. It emerges from shared experience of exclusion, humiliation, historical injustice, lack of representation, cultural insecurity and unequal access to state resources. It differs from purely ideological or class-based politics and gives voice to groups ignored by universal claims of nationalism, class or development. **Craig Calhoun** treats it as a modern phenomenon — an effort to consolidate individual and group identity in an impersonal world.

Merits

- Political voice to historically marginalized communities.
- Expands democratic participation.
- Builds self-respect among excluded groups.
- Secures reservations, representation, welfare claims.
- Pressures the state to address social injustice.

Limitations

- Hardens group boundaries.
- Produces competitive victimhood.
- Weakens common citizenship.
- Elite capture for narrow electoral gain.
- Reduces individuals to caste / community categories.

Nancy Fraser — “Recognition is a matter of justice, not only because it provides self-respect and social esteem but also because it is a precondition for participation in democratic politics.”

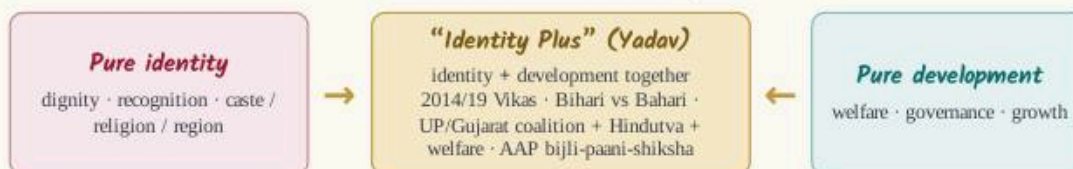
Todd Gitlin — “Identity politics often reduces individuals to their group affiliations, limiting their freedom to express their varied identities.”

Brian Barry and **Amartya Sen** caution that identity politics may slide into sectarianism if group claims override broader democratic principles.

“Identity Plus” Politics — Yogendra Yadav

Indian elections show neither pure identity politics nor pure development politics. Caste, religion and region remain important, but voters also weigh welfare delivery, employment, inflation, public goods, corruption, leadership, governance and national security. **Yogendra Yadav** calls this “**Identity Plus**” politics — caste and religion do not disappear; they combine with development claims. **Fred W. Riggs**’s “**prismatic society**” model fits India: tradition and modernity coexist rather than replace each other. **Suhas Palshikar** flags regional-identity themes (“Bihari vs Bahari”); **Milan Vaishnav** sees voters weighing economics more seriously; **Pratap Bhanu Mehta** warns excess identity politics can weaken the governance frame development needs.

Where Indian elections actually sit



Riggs’s prismatic society — tradition and modernity coexist, not one replacing the other.

Assessment

Identity politics **deepens** democracy when it gives dignity to excluded groups; it **weakens** democracy when it becomes a permanent instrument of polarization. Development politics turns thin if it ignores social injustice. The Indian pattern is a dynamic balance — **identity gives voice; development gives legitimacy**.

2 Caste in Indian Politics

Meaning & Sociological Basis

The word **caste** comes from Spanish/Portuguese *casta* — “race” or “lineage”. In India it is expressed through **jāti**: a hereditary, endogamous group with a shared name, ritual status, occupational association and social hierarchy. The **varna** scheme runs Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras and the historically excluded “untouchables” — now widely referred to as Dalits or Scheduled Castes.

- **Louis Dumont** (*Homo Hierarchicus*) → caste through hierarchy, purity and pollution; the Indian model of stratification, contrasted with the Western class model and tied to religious ideology and ritual rank.
- **M. N. Srinivas** → challenges Dumont’s rigidity; caste is flexible and dynamic. Gives **Sanskritization** (lower castes adopt higher-caste practices to raise status), Westernization, and the **dominant caste** (numerically strong + economically powerful + politically influential).
- **Nicholas Dirks** (*Castes of Mind*) → caste became a single, unique, rigid category under colonial modernity — enumeration, ethnography and administration *hardened* identities (not that caste did not exist earlier).

Historical Transformation

Phase	What changed
Colonial	Census & administrative categories strengthened caste; separate electorates and communal representation politicized social categories; caste became a tool of representation, reform and elite negotiation.
Reform & protest	Brahmo & Arya Samaj attacked orthodoxy; Jyotirao Phule’s Satyashodhak Samaj questioned Brahmin dominance; Periyar led the non-Brahmin movement in Madras; Ambedkar led anti-untouchability / Dalit rights; Gandhi led anti-untouchability on different lines.
Post-Independence	Constitution abolished untouchability but retained caste for protective discrimination; reservations, land reform, education, urbanization weakened rigid rules; adult franchise turned numerical strength into electoral power; Panchayati Raj opened new arenas; Mandal made OBCs a major category.

