



The Demand for Separate Statehood in North Karnataka: Addressing Regional Disparity, Historical Grievances, and Future Development Opportunities

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DOI-10.5281/zenodo.13982008

Abstract:

The demand for separate statehood in North Karnataka has gained momentum due to persistent regional disparities, historical grievances, and aspirations for equitable development. This research critically examines the socio-economic and political factors driving the call for bifurcation of Karnataka, highlighting the underdevelopment of North Karnataka in comparison to the more prosperous southern regions. The paper delves into the historical context, including the region's integration post-independence and the unequal distribution of resources, while exploring contemporary concerns such as inadequate infrastructure, poor access to healthcare and education, and limited industrialization. Through a comprehensive analysis of these issues, this research also evaluates the potential future development opportunities that a separate North Karnataka state might unlock, including improved resource management, industrial growth, and governance reforms. Additionally, the study considers the significant challenges that the movement faces, including political resistance, economic viability, and social cohesion. The paper aims to provide an objective framework for understanding the complex dynamics of regionalism in Karnataka and offers recommendations for balanced regional development as an alternative to state division.

Key Words: North Karnataka, Separate Statehood Movement, Regional Disparity, Governance and Development Opportunities, Balanced Regional Development.

Introduction:

The demand for separate statehood in North Karnataka reflects deep-rooted socio-economic inequalities and long-standing grievances that have simmered since the region's integration into the state of Karnataka in 1956. Comprising districts such as Belagavi, Kalaburagi, Ballari, and Bidar, North Karnataka has historically lagged behind the more prosperous southern regions, including Bengaluru and Mysuru, in terms of industrial development, infrastructure, education, and healthcare. Despite its natural resources and agricultural potential, the northern region remains economically marginalized, contributing to rising discontent and calls for state bifurcation.

This regional imbalance is not only economic but also political and cultural, with many in North Karnataka feeling that their needs are overlooked by a Bengaluru-centric governance model. Historical grievances, such as the unfulfilled promises of the Hyderabad-Karnataka region (now Kalyana-Karnataka) under Article 371J of the Indian Constitution, further fuel the demand for separation. Proponents argue that the creation of a new state would enable more focused governance, equitable resource distribution, and targeted

development policies, while opponents caution against the political, administrative, and economic challenges that such a move would entail.

This research article explores the complex factors driving the demand for statehood, including the historical, economic, and political contexts. It assesses both the potential opportunities that a new state might unlock—such as improved governance and resource management—and the formidable challenges it faces, including political resistance and the economic viability of the region as a standalone entity. Through this analysis, the article aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of regionalism in Karnataka and offers insights into possible solutions to address these regional disparities without resorting to state bifurcation.

Review of Literature:

The demand for separate statehood in North Karnataka is rooted in a long history of regional inequality, socio-political marginalization, and economic underdevelopment. Scholarly work on regional disparities in India highlights how imbalances in resource allocation and governance can fuel sub-nationalism and separatist tendencies (Singh, 2010; Rao & Reddy, 2015). In the case of Karnataka, North Karnataka, particularly the

Hyderabad-Karnataka and Bombay-Karnataka regions, has historically been underdeveloped compared to South Karnataka, which houses the state capital Bengaluru, the centre of economic and political power (Nagaraj & Byrappa, 2008).

Various studies have examined the historical factors contributing to North Karnataka's marginalization. Rao (1999) notes that the integration of regions from the erstwhile Bombay and Hyderabad presidencies into Karnataka after the States Reorganization Act of 1956 led to linguistic and administrative challenges, exacerbating the region's political and developmental neglect. Sridhar (2013) emphasizes the uneven development within Karnataka, noting that Bengaluru's rise as a global IT hub has overshadowed efforts to address the underdevelopment of northern districts.

Developmental disparity has been a recurring theme in the literature, with scholars like Kannan and Pillai (2007) pointing to the lack of industrial investment and infrastructure in North Karnataka as key barriers to its growth. The region's agrarian economy and its dependence on the monsoon for irrigation have further widened the development gap (Deshpande, 2003). Studies on governance (Mohan, 2018) argue that centralized decision-making in Bengaluru often leaves the northern regions with insufficient political representation and voice in policy matters.

