

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2019 · 10 marks

Despite constitutional mandate the Inter-State Council has not come of age. Discuss.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 Art. 263 mandate (inquire → discuss → recommend) → yet no maturation since its 1990 birth under Sarkaria

R2 meant to be the principal federal forum → has not grown into one

Body flow

root cause is *design* → exists only by Presidential Order → executive can alter its structure → recommendations bind no one → politics widens the gap → Congress dominance (party channels settle disputes) → coalitions (regional parties bargain directly within Union) → sectoral bodies (GST Council, NITI Aayog) absorb its core work → secretariat under Home Ministry → no autonomy or expertise → meetings rare (2006–2016 gap) → **Rekha Saxena** → poor record, almost no amendment or enactment

Counter-view

not beyond repair → Punchhi Commission → statutory status, regular meetings, permanent secretariat

Conclusion routes

R1 reactivated on these lines → gives cooperative federalism real substance

R2 the constitutional mandate is intact → only political will and a structural fix are missing

Article 263 gave the Inter-State Council a clear mandate i.e. to inquire into disputes, discuss matters of common interest, and recommend coordinated policy.

But since its creation in 1990 on the Sarkaria Commission's recommendation, it has not grown into the principal federal forum it was meant to be. The council exists through a Presidential Order, so the Union executive can alter its structure and its recommendations bind no one.

Politics deepened this weakness. Under Congress dominance, party channels settled disputes; under coalitions, regional parties bargained directly within the Union government. Sectoral bodies like the GST Council and NITI Aayog absorbed its core work.

Its secretariat, placed under the Home Ministry, lacks autonomy and expertise and meetings stayed rare i.e. a long gap ran between 2006 and 2016.

According to Rekha Saxena, the council's record has been poor, with almost no amendment or enactment flowing from its recommendations. The Punchhi Commission urged statutory status, regular meetings and a permanent secretariat.