Andre Béteille’s sharp question: the Constitution abolishes untouchability *without* abolishing caste — making caste both a target of reform and a basis of public policy.

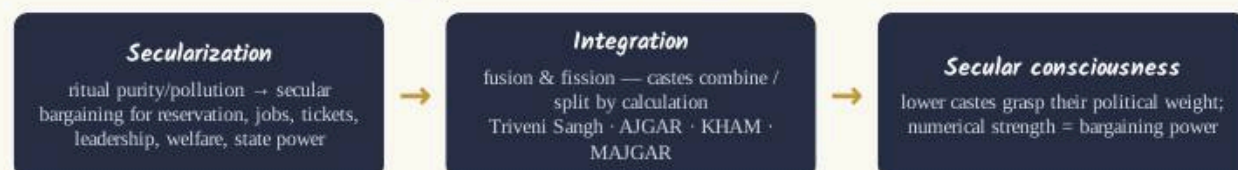
Caste Associations & Federations

Single-caste associations work on one caste’s education, welfare, representation and status. **Caste federations** combine castes for bargaining — e.g. Kshatriya Sabhas uniting Rajputs and Kolis in Gujarat. **Lloyd I. Rudolph** and **Susanne Hoeber Rudolph** argue caste associations nominate their own members for office, influence cabinets and legislatures, shape welfare / education / economic policy, organize previously excluded electorates and educate large sections in democratic values.

Caste as a Political Category — Rajni Kothari

Kothari’s core idea: politics has not merely been influenced by caste — **politics has transformed caste**. Three dimensions:

Kothari’s politicization of caste — three dimensions



Coalitions: Triveni Sangh · Bihar · Kurmi + Yadav + Koeri AJGAR · Ahir + Jat + Gujar + Rajput
KHAM · Gujarat · Kshatriya + Harijan + Adivasi + Muslim MAJGAR · Muslim + AJGAR

Rajni Kothari — “Casteism in politics is no more or no less than the politicization of caste.”

UPSC 2021 · 15 marks — Explain how caste as a social category is also becoming a political category in the democratic politics of India.

Caste in Electoral Politics

Caste shapes ticket distribution, candidate selection, booth-level mobilization, vote banks, caste coalitions, campaign language, reservation claims, local leadership recruitment and social engineering.

Party	Caste base / strategy
Bahujan Samaj Party	Dalit support base.
Samajwadi Party	Yadav and OBC base.
Rashtriya Janata Dal	Yadav-Muslim and backward-caste mobilization.
Lok Dal / Charan Singh	Jat and middle-peasant mobilization.
Dravidian parties	Anti-Brahmin and non-Brahmin mobilization.
Bharatiya Janata Party	Expanded via non-dominant OBCs, Dalit jātis and Hindu consolidation.

Paul R. Brass describes the old Congress base as a “coalition of castes”. **Christophe Jaffrelot** calls lower-caste mobilization “India’s silent revolution”. **Yogendra Yadav** maps three democratic upsurges:



UPSC 2023 · 20 marks — The rise of caste politics is to be attributed to both regional aspirations and electoral manifestations. Comment.

Caste in Non-Electoral Politics

Caste organizations also act outside elections — as pressure groups, welfare associations, educational trusts, hostels, scholarship networks, marriage-regulation bodies, health, cultural and dispute-resolution institutions; they run schools, hospitals, dharmashalas, libraries, festivals and welfare funds. Caste also produces conflict: land disputes trigger caste violence. **Mendelsohn & Vicziany** connect violence against Dalits with land and power; **Dag-Erik Berg** reads the Karamchedu massacre as status competition; Bihar’s caste armies of the late 1970s–80s show how land and caste dominance became armed conflict.

Dalit Politics

Phase	Content
Co-option / alignment	Republican Party of India (Ambedkar legacy) sought Dalit advancement; Congress co-opted Dalit leaders through symbolic representation.
Autonomy	Kanshi Ram built independent assertion via BAMCEF, DS4, BSP; Mayawati as CM of UP = Dalit entry into state power.
Radicalism	Dalit Panthers (1972) — Ambedkarism + Marxism + Black Panther ideology; Bhim Army = confrontational, rights-based politics.

