



FEDERALISM AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN INDIA AFTER LIBERALISATION

Mukesh Gautam

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Gargi College, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India

ABSTRACT

This article examines the intricate relationship between federalism and national security in India in the post-liberalisation era. The process of economic liberalisation that began in 1991 had profound implications for India's federal structure and its approach to national security. This article delves into the evolution of federalism in India, mainly focusing on the challenges and opportunities it presents in the context of national security. By analysing critical case studies and policy shifts, this article aims to provide insights into how federalism impacts India's ability to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

KEYWORDS : federalism, national security, post-liberalisation, India, evolution, 1991

INTRODUCTION

With economic liberalisation policies, India's socio-political and economic landscape underwent a significant transformation in the early 1990s. This transformation, often referred to as "liberalisation," entailed a shift from a largely closed, centrally planned economy to one that embraced market-oriented reforms, foreign investment, and global integration. While liberalisation's impact on India's economy and its implications for foreign policy has been widely studied, examining how this transformation affected India's federal structure and its approach to national security is equally imperative.

The concept of federalism, enshrined in the Indian Constitution, is integral to India's governance system. It delineates the distribution of powers and responsibilities between the central government and individual states, ensuring a balance between unity and diversity in a country of staggering heterogeneity. Federalism, historically rooted in India's socio-cultural and political diversity, underwent a reevaluation and reconfiguration as liberalisation swept across the nation. The pivotal question in this context is how the evolution of federalism in India, catalysed by economic liberalisation, impacts the country's ability to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity. In the post-liberalisation era, federalism is no longer confined to the realms of fiscal decentralisation or regional development; it is inextricably linked with the very fabric of India's national security.

Our study unfolds in five key sections. The first section provides an in-depth analysis of the evolution of federalism in India, elucidating how it has been influenced and reshaped by the forces of liberalisation. The subsequent sections delve into the multifaceted challenges and opportunities this evolving federal structure presents concerning national security.

Evolution Of Federalism (post-liberalisation)

The early 1990s marked a watershed moment in India's economic and political history with the initiation of economic liberalisation policies. This era saw a dramatic shift in India's approach to federalism, reflecting changing national priorities and a renewed commitment to decentralisation.

- **Cooperative Federalism:** One of the most significant changes post-liberalisation was the emergence of cooperative federalism. The central government began collaborating more closely with states to promote economic growth and development. Fiscal decentralisation gained momentum as states were granted greater financial autonomy. This shift was underscored by the establishment of institutions like the National Development Council (NDC) and the Finance Commission, which played critical roles in redistributing

resources and facilitating cooperation between the centre and states.

- **Decentralization of Economic Powers:** The liberalisation policies opened avenues for states to formulate their economic policies and attract investment. States were encouraged to create a conducive environment for industries and businesses, leading to competition among states to attract investments. This decentralisation of economic powers aims to promote regional development and reduce economic disparities.
- **Political Changes:** Alongside economic shifts, political changes occurred as well. Coalition governments at the centre became more common, necessitating greater cooperation between political parties and states. This political landscape further emphasised the role of states in shaping national policies, including those related to national security.
- **State-Specific Policies:** States developed leeway in implementing policies tailored to their needs and challenges. This was particularly evident in education, healthcare, and infrastructure development.
- **Challenges of Cooperative Federalism:** While cooperative federalism has its advantages, it has challenges. Coordination between the Centre and states can be complex, and disagreements over resource allocation and policy priorities sometimes arise.

The evolution of federalism in India post-liberalisation represents a shift from a more centralised system to one that embraces cooperative federalism and decentralisation. This transformation has profound implications for how India addresses national security challenges in an era of globalisation, regional conflicts, and non-traditional security threats. Understanding this evolution is pivotal in comprehending the contemporary dynamics of federalism and its impact on India's national security paradigm.

National Security Challenges (post-liberalisation)

- **Border Security:** Border security is a cornerstone of India's national security framework, and the post-liberalisation era introduced new dynamics and challenges in this realm. India shares borders with several countries, each presenting its own set of security concerns.
- **Cross-Border Terrorism and Insurgencies:** The liberalisation of the Indian economy brought with it increased cross-border trade and connectivity, which, while beneficial for economic growth, also presented opportunities for illicit activities, including terrorism. Bhattacharyya (2016) noted, "The opening up of trade and investment channels post-liberalisation also opened avenues for cross-border terrorism and insurgencies, as non-state actors could exploit these openings to their advantage." [1]

- **Infiltration and Smuggling:** The porous nature of some of India's borders, particularly in regions like Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeast, made it challenging to curb infiltration and smuggling. Chakravorty et al. (2019) noted, "The liberalisation of trade routes, while boosting legitimate commerce, also provided cover for nefarious activities, including the smuggling of arms and contraband." [2]
- **Cyber Threats:** The digital revolution accompanying liberalisation brought new security challenges. India's increasing reliance on information technology and the internet has made it vulnerable to cyber threats, including attacks on critical infrastructure and data breaches. Singh and Chaturvedi (2017) noted, "The post-liberalisation era witnessed a proliferation of cyber threats, necessitating a robust cybersecurity framework." [3]
- **Economic Security:** The economic reforms of the early 1990s reshaped India's economic landscape and redefined the concept of national security, encompassing economic stability and prosperity.
- **Safeguarding Critical Infrastructure:** With the liberalisation of key sectors such as energy, telecommunications, and transportation, ensuring the security and resilience of critical infrastructure became paramount. Mishra and Sarma (2018) emphasised, "The liberalisation-induced expansion of critical infrastructure demanded comprehensive measures to safeguard them from physical and cyber threats." [4]
- **Resource Security:** India's increased integration into the global economy made it more reliant on imports for essential resources, such as oil and minerals. This heightened resource vulnerability, making the nation susceptible to supply disruptions and price fluctuations. Garg and Jain (2019) state, "Resource security post-liberalisation involved securing access to strategic resources through diplomacy and diversification of sources." [5]
- **Economic Espionage:** The liberalised business environment also brought risks of economic espionage and intellectual property theft. Firms operating in India faced challenges in protecting their proprietary technologies and sensitive data. As Gupta et al. (2016) highlighted, "Economic security post-liberalisation encompassed measures to safeguard the intellectual property of domestic industries and protect against economic espionage." [6]

