

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q6(c)

Discuss the composition and functions of the Inter-State Council. To what extent has this body been successful in achieving its objectives?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · PSIR GS 1 · 15 marks · Federalism

Federalism: Constitutional provisions; changing nature of centre-state relations; integrationist tendencies and regional aspirations; inter-state disputes.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the composition and functions of the Inter-State Council. To what extent has this body been successful in achieving its objectives? (15 marks)

Revision summary

Article 263 authorises an Inter-State Council; **Sarkaria**'s push led to its 1990 constitution.

The PM chairs; Chief Ministers and some Union ministers are members.

Functions are dispute advice, common-interest discussion, and policy coordination, all recommendatory.

Meetings have been too few for a standing federal forum.

Bommai, **GST Council**, and tribunals did more for federal conflict than the Council did.

Introduction

The Inter-State Council is a constitutional body under **Article 263** for coordination between the Union and the States and among States. **Sarkaria** recommended that it be set up as a standing political forum. It was constituted in 1990. Success has been modest beside the problems it was meant to ease.

Body

Composition

- The Prime Minister is the chairman. Chief Ministers of all States and those Union Territories with assemblies are members.
- Six Union Cabinet ministers, nominated by the Prime Minister, sit on the Council.
- A standing committee, usually chaired by the Union Home Minister, does preparatory work.
- The Secretariat, now with the Ministry of Home Affairs after shifts of location, services meetings. This is a political council, not a court.

Functions under Article 263

- Inquiring into and advising upon disputes between States.
- Investigating and discussing subjects of common interest to some or all States, or to the Union and one or more States.
- Making recommendations for better coordination of policy and action.

- **Sarkaria** wanted it to be the principal forum for Union-State consultation, including on concurrent-list bills and fiscal federal stress.
- **Punchhi** later asked for more regular meetings and a stronger follow-up of recommendations.

Extent of success

- The Council created a recognised table after decades of ad hoc National Development Council and zonal councils. That is a partial success of form.
- It discussed **Sarkaria**'s own report, **Article 356**, and some concurrent-list issues. Recommendations are advisory. Cabinets may ignore them.
- Meetings have been infrequent for long stretches, which is the opposite of a standing coordinating device.
- **S. R. Bommai** (1994) disciplined President's Rule through the Court, not through the Council, showing where federal protection actually bit.
- **GST Council** under **Article 279A** became a more consequential federal bargain on tax. **NITI Aayog** replaced **Planning Commission** as a different talking shop. The Inter-State Council did not become the centre of either money or planning.
- River disputes still go to tribunals and the Supreme Court. The Council has not been the successful dispute-settler **Article 263** imagined.

Assessment

- Objectives of dialogue and a less imperial Centre are only weakly met.
- Coalition eras used extra-constitutional bargaining more than this Council. A dominant national party can starve it of meetings.
- It remains useful when used. It has not achieved **Sarkaria**'s standing political federalism.

Flow diagram

Article 263 -> Inter-State Council
 Inter-State Council -> PM plus CMs plus CMs
 Inter-State Council -> Advise coordinate disputes
 Sarkaria 1990 -> Inter-State Council
 GST Council Council -> Stronger fiscal forum

Conclusion

The Inter-State Council's composition is PM, Chief Ministers, and nominated Union ministers. Its functions are inquiry, common-interest discussion, and recommendatory coordination. Success is limited: irregular meetings, advisory teeth, and displacement by **GST Council**, courts, and informal coalition bargains.

Facts & figures

Article 263

Empowers the President to establish an Inter-State Council for coordination and dispute-related inquiry.

Sarkaria Commission

Recommended a standing Inter-State Council; implemented in 1990.

Punchhi Commission

Asked for regular meetings and better implementation of Council advice.

GST Council

Constitutional federal tax body that in practice outranked the Inter-State Council on fiscal coordination.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/psir-gs-1/2022/discuss-the-composition-and-functions-of-the-inter-state-council-to-what-extent-has-this-body-been-successful-in-achieving-its-objectives/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com