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Region and the Nation; Jammu and Kashmir

The 1980s witnessed a surge in regional demands for autonomy, often challenging the framework of the Indian Union. Many of these movements involved armed protests, government repression, and the breakdown of political and electoral systems. Resolutions often came through negotiated settlements or accords between the central government and the leaders of the movements. These accords aimed to settle issues within the constitutional framework but were often achieved after violent and tumultuous struggles.

Indian Approach

India's Constitution promotes unity in diversity, allowing retention of regional and linguistic identities without denying unique cultures. Indian nationalism balances unity with diversity, unlike some European models that view cultural diversity as a threat. Democracy allows regional aspirations to be expressed politically, viewing them as part of the national discourse rather than anti-national. Regional identity and issues strengthen through democratic politics, with political parties addressing these concerns to gain support. Balancing national unity with regional demands can create tensions, as national concerns may overshadow regional needs, while exclusive regionalism can ignore broader national interests. Power struggles over regional autonomy and rights are common in nations that seek to honour diversity while maintaining national unity.

Areas of Tension: Challenges in Nation Building

Post-Independence, India faced immediate hurdles like Partition, displacement, integration of Princely States, and reorganisation of states. Observers doubted whether India could remain unified as a single nation. Jammu and Kashmir became a contentious issue, involving conflict with Pakistan and political aspirations of the Kashmiri people. Movements in Nagaland and Mizoram demanded separation, leading to armed insurgencies. In the south, some factions of the Dravid movement briefly considered forming a separate country. Regions like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Gujarat saw mass agitations for linguistic states. Tamil Nadu resisted making Hindi the national language, while in the north, there were strong demands for it. Agitations for a Punjabi-speaking state led to the creation of Punjab and Haryana in 1966. Later, states like Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, and Jharkhand were also carved out. Complex challenges, especially in Kashmir and Nagaland, persisted despite redrawing state boundaries. New crises emerged in Punjab, Assam, and Mizoram, reflecting the ongoing challenge of balancing regional diversity with national unity. These experiences offer insights into India's successes and failures in handling diversity and are instructive for nation-building efforts.

Jammu and Kashmir

Jammu and Kashmir had special status under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. Despite this, the region faced violence, cross-border terrorism, and political instability, leading to loss of lives among civilians, security forces, and militants. Large-scale displacement of Kashmiri Pandits occurred from the valley.

The region consists of three distinct areas: Jammu (foothills and plains, predominantly Hindu but also Muslims, Sikhs, and others), Kashmir Valley (mostly Muslim with minorities of Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists), and Ladakh (mountainous region with Buddhists and Muslims).

Roots of the Problem

Before 1947, Jammu and Kashmir was a Princely State ruled by Maharaja Hari Singh, who aimed for independence from both India and Pakistan. Pakistani leaders believed Kashmir

should belong to Pakistan due to its Muslim-majority population. The people of Kashmir, led by Sheikh Abdullah of the National Conference, prioritized their identity as Kashmiris and opposed joining Pakistan despite the Muslim majority. Pakistan sent tribal infiltrators to capture Kashmir, forcing the Maharaja to seek Indian military help, leading to the signing of the Instrument of Accession with India.

The United Nations proposed in 1948 that Pakistan withdraw forces, India reduce forces to maintain law and order, and a plebiscite be held in the state; however, the plebiscite was never implemented. Sheikh Abdullah became Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir in 1948 with provisional autonomy under Article 370.

External and Internal Disputes

Externally, Pakistan claims Kashmir due to its Muslim majority. In 1947, Pakistan sponsored a tribal invasion, resulting in part of Kashmir being under Pakistani control, known as Pakistan Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (POJK). This issue has fueled ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan.

Internally, Article 370 gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir, sparking divided reactions. Some in India wanted Article 370 revoked for full integration, while Kashmiris believed the promised plebiscite was unfulfilled. Autonomy under Article 370 was seen as eroded over time, and democracy in Jammu and Kashmir was perceived as less institutionalized than in other Indian states.

Politics Since 1948

Sheikh Abdullah initiated land reforms benefiting ordinary people but faced differences with the central government over Kashmir's status. He was dismissed in 1953 and detained for several years. Subsequent leadership lacked popular support and relied on central backing. Congress dominated Jammu and Kashmir politics, with the National Conference merging into it, leading to direct control and allegations of election rigging. In 1965, the title of Prime Minister was changed to Chief Minister; Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq became the first Chief Minister.

In 1974, Indira Gandhi's agreement led to Abdullah becoming Chief Minister again, reviving the National Conference, which won the 1977 elections. After Abdullah's death in 1982, Farooq Abdullah took over but was dismissed by the Governor, resulting in a brief period of rule by a breakaway faction. Farooq Abdullah's dismissal sparked resentment among Kashmiris, undermining confidence in democratic processes and intensifying feelings of central intervention when the National Conference formed an electoral alliance with Congress in 1986.

Insurgency and After

The National Conference–Congress alliance declared a massive victory, but results were widely viewed as rigged, leading to popular resentment. Growing discontent over perceived undermining of democracy escalated into a political crisis and insurgency. A militant movement emerged advocating for a separate Kashmiri nation, receiving support from Pakistan. This led to President's rule and increased military presence.

From 1990 onwards, Jammu and Kashmir faced severe violence from insurgents and military operations, destabilizing the region. Elections in 1996 brought the National Conference back to power with a call for regional autonomy. The 2002 elections resulted in a coalition government between the People's Democratic Party and Congress. Ghulam Nabi Azad succeeded Mufti Mohammed Sayeed but faced President's rule in 2008. The 2008 elections led to another coalition government led by Omar Abdullah. The 2014 elections recorded the highest voter turnout in 25 years, leading to Mufti Mohammed Sayeed forming a coalition with the BJP. After Sayeed's death, his daughter Mahbooba Mufti became the first woman Chief Minister in 2016. Rising terrorism and internal tensions led to President's rule in 2018 after BJP withdrew support.

On August 5, 2019, Article 370 was abolished through the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, reconstituting Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories: Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. This reorganisation highlighted the diverse religious, cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and tribal backgrounds of the region, reflecting India's pluralistic society and varied political and developmental aspirations.

Exam Question

Q: What was the significance of Article 370 for Jammu and Kashmir?

A: Article 370 granted Jammu and Kashmir special autonomous status within India, allowing it to have its own constitution and autonomy over internal matters, which was significant in recognizing the region's unique identity and political status until its abrogation in 2019.

Punjab

The social composition of Punjab changed significantly after Partition in 1947, with migration of Sikhs and Hindus to India and Muslims to Pakistan, altering the demographic structure. While most of India was reorganized on linguistic lines in the 1950s, Punjab was reorganised in 1966 following the demand for a Punjabi-speaking state led by the Akali Dal, the political wing of Sikhs formed in 1920.

Punjab's reorganisation carved out Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, making Sikhs the majority in the new Punjab. The Akali Dal formed coalition governments in 1967 and 1977 but struggled politically due to limited Hindu support and internal Sikh divisions. In the 1970s, the Akalis demanded greater autonomy through the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973, seeking to redefine centre-state relations and promote Sikh regional dominance and federalism. The resolution had limited appeal but highlighted growing demands for autonomy and Sikh identity.

Cycle of Violence

Leadership of the Punjab movement shifted from moderate Akalis to extremist elements, resulting in armed insurgency. Militants established their base in the Golden Temple in Amritsar, turning it into an armed fortress. In June 1984, the Indian government executed Operation Blue Star to flush out militants, damaging the historic temple and hurting Sikh sentiments. Many Sikhs viewed this as an attack on their faith, fueling further militancy.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated on October 31, 1984, by her Sikh bodyguards seeking revenge. Following her assassination, violent reprisals against Sikhs

erupted, especially in Delhi and northern India, lasting nearly a week. Over 2000 Sikhs were killed in Delhi, with significant violence in other cities, causing emotional and financial devastation. The government's slow response and failure to punish perpetrators intensified Sikh grievances. In 2005, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh apologized in Parliament for the anti-Sikh violence.

Road to Peace

After the 1984 elections, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi initiated dialogue with moderate Akali leaders, leading to the Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal Accord in 1985. The accord aimed to restore normalcy by agreeing to transfer Chandigarh to Punjab, establish commissions for border disputes and water sharing, provide compensation for those affected by militancy, and withdraw the Armed Forces Special Powers Act in Punjab.