Pratap Bhanu Mehta (“New Dalit Challenge”): Dalits are no longer satisfied with mere constitutional recognition; they reject the “managerial” approach of symbolic co-option without real power; they build counter-hegemony by rewriting history; they move from survival politics to **dignity politics** — Bhima-Koregaon reflected this, colliding with upper-caste strategies of containment. **C. P. Bhambri** holds rising Dalit consciousness is positive but needs alliances with progressive forces. Further readings: **Anand Teltumbde** (mainstream appropriation dilutes radical Dalit politics), **Sukhadeo Thorat** (economic uplift essential), **Kancha Ilaiah** (education + economic empowerment central), **Jaffrelot** (Dalit parties = an alternative to mainstream politics).

Backward Classes & Mandal Politics

OBCs are not a single caste — internally heterogeneous, with dominant OBCs and Most Backward Castes differing sharply in access. Basis: zamindari abolition weakened landlord power; Green Revolution empowered intermediate peasant castes; Charan Singh mobilized Jats, Yadavs, Kurmis; Ram Manohar Lohia used quota politics against upper-caste dominance; Devi Lal and Karpooori Thakur added momentum. The **B. P. Mandal** Commission identified OBCs and recommended **27% reservation** in central government jobs; V. P. Singh implemented it in **1990**.

Kisan politics

Charan Singh — peasant solidarity against urban India.

Quota politics

Lohia & Janata Dal — caste-based affirmative action.

Christophe Jaffrelot argues Mandal enabled lower-caste people to vote for leaders *from their own milieu*. Limits: OBCs are not cohesive; Yadav dominance created internal tension; MBCs often felt excluded; Hindu nationalism offered a competing identity; BJP used social engineering to include non-dominant OBCs.

Reservation Politics & Caste Census

Supporters

- Caste inequality remains entrenched.
- Merit is shaped by structural disadvantage.
- Representation needs institutional support.
- Social justice requires compensatory policy.

Opponents

- Benefits may go to dominant OBC segments.
- Economic criteria should matter.
- Quotas may affect efficiency.
- Caste politics may deepen divisions.

Ghanshyam Shah’s study of Gujarat anti-reservation agitations shows middle-class anxieties + electoral calculation fuelling protest; **Nikita Sud** notes elites expand or reduce reservations to appease crucial voting blocs.

Caste census — the data points: credible data on OBCs and EBCs; Mandal estimated OBCs at **52%**; other estimates vary between **36% and 65%**; the Rohini Commission identified around **2,633 castes** covered by OBC reservation. It can redistribute quota benefits within OBCs, expose upper-caste over-representation and support evidence-based welfare — while raising fears of sharper caste competition.

Babu Jagdev Prasad Kushwaha — “90 out of 100 are exploited and 90% belongs to us.”

UPSC 2025 · 15 marks — Caste remains a vital axis for political mobilisation in India. How would the caste census address the aspirations of people? Discuss.

Caste, Class & Democracy

Caste and class overlap but are not identical. **M. N. Srinivas** and **F. G. Bailey** link land ownership with caste status; globalization and urbanization produced intra-caste stratification — rich and poor within the same caste; dominant agrarian castes demand backward status as agrarian income falls. **Rudolph & Rudolph**’s “**bullock capitalists**” explain politically influential small landowners. **Sudipta Kaviraj** reads India as moving from a **hierarchy of castes** towards a **democracy of castes**.

Caste strengthens democracy when it

- brings marginalized groups into politics,
- broadens representation,
- breaks upper-caste monopoly,
- supports affirmative action,
- creates political voice.

...and weakens it when it

- hardens identities,
- fuels communal counter-mobilization,
- promotes factionalism & violence,
- weakens class politics,
- reduces citizenship to group claims.

Ashutosh Varshney (*Battles Half Won*): caste-based mobilization has made *elections* successful, but democracy *between* elections remains weak — the next task is deepening democracy. **Pratap Bhanu Mehta** warns of the **gap between representation and responsiveness**: symbolic representation expands, policy responsiveness lags.

