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Q5(d)

Does regionalism essentially lead to decentralization of power? Substantiate your answer with relevant examples

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Politics and Society

Politics and Society: Nation, democracy and citizenship; Political parties, pressure groups, social and political elite; Regionalism and decentralization of politics; Secularization.

Core demand of the question

- Does regionalism essentially lead to decentralization of power? Substantiate your answer with relevant examples
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Regionalism can force new states and federal bargaining.

It often stops at the state elite, not the village.

Sons-of-the-soil politics can exclude rather than devolve.

Panchayati raj is a distinct constitutional path.

The link is possible, not essential.

Introduction

Regionalism is loyalty to a language, culture, or state-region. Decentralisation is the downward spread of power. The first can cause the second, but it does not essentially do so.

Body

When it leads downward

- **Linguistic states**, and later demands in Telangana or Jharkhand, pushed federal redesign and new statehood, a real devolution from an older map.
- Coalition politics and state parties have forced the Centre to bargain, which Yogendra Singh's nation of regions can describe as modern recombination.

When it does not

- **Regionalism can centralise inside the region:** a dominant caste or linguistic majority captures the new state, as Srinivas's local power would predict.
- Ethnocentric sons-of-the-soil movements may exclude migrants rather than empower panchayats.
- Some regional parties, once in Delhi's coalition, still run high-command states.

Examples

- Tamil and Telugu political assertion expanded cultural federalism without automatically funding Gram Sabhas.

- **Panchayati raj** is constitutional decentralisation that regionalism neither invented nor always implements.

Flow diagram

Regionalism -> Statehood federal bargain
Regionalism -> Regional elite capture
Statehood federal bargain -> Possible decentralisation
Regional elite capture -> Not essential link
Panchayati raj -> Possible decentralisation

Conclusion

Regionalism does not essentially lead to decentralisation. It often redistributes power from Centre to state elite. Local democracy needs separate design, not only a regional name.

Facts & figures

Linguistic states

Reorganisation that answered regionalism with a federal map.

Jharkhand Telangana

Statehood as regional claim; local power still contested after the new capital.

Panchayati raj

73rd Amendment decentralisation that is not the same as regional party success.

Sons of the soil

Regionalism that can centralise belonging against migrants.