

REGIONALISM – ITS DIMENSIONS, MEANING AND ISSUES

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Introduction:

To understand regionalism, we need to know various dimensions of the region. Region as a geographical unit, is delimited from each other. Region as a social system, reflects the relation between different human beings and groups. Regions are an organised cooperation in cultural, economic, political or military fields. Region acts as a subject with distinct identity, language, culture and tradition.

Regionalism is an ideology and political movement that seeks to advance the causes of regions. As a process it plays role within the nation as well as outside the nation i.e. at international level. At the international level, regionalism refers to transnational cooperation to meet a common goal or to resolve a shared problem or it refers to a group of countries such as-Western Europe, or Southeast Asia, linked by geography, history or economic features. Used in this sense, regionalism refers to attempts to reinforce the links between these countries economic features.

The second meaning of the term is regionalism at national level refers to a process in which sub-state actors become increasingly powerful, power devolves from central level to regional governments. These are the regions within country, distinguished in culture, language and other socio-cultural factors.

Key words: society, polity, diplomacy, economy, security, culture, development, negotiations

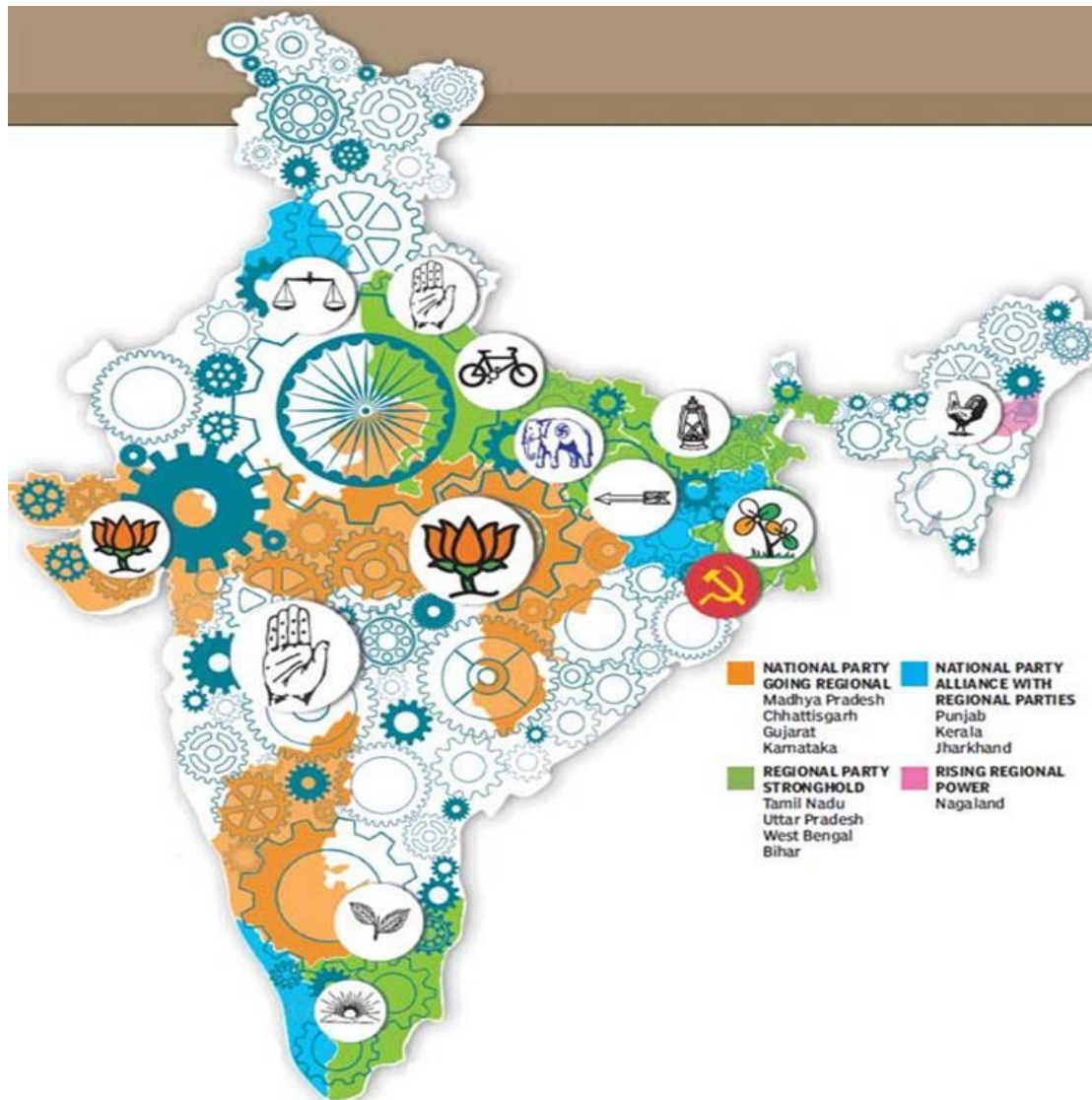
Regionalism within nation:

If the interest of one region or a state is asserted against the country as a whole or against another region/state in a hostile way, and if a conflict is promoted by such alleged interests, then it can be called as regionalism. If someone is aspiring to or make special efforts to develop one's state or region or to remove poverty & make social justice there, then that cannot be called as regionalism. Regionalism doesn't means defending the federal features of the constitution. Any demand for separate state, autonomous region or for devolution of power below the state level is also, sometimes confused as regionalism.

Regionalism in INDIA:

Roots of regionalism is in India's manifold diversity of languages, cultures, ethnic groups, communities, religions and so on, and encouraged by the regional concentration of those identity markers, and fueled by a sense of regional deprivation. For many centuries, India remained the land of many lands, regions, cultures and traditions.

For instance, southern India (the home of Dravidian cultures), which is itself a region of many regions, is evidently different from the north, the west, the central and the north-east. Even the east of India is different from the North-East of India comprising today seven constituent units of Indian federation with the largest concentration of tribal people.



Regionalism has remained perhaps the most potent force in Indian politics ever since independence (1947), if not before. It has remained the main basis of many regional political parties which have governed many states since the late 1960s. Three clear patterns can be identified in the post-independence phases of regional identity through statehood.

First, in the 1950s and 1960s, intense (ethnic) mass mobilisation, often taking on a violent character, was the main force behind the state's response with an institutional package for statehood. Andhra Pradesh in India's south showed the way. The fast unto death in 1952 of the legendary (Telugu) leader Potti Sriramulu for a state for the Telegu-speakers out of the composite Madras Presidency moved an otherwise reluctant Jawaharlal Nehru, a top nationalist leader and it was followed by State re organisation commission under Fazal Ali paving way for StateReorganizationAct,1956.

Third, the movements for the three new states (created in 2000)—Chhattisgarh out of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand out of Bihar and Uttaranchal out of Uttar Pradesh— were long-drawn but became vigorous in the 1990s. And the most recent one, we can see with the division of AndhraPradesh,givingaseparate Telangana,whichstartedin1950s.

Potential cause for regionalism: Regionalism could have flourished in India, if any state/region had felt that it was being culturally dominated or discriminated against.

Regional economic inequality is a potent time bomb directed against national unity and political stability. But, this potential cause did not take shape of regionalism, because of government steps, which focussed on the balanced regional development and fulfilled the aspiration of states.

Few of them are – Industrial Policy, 1956, National Integration council, 1961. Transfer of financial resources to poorer states on the recommendation of Finance commission..

Why regional disparity still persists?

Low rate of economic growth: The economic growth of India has been fluctuating since independence. But with respect to High population growth, the economic growth has been not enough to catch the development with full speed. In the last decade, the economic growth were progressive, but now they are reeling under the influence of world economic crisis and other bottlenecks at domestic level.

Lower level of infrastructural facilities in backward states: The level of infrastructural development, such as- power distribution, irrigation facilities, roads, modern markets for agricultural produce has been at back stage. All these are state list subjects.

Low level of social expenditure by states on education, health and sanitation: These subjects are core for human resource development. The states which have invested heavily on these subjects, fall under the developed and advanced states, for example Tamil Nadu, where health care services in Primary health centre is bench mark for other states.

Political and administration failure: This is source of tension and gives birth to sub-regional movements for separate states. Jarkhand, Chattisgarh, Uttrakhand and recently Telangana are result of these failure only. Many such demands are in pipeline such as- Vidarbha, Saurashtra, Darjeeling and Bodoland, etc. These failures also weakens the confidence of private players and do not attract investors in the states.

“Son of the soil” doctrine explains a form of regionalism, which is in discussion since 1950. According to it, a state specifically belongs to the main linguistic group inhabiting it or that the state constitutes the exclusive homeland of its main language speakers, who are the sons of the soil or local residents.

Clashes in India having colours of regionalism

Linguistic Reorganization of States

It was the demand of Potti Sriramulu, a freedom fighter and a devoted follower of Mahatma Gandhi, that led to the creation of Andhra Pradesh state and linguistic recognition of the states in India. To achieve this end, he died in 1952 after not eating for 52 days in support of a Telugu-speaking state. Sriramulu's death forced Jawahar Lal Nehru to agree to the various demands from other parts of the country with similar demands. Consequently, in 1954, a States Reorganisation Committee was formed with Fazal Ali as its head, which recommended the formation of 16 new states and 3 Union Territories based on the language.



Telangana Movement

In the years after the formation of Andhra Pradesh state, people of Telangana expressed dissatisfaction over how the agreements and guarantees were implemented. Discontent with the 1956 Gentleman's agreement intensified in January 1969, when the guarantees that had been agreed on were supposed to lapse. Student agitation for the continuation of the agreement began at Osmania University in Hyderabad and spread to other parts of the region. Government employees and opposition members of the state legislative assembly threatened "direct action" in support of the students. This movement since then finally resulted last year one separate state of Telangana.

Impact of Regionalism in India

Positive: Scholars believe that regionalism plays important role in building of the nation, if the demands of the regions are accommodated by the political system of the country. Regional recognition in terms of state hood or state autonomy gives self-determination to the people of that particular region and they feel empowered and happy. Internal self-determination of community, whether linguistic, tribal, religious, regional, or their combinations, has remained the predominant form in which regionalism in India has sought to express itself, historically as well as at present time.

Regional identities in India have not always defined themselves in opposition to and at the expense of, the national identity, noticed a democratic effect of such process in that India's representative democracy has moved closed to the people who feel more involved and show

Negative

Regionalism is often seen as a serious threat to the development, progress and unity of the nation. It gives internal security challenges by the insurgent groups, who propagate the feelings of regionalism against the mainstream politico-administrative setup of the country. Regionalism definitely impacts politics as days of collation government and alliances are taking place. Regional demands become national demands, policies are launched to satisfy regional demands and generally those are extended to all pockets of country, hence national policies are now dominated by regional demands. E.g. MSP given to sugarcane, it was helpful for farmers in Maharashtra but it was

implemented across all states resulting agitations of farmers belonging to UP, Punjab and Haryana. Some regional leaders play politics of vote bank based on language, culture, this is certainly against healthy democratic procedures. This always leads to demand for separate state and it has observed that after creating small states only few political leaders could run efficient government else alliances run government which ultimately makes administration machinery effective. Developmental plans are implemented unevenly focusing on regions to which heavy weight leaders belongs are benefitted, hence unrest is generated among rest regions. Law and order is disturbed, agitations with massive violence take place ultimately government is compelled to take harsh steps; hence wrong signals are emitted about government authorities. Regionalism, also becomes hurdle in the international diplomacy, as in 2013 we saw how Tamil Nadu regional parties were against the Prime Minister of India, attending the Commonwealth heads meeting(CHOGM) in Sri Lanka. These actions have their direct implication on the relation of India with Sri Lanka or other countries of the forums or in case of Mamata Banerjee not agreeing to Land Boundary agreement and Teesta River Water sharing,

Nationalism and Regionalism

NEWRegionalism

The New regionalism is taking shape in a multipolar world order. The new regionalism and multi-polarity are, in fact, two sides of the same coin. The new is a more spontaneous process from within the regions, where the constituent states now experience the need for cooperation in order to tackle new global challenges. Regionalism is thus one way of coping with global transformation, capacity and the means to manage such a task on the “national” level.

The new is often described as “open”, and thus compatible with an interdependent world economy. It is a more comprehensive, multidimensional process. This process includes not only trade and economic development, but also environment, social policy and security, just to mention some imperatives pushing countries and communities towards cooperation within new types of regionalist frameworks. The New regionalism forms part of a global structural transformation in which non-state actors (many different types of institutions, organizations and movements) are also active and operating at several levels of the global system. In sum, the new regionalism includes economic, political, social and cultural aspects, and goes far beyond free.

Conclusion

We have seen how regionalism could be good or bad for a nation as well for group of nations. Constitution of India under Article-19, gives every citizen a fundamental right to move around and settle down peacefully any part of the country. And, as citizen of India everyone should respect this fundamental right of every person, avoiding clashes like Shiv Sena does in Maharashtra. The need of the hour is to develop each region of India, through devolution of power to local governments and empowering people for their participation in decision-making. The governments at state level need to find out the alternative resources of energy, source of employment for local people, use of technology in governance, planning and for agriculture development. The 12th five year targets for “**Faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth**“, The regional blocks like BRICS, ASEAN are developing more negotiation capabilities for economic needs of the region, for climate change negotiations, etc. The dependency on World Bank, IMF for developmental projects is being complimented by the new commitments of the BRICS Bank, New Developmental Banks, etc. In future, the further integration of the different regions will give every nation due respect and due importance to their needs. Their exotic and unique things are

getting exposure at international level and no one will feel left out. The whole world will be a global village with unique regions within.

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