Assessment

Caste has moved from hierarchy to negotiation — secularized, politicized and democratized. It has empowered Dalits, OBCs and lower castes, but also produced fragmentation, violence and competitive populism. Indian democracy cannot be understood without caste; yet democratic justice cannot end with caste arithmetic.

3 Religion in Indian Politics

Meaning & Forms

Religion as basis of politics

Doctrines reinterpret nationalism and political purpose — Bhagavad Gita read for political action; Quranic teachings used for community politics.

Religion as tool of mobilization

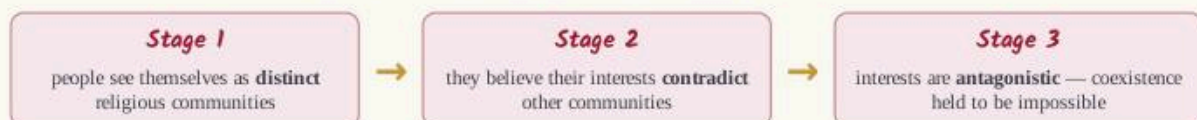
Temples, mosques, festivals, religious leaders, symbols, processions, sacred sites — e.g. Sarvajanik Ganesh Puja in Maharashtra.

Communal politics = using religion for *secular* gains — votes, jobs, concessions, patronage and power.

Reform → Revival → Communalism

- **Reform (19th c.):** Raja Rammohan Roy questioned orthodox Hindu practice; movements attacked child marriage, enforced widowhood, caste ritual; Swami Vivekananda stressed Vedanta's moral-spiritual core while criticizing rigid hierarchy.
- **Revival:** Bal Gangadhar Tilak opposed the Age of Consent Bill (religious interference), banned parallel sessions of the National Social Conference in 1885, popularized Sarvajanik Ganesh Puja — cultural nationalism gained priority over social reform. Hence Tilak's thesis: **political reform must precede social reform**.

Bipan Chandra — the three stages of communalism



British rule deepened division — divide & rule, Partition of Bengal, separate electorates (Morley-Minto), communal representation, competitive elite politics.

Hindu Revivalism & Hindutva

Revivalists linked nationhood with Vedic texts, Hindu symbols, spiritual superiority, cultural homogenization and the need to unify Hindus. Regional variants: Bengal → Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Ananda Math* and "Vande Mataram"; Maharashtra → Ganesh Utsav as mass mobilization; North India → cow protection and the Hindi-Urdu debate; Arya Samaj → reform plus polemics with non-Vedic faiths. Swami Dayanand Saraswati attacked some rituals yet took strong positions against non-Vedic faiths; Sri Aurobindo and Vivekananda presented ancient India as spiritually unique. **Vinayak Damodar Savarkar**'s *Hindutva* converted Hindu identity into **territorial-cultural nationalism** — Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh faiths treated as rooted in India; Muslims and Christians placed outside the core.

Thomas Blom Hansen (*The Saffron Wave*): the BJP's rise is not merely religious or political — it occurs against a background of democratic transformation. **Pratap Bhanu Mehta**: Hindutva politics is not new; Congress too practiced

“soft Hindutva” — Ram Janmabhoomi gates opened under Rajiv Gandhi, the Shah Bano reversal, Indira Gandhi’s use of Sikh fundamentalists against the Akalis and later Hindu fundamentalism against Sikhs, and symbolic Hindu gestures in contemporary Congress.

Islamic Reform & Community Identity

Shah Waliullah, Sayyed Ahmad of Bareilly and Haji Shariatullah sought to purify Islam of non-Islamic elements; Sir Syed Ahmad Khan’s Aligarh Movement promoted modern education and rationality, advising Muslims to stay aloof from nationalist politics for a time and cooperate with the colonial government for socio-economic progress. Traditionalists and modernists differed, but both deepened Muslim community consciousness. By the early 20th century, religious autonomy, minority representation, separate electorates and community rights became politically powerful — feeding the politics that culminated in Partition.

Secularism & Constitutional Politics

Instrument	Content
Communal electorates	Abolished by the Constitution.
Articles 25–28	Protect religious freedom; secularism a basic feature.
RPA 1951 §123(3)	Prohibits appeals for votes on religious grounds (corrupt practice).
Supreme Court, 2017	Restricted appeals based on religion, caste, creed, community or language.

Rajeev Bhargava calls Indian secularism **“principled distance”** — the state need not follow strict separation, may intervene in religion for reform and equality, but must not privilege one faith. It differs from Western secularism because India is a deeply multi-religious society.

Mahatma Gandhi — “Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion is.”

For Gandhi, religion meant morality and ethical politics — Ramrajya as an inclusive moral order, spirituality a guard against moral bankruptcy. **Thomas Pantham** explains that Gandhi’s “Purna Swaraj” and “Ramrajya” went beyond liberal democracy, aiming at real freedom anchored in spirituality.

Communal Violence & Electoral Mobilization

Patterns: disproportionate impact on minorities, partisan law enforcement, distorted history, mobilization around sacred sites, fear of “the other”, and conversion of violence into vote polarization.

- **Romila Thapar** → medieval temple destruction often had political or economic causes, not only religious fanaticism.
- **Gyan Pandey** → cow slaughter, language and “Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan” hardened communal lines in North India.
- **Kenneth Jones** (*Arya Dharma*) → Arya Samaj in Punjab combined reform with polemics against Muslims and Sikhs.
- **Paul R. Brass** → communal violence is organized and politically managed; his **institutionalized riot systems** explain how riots are prepared, sustained and used electorally.
- **Ashutosh Varshney** → stronger inter-community civic engagement makes an area less prone to communal violence.
- **Moin Shakir** → minority electoral participation is limited to choices between reactionary, casteist and communal politics.
- **Tausif Ahmed** → minority communalism is an assertion of identity under scarcity, but it may alienate minorities from the wider social fabric.

UPSC 2020 · 15 marks — Examine the role of religion in Indian electoral politics in the contemporary times.

Contemporary Importance

Religion persists because identity is emotionally powerful, parties use religious symbols, religious leaders influence followers, personal laws and temple management stay political, communal violence affects voting, Hindutva has become a major national force, minority consolidation can follow in response, and religious issues intersect with welfare, security and citizenship.

Contemporary set: Ram Mandir CAA NRC “Love Jihad” laws Babri judgment gurdwara politics — Punjab
Assam migration Shiv Sena / Hindutva AIMIM / minority politics

Ashis Nandy points to growth of religious revivalism and fundamentalism; **Kanchan Chandra** treats religion as part of ethnicity-based politics; the Ranganath Misra Commission and Sachar Committee highlight minority socio-economic backwardness that feeds political insecurity; L. K. Advani's critique of "**pseudo-secularism**" became central to the BJP's attack on Congress. On the electoral link, **Steven I. Wilkinson** ties communal violence to electoral outcomes, and **Samuel P. Huntington**'s "clash of civilizations" offers a wider frame for religious identity politics.

UPSC 2017 · 15 marks — Religion is still an important factor in Indian politics. Discuss.

Assessment

Religion can give ethical depth (Gandhi) or become communal mobilization (both majoritarian and minority). It has moved from colonial communal representation to contemporary ideological nationalism, and works alongside welfare, leadership and development — not always alone. India's challenge is to protect religious freedom without letting communal polarization weaken citizenship.

4 Ethnicity, Regionalism & National Integration

Meaning & Approaches

Ethnicity = group consciousness based on common descent, language, religion, history, territory, culture, tribe, caste and shared memory.

Max Weber — ethnic groups are "those human groups that share a subjective belief about their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists".

- **Paul R. Brass** → ethnic and communal mobilizations are closely connected.
- **Dipankar Gupta** → ethnicity refers to the nation-state, territory and sovereignty; communalism targets government policies without necessarily questioning state loyalty.
- **Donald Horowitz** → broad definition — conflicts on ascriptive identities (race, language, religion, tribe, caste) count as ethnic.
- **Ashutosh Varshney** → ethnic conflict = conflict between contending ethnic groups fighting for their position in society.

Approach	Claim
Primordial	Ethnic identities are inherited and given; conflict is natural when groups differ.
Instrumentalist	Identities are created / manipulated by elites — politicians, religious leaders, teachers — for power.
Hybrid	Loyalties exist but need political conditions to become conflict. Key question: <i>why</i> do people respond to elite manipulation?

Anthony D. Smith stresses deep historical-cultural roots. **Hamza Alavi** sees ethnic categories as attempts at mobilization and manipulation. **James Manor** argues Indians have fluid, overlapping identities that prevent permanent fault lines. **Atul Kohli** holds ethnic politics is expected in a multicultural democracy and that democratic accommodation is the best response.

