

CUET · POLITICAL SCIENCE · CLASS XI · CODE 323

Federalism

CUET unit: Indian Constitution at Work — Federalism, Centre–State Relations, Special Provisions

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Snapshot

- Explains federalism as an institutional mechanism to accommodate two sets of polities (national and regional), each autonomous in its own sphere, with disputes resolved by an independent judiciary.
- Locates Indian federalism in Article 1 ("Union of States"), and shows that the Constitution never uses the word "federation" yet creates a strong-centre federal system.
- Maps the division of powers through the Union, State and Concurrent Lists, plus Residuary Powers vested in the Union.
- Tracks the working of Indian federalism: Nehru-era cooperation, the autonomy-demand phase post-1967, and the coalition-era "mature federalism" after the 1990s.
- Covers conflicts (Governor's role, Article 356/President's Rule, inter-state border and river-water disputes) and special provisions (north-east, hill States, and the now-repealed Article 370 for J&K, replaced by the J&K Reorganisation Act 2019).

Detailed Notes

2.1 Core concepts

Federalism is an **institutional mechanism to accommodate two sets of polities — one regional and one national** — with each government autonomous in its own sphere (NCERT §"What is Federalism", p. 154). People living in a federation have two sets of identities and loyalties — they belong to their region (as Gujaratis or Jharkhandis, for example) and they are also Indians. Each level of polity has distinct powers and a separate system of government. The dual system is spelt out in a **written, supreme constitution** which is the source of power of both governments: subjects of national concern (defence, currency) are entrusted to the centre, while regional and local matters are entrusted to the States. One important contrast: **India has single citizenship, unlike some federations with dual citizenship** (NCERT §"What is Federalism", p. 154). An **independent judiciary** settles centre–State legal disputes about the division of power, and the smooth functioning of federalism ultimately depends on real politics, culture, ideology and history — on a "culture of trust, cooperation, mutual respect and restraint." Dominance by a single unit or group can

generate resentment, secessionist demands or even civil war (NCERT §"What is Federalism", p. 155).

The Indian Constitution opens with **Article 1**: "India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States." The word "federation" is not used anywhere in the Constitution; the framers preferred "Union of States" to emphasise unity while recognising diversity (NCERT §"Federalism in the Indian Constitution", p. 157). The Constitution creates two sets of government — Union and State — each with constitutional status and a clearly identified area of activity; disputes are resolved by the judiciary on the basis of constitutional provisions (NCERT §"Division of Powers", p. 158). The **division of powers** is operationalised through **three Lists**: the **Union List** (Defence, Atomic Energy, Foreign Affairs, War and Peace, Banking, Railways, Post and Telegraph, Airways, Ports, Foreign Trade, Currency & Coinage), the **State List** (Agriculture, Police, Prison, Local Government, Public Health, Land, Liquor, Trade and Commerce, Livestock and Animal Husbandry, State Public Services), and the **Concurrent List** (Education, Transfer of Property other than agricultural land, Forests, Trade Unions, Adulteration, Adoption and Succession). All matters not mentioned in any List — the **Residuary Powers**, including Cyber Laws — vest exclusively with the Union Legislature (NCERT §"Division of Powers", p. 159).

The Constitution creates a federal polity with a **strong central government** because India is a country of continental dimensions with immense diversities and, at independence, **over 500 princely states** had to be integrated into the Union alongside the British-created provinces (NCERT §"Federalism with a Strong Central Government", p. 160). Several constitutional features reinforce central strength. Parliament alone can form a new State by separation of territory or by uniting States, and can alter the boundary or name of any State after securing the view (not the consent) of the concerned State legislature (NCERT p. 161). Emergency provisions can turn the federal polity into a highly centralised system; during a Proclamation of Emergency, Parliament can make laws on State List subjects. Financial powers are centralised — items generating revenue are largely under the centre; the erstwhile Planning Commission centralised economic decision-making; the Union uses discretion in grants and loans, which has occasionally led to charges of discrimination against opposition-ruled States (NCERT p. 161).

The **Governor** can recommend the dismissal of a State government and dissolution of the Assembly, and can reserve State bills for the President's assent. The **Rajya Sabha** can ratify Union legislation on a State subject; **Article 257(1)** makes Union executive power superior to State executive power and allows the Union to give directions to States. The **All-India Services** (IAS, IPS), though serving in States, remain under central control — States can neither take disciplinary action against them nor remove them from service. **Articles 33 and 34** authorise Parliament to protect persons in Union or State service for action taken during martial law; the Armed Forces Special Powers Act flows from these provisions (NCERT pp. 162–163).

The **working** of Indian federalism has passed through three phases. The **1950s and early 1960s** were a cooperative phase under Nehru, with Congress dominant at the centre and in most States. From the mid-1960s onwards, opposition parties came to power in several States and **demands for autonomy intensified**. Since the 1990s, the coalition era has produced a more "**mature federalism**" with greater say for States in policy-making (NCERT §"Centre-State Relations", p. 164). **Demands for autonomy** take four forms: (i) more powers to States in the division of powers; (ii) financial autonomy (independent revenue sources); (iii) administrative autonomy; and (iv) cultural/linguistic autonomy — opposition to Hindi imposition in Tamil Nadu and the demand for advancement of Punjabi in Punjab are the chief examples (NCERT §"Demands for Autonomy", pp. 165–166).

Governors are appointed by the central government and are not elected, making their role controversial. The **Sarkaria Commission** on Centre-State Relations was appointed in **1983** and submitted its report in **1988**, recommending that Governor appointments should be strictly non-partisan (NCERT §"Role of Governors and President's Rule", p. 166). **Article 356** (President's Rule) is invoked when the government of a State cannot be carried on in accordance with the Constitution; the proclamation must be ratified by Parliament and can be extended up to three years; the Supreme Court has held that its constitutional validity can be examined by the judiciary. Article 356 was sparingly used till 1967; after 1967 it was frequently used by the centre to dismiss State governments (e.g., Andhra Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir in the 1980s) (NCERT pp. 166–167).

Demands for new States have shaped the federal map. The States Reorganisation Commission was set up in **December 1953**; reorganisation on linguistic lines took place in **1956**; Gujarat and Maharashtra were created in **1960**; Punjab and Haryana were separated in **1966**; subsequently Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were created. In **2000**, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand were carved out of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar respectively; in **2014**, Telangana was formed by dividing Andhra Pradesh (NCERT pp. 167–168). **Inter-state conflicts** are of two main types: border disputes (Maharashtra–Karnataka over Belgaum; Manipur–Nagaland; Punjab–Haryana over Chandigarh — the 1985 Rajiv Gandhi understanding to hand Chandigarh to Punjab has not been implemented) and **river-water disputes** (Kaveri between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka; Narmada between Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra) (NCERT §"Interstate Conflicts", pp. 168–169).

Special provisions are mostly for north-eastern States (Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, etc.) due to their sizeable indigenous tribal population, and for hill States like Himachal Pradesh, as well as Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Sikkim and Telangana (p. 170).

Article 370 earlier gave Jammu and Kashmir a special status: concurrence of the State was required for laws on Union and Concurrent List subjects; no internal-disturbance emergency or financial emergency could be imposed without State concurrence; Directive Principles did not apply; and J&K had its own constitution and flag (NCERT pp. 170–171). This special status no longer exists: by the **Jammu and Kashmir**

Reorganisation Act, 2019, the State was bifurcated into two **Union Territories — Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh** — with effect from **31 October 2019** (NCERT p. 171).

2.2 Definitions to memorise

Term	Definition	Page
Federalism	Institutional mechanism accommodating two sets of polities — one regional and one national — each autonomous in its own sphere.	154
Single citizenship	Indian feature distinguishing it from federations with dual citizenship.	154
Union of States	Phrase in Article 1 describing India; the word "federation" is not used in the Constitution.	157
Union List	List of subjects (Defence, Foreign Affairs, Currency, Railways, etc.) on which only the Union Legislature can make laws.	159
State List	List of subjects (Agriculture, Police, Public Health, Land, etc.) on which normally only the State Legislature can make laws.	159
Concurrent List	List of subjects (Education, Forests, Trade Unions, Adoption, etc.) on which both Union and State legislatures can make laws.	159
Residuary Powers	All matters not mentioned in any List (including Cyber Laws); legislated upon only by the Union Legislature.	159
Article 1	"India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States."	157
Article 257(1)	Union executive power is superior to State executive power; permits central directions to States.	162
Article 356	President's Rule when a State government cannot be carried on as per the Constitution; ratified by Parliament; extendable up to three years.	166
Sarkaria Commission	Centre–State relations commission appointed 1983, reported 1988; non-partisan Governor appointments.	166
Article 370	Earlier provision giving special status to Jammu and Kashmir; no longer in effect.	170
J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019	Bifurcated J&K into two Union Territories — J&K and Ladakh — w.e.f. 31 October 2019.	171
Articles 33 & 34	Authorise Parliament to protect personnel acting during martial law; basis for AFSPA.	163
All-India Services (IAS, IPS)	Common to India and the States; under central disciplinary control.	162

Term	Definition	Page
Demands for autonomy	More powers, financial autonomy, administrative autonomy, cultural/linguistic autonomy.	165–166
Hindi imposition issue	Cited as cultural-autonomy grievance in Tamil Nadu.	166
Punjabi advancement	Cited as cultural-autonomy demand in Punjab.	166
Mature federalism	Coalition-era phase from the 1990s with greater State say.	164
Three phases of federalism	1950s–early 1960s; mid-1960s onwards; post-1990s.	164
Kaveri dispute	River-water dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.	169
Narmada dispute	River-water dispute between Gujarat, MP and Maharashtra.	169
Belgaum dispute	Border dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka.	168
Chandigarh-Punjab understanding (1985)	Rajiv Gandhi-era unimplemented promise.	169

2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

Several visual aids and process-lines recur in CUET stems. The **political maps of India 1947 vs 2017** on pp. 151–152 dramatise seven decades of reorganisation — useful for map-based items asking which state existed in 1947 but not in 2017 (e.g., Bombay), and vice versa (e.g., Telangana). The **distribution-of-powers chart** on p. 159 is the canonical visual: a three-column table with Union List (sample subjects: Defence, Atomic Energy, Foreign Affairs, War and Peace, Banking, Railways, Post and Telegraph, Airways, Ports, Foreign Trade, Currency & Coinage), State List (Agriculture, Police, Prison, Local Government, Public Health, Land, Liquor, Trade and Commerce, Livestock and Animal Husbandry, State Public Services) and Concurrent List (Education, Transfer of Property other than agricultural land, Forests, Trade Unions, Adulteration, Adoption and Succession), with a Residuary Powers box appended below the Union column. Drill which subject lies in which list, especially the recurring NTA trap items — **Education** (Concurrent, not State) and **Cyber Laws** (Residuary → Union).

Two textual boxes are heavily quarried in CUET: the **Article 1 box** on p. 157 ("India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States") and the **Article 257(1) box** on p. 162 (Union executive supremacy over State executive). The **phases-of-federalism timeline** on p. 164 — 1950s cooperative phase (Nehru) → mid-1960s autonomy demands → post-1990s coalition mature federalism — is a standard match-the-following spine. The Shankar and R.K. Laxman cartoons on Governor appointments and the "toppling of State governments" (pp. 165–167) capture the politics of Article 356. Memorise three concrete process lines: **Process A — President's Rule under Article 356**: State government cannot be carried on as per the Constitution → Governor's report → President's Proclamation → Parliamentary ratification → up to three-year duration → judicial review available. **Process B — Formation of new States**: Parliament's law under Article 3 → consultation with concerned State legislature → boundary or name

alteration. **Process C — Article 370 phase-out:** J&K had own constitution/flag → State concurrence required for Union/Concurrent List laws → J&K Reorganisation Act 2019 → effective 31 October 2019 → two UTs (J&K + Ladakh).

2.5 Key Articles / Treaties / Events

Reference	Source / Subject	NCERT cite
Article 1	"India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States"	p. 157
Articles 33 & 34	Parliamentary power to protect personnel during martial law; AFSPA basis	p. 163
Article 257(1)	Union executive supremacy over State executive	p. 162
Article 356	President's Rule in States	p. 166
Article 370 (former)	Special status for J&K (now inoperative)	pp. 170–171
Union, State, Concurrent Lists	Seventh Schedule distribution of powers	p. 159
Residuary Powers (incl. Cyber Laws)	Union Legislature	p. 159
States Reorganisation Commission (Dec 1953)	Linguistic reorganisation recommended	p. 167
States Reorganisation 1956	Implementation of SRC report	p. 167
Gujarat–Maharashtra (1960)	Bifurcation of bilingual Bombay	p. 168
Punjab–Haryana (1966)	Reorganisation of Punjab	p. 168
Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand (2000)	Carved from MP, UP, Bihar	p. 168
Telangana (2014)	Carved from Andhra Pradesh	p. 168
Sarkaria Commission (1983 appointed; 1988 reported)	Non-partisan Governor appointments	p. 166
J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 (effective 31 Oct 2019)	Two UTs created — J&K and Ladakh	p. 171
Rajiv Gandhi–Punjab understanding (1985)	Chandigarh transfer to Punjab — unimplemented	p. 169

2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

1. **The Constitution does NOT use the word "federation"** — Article 1 calls India a "Union of States." Distractors often offer "Federation of States."

2. **Residuary Powers (including Cyber Laws) lie with the Union**, not the States or the Concurrent List.
3. **Education is in the Concurrent List, not the State List** — a frequent NTA trap.
4. **Sarkaria Commission** was appointed in **1983** and submitted its report in **1988** — dates are often swapped.
5. **Article 370 is now inoperative** after the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019 (effective 31 October 2019), creating **two UTs** (J&K and Ladakh) — not three, and not States.
6. **SRC was set up in December 1953**; linguistic reorganisation came in **1956**; Gujarat–Maharashtra in **1960**; Punjab–Haryana in **1966**.
7. **The three States created in 2000** were Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand (from MP, UP and Bihar respectively); Telangana came later in 2014.
8. **India has single citizenship**, NOT dual citizenship — this distinguishes it from the US-style federation.
9. **All-India Services officers are under central disciplinary control** — States cannot remove them.
10. **Article 356 invocation can be reviewed by the judiciary**; it is NOT immune from judicial review (p. 166).
11. **Parliament can alter boundaries or names of States after taking the "view" of the concerned legislature** — but the State's consent is NOT mandatory.
12. **The 1985 Rajiv Gandhi understanding on Chandigarh** to Punjab has NOT been implemented (p. 169).

Practice MCQs

PYQ Alignment

Federalism is among the highest-yielding chapters in CUET Political Science, typically producing 5–7 MCQs across the paper. Recurring question types include direct factual recall on Article 1, the three Lists, and Residuary Powers; statement-based questions on the strong-centre features (Articles 257, 356, 370); match-the-following on years of State formation (Gujarat–Maharashtra 1960, Punjab–Haryana 1966, the 2000 trio, Telangana 2014); and assertion–reason items on the Sarkaria Commission, President's Rule, and the 2019 J&K reorganisation. The Education-in-Concurrent-List trap and the "no use of the word federation" trap repeatedly catch unprepared candidates.