

PrepAlpine

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PrepAlpine

Email: info@PrepAlpine.com

Website: PrepAlpine.com

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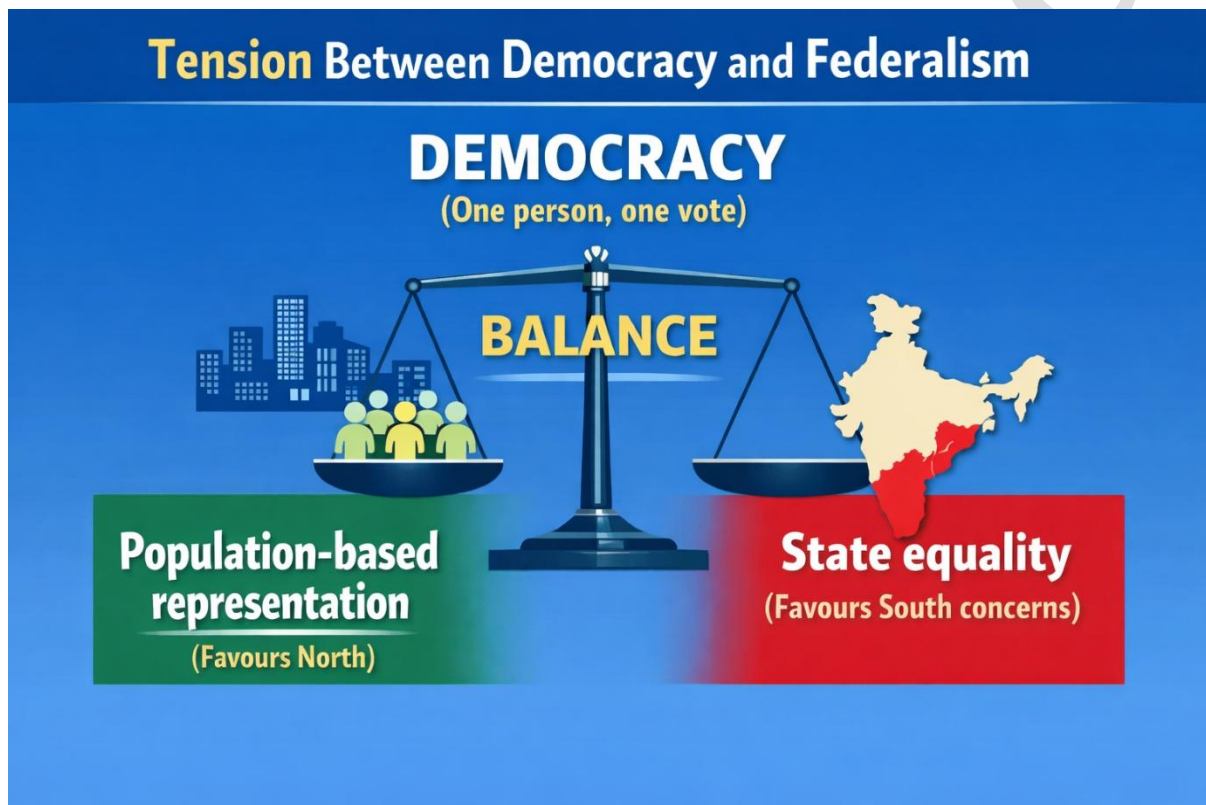
GS Paper II: Polity

1. North–South Divide in India and Its Implications for Federalism

a. Introduction

India's identity as a "Union of States" hides deep regional inequalities. One of the most significant is the growing divide between the northern and southern regions. This divide is not just about geography—it reflects differences in economic growth, population trends, human development, and political influence.

Over time, these differences have begun to affect debates on representation, resource sharing, and the functioning of Indian federalism. Understanding this divide is therefore essential to understanding the future of India's political system.



b. Understanding the Nature of the Divide

At a broad level, India shows two contrasting development patterns.

i. Southern States: A Model of Social and Economic Advancement

The southern States—Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh—have achieved relatively higher development.

Economic Strength

- Higher per capita income due to strong industry and services
- Better infrastructure and urbanisation

Human Development

- Higher literacy rates and better education systems
- Improved healthcare and life expectancy

- Lower infant mortality

Demographic Transition

- Successfully reduced fertility rates
- Stable population growth

Kerala is a classic example where investment in education and health has produced outcomes similar to developed regions.

ii. Northern States: Persistent Developmental Challenges

Many northern and central States—like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh—face structural issues.

Economic Constraints

- Lower income levels
- Limited industrial growth

Social Indicators

- Lower literacy and weaker health outcomes
- High poverty levels

Demographic Pressure

- Higher fertility rates
- Rapid population growth

Some districts in these States have development levels comparable to poorer regions globally.

iii. A Structural Imbalance

- **Economic Activity:** Concentrated in southern States
- **Population Weight:** Dominated by northern States

This creates a mismatch: the South drives the economy, while the North dominates in numbers, leading to tensions in representation and policy-making.

c. Why the Divide Matters for Indian Federalism

The divide impacts federalism through representation, institutional balance, and fiscal relations.

i. Delimitation and Representation

Constitutional Basis

- Lok Sabha seats are allocated based on population (Article 81)

Upcoming Change

- Delimitation frozen since the 1970s
- Likely to resume after 2026

Core Concern

- States with higher population growth will gain more seats
- States that controlled population may lose relative influence

This creates a perception that demographic responsibility is being penalised.

ii. Tension Between Democracy and Federalism

- **Democratic Principle:** One person, one vote — population-based representation
- **Federal Principle:** Fair representation of all States, regardless of size
- **Core Challenge:** How to balance equality of citizens with equality of States

The North–South divide makes this tension more visible and complex.

iii. Fiscal Federalism and Perceived Inequity

Contribution vs Redistribution

- Southern States contribute more to taxes
- Resources are redistributed to poorer States

Emerging Perception

- Developed States feel they contribute more but receive less influence

Implication

- Risk of weakening cooperative federalism

d. Key Issues Emerging from the Divide

Political Imbalance

- Increased representation of northern States
- Risk of southern States feeling underrepresented

Risk of Regional Polarisation

- North vs South narratives
- Possible linguistic and cultural tensions
- Threat to national integration

Uneven Development Within States

- Urban–rural divide persists even in developed States
- Growth does not always mean equality

Migration and Social Integration

- Large-scale migration from North to South
- Benefits
 - Supports labour markets
 - Boosts economic activity
- Challenges
 - Cultural barriers
 - Social exclusion of migrants

Institutional and Governance Gaps

- Differences in administrative efficiency
- Lack of coordinated national strategy
- Weak implementation capacity in lagging regions

e. Digressive Proportionality as a Conceptual Solution

Digressive proportionality offers a middle path between strict population-based representation and equal representation.

Core Idea

- Larger States get more seats
- But not strictly proportional to population

Benefit

- Smaller or better-performing States are not overshadowed

Example

- Used in the European Union

Relevance to India

- Can balance democracy and federalism
- Prevents domination by high-population States

f. Limitations of the Southern Development Model

Even developed southern States face challenges.

- **Economic Inequality:** Income disparities persist
- **Social Issues:** Caste and gender inequalities
- **Rural Distress:** Uneven benefits of growth

Thus, the divide is not absolute—both regions have internal complexities.

g. Comparative Perspective: Lessons from Other Federal Systems

i. United States Model

- **House of Representatives:** Based on population
- **Senate:** Equal representation for all States
- **Outcome:** Balance between democracy and federalism

ii. Indian Context

Lok Sabha

- Population-based

Rajya Sabha

- Not fully equal representation
- Limited balancing role

Implication

- Institutional imbalance remains

h. Way Forward

Calibrated Delimitation

- Gradual changes instead of sudden shifts
- Hybrid formulas combining population and performance

Strengthening Cooperative Federalism

- Use of Inter-State Council
- Dialogue between Centre and States

Reforming Fiscal Federalism

Incentives for

- Population control
- Human development
- Governance reforms

Reducing Regional Disparities

- Investment in education, health, infrastructure
- Job creation in lagging regions

Strengthening the Rajya Sabha

- Enhance its role in protecting State interests
- Improve balance in federal structure

Conclusion

The North–South divide is a critical challenge for Indian federalism. It raises fundamental questions about how to balance population-based democracy with regional fairness.

India's unity will depend on creating a system where no region feels politically or economically disadvantaged. The solution lies in designing policies that balance population, performance, and equity, ensuring that both democracy and federalism remain strong in the long run.

GS Paper II: Current Affairs

2. IOC Policy on Transgender Women in Women's Sports

a. Introduction

The participation of transgender women in women's sports reflects a broader societal shift where questions of identity, biology, rights, and fairness increasingly intersect. The recent stance of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which gives primacy to biological sex in determining eligibility for women's events, has intensified this debate.

This issue goes beyond sports—it has become a test case for how modern institutions balance inclusion with competitive fairness.

b. Understanding the Core Concepts

Before analysing the policy, it is important to understand the foundational distinction between sex and gender, as the debate revolves around this difference.

Sex as a Biological Category

- Sex refers to biological characteristics such as chromosomes, reproductive organs, and hormonal structures.
- Traditionally, individuals are classified as male or female based on these traits.
- However, biological reality is not always strictly binary.
- Some individuals have variations in sex characteristics — intersex or Differences in Sex Development – DSD, showing that classification can be complex.

Gender as a Social Identity

- Gender refers to how individuals identify and express themselves socially.
- It is based on personal identity rather than biological traits.
- A transgender woman is someone assigned male at birth but who identifies as female.
- This distinction creates the central dilemma for sports institutions—whether eligibility should be based on biology or identity.

Sex vs Gender: Core Conceptual Distinction		
Basis	Sex ♂ (Biological)	Gender ♀♂ (Social Identity)
Definition	Biological traits (chromosomes, hormones)	Self-identified identity
Determination	Assigned at birth	Personal/social identity
Nature	Relatively fixed	Fluid/variable
Examples	Male, Female, Intersex (DSD)	Man, Woman, Transgender
Relevance to Sports	Determines physical advantage	Determines inclusion claims

c. Nature of the IOC Policy Shift

Shift Towards Biological Criteria

- The IOC has moved towards restricting women's categories to those considered biologically female.
- Earlier, it allowed sports federations to decide eligibility based on testosterone levels.
- The new approach reflects a more uniform and restrictive framework.

Rationale: Fairness and Competitive Integrity

- Scientific studies indicate that male puberty may provide advantages such as:
 - Greater muscle mass
 - Higher bone density
 - Enhanced endurance
- Women's categories were historically created to offset these differences.
- The IOC aims to preserve level playing conditions.

Wider Implications

- The policy impacts transgender athletes and individuals with intersex traits.
- It is likely to influence rules across global sports federations.
- It marks a shift towards standardisation in international sports governance.

d. Why the Issue is Contentious

Scientific and Structural Basis of Sports Categories

- Sports classification assumes average biological differences between males and females.
- Categories exist to ensure women are not structurally disadvantaged.

Recognition of Gender Identity

- Modern legal and social systems increasingly recognise gender identity.
- Exclusion of transgender athletes may be viewed as discriminatory.

Core Dilemma

- Should eligibility be based on biology?
- Should it be based on self-identification?
- Or should a hybrid model be adopted?

e. Significance of the IOC's Decision

i. Institutional and Sporting Impact

Reinforcement of Fairness

- Protects competitive integrity in women's sports.
- Addresses concerns raised by female athletes.

Policy Clarity

- Reduces ambiguity across international competitions.
- Moves towards uniform standards.

Preservation of Trust

- Ensures credibility of sporting outcomes.
- Maintains legitimacy of categories.

ii. Concerns and Criticisms

Risk of Exclusion

- May marginalise transgender athletes.
- Could reinforce existing social discrimination.

Complexity of Biological Reality

- Intersex and DSD conditions challenge binary classification.
- Biological criteria alone may oversimplify reality.

Variation Across Sports

- Performance advantage differs by sport.
- A single rule may not suit all disciplines.

Question of Dignity

- Sport is also about identity and belonging.
- Policies must respect human dignity.

f. Stakeholders in the Debate

Female Athletes

- Seek fair competition and equal opportunity.

Transgender Athletes

- Seek recognition of identity.
- Demand inclusion and participation rights.

Intersex Athletes

- Risk misclassification or exclusion.

Institutions and Society

- Sports federations: balance science and acceptance.
- Governments and courts: uphold rights and non-discrimination.
- Scientific community: provide evolving evidence.
- Society: reflects broader cultural values.

g. Towards a Balanced Approach

Sport-Specific Rules

- Different sports require different eligibility criteria.
- Avoid one-size-fits-all policies.

Differentiation of Levels

- Elite vs recreational sports should have different standards.
- Competitive stakes vary across levels.

Respect for Dignity

- Avoid invasive testing methods.
- Ensure privacy and humane treatment.

Strengthening Scientific Research

- Invest in better evidence on performance differences.
- Reduce policy uncertainty.

Exploring Alternatives

- Consider open or additional categories.
- Evaluate feasibility and fairness carefully.

Conclusion

The IOC's policy reflects a broader challenge of modern governance—balancing scientific realities with evolving notions of identity and rights.

While fairness remains essential in competitive sport, dignity and inclusion cannot be ignored in a democratic society. The solution lies not in choosing one value over another, but in designing policies that harmonise both through evidence, empathy, and flexibility.

This balanced approach represents the true spirit of justice—where fairness is upheld without compromising compassion.

Reader's Note — About This Current Affairs Compilation

Dear Aspirant,

This document is part of the PrepAlpine Current Affairs Series — designed to bring clarity, structure, and precision to your daily UPSC learning.

While every effort has been made to balance depth with brevity, please keep the following in mind:

1. Orientation & Purpose

This compilation is curated primarily from the UPSC Mains perspective — with emphasis on conceptual clarity, analytical depth, and interlinkages across GS papers.

However, the PrepAlpine team is simultaneously developing a dedicated Prelims-focused Current Affairs Series, designed for:

- factual coverage
- data recall
- Prelims-style MCQs
- objective pattern analysis

This Prelims Edition will be released separately as a standalone publication.

2. Content Length

Some sections may feel shorter or longer depending on topic relevance and news density. To fit your personal preference, you may freely resize or summarize sections using any LLM tool (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, etc.) at your convenience.

3. Format Flexibility

The formatting combines:

- paragraphs
- lists
- tables
- visual cues

—all optimised for retention.

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4. Monthly Current Affairs Release

The complete Monthly Current Affairs Module will be released soon, optimized to a compact 100–150 pages — comprehensive yet concise, exam-ready, and revision-efficient.

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