S. D. Muni — "The manifestation of ethnicity in Indian politics is not so much an outcome of popular grassroots passions as it is a creation of vested political interests."

Ethnic assertion — escalation ladder & how the state responds



Forms 1–3 link to self-determination movements. Brass on India's method: secession rejected outright · religiously framed demands less tolerated · linguistic / developmental demands more easily accommodated · demands gain attention when broadly supported · affected groups' views considered.

State toolkit: coercion, accommodation, divide-and-rule, patronage, state reorganization, constitutional safeguards, peace accords, development packages, security measures. **Selig S. Harrison** called the first decades after Independence the “**most dangerous decades**” for linguistic and communal conflict. Examples: Punjabi Suba accepted once Haryana also demanded a Hindi-speaking area; linguistic reorganization accommodated many demands; the North-East was reorganized through statehood and autonomy.

North-East India

Eight states — Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura — with many ethnic groups, tribes, languages and religions; strategically placed near Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and China; rich in oil, coal, gas, minerals, forests and the Brahmaputra system. The **Second Administrative Reforms Commission** notes a long cycle of violent conflicts.

State	Conflict
Nagaland	Demand for a sovereign Nagaland; Naga insurgents rejected the Constitution and boycotted the 1952 elections; NSCN emerged as a major insurgent formation.
Assam	ULFA, anti-migrant politics, Bodoland and Karbi Anglong demands.
Bodos	Demand for Bodoland; conflict with other communities.
Manipur	Tensions among Meiteis, Nagas and Kukis.
Mizoram	Mizo insurgency; Mizo-Chakma and Mizo-Bru tensions.
Tripura	Conflict between indigenous tribes and Bengali migrants.
Arunachal	Tensions around the Chakma community and local tribes.

Modernization / Nation-building

S. K. Chaube, V. B. Singh, B. G. Verghese, Myron Weiner, Hiren Gohain

- tension between modern & traditional leadership,
- rising aspirations of new middle classes,
- development gaps & unmet expectations.

Federation-building

Sanjib Baruah, Sajal Nag, Udayan Sharma, Sanjay Hazarika, M. P. Bezbaruah, Urmila Phadnis

- nation-state building ignored smaller communities,
- centralization violated autonomy,
- rights violations deepened alienation.

Sanjib Baruah (*In the Name of the Nation*): the postcolonial state retained colonial security devices; the Sixth Schedule and small states were used to *manage* the region; AFSPA deepened alienation; militarization produced “**otherness**”; democracy often became a tool of legitimacy rather than genuine integration. His prescription — shift from “**nation-state building**” to “**genuine federation-building**”.

Government measures: Sixth Schedule ADCs Article 371 North Eastern Council MDoNER Act East Assam & Mizo Accords statehood security + development + rehabilitation

UPSC 2018 · 15 marks — Critically examine the ethnic conflicts in North-East India.

UPSC 2022 · 20 marks — Ethnicity is the underlying cause which poses a great challenge in the resolution of the problems in the North-East region of India. Comment.

Tamil Nadu & Dravidian Politics

Ethnic politics around language, region, caste and anti-Brahminism. E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker (Periyar) attacked Indian nationalism as rooted in Hindu religion / Brahminism, imposing Hindi over Dravidian languages and sustaining high-caste dominance; C. N. Annadurai argued for Dravida Nadu against North Indian high-caste domination. **Narendra Subramanian** notes Dravidian parties were among the first to challenge Congress at the state level with relatively less violence. DMK and AIADMK abandoned full secession but kept Tamil identity, anti-Hindi politics, social justice, regional autonomy and an anti-caste rationalist heritage.

Punjab & Sikh Homeland

Punjabi Suba movement: Akali Dal demanded a Punjabi-speaking state; Master Tara Singh gave it a religious basis, Sant Fateh Singh a socio-economic one; **Baldev Raj Nayar** notes the Akalis' constitutional, infiltration and agitational strategies. **Khalistan phase:** the 1980s saw the demand for an independent Khalistan; Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale became central; Operation Blue Star, Indira Gandhi's assassination and anti-Sikh violence deepened the crisis.

Socio-economic explanation

Sucha Singh Gill, K. C. Singhal, Harish Kumar Puri, Joyce Pettigrew, M. S. Dhami, Javeed Alam, Gurharpal Singh
Green Revolution changes, unemployment, crisis of Sikh identity, consumerist modernity vs traditional values.

