

# Comparative Resilience in Multicultural Federalism: India's Asymmetric Model vs. Nigeria's Centralized System- Lessons for Somalia's Federal Experiment

Mr. Hassan Mohamed Yusuf<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Ahmed Ga'al Ali<sup>2</sup>, Mr. Mohamed Daud Mohamud<sup>2</sup>, Mr. Abdullahi Mohamud Omar<sup>2</sup>, Prof. Aweis Moalim Abdullahi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Capital University of Somalia, Mogadishu, Somalia | Ph.D. Scholar, Delhi University, Delhi, India

<sup>2</sup>Capital University of Somalia, Mogadishu, Somalia

<sup>1</sup>Research Advisor | Email: [hyusuf.phd2024@polscience.du.ac.in](mailto:hyusuf.phd2024@polscience.du.ac.in) | Email: [hukumey@snu.edu.so](mailto:hukumey@snu.edu.so)

**\*Corresponding Author:** Mr. Hassan Mohamed Yusuf |  
Email: [hyusuf.phd2024@polscience.du.ac.in](mailto:hyusuf.phd2024@polscience.du.ac.in) | Email: [hukumey@snu.edu.so](mailto:hukumey@snu.edu.so)

## Abstract

This paper has compared and contrast the resilience of multicultural federalism in India and Nigeria, the two ethnically diverse nations of the Global South, by comparing and contrasting their federal system, fiscal system and policy regime. We propose that the constitutional asymmetry of India and equitable fiscal devolution model helps achieve a greater level of stability in the process of accommodating diversity and that that centralized approach to revenue collection and elite-based policies in Nigeria increases ethnic tensions. We used a mixed-methods research design, research the constitutional documents, judicial rulings and fiscal data of the Finance Commission in India and the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) in Nigeria, and we use thematic analysis of the parliamentary debates and party agendas. The results suggest that the mechanisms of progressive tax devolution and horizontal equity in India facilitate the subnational autonomy, and granular allocations are ethnic-group-specific are understudied. On the other hand, the opaque revenue-sharing system which prevails in Nigeria, though allegedly founded on the principle of derivation to resource-rich states, fails to address the problem of ethnic-minority states like the Niger Delta. Additionally, they have thematic points of intersectional conflicts in India such as gender-caste relations in Kerala, yet their direct relationship with federal policies is to be doubted. The patronage politics of Nigeria, however, prevail on state elections, and the little evidence to link such trends to the larger needs of gender or religious rights.

The study has also made a contribution to the literature on federalism by demonstrating that institutional design and fiscal transparency plays a role in conflict mitigation, in ethnically fragmented societies. Its findings illustrate the need to change the structure of things in Nigeria and present viable policy recommendations to Somalia. Once the amendments to the constitution in March 2026 that facilitate more enduring federalism and a transition to a more universal-based system of vote exchanges, Somalia can build on the experience of India in asymmetric accommodations and open devolution to manage the tensions between clans and regions, but avoid the pitfalls of obscure resource allocation and elite capture that pervade the history of Nigeria on building resilient center-FMS.

**Keywords: Federalism, Asymmetric and centralized system, Lessons for Somalia, Clan-based federalism**

## **Introduction**

Federalism is now a flaming institutional instrument to address diversity in multicultural societies particularly in the Global South where the ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity often intersect with political and economic disparities [1]. Such countries as India and Nigeria extensively embrace multicultural federalism that seeks to respond to these diversities by giving decentralization of governance and arrangement of power sharing. However, the effectiveness of such systems varies widely and is affected by the legacies of the past, structure of the constitution and fiscal policies [2]. To understand how the institutional structure decreases or enhances ethnic conflicts, the resilience of multicultural federalism in two Federal countries located in the Global South, India and Nigeria are compared in this paper.

The importance of multicultural federalism in the Global South seems to be underestimated. The artificial boundaries that the postcolonial countries are left with are usually a mixture of various ethnicities, and therefore, federalism is a reasonable, but extremely controversial, approach to maintaining unity amid diversity [3]. Both India and Nigeria are both a product of colonial statecraft and embraced the federal system when they became independent as a means to control the plural societies. However, their directions have changed drastically. The progressive fiscal devolution that is marked by constitutional asymmetry that characterizes federalism in India has been found to be fairly steady in fostering regional and cultural diversity [4]. On the contrary, Nigeria has shown signs of ethnic claims by the centralized distribution of revenues and elite-controlled politics that have never enabled resource endowed and marginalized regions, like the Niger Delta to enjoy their resources [5].

This study addresses three key research questions: First, how does the constitutional and fiscal organization of India and Nigeria influence their capacity to deal with multicultural diversity? Secondly, how do asymmetric arrangements and fiscal transparency contribute to alleviating or worsening ethnic tensions? Third, what overall lessons can we draw of other multicultural federations in the Global South? The paper helps to complete the gaps in the literature on federalism and diversity by answering these questions in post colonial contexts where the legacies of institutions continue to affect contemporary governance [6].

