

Examine the federal structure of India in comparison with that of the United States. Analyse how recent Centre–State issues highlight similarities and differences.

Understanding Question- Finding Information

- **Precise Syllabus Mapping:** Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries. (**GS Paper – II**)
- **Marks and Words Limit:**
 - The marks-oriented approach to answering **(10-mark, 150-word)** questions in the question is to use **Bullet Points** (one idea per bullet point), **Brainstorming**, or a combination of both.
 - The way to score good marks in questions worth **(15 marks. 250 words)** is to use the **Heading** and **Subheading** method while writing your answers.
- **Directive words**
 - Examine → Explain key features with comparison
 - Analyse → Link theory with practice using recent Centre–State issues
- **Focal points of the questions:**
 - Comparative federal structure: India vs USA
 - Contemporary Centre–State issues showing: Similarities, Differences

Answer Writing Structure (Outline)

A. Introduction Paragraph

- Conceptual clarity on federalism
- Non-ideological tone

B. Body Paragraph

a. Federal Structure: India vs United States

Dos & Don'ts: Use a comparative, theme-wise framework (not country-wise essays).

- **Nature of Federation**

- India: "Union of States" with strong Centre; indestructible Union
- USA: Voluntary federation; strong state autonomy

- **Distribution of Powers**

- India: Union, State and Concurrent Lists; residuary powers with Centre
- USA: Enumerated federal powers; residual powers with States

- **Fiscal Federalism**

- India: Greater fiscal centralisation; States depend on transfers
- USA: States enjoy substantial taxation and borrowing autonomy

- **Constitutional Flexibility**

- India: Amendments can be passed by Parliament with limited state consent
- USA: Amendments require ratification by states

- **Emergency and Unitary Bias**

- India: Emergency provisions can tilt federation towards unitary form
- USA: No equivalent constitutional emergency centralisation

b. Recent Centre–State Issues: Similarities and Differences

Dos & Don'ts: Do not list events, focus on federal principles revealed

- **Similarities Highlighted**

- Disputes over: Fiscal resources, Policy implementation
- Judicial arbitration in Centre–State conflicts
- Federal tensions visible in both systems during crises

- **Differences Highlighted**

- India: Greater Union role in policy design and implementation, States express concerns over fiscal autonomy and consultation
- USA: States often challenge federal authority more assertively, Greater room for policy divergence among states

- **Institutional Mechanisms**

- India: Inter-State Council, Finance Commission, GST Council
- USA: Strong role of courts and negotiated federalism

C. Conclusion:

- Balanced judgement + forward-looking tone

Dos & Don'ts

- **Do for Maximum Marks**

- ✓ Can use Brainstorming Idea: Constitutional design → Operational practice → Centre–State tensions → Federal resilience
- ✓ Use comparative headings (India vs USA)
- ✓ Anchor analysis in constitutional provisions
- ✓ Maintain neutral, analytical tone
- ✓ Link recent issues to federal principles, not politics
- ✓ Highlight cooperative federalism where relevant

- **Don't do these Common Mistakes**

- × Don't write two separate country essays
- × Avoid political commentary or party references
- × Don't overload with case names or data
- × Avoid extreme claims (e.g., "India is not federal")
- × Don't ignore fiscal federalism

Notes Oriented Content for Writing Answer

India's quasi-federal system emphasizes a strong Centre for unity (unitary bias) versus the US's classic, strict federation where states hold significant autonomy, shown in single vs. dual citizenship, residuary powers (Centre in India, States in US), and central appointment of Governors (India) vs. direct election (US); recent issues like GST disputes (fiscal federalism), abrogation of Article 370 (central power), and debates over All India Services (AIS) highlight India's cooperative but often contentious balancing act between central authority and regional demands, unlike the US's more distinct state sovereignty.

Comparative Federal Structure: India vs. USA

Feature	India (Holding Together)	United States (Coming Together)
Origin	Result of a split of a unitary unit; an indestructible Union of destructible states.	Result of an agreement between sovereign states; an indestructible Union of indestructible states.
Nature	Quasi-federal with a strong unitary bias (Art. 1).	Dual Federalism with strict separation between federal and state spheres.
Citizenship	Single Citizenship to promote national unity.	Dual Citizenship (state and federal).
Residuary Powers	Vested with the Union (Art. 248).	Vested with the States (10th Amendment).
Judiciary	Integrated system with the Supreme Court at the apex.	Dual system (separate federal and state court systems).
Upper House	Asymmetrical representation based on state population.	Symmetrical representation (two senators per state).

Analysis of Recent Centre State Issues

Recent issues highlight the shift from "Cooperative Federalism" toward "Bargaining" or "Coercive Federalism".

- **Fiscal Federalism (GST):**

- **Similarity:** Both nations use fiscal transfers to support states.
- **Difference:** The GST Council (Art. 279A) creates a unique pooled sovereignty in India, whereas US states retain high independent taxing power.
- **Issue:** Delays in GST compensation during the pandemic highlighted states' financial dependence on the Centre, a vulnerability less common in the more autonomous US state system.

- **Legislative Overlap (NEET & Farm Laws):**

- **Similarity:** Both countries face legal battles over whether a central law can override state preferences in education or agriculture.
- **Difference:** In India, the Concurrent List (7th Schedule) allows the Union's law to prevail in case of conflict (Art. 254), whereas the US 10th Amendment offers stronger protection for state-held powers.
- **Issue:** States like Tamil Nadu have challenged NEET, arguing it infringes on their right to regulate education, highlighting the "unitary bias" of the Indian system.

- **Role of Executive Agents (Governor vs. State Governors):**

- **Difference:** In the US, Governors are elected and sovereign heads of their states. In India, the Governor is an appointee of the Centre, often leading to friction when the state and central ruling parties differ.
- **Issue:** Recent conflicts over withholding bills (e.g., in Kerala or West Bengal) highlight a vertical tension absent in the US horizontal federal model.

- **Centralised Administration (All India Services):**

- **Difference:** India uses All India Services (IAS/IPS) where officers are recruited by the Centre but serve the States. The US has no such cross-cutting administrative cadre.
- **Issue:** Disputes over the central deputation of officers have become a flashpoint for administrative federalism in India.

In conclusion, while both India and the United States share the foundational architecture of a written constitution, an independent judiciary, and a division of powers, they represent two distinct evolutionary paths of federalism. The United States operates as a "coming together" federation, prioritising state sovereignty and a rigid dual structure where the federal government has only delegated powers. In contrast, India is a "holding together" federation, intentionally designed with a "unitary bias" (quasi-federal) to preserve national integrity amidst extreme diversity. Ultimately, while the U.S. model focuses on protecting liberty through decentralisation, the Indian model focuses on governance and unity through a flexible, cooperative framework. Both systems continue to adapt, proving that federalism is not a static blueprint but a dynamic process of balancing shared rule with regional self-rule.

