Polity & Governance · GS - II

“Delimitation must reconcile democratic equality with the federal principle of equitable representation.” Critically analyse this challenge in the context of India's North-South debate.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 27/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Articles 81 and 82, population-based representation, demographic transition, federalism, regional equity, 42nd Amendment, 84th Amendment, constitutional safeguards

Model Answer

Delimitation is essential for ensuring fair representation as population patterns change. However, in India, differences in demographic growth among States have made the exercise a sensitive constitutional and federal question.

The competing principles

1. **Democratic equality:** Population-based representation seeks to ensure broadly comparable representation of citizens in the Lok Sabha.
2. **Federal equity:** States that successfully controlled population growth fear a decline in their relative parliamentary influence compared with States experiencing faster population growth.
3. **Development incentives:** Penalising States for achieving demographic stabilisation may create concerns about fairness and weaken the incentive structure for population-related public policies.

Constitutional and political dimensions

1. Articles 81 and 82 provide the framework for parliamentary representation and delimitation.
2. The 42nd Constitutional Amendment froze the allocation of Lok Sabha seats among States until the first census after 2000.
3. The 84th Amendment extended this freeze until the first census after 2026, while the 87th Amendment permitted constituency readjustment using 2001 Census figures without changing the inter-State allocation of seats.
4. Political negotiations over proposals such as uniform seat expansion reflect the difficulty of balancing numerical equality with regional representation.

Towards a balanced framework

A credible approach requires transparent criteria, consultation with all States and constitutional safeguards against arbitrary redistribution. Population, demographic performance and the federal consequences of representation should be considered openly.

Conclusion

Delimitation should strengthen democratic representation without creating a perception that States are being disadvantaged for successful social development. Constitutional legitimacy depends on fairness, transparency and federal consensus.

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