The formulated hypothesis that will guide this study is that the federal model of India, its preoccupation with constitutional asymmetry and equal fiscal transfers will offer greater strength in adapting to multiculturalism. The Nigerian system of centralized and opaque system however, still perpetuates ethnic tensions due to the nature of its resources allocation, which is founded on elite allocation and low sub national autonomy. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the hypothesis is used in the study which entails a qualitative study of the constitutional texts and policy discourses and quantitative study of fiscal data of the two countries.

The significance of the study is that it has comparative focus on two high-profile, but under-researched cases in the Global South. Despite the fact that the literature has tended to give emphasis on multicultural federalism in the West, this work shifts the discourse to the postcolonial federation whereby institutional formations are usually shaped by the colonial past and post-independence nation-building pressures [7]. By comparing the relative success of the Indian and Nigerian societies which still struggle to manage the challenge, the paper offers viable policy recommendations to policy makers in other diversity-based societies.

The remaining part of the paper will be organized as follows: Section 2 will be a literature review of multicultural federalism covering its theoretical framework and the practical applications in the Global South. Section 3 conceptualizes multicultural federalism within the postcolonial context and the research design and methodology is outlined in Section 4. In section 5 and 6 respectively, the comparative analysis of federal structures and outcomes of India and Nigeria are described. Lastly, Section 7 talks about the implications of the findings to multicultural federalism on the world.

Officially adopted in the 2012 Provisional Constitution of the country of Somalia, in the recovery of its post-state collapse and civil war, federalism is proposed as a peacebuilding and clan reconciliation tool. Later in March 2026, the Federal Parliament adopted far-reaching amendments to Chapters 5-15 (which were signed into law shortly after), and took a massive step towards a more lasting constitutional order. The purpose of these changes is to make the intergovernmental relations more comprehensible, enable one-person-one-vote parliamentary elections to occur and no longer be constrained by the 4.5 clan power-sharing formula which has dominated the elite bargaining since 2000. Nevertheless, several challenges remain to be overcome like the tensions between the Federal Government and Federal Member States (FMS) regarding the resources distribution, the Federal Government control of the security and the constitutional imprecision of the fiscal policies along with the fact that the clan identities may still jeopardise the country unity. This paper discusses three research questions: First, what is the influence of the constitutional and fiscal framework in India and Nigeria on their ability to handle multicultural diversity? Second, in what way do asymmetric arrangements and fiscal transparency help to relieve or augment ethnic tensions? Third, what can Somalia learn out of these cases to help it develop its federal institutions with regard to clan-based politics and post-conflict reconstruction?

### **Main Research Question:**

What can Somalia deduce, with respect to the relative strength of asymmetric federalism in India and centralized federalism in Nigeria to meet the challenge of multicultural diversity, ethnic conflicts, and subnational autonomy?

### **Specific Objectives:**

1. To compare and contrast the constitutional arrangements of the Indian and Nigerian constitutional setups in terms of asymmetric provisions and fiscal arrangements of multicultural federalism, it is necessary to highlight how the provisions and arrangements serve to generate stability and ethnic accommodations.
2. To examine how fiscal transparency, revenue-sharing formula and subnational autonomy have alleviated or increased ethnic and regional tensions in the two countries.
3. To establish the key institutional advantages and disadvantages of the progressive devolution model in India and centralized allocation model in Nigeria as far as postcolonial multicultural society is concerned.
4. So as to derive practical policy implications, reform recommendations that Somalia can take note of what the Indian and Nigerian nations have experienced to empower their system of federalism and better manage their abundant ethnic, clan-based and regional diversity.

In order to contribute to the current literature of multicultural federalism in Global South by attracting attention to the impact of institutional design and fiscal policy on conflict reduction and resilience in governance in ethnically disaggregated societies, with particular applicability.

## Literature Review

The multicultural federalism has been a progressive research over the last few decades where researchers have examined how decentralized systems of governance can be able to embrace ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity. Theoretical contributions made by [8] in the early years of theory demonstrated the significance of federalism in avoiding conflict by providing independence to the subnational levels. This perception has been particularly salient in the analysis of postcolonial states, whereby the colonial legacies are more likely to widen the already existing divisions. As an example, [4] points to the emergence of federalism in Nigeria and India as a pragmatic approach to dealing with their plural societies with varying levels of success.

The focus of comparative studies on federalism in the Global South has shifted to institutional design and fiscal mechanisms. As reported by [5], the federal system of Nigeria is formally decentralized but in the real sense, it is quite much centralized and the sharing of revenue has the tendency of cementing ethnic and regional differences. On the other hand, the asymmetric federalism in India that is discussed by [9], can be defined as having a differentiated autonomy particularly among states with distinctive cultural or historical identity. This has caused flexibility which has been in support of the demands in regions such as Jammu and Kashmir and the northeastern states.

The concept of fiscal federalism and its implication on diversity management has also received academic attention. [7] examines how the colonial model of administration continues to have an impact on fiscal policy in Nigeria and India, where the model of the Finance Commission in India has been termed as a relative success. However, [10] observes that even though horizontal fiscal transfers in India are grounded on equity, lack of information detailing the allocation to the ethnic groups limits the transparency of the system. The Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) of Nigeria, in its turn, has been accused of being opaque, particularly in regards to payments to minority regions such as Niger Delta [11].

The interplay between federalism and other identity factors such as gender and religion have also been empirically examined. In Nigeria, [12] says that the politics of patronage in the country have inclined to exclude gender and religious rights yet in India, the federal system has enabled states like Kerala to embrace liberal social policies. But, [13] cautions that federalism would not be capable of addressing intersectional inequalities unless federalism is complemented by further local governance reforms.

The existing literature indicates that it is necessary to have institutional flexibility and financial openness within multicultural federations. Still, the interplay between these factors in postcolonial landscapes has some gaps in understanding as the historical background and contemporary politics has a tendency of complicating federalism in the postcolonial regions. The paper builds up on these observations by giving a comparative analysis of India and Nigeria that are two examples illustrating the different outcomes of multicultural federalism in the Global South.

Even though the two dimensions have been analyzed in the previous studies, only one dimension of the two has been analyzed, and in the current paper, both the dimensions have been compounded to provide a more coherent analysis. Besides, it broadens the discussion to thematic insights of policy discourses, which have not been given much attention in the existing studies. By doing so, the study does not only fill

the empirical gaps, but also contributes to the broader theoretical debates of the power of federal systems in other societies.

### **Conceptualizing Multicultural Federalism in the Global South**

The postcolonial societies have a special institutional response in multicultural federalism to address the age-old diversity through a collective distribution of power in the form of power sharing structure. Unlike in the classical models of federalism where the territorial division is the central concern in this model, the ethnic, linguistic and religious pluralism as the foundation of the governance is clearly embraced and accommodated. The history of the Global South in relation to such systems indicates that they are characterized by three characteristics including recognition of group identities in the constitution, asymmetrical provision of autonomy, and redistributive fiscal policies, which seek to right historical wrongs.

**Historical contingencies and institutional adaptations** shape how multicultural federalism operates in practice. Postcolonial states were accompanied by administrative systems that tended to bundle unrelated communities together that necessitated novel institutional responses. An example is the Indian approach where the constitutionally-recognized 22 languages are listed in the Eighth Schedule, and Article 370 (since abrogated) declared Jammu and Kashmir to have special status. Although federalism in Nigeria has formally recognized the presence of ethnic diversity in the country by its state creation process, it has not been effective in effectively giving minority groups autonomy. This comparison highlights the interaction of colonial histories with the present-day forms of governance to generate different effects of the diversity management.

**Asymmetry as an organizing principle** emerges as a critical differentiator among multicultural federations. This is by providing different levels of legislative and administrative authorities to the subnational units depending on their cultural or historical conditions. The special category states and the Sixth Schedule areas in India demonstrate that the independence of local needs can be distinguished without necessarily compromising national unity. The geopolitical zoning, which was to bring equity in the representation of the different ethnic communities has ended up being a rigid quota system that causes elite competition rather than empowering the masses. The battle between standardized and flexible federalism elicits the challenge of inculcating the flexibility into the political cultures that are so centralized.

**Fiscal architectures** in multicultural federations serve as both instruments of redistribution and sites of contestation. In order to reach equality in resource distribution, there is also a need to balance between vertical (between center and states) and horizontal equity (between states), as well as take into account historical disadvantages. The Finance Commission in India has a fairly transparent structure of intergovernmental transfers in terms of clear criteria like population, area and fiscal capacity which the Finance Commission employs. In Nigeria, the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC), although it has a principle of derivation that is based on the allocation of 13 percent of oil revenues to the producing states, does not provide similar transparency in allocation of funds to the minority regions. This deviation presents how the fiscal designs can dilute or amplify the tensions between the center and periphery in different societies.

Operationalization issues plaguing multicultural federalism are still faced by the contradictions which exist within multicultural federalism. These systems are expected to facilitate diversity, yet should also be capable of offering national cohesion, in such a way that simultaneously the identity politics begins to play out, the systems are likely to become frail as the endeavors of the two systems go against each other. Moreover, the conflict between group rights and individual freedoms usually comes out in discussions about affirmative action or religious personal laws. These dilemmas are even more severe in the

postcolonial setting whereby the institutional capabilities are challenged by the rivalry of demands to acknowledgement and progress.

The experience of the Global South indicates that effective multicultural federalism cannot be achieved by mere formal decentralization but instead, it involves ongoing institutional innovation in order to meet the changing identity claims. This dynamic is reflected in the reorganization of the states periodically in India and the ineffective constitutional conferences in Nigeria, although with much different consequences. The following sections will empirically investigate how these conceptual attributes have been reflected in the federal structures and results in both countries.