Despite the accord, violence persisted for nearly a decade, with militancy and counter-insurgency actions causing human rights violations. Political fragmentation within the Akali Dal led to President's rule and suspension of normal elections. The 1992 elections had only 24% voter turnout due to violence and suspicion. Eventually, security forces eradicated militancy, but losses were significant for both Sikhs and Hindus.

By the mid-1990s, peace was restored, culminating in a major victory for the Akali Dal (Badal) and BJP alliance in 1997, marking the first normal elections post-militancy. The state shifted focus to economic development and social change, with a gradual return to secular politics despite enduring religious identities.

Exam Question

Q: What were the causes and consequences of Operation Blue Star?

A: Operation Blue Star was launched in 1984 to remove militants from the Golden Temple in Punjab. It caused damage to the sacred site and hurt Sikh sentiments, leading to increased militancy. The operation resulted in the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and subsequent anti-Sikh riots, causing widespread violence and loss of life.

The North-East; Accommodation and National Integration

The North-East region of India consists of eight states: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Sikkim. It represents about 4% of India's population but covers a large area connected to the rest of India by a narrow corridor. The region borders China, Myanmar, and Bangladesh and serves as a gateway to Southeast Asia.

Post-independence, Tripura, Manipur, and the Khasi Hills merged with India. Significant political reorganisation occurred with the creation of Nagaland (1963), Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya (1972), and Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh (1987). The 1947 Partition isolated the region, leading to economic neglect and political insulation. Demographic shifts occurred due to migration from neighbouring states and countries. Isolation, diverse social structures, and underdevelopment contributed to complex political demands, including autonomy, secessionist movements, and opposition to outsiders.

Demand for Autonomy

At independence, the North-East (excluding Manipur and Tripura) was part of Assam, leading to demands for political autonomy from non-Assamese communities. Non-Assamese groups opposed the imposition of the Assamese language, resulting in protests and riots. Tribal leaders formed the Eastern India Tribal Union, later the All Party Hill Leaders Conference, demanding tribal states carved out of Assam. Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh were created from Assam, and Tripura and Manipur were upgraded to statehood by 1972.

Demands for autonomy persisted, with communities like Bodos, Karbis, and Dimasas seeking separate states. Overlapping territorial claims complicated state formation. To address this, autonomy was granted through District Councils and Autonomous Councils within the federal framework.

Secessionist Movements

Secessionist movements in the North-East present complex challenges. In the Mizo Hills, dissatisfaction with the Indian Union and inadequate government response to the 1959 famine led to the formation of the Mizo National Front (MNF), which began an armed campaign for independence in 1966. The conflict lasted two decades, with guerrilla warfare and repressive measures. A peace agreement in 1986 granted Mizoram full statehood with special powers, and the MNF renounced secession, leading to peace and development.

In Nagaland, the Naga National Council declared independence in 1951 and launched an armed struggle. Some factions signed agreements with the Indian government, but others remain dissatisfied. The Naga issue remains unresolved.

Movements Against Outsiders

Movements against outsiders arose from significant migration, leading to tensions between locals and perceived migrants competing for resources. The Assam Movement (1979–1985) was led by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), demanding deportation of illegal migrants who entered after 1951. The movement saw widespread support and violent incidents. The Rajiv Gandhi government negotiated the Assam Accord in 1985, aiming to identify and deport illegal migrants. The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) formed government promising to address immigration issues. Despite the accord, immigration remains contentious in Assam and the North-East, with hostility toward refugees in Tripura, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh.

Accommodation and National Integration

Regional aspirations are integral to democratic politics and should be viewed as legitimate expressions of diverse societal interests. Democratic negotiation rather than suppression is crucial for addressing regional tensions and facilitating reconciliation and stability. Effective governance requires involving regional groups in decision-making at state and national levels to ensure equity and representation. Addressing regional economic disparities counters feelings of injustice and alienation. India's Constitution provides a flexible framework accommodating diversity, helping manage conflicts and maintain unity. Regions should have autonomy to preserve unique identities while being included in national governance to foster belonging. This flexibility prevents regional

aspirations from turning into separatist movements and integrates regionalism into democratic politics.

Exam Question

Q: How has India accommodated regional aspirations in the North-East?

A: India has accommodated regional aspirations in the North-East by creating new states and autonomous councils, negotiating peace agreements with insurgent groups, and providing constitutional flexibility that allows regions to preserve their unique identities while remaining part of the Indian Union.