Case Studies

Kashmir Conflict

The enduring Kashmir conflict is a compelling case study of how federalism and national security intersect in post-liberalisation India. Kashmir, a region marked by territorial disputes and ethnic complexities, has posed a persistent security challenge. The Kashmir conflict epitomises the complexities of India's federal structure in addressing regional security concerns. The state of Jammu and Kashmir enjoyed a special autonomous status until it was revoked in 2019. This special status exemplified the balance between state autonomy and central authority, which became a subject of contention (Ganguly, 2020) [7]. India's experience with cross-border terrorism in Kashmir underscores the importance of border security. Jha (2017) states, "The porous border with Pakistan-administered Kashmir has facilitated infiltration and insurgent activities, requiring a multi-faceted approach to counterterrorism." [8] The state government's role in managing the conflict is pivotal. The ability of the state government to maintain law and order while addressing the aspirations of the local population has significant implications for national security (Ghosh, 2019). [9]

Naxalite Insurgency

The Naxalite insurgency provides insights into the challenges

of dealing with internal security threats in India's federal structure. The Naxalite insurgency spans multiple states, necessitating coordinated efforts between state and central governments. Roy and Shukla (2018) noted, "Effective coordination and intelligence sharing between affected states are crucial in addressing the Naxalite insurgency." The allocation of resources for counter-insurgency operations is a matter of contention between the center and affected states. [10]

Mumbai Terror Attacks

The 2008 Mumbai terror attacks exemplify the importance of intelligence sharing and inter-agency cooperation in national security. The attacks exposed gaps in intelligence sharing between central and state agencies. The need for improved coordination and information exchange became evident (Subramanian, 2011). [11] The swift response of security forces at the state level and central assistance were instrumental in mitigating the crisis. The attacks highlighted the significance of well-trained state-level security forces (Kamik, 2009). [12]

These case studies underscore the dynamic nature of federalism in India and its impact on national security. The Kashmir conflict illustrates the challenges of addressing regional security issues within a federal structure, the Naxalite insurgency showcases the importance of state-level coordination in addressing internal threats, and the 2008 Mumbai attacks emphasise the need for effective intelligence sharing between central and state agencies.

CONCLUSIONS

The evolution of federalism in India post-liberalisation reflects a dynamic process that has profound implications for the nation's national security landscape. This research demonstrated that the transformation from a largely centralised approach to a more cooperative federalism framework was accompanied by significant challenges and opportunities in safeguarding India's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The case studies presented here, including the Kashmir conflict, the Naxalite insurgency, and the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, underscored the intricate interplay between federalism and national security. These case studies exemplified the need for a balanced approach that respects state autonomy while ensuring the central government's ability to respond effectively to security challenges.

In conclusion, India's federalism, evolving in the wake of economic liberalisation, has reshaped the nation's approach to national security. The shift towards cooperative federalism has empowered states to play a more significant role in shaping India's security policies. However, this transformation has not come without challenges, particularly regarding coordination, resource allocation, and the distribution of powers between the centre and states.

As India navigates an increasingly complex global environment, it must continue to adapt its federal structure to address evolving security threats effectively. Striking the right balance between a strong central authority and empowered states is pivotal for ensuring national security and stability in a diverse and dynamic nation.

This article underscores the significance of ongoing dialogue and policy development to refine the federalism-national security nexus in India. Further research, analysis, and policy innovation are essential to address the evolving security landscape in the post-liberalisation era and ensure that India remains secure and resilient in the face of emerging challenges.

REFERENCES:

- [1] Bhattacharyya, A. (2016). India's National Security Challenges: Trade, Security, and Illicit Flows. IDSA Monograph Series.
- [2] Chakravorty, S., et al. (2019). Borders, Histories, Existences: Gender and Beyond. Women Unlimited.
- [3] Singh, R., & Chaturvedi, S. (2017). Cybersecurity in India: An Evolving Challenge. Observer Research Foundation.
- [4] Mishra, R., & Sarma, P. (2018). Securing India's Critical Infrastructure: A Comprehensive Framework. National Institute of Advanced Studies.
- [5] Garg, D., & Jain, A. (2019). India's Resource Security Challenges in a Globalized World. Center for Strategic and International Studies.
- [6] Gupta, A., et al. (2016). Economic Espionage and Intellectual Property Theft: Implications for India. Observer Research Foundation.
- [7] Ganguly, S. (2020). The Kashmir Conundrum: Federalism and Special Status. *International Affairs*, 96(4), 861-878.
- [8] Jha, P.K. (2017). Pakistan and Infiltration of Terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir: An Appraisal. *Journal of Defence Studies*, 11(2), 89-113.
- [9] Ghosh, P. (2019). The Kashmir Conundrum: Autonomy, Governance, and the Challenges of Federalism. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 42(2), 213-232.
- [10] Roy, A., & Shukla, A. (2018). The Naxalite Insurgency in India: Challenges and Responses. *Asia Policy*, 13(4), 101-126.
- [11] Subramanian, L. (2011). 26/11 and the Need for Intelligence Reforms in India. Observer Research Foundation.
- [12] Karnik, R. (2009). Mumbai 26/11: A Day of Terror. HarperCollins India.