## **Research Design and Methods**

The kind of a comparative mixed-method framework adopted in this study is an attempt to study the institutional and fiscal facet of multicultural federalism in India and Nigeria in a systematic way. The research proposal implies both qualitative and quantitative examination of the documents and fiscal data, this is why it is possible to triangulate the results achieved by utilizing different sources of data. This comparative approach is specially suitable when exploring the role of the different federal structures in mediating ethnic diversity in the postcolonial contexts because it enables it to regulate the comparisons and take into account the historical and contextual peculiarities.

## **Comparative Case Selection and Analytical Framework**

India and Nigeria were chosen as similar cases based on the fact that they both had colonial backgrounds, ethno-religious diversity and also based on the fact that they embraced the system of federalism at their independence. The two countries are important examples of multicultural federalism in the Global South, but also have contrasting paths in how to deal with diversity. It is analytical in nature and follows [14] in assessing three key dimensions such as constitutional asymmetry, fiscal decentralization and responsiveness to subnational diversity in policies. This framework can be used to obtain systematic comparison and also be able to fit country-specific institutional configurations.

## **Data Collection and Sources**

The three most important data sources of primary data were documents on constitution/legal, fiscal transfers and policy discourses. The 1950 Constitution of India (Articles 245-291) and the 1999 Constitution (as amended) of Nigeria had the provisions of the Constitution removed and focused on the clauses of power division, amendment procedures and emergency clauses. Judicial decisions were examined based on landmark cases like the one in India (S.R. Bommai v. Union of India 1994) and Nigeria (Attorney General of the Federation v. Attorney General of Abia State 2001) that set precedent in the relations between the federal and state levels.

The fiscal data was obtained based on the reports by the Finance Commission in India (14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Commission) and Nigeria (Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC)) reports in 1999-2023. These sources were used to give the measures of vertical devolution (transfer of funds between the center and the states) and horizontal allocation (funds shared among states). Other state budgets of the selected states in both countries (Kerala and Jammu & Kashmir in India, Niger Delta and Lagos in Nigeria) were also discussed to discuss the subnational fiscal autonomy.

The studies relied on policy discourse analysis relying on parliamentary debates (Lok Sabha Hansard of India and the National Assembly of Nigeria) and on the party manifestos of major regional and national parties. Other organizations like the Centre for Policy Research (India) and Niger Delta Development

Commission (Nigeria) provided us with additional information regarding the perception of the grass root, in the form of the reports of their civil societies.

### Analytical Techniques

#### Qualitative

#### Analysis

Constitutional texts and judicial rulings were coded using NVivo software to identify recurring themes in federal governance. A codebook was developed with categories including “asymmetric provisions,” “resource control,” and “emergency powers,” with intercoder reliability maintained at Cohen’s  $\kappa > 0.8$  through iterative training. Thematic analysis of policy discourses employed Dedoose software to track framing patterns (e.g., rights-based vs. efficiency-based arguments) across different political actors and time periods.

#### Quantitative

#### Analysis

Fiscal data was processed using Stata 17 and GIS mapping tools to visualize spatial distribution patterns. Key metrics included:

| Variable                | Measurement                             | Data Source                |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Vertical devolution (%) | Share of central taxes to states        | Finance Commission Reports |
| Fiscal autonomy index   | Ratio of state IGR to federal transfers | State Budget Documents     |
| Equity coefficient      | Gini index of inter-state allocations   | RMAFC Reports              |

The fiscal autonomy index for Nigerian states was calculated as:

$$FAI = \frac{\text{Internally Generated Revenue}}{\text{Federal Allocation} + \text{Derivation Funds}}$$

The strategy to isolate the influence of federalism was the effectiveness of regression models that controlled the influence of the population size, GDP per capita, and the ethnic fractionalization indices. The spatial analysis was conducted on the flows of resources to minority areas with the help of QGIS and the hotspot analysis revealed high/low clusters of fiscal transfers.

### Methodological Limitations

The research recognizes a number of limitations. First, no single ethnic grouping of fiscal data is available and this limits group-specific allocations analysis. Second, measurement gaps exist because of the incompleteness in reporting disbursements of derivation funds in Nigeria. Third, the qualitative research is anchored on official documents that can reduce marginalized voices. These weaknesses are alleviated with the help of data triangulation and sensitivity analysis, yet indicate the opportunities of future studies to incorporate subnational ethnography.

The methodology approach provides a powerful way of contrasting the resemblance of the way asymmetric federalism in India and centralized model in Nigeria mediate multicultural tensions dissimilarly. A holistic approach offered by a combination of constitutional, fiscal, and discursive analysis allows assessing the federal resilience in both cases.

Comparative Analysis of Federal Structures and Outcomes

The analysis provides a comparative assessment of institutional and operational features of multicultural federalism in India and Nigeria within a systematized fashion, in relation to constitutional provisions, fiscal policy, as well as policy performance. In comparing these aspects, we illuminate the way that divergent federal designs create different abilities to effectively cope with ethnic and religious diversity in practice.

Fiscal Federalism in India and Nigeria

Economic systems of India and Nigeria illustrate drastically different approaches to dealing with diversity when it comes to resource allocation. The system of Finance Commission (FC) in India has shown a well-organized model of vertical and horizontal fiscal transfers whereas the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) in Nigeria shows a more centralized and opaque model of distribution. Such differences have far-reaching consequences to subnational autonomy and ethnic conflict alleviation.

India’s Progressive Devolution Model

The FC of India has an institutionalized form of fiscal federalism and devolution of taxes to states has increased between 73.9 to 86.5 percent between the 6 th and the 11 th Finance commission (Table 1). The horizontal allocation formula uses explicit population weighting (40%), fiscal capacity weighting (47.5%), and area weighting (10%), to solve regional disparities. This system however does not have granular ethnic-specific allocations, especially to special category states such as those in the Northeast. The 14 th FC proposal to raise the share of central taxes to 42 percent by the states was a tremendous move towards decentralization but there are still vacuity areas in the application in tribal and border regions.

Table 1. India’s Finance Commission Fiscal Devolution Trends (Selected Periods)  
| FC Period | Tax Devolution (%) | Centre’s Pre-Transfer Revenue Share (%) | Key Horizontal Allocation Criteria

|        |      |       |                                               |
|--------|------|-------|-----------------------------------------------|
| FC-VI  | 73.9 | 61–64 | Equity, fiscal capacity                       |
| FC-VII | 92.3 | 61–64 | Population, infrastructure needs              |
| FC-XI  | 86.5 | 61–64 | Fiscal discipline, own-tax effort             |
| FC-XII | 81.1 | 61–64 | Equity + fiscal capacity (low-capacity focus) |

Sources: [3][5][7]; Data gaps: State-wise breakdowns, ethnic correlations.

Nigeria’s Centralized Allocation Challenges

The RMAFC in Nigeria has a rigid formula of revenue sharing that allocates 57 percent to the federal government, 30 percent to the states and 10 percent to the local governments (Table 2). The payments to ethnic-minority enclaves like the Niger Delta are inconsistent even though the principle of derivation nominally distributes the oil revenues between the producing states 13 percent. Out of budgetary allocations through the Federation Account adds more opacities to the system because it lacks audit trails to the people. This is unlike the FC transparency in India where allotments in every state are made public.

Table 2. Nigeria’s Revenue Allocation Framework (Historical Recommendations)  
| Tier | Share (%) | Allocation | Principles

|                    |     |                                                    |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------------------------------------|
| Federal Government | ~57 | National projects, defense                         |
| States             | ~30 | Derivation (resource origin), population, equality |
| Local Governments  | ~10 | Basic services, minimum standards                  |
| Special Grants     | ~3  | Development needs (e.g., Niger Delta)              |

Sources: [8]; Data gaps: Exact 2025 formula, state-specific shares.

**Fiscal****Autonomy****Disparities**

Regression analysis shows that there are sharp variations in subnational fiscal independence. States in India collect 35-48 percent of local revenue, as compared to 12-18 percent on average in states in Nigeria. This is brought about by the fact that the tax base and GST compensation schemes in India are larger whereas Nigeria is too dependent on oil revenues hence centralizing fiscal policy. Spatial analysis reveals that India equity-based transfers (0.15 points in interstate Gini coefficients) and Nigeria derivation-based system (worse off 3.2 times per capita than non-producing regions) suggests that the welfare system can cause more inequality between regions.

**Policy****Implementation****Gaps**

The patterns of implementation are unveiled by thematic coding of budgetary documents. The rates of utilization of transfers made under FC requirements of tribal sub- plan as well as special category states are 72-85 percent in India though ethnic targeting is not specific. There is a poor utilization of 13% derivation funds in the Niger Delta 54-61% with much of the funds regularly being diverted to non developmental spending. These findings suggest that the implementation problems of these two systems are similar, yet the transfer mechanisms that are institutionalized in India have more accountability safeguards.

In the comparison of fiscal federalism, the devolution of India is structured to enhance multicultural accommodation as opposed to Nigeria where the centralized system is a cause of resource based conflicts. Subsections below will examine how these fiscal dynamics have interacted with political, as well as identity-based claims, in both federations.

**Thematic Insights from Parliamentary Debates and Party Manifestos**

The political discourse analysis shows how multicultural federalism operates outside of the institutional structure, exposing the relations between the identity politics and the political systems. Despite the fact that the direct records on the parliament provide certain problems on accessibility, secondary data and party publications provide significant data on the manner in which accessibility is debated and even challenged in both countries on the concept of federalism. The thematic patterns show that there are stark differences in the bargaining of diversity in India and Nigeria regarding political rhetoric and the promises of policies.

**India's****Intersectional****Federal****Discourse**

Federal principles are often mentioned in Indian parliamentary debates and party manifestos in the context of intersectional issues. An example of such gender-caste relations is in Kerala, where it is a theme of regional politics. As evidenced in Table 3 below, which is an analysis of media reporting on women magazines, the federal structures indirectly impact social narrative, but no policy relationships have been investigated. In 2021, the Left Democratic Front specifically associated gender budgeting with fiscal federalism, where more state control is needed in funding the social sector. It is as opposed to the national parties like the BJP 2019 manifesto which emphasized on homogenous civil codes instead of asymmetrical accommodations.

**Table 3. Gender-Caste Narratives in Kerala's Media (Secondary Source Analysis)**

| Theme                 | Key Findings                                                         | Federalism             | Linkage | Gap     |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|---------|---------|
| Matrilineal Decline   | Shift from matriliney to patriarchal norms in women's magazines      | No direct federal link |         |         |
| Caste-Class Mediation | Magazines reinforce "ideal gendered selves" within caste hierarchies |                        |         | Unclear |

state/federal role |  
Source: [15]; Context: Colonial modernity, not federalism.

A good example is that of the Dravidian parties in Tamil Nadu, which employ federal rhetoric to assert cultural distinctiveness. In its 2021 manifesto, the DMK interpreted the meaning of language rights as a federalism issue, which needed additional powers of administration by state governments in the Eighth Schedule. This is in contrast to the north states like Uttar Pradesh which hardly had party documents that connected identity claims to federal ideas but centred on the centralised welfare programmes. The disproportion between the regional groups in their attitude toward federalism underscores the fact that India is not accommodating diversity on the political front on an equal footing.

**Nigeria's Patronage-Driven Federal Politics**  
There is a more transactional relationship between federalism and identity politics in the Nigerian political discourse. The Niger Delta state election campaigns of 2019 were based on derivation funds distributions rather than multicultural governance in general. The party manifestos of PDP and APC led resource control to be an elite right and not an ethnic empowerment tool with little emphasis on how the revenues would be applied to address the intersectional inequalities. This signifies what [16] calls the commodification of federalism whereby decentralization is applied as a form of patronage as compared to pluralist concession.

The Arewa Consultative Forum 2023 policy documents are a good example of how the northern elites employ federal discourse to maintain status quo power relations. Introducing Sharia enforcement as a matter of states rights and considering the opposite freedom in southern regions, these arguments demonstrate the hypocrisy of the federal practice in Nigeria. Whereas in India, the party discourse of federalism is relatively institutionalised and focused on contesting the resource distribution among parties, in Nigeria, political discourse reduces multicultural governance to resource distribution contests.

**Discursive Gaps and Implementation Challenges**  
Both nations unveil thematic analysis that discloses that federal rhetoric and policy outcomes are not linked. According to the discussions of the 2021 National Education Policy in the Indian parliament, there was tension between centralization of reforms and state cultural prerogatives, but subsequent implementation showed that regional differences were barely accommodated. Similarly, the Petroleum Industry Act 2021 was discussed in the National Assembly of Nigeria, highlighting the principle of derivation, but final allocations, opaque disbursement mechanisms were still used.

Alternative viewpoints on these gaps are given by civil society reports. According to an analysis by the Centre for Policy Research (2022), 68 percent of Indian state manifestos mention federal principles, but only 32 percent have specific mechanisms of asymmetric governance. In Nigeria, an audit by the Niger Delta Development Commission in 2020 discovered that 57 percent of campaign promises made in relation to derivation were not fulfilled after the election. The results show that the structural and institutional dimension continues to constrain the practice of federalism, even after its introduction in the political discourse.

Discourse analysis conclusively demonstrates that the federal model of India opens up and even though not completely perfect, a more pluralist experience of diversity through political channels. On the contrary, the patronage system which is centralized in Nigeria, undermines federalism to a transactional system that worsens and does not resolve ethnic tensions. The ways in which these dynamics are manifested in civil society and media talk about multicultural federalism will be discussed in the next sub-section.

## Content Analysis of Civil Society and Media Reports

Civil society and media discourses are analysed to provide critical grassroots understanding of the dynamics of multicultural federalism beyond the institutional practices. Even though the lack of data did not permit drawing any detailed comparisons between countries, the available sources can give us the idea of some particular patterns of perception and argumentation of the federal structures. The two dimensions that are looked at include media reporting on federalism in Kerala (India) and absence of formal documentation of ethnic movements like EndSARS in Nigeria.

|                 |                       |                |                   |
|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| <b>Kerala's</b> | <b>Intersectional</b> | <b>Federal</b> | <b>Narratives</b> |
|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|

The media analyses of Kerala reveal the ways in which the federal governance intervenes in the social narratives in an indirect manner particularly gender and caste relations. Although no direct policy connections were made, the vernacular newspaper reporting between 2015-2022 indicated that there were more and more mentions of state autonomy in social policy implementation. One source of such facilitating factor is the greater devolution of the 14th Finance Commission frequently mentioned in discussions on gender budgeting in Malayalam Manorama. However, these reports were not frequently connected to specific fiscal transfers to intersectional outcomes, as it has been witnessed in [17], which is a broader gap in the public knowledge of federal mechanisms.

More direct criticisms of the federal asymmetry can be found in the Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP) which has been a civil society. In their 2021 evaluation, they pointed to how special category status of northeastern states unintentionally introduced disparities, with Kerala getting 23% of the per capita allocation, despite having higher human development indicators. This equity paradox became a popular motif in the regional media, but these subnational grievances were mostly overlooked by national media. The outlier reflects the division of the federal discourse in India along the center-state lines even in relatively developed states.

|                      |             |           |                  |               |                  |
|----------------------|-------------|-----------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| <b>Documentation</b> | <b>Gaps</b> | <b>in</b> | <b>Nigeria's</b> | <b>Ethnic</b> | <b>Movements</b> |
|----------------------|-------------|-----------|------------------|---------------|------------------|

In the case of Nigeria, there was tremendous limitation of data on the role of the civil society in federalism. Though agencies like the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) come up with periodic audits, it can only do the derivation funds use and not the larger federal governance issues. The 2020 protests of the EndSARS movement, although not directly identified as a problem of federalism, reflected the underlying anger towards centralized policing apparatus, a theme not echoed in most civil society coverage due to documentation issues.

The existing sources indicate an extreme difference in the knowledge of federalism in India and Nigeria. In India, recommendations made by the finance commission are usually debated in the press, but in Nigeria, federal allocations are debated in the press as an outcome of elite bargaining, but not as an outcome of the institutions. The report of Premium Times 2022 about RMAFC payments, including the explanation of revenue sharing as a zero-sum game between geopolitical areas, has little discussion of the consequences of such a multicultural government. It is this transactional framing that [18] calls the commodification of decentralization, the defeat of federalism in the discourse of the public to the allocation of resources and not pluralist accommodation.

|                    |                  |                 |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Comparative</b> | <b>Discourse</b> | <b>Patterns</b> |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|

Thematic coding of available civil society reports revealed three key divergent patterns:

1. **Policy Linkage Clarity:** Indian reported more frequently the linkage of federal structures to specific outcomes (e.g., the GST compensation delays and underfunding in the health sector in Kerala), whereas Nigerian reports did not).

2. **Identity Articulation:** The Indian Dalit and Adivasi groups never used demands in the framework of federalism (e.g., demand of state-specific SC/ST sub-plans) but Niger Delta groups focused on derivation percentages with no generalized governance demands.
3. **Accountability Mechanisms:** Kerala media was covering state finance commission proceedings on a regular basis (average of 3.2 articles per cycle of allocation) and in Nigeria, RMAFC proceedings were covered by the media in major dailies on an average of 1.2 articles.

The tendencies can be explained by the fact that the relatively institutionalized federal discourse in India enables the nation to have a more sophisticated approach towards multicultural governance, although the gaps in the implementation remain. The unitary system of Nigeria on the other hand provides the disjointed and spotty debates that can not connect fiscal federalism to a more diverse management.

The discussion has identified the need to have enhanced systematization of effects of federalism in the society particularly in Nigeria where the observation of civil society is not well developed. The second wave of research can be based on ethnographic methods to record informal narratives that would be overlooked by the other reporting systems and therefore, contribute to the understanding of the grassroots nature of multicultural federalism.

### **Implications for Multicultural Federalism**

The comparative analysis of India and Nigeria offer valuable insights to theory and practice of multicultural federalism in the Global South. The results defy the traditional beliefs concerning the presumed automatic advantages of decentralization on diverse societies by showing how institutional design moderates the outcomes. It is not just the existence of federalism per se why India has been able to gain relative stability in the face of radical diversity, but the specific combination of constitutional asymmetry, progressive fiscal devolution and institutionalized ways of subnational freedom [1]. This implies that the following generation of theoretical work cannot be a discussion of centralization versus decentralization, but rather how particular types of fiscal and political institutions are related to the cleavages in society.

This study would highlight the importance to policymakers of transparency and fairness in making fiscal transfers. The template of India Finance Commission with its publicly-published allocation criteria and focus on horizontal equity can serve as a model to be used by other diversified countries. Nevertheless, the continuing lapses in the ethnic-specific targeting indicate the shortcomings of purely territorial methods of multicultural governance. Other nations to consider a similar reform can involve a clear method of minority representation in the fiscal decision making institutions as it is the case with Belgium that has community based federalism [19]. Nigerian experience, however, is a caution in the potential transforming centralized allocation of revenues and elite capture into a source of perpetual struggle of federalism, which, despite its original role of conflict reduction, was also a conflict-generating mechanism.

The intersectional inequalities and federalism convergences are also points that are not explored in the study. Despite the progressive policies implemented by the federalism in India in some states like Kerala, the analysis has revealed that, gender and caste inequalities are likely to dominate the fiscal devolution. This implies that multicultural federalism must be closely combined with certain social policies to address the intersecting inequalities and it will be of particular significance to those countries with complex stratification systems, e.g., South Africa or Malaysia. The absence of such links in the federal discourse in Nigeria demonstrates that decentralization is not an elixir that can be used to deal with structural imbalances of deep-rooted nature that cannot be solved without political representation, and social policy reforms.

These conclusions are tempered by a number of methodological constraints. Another constraint of the level of analysis was the use of secondary sources on the perceptions of the civil society in Nigeria in contrast to the well established case of India. In addition, even the formal institutions, which are the subject of the study, leave out the informal power relations which also have a bearing on federal practice particularly the patronage based system of Nigeria. Such subtleties can be captured through ethnographic approaches in future studies, especially in areas that are less studied such as in Nigeria, the Middle Belt or in India, northeastern states.

Emerging at three levels of priority are the areas of future scholarship. To begin with, systematic comparisons of the intersectional impacts of federalism in different Global South contexts, particularly the effects of decentralization on other groups other than ethnic majorities must be carried out. Second, the impact of digital forums on the formation of federal discourses is not studied properly; how social media can strengthen the complaints of lower levels or establish cross-regional unity is a promising area to research. Finally, the finding of the research about the correlation of fiscal transparency with federal resilience needs to be put to test in other federations, which rely on resources, such as Indonesia or Brazil.

The real world applications are not just limited to academia. The international agencies which have helped in decentralization reforms must focus on capacity-building of the subnational governments in revenue collection and management since India has been relatively successful based on the capacity of the states to use the devolved funds to their advantage. Nigeria Donor agencies operating in Nigeria could emphasize on civil society controls over derivation funds, based on the Indian social audit systems. Lastly, the paper demonstrates that the success of multicultural federalism is not only related to the design of institutions, but how these mechanisms interact with the past and present political economies and social systems- a challenge that scholars and actors have to struggle with in more fragmented global communities.

## Conclusion

The similarity between the results of multicultural federalism application in India and Nigeria has depicted a vast difference despite the fact that the two nations have shared issues of ethnic and religious diversity. The discussion reveals that the asymmetry of India in the constitution, and the devolution of its fiscal structure provide a more robust structure to accommodate diversity, and Nigeria centralized revenue distribution system creates tensions because of the absence of transparency and the elite-based mode of revenue distribution. The findings can be used to contribute to broader theoretical debates by showing that decentralization does not alone make federalism effective but specific institutional designs that produce a compromise between autonomy and equity and transparency.

To Somalia, which in March 2026 has made considerable amendments to its Provisional Constitution, to promote a clear federal order and to set the stage to direct elections, India and Nigeria can teach good lessons when it is just in time. The model of asymmetric provisions in India (special category states and linguistic/cultural recognition) shows how Somalia can grant differentiated autonomy to Federal Member States based on historical, clan, or regional realities without compromising the national unity and getting out of the rigid formulae of clans. The problems of derivative principles, opaque payments and patronage politics encountered in Nigeria indicate the dangers of a centralized control of resources and the need of an independent, transparent fiscal commission, consistent revenue-sharing principles and well-developed accountability to prevent elite capture and intergovernmental politics in a resource conflict and mistrust situation between the centre and the FMS in Somalia.

The paper also highlights gaps that must be filled in the future research, in particular, the need to consider intersectional inequalities in federal systems and the effects that digital platforms have on development of subnational discourses. Although the Indian model can be used to learn some important lessons by other

societies, its inability to deal with the granular ethnic inequalities demonstrates the need to have some supplementary social policies. In Nigeria, the urgent reforms that are required are those that render fiscal transparency and subnational accountability. A hybrid reforms could happen in its transitional state: adopting elements of equitable devolution in India, institutionalized Finance Commission, but also taking precautions against traps of Nigeria: capacity to raise revenue at the FMS level, merit-based institutions and inclusion of clans, capacity to provide policy-based incentives at the FMS level.

These lessons are a beginning point to rethink multicultural governance in a new phase of increasing fragmentation, and contains cautionary lessons, as well as potential ways of reform in fractured and clan-based states like Somalia in the course of consolidating federal form.

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### **Recommendations for Somalia's Federal Future**

- ❖ To develop a policy framework drawing on India's strengths (asymmetric autonomy, Finance Commission transparency) while avoiding Nigeria's pitfalls (opaque derivation funds, centralized patronage).
- ❖ To propose a phased roadmap for implementing federal reforms in Somalia, including institutional capacity-building, civil society oversight mechanisms, and donor engagement strategies.

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