Solved Examples

Example 1: Explain the significance of the Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal Accord.

Answer: The Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal Accord of 1985 was significant as it aimed to restore peace in Punjab by addressing key issues such as the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab, resolving border disputes, sharing river waters, compensating victims of militancy, and withdrawing the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. Although violence continued for some years, the accord laid the foundation for eventual peace and political stability.

Example 2: What were the main causes of insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir?

Answer: The main causes of insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir included political instability, perceived erosion of autonomy under Article 370, rigged elections undermining democratic processes, support from Pakistan for militant groups, and dissatisfaction among Kashmiris over central government interventions.

Practice Set

Easy

- What was the Instrument of Accession?
- Name the three regions of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Which political party led the demand for a Punjabi-speaking state?

Moderate

- Describe the impact of Operation Blue Star on Punjab.
- Explain the significance of the Assam Accord.
- What were the main demands of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution?

Challenging

- Analyze the challenges faced by India in balancing regional autonomy with national integration.
- Discuss the role of democratic negotiation in resolving regional conflicts in the North-East.
- Evaluate the consequences of the abrogation of Article 370 on Jammu and Kashmir.

Answer Key

Easy

- The Instrument of Accession was a 1947 treaty where the Maharaja of Kashmir agreed to join Kashmir with India, allowing India to control defence, foreign affairs, and communications.
- The three regions of Jammu and Kashmir are Jammu, Kashmir Valley, and Ladakh.
- The Akali Dal led the demand for a Punjabi-speaking state.

Moderate

- Operation Blue Star led to damage to the Golden Temple, hurt Sikh sentiments, increased militancy, and resulted in the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and anti-Sikh riots.
- The Assam Accord was an agreement to identify and deport illegal migrants, aiming to restore peace after the Assam Movement.
- The Anandpur Sahib Resolution demanded greater autonomy for Punjab, redefinition of centre-state relations, and promotion of Sikh identity and federalism.

Challenging

- India faces challenges in balancing regional autonomy and national integration due to diverse identities, demands for self-rule, and the need to maintain unity. Constitutional flexibility and democratic negotiation help manage these tensions.
- Democratic negotiation allows peaceful resolution of conflicts by involving regional groups in decision-making, fostering reconciliation, and preventing violence, as seen in peace accords in the North-East.
- The abrogation of Article 370 ended Jammu and Kashmir's special status, leading to reorganisation into two Union Territories, aiming for better integration but also causing political and social tensions.

Quick Reference

- **Article 370:** Special autonomous status for Jammu and Kashmir until 2019.
- **Operation Blue Star:** 1984 military operation in Punjab targeting militants in the Golden Temple.
- **Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal Accord:** 1985 agreement to restore peace in Punjab.
- **Assam Accord:** 1985 agreement addressing illegal immigration in Assam.
- **Anandpur Sahib Resolution:** 1973 demand for greater autonomy and Sikh identity.
- **Mizo National Front:** Insurgent group seeking independence for Mizoram, later negotiated peace.
- **Instrument of Accession:** Treaty integrating Jammu and Kashmir with India in 1947.

Glossary

- **Autonomy:** The right of a region to self-govern within a larger political entity.
- **Insurgency:** Armed rebellion against a government, often for political or regional reasons.
- **Secessionist Movements:** Political movements seeking to separate a region from a country to form an independent state.
- **Federalism:** A system of government where power is divided between a central authority and constituent units.
- **President's Rule:** Direct rule by the central government in an Indian state during political instability.
- **Union Territory:** A type of administrative division in India governed directly by the central government.

Year	Event	Significance
1947	Partition and Instrument of Accession of Jammu and Kashmir	Integration of J&K with India; beginning of Kashmir conflict
1951	Naga independence declared by Angami Zapu Phizo	Start of Naga insurgency
1966	Punjab Reorganisation	Creation of Punjabi-speaking state; Sikh majority
1984	Operation Blue Star and Indira Gandhi assassination	Escalation of Punjab militancy and anti-Sikh riots
1985	Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal Accord and Assam Accord	Efforts to restore peace in Punjab and Assam
1986	Mizoram Peace Accord	End of Mizo insurgency; Mizoram statehood
2019	Abrogation of Article 370	Revocation of J&K special status; reorganisation into Union Territories