Political manipulation

Paul R. Brass
Socio-economic explanations are reductionist; stresses strategic manipulation of religion and grievance — Indira Gandhi's engagement with Bhindranwale to weaken the Akali Dal backfired.

Jammu & Kashmir

Shaped by geography, history, religion, regional diversity and external intervention. Historical: Maharaja Hari Singh initially wanted independence; Sheikh Abdullah initially supported accession; Articles 370 and 35A gave special constitutional status; Sheikh Abdullah's arrest in 1953 created long-term distrust; autonomy demands also came from Jammu and Ladakh; Pakistan-backed insurgency in the 1980s turned the conflict violent. **Balraj Puri's** causes: central interference reducing autonomy, derailing of democracy, unemployment, deteriorating economy, denial of regional autonomy to Jammu and Ladakh, lack of legitimate opposition, and use of armed forces instead of political dialogue.

Post-2019. Abrogation of **Article 370 on August 5, 2019** changed J&K's constitutional relationship with India: removal of special status · legal integration with the Union · end of Article 35A · bifurcation into Union Territories · greater centralization · political reorganization · security restrictions · civil-rights debate · focus on development and investment (tourism, handicrafts, agriculture, IT) · changing role of regional parties (National Conference, People's Democratic Party, which historically articulated regional autonomy and identity).

UPSC 2025 · 10 marks — Delineate the key factors that have shaped the evolving political landscape in Jammu and Kashmir post 2019.

Relative Deprivation & Ethnic Conflict

Relative deprivation = the perception that a group is unfairly disadvantaged compared with others — arising when groups compare expected with actual status, resources with other groups, rights with others' privileges, recognition with humiliation.

Ted Robert Gurr — relative deprivation is “the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the ‘ought’ and the ‘is’ of collective value satisfaction, and this disposes men to violence”.

Examples: North-East insurgencies in Assam and Nagaland (perceived neglect, weak development, lack of recognition); Dalit movements (deprivation vs upper castes); Jat and Patidar agitations (declining agrarian income, job competition); the Bodo movement (language, land, institutional exclusion); Telangana (deprivation within a larger state); Jammu & Kashmir (autonomy, identity, representation). **Yogendra Yadav** notes dominant agrarian castes seek reservations when they fear loss of status; **Gopal Guru** links Dalit mobilization with long-standing exclusion; **Charles Tilly** argues nation-state building can exclude and subordinate ethnic groups.

UPSC 2024 · 10 marks — “Relative deprivation is a major source of ethnic conflict.” Elaborate the statement with relevant examples.

Regionalism & Federal Accommodation

Regionalism = mobilization around territory, culture, development and local identity. **Paul R. Brass** holds regionalism is a long-term trend while nationalism has often been short-term in Indian politics. Movements range from autonomy → separate statehood → special status → resource control → language recognition → protection from outsiders → secession. **Gurharpal Singh** divides them into movements from *core* regions (Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh) and from *peripheries* (Nagaland).

Explanations: modernization · democracy awakens tradition uneven development · Telangana, Vidarbha

sons-of-the-soil · Shiv Sena, AGP cultural anxiety · fear of assimilation development deficit

Prema Singh argues regional solidarity can support welfare and development — strong regional identities in South India helped better bargaining and development. The Sarkaria and Punchhi Commissions support democratic decentralization as a way to manage regional aspirations. **Atul Kohli** warns that mishandled regional movements can turn secessionist, as in Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir.

UPSC 2016 · 10 marks — Cultural and Regional differences are the enduring bases on which politics is played out in India.

Assessment

Ethnicity is not merely a threat — it is also a demand for recognition. India has often managed ethnic conflict better than many postcolonial states; the danger rises when accommodation is delayed and coercion becomes excessive. The solution is **more democracy, not less** — power-sharing, autonomy, inclusive growth, decentralization, cultural recognition and federal trust.

5 Power Quotes

Rajni Kothari — “Casteism in politics is no more or no less than the politicization of caste.”

Nancy Fraser — “Recognition is a matter of justice, not only because it provides self-respect and social esteem but also because it is a precondition for participation in democratic politics.”

Todd Gitlin — “Identity politics often reduces individuals to their group affiliations, limiting their freedom to express their varied identities.”

Milan Vaishnav — “Good economics can make for good politics in India.”

Mahatma Gandhi — “Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion is.”

S. D. Muni — “The manifestation of ethnicity in Indian politics is not so much an outcome of popular grassroots passions as it is a creation of vested political interests.”

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Babu Jagdev Prasad Kushwaha — “90 out of 100 are exploited and 90% belongs to us.”

6 Scholar Index

Abhijit Banerjee · Amartya Sen · Anand Teltumbde · Andre Béteille · Anthony D. Smith · Arvind Panagariya · Ashis Nandy · Ashutosh Varshney · Atul Kohli · B. G. Verghese · Baldev Raj Nayar · Balraj Puri · Bipan Chandra · Brian Barry · C. P. Bhabri · Charles Tilly · Christophe Jaffrelot · Craig Calhoun · Dag-Erik Berg · Dipankar Gupta · Donald Horowitz · F. G. Bailey · Francine Frankel · Fred W. Riggs · Ghanshyam Shah · Gopal Guru · Gurcharan Das · Gurharpal Singh · Gyan Pandey · Hamza Alavi · Harish Kumar Puri · Hiren Gohain · Jack C. Plano · James Manor · Javeed Alam · Joyce Pettigrew · K. C. Singhal · Kancha Ilaiah · Kanchan Chandra · Kenneth Jones · Lloyd I. Rudolph · Louis Dumont · M. N. Srinivas · M. P. Bezbaruah · M. S. Dhami · Mendelsohn & Vicziany · Milan Vaishnav · Moin Shakir · Myron Weiner · Nancy Fraser · Nandita Haksar · Narendra Subramanian · Nicholas Dirks · Nikita Sud · Niraja Gopal Jayal · Paul R. Brass · Poonam Gupta · Pratap Bhanu Mehta · Prema Singh · Rajeev Bhargava · Rajni Kothari · Romila Thapar · S. D. Muni · S. K. Chaube · Sajal Nag · Samuel P. Huntington · Samuel S. Eldersveld · Sanjay Hazarika · Sanjib Baruah · Selig S. Harrison · Steven I. Wilkinson · Sucha Singh Gill · Sudipta Kaviraj · Suhas Palshikar · Sukhadeo Thorat · Susanne Hoeber Rudolph · Tausif Ahmed · Ted Robert Gurr · Thomas Blom Hansen · Thomas Pantham · Todd Gitlin · Udayan Sharma · Urmila Phadnis · V. B. Singh · Yogendra Yadav · Zoya Hasan

7 How UPSC asks it

Caste as a political category & mobilization

Year	Marks	Question
2021	15	Explain how caste as a social category is also becoming a political category in the democratic politics of India.
2023	20	The rise of caste politics is to be attributed to both regional aspirations and electoral manifestations. Comment.
2025	15	Caste remains a vital axis for political mobilisation in India. How would the caste census address the aspirations of people? Discuss.

Religion & communal politics

Year	Marks	Question
2017	15	Religion is still an important factor in Indian politics. Discuss.
2020	15	Examine the role of religion in Indian electoral politics in the contemporary times.

Ethnicity, region, North-East & Jammu and Kashmir

Year	Marks	Question
2016	10	Cultural and Regional differences are the enduring bases on which politics is played out in India.
2018	15	Critically examine the ethnic conflicts in North-East India.
2022	20	Ethnicity is the underlying cause which poses a great challenge in the resolution of the problems in the North-East region of India. Comment.
2024	10	“Relative deprivation is a major source of ethnic conflict.” Elaborate the statement with relevant examples.
2025	10	Delineate the key factors that have shaped the evolving political landscape in Jammu and Kashmir post 2019.

8 Today's practice

Year	Marks	Attempt these three tonight
2025	15	Caste remains a vital axis for political mobilisation in India. How would the caste census address the aspirations of people? Discuss.
2024	10	"Relative deprivation is a major source of ethnic conflict." Elaborate the statement with relevant examples.
2022	20	Ethnicity is the underlying cause which poses a great challenge in the resolution of the problems in the North-East region of India. Comment.

Before you move on

Model answers to these drop tonight on [@psirbyamitpratap](#). Each of these is covered in full in your **Foundation / OGP class notes & handouts** — revise that page, then write the answer. Recall first, notes second, model answer last — that order is what builds the marks.

See you tomorrow with Day 25 — keep the chain alive.