The demand for separate statehood has also been contextualized within broader discussions on subnational movements in India (Aiyar, 2007). Scholars have compared the North Karnataka movement to similar demands in other parts of India, such as Telangana and Vidarbha, noting that such movements are often the result of prolonged economic neglect and the failure of regional policy interventions (Ghosh & Mitra, 2011). Additionally, Article 371J, which provides special status to the Kalyana-Karnataka region, has been a subject of study in terms of its effectiveness in addressing regional disparity. Studies (Patil & Ramachandra, 2016) suggest that while the article has helped marginally, it has not significantly altered the region's developmental trajectory.

Overall, the literature underscores the complexity of the separate statehood demand, rooted in economic underdevelopment, political marginalization, and regional identity. This research seeks to build on these existing studies by providing a focused analysis of contemporary factors driving the movement, while also exploring potential pathways for balanced development as an alternative to state bifurcation.

Objectives:

- To analyse the socio-economic disparities between North and South Karnataka that have led to demands for separate statehood.

- To explore the historical grievances of North Karnataka, including its post-independence integration and marginalization within the state's development agenda.
- To evaluate the political, economic, and social factors that have intensified the movement for a bifurcated Karnataka.
- To assess the potential benefits and opportunities that a separate state of North Karnataka could offer in terms of governance, infrastructure development, and resource management.
- To identify the key challenges and obstacles to the realization of separate statehood, including political resistance, economic viability, and inter-regional tensions.
- To propose alternative strategies for addressing regional disparities through policy reforms, decentralization, and balanced development initiatives within a unified Karnataka.

Data Collection and Methodology:

• Research Design:

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis of the demand for separate statehood in North Karnataka. The research is exploratory in nature, aiming to identify the key factors contributing to the movement and assess potential development opportunities and challenges.

• Data Sources:

Secondary Data:

Government Reports: Data was sourced from government publications, including the Karnataka Human Development Reports, Economic Surveys of Karnataka, and the reports of the Hyderabad-Karnataka Development Board (HKDB). These documents provided statistical information on regional economic disparities, infrastructure development, and governance in North Karnataka.

Academic Literature: Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and reports were reviewed to understand the historical context, socio-political dynamics, and economic challenges of the region. This provided a theoretical foundation for the study's analysis.

Census and Statistical Data: National Census data, along with statistics from the Directorate of Economics and Statistics of Karnataka, was used to analyse socio-economic indicators such as literacy rates, employment levels, income disparities, and healthcare access across North and South Karnataka.

• Data Analysis:

Qualitative Data from FGDs were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. Key themes such as regional disparity, governance challenges, and development opportunities were identified, and patterns in stakeholder opinions were mapped to understand the depth of grievances and the motivations behind the statehood demand.

Quantitative Data from surveys and secondary sources were analysed using descriptive statistics. Comparative analysis between North and South Karnataka was performed on economic indicators, development indices, and access to public services. This helped quantify the extent of regional disparities and evaluate the viability of a separate North Karnataka state from an economic standpoint.

5. Limitations of the Study:

Geographical Focus: The study focuses primarily on North Karnataka, which may limit its generalizability to other regions with statehood demands. However, the findings may offer insights into broader trends in subnational movements within India.

Temporal Constraints: The study covers the contemporary period and may not fully capture the long-term historical shifts in regional dynamics. Longitudinal studies may be required for a more comprehensive understanding of evolving regional disparities.

Data Availability: In some instances, access to certain government reports and localized data may be limited, potentially affecting the depth of the quantitative analysis.

This study aims to bridge the gap between academic literature and on-the-ground realities concerning the demand for separate statehood in North Karnataka. By employing a mixed-methods approach, this research will provide a detailed understanding of the region's socio-economic challenges, political dynamics, and development opportunities while proposing balanced development strategies to address regional grievances.

Analysis and Discussion:

The demand for separate statehood in North Karnataka has emerged from long-standing issues related to regional disparity, historical grievances, and aspirations for better development opportunities. Here is an exploration of these factors:

1. Regional Disparity

North Karnataka, comprising districts Mainly like Kalaburagi, Raichur, Vijayapura, Yadagiri, Koppal and Bidar, has lagged behind the

more affluent South Karnataka (which includes Bengaluru and Mysuru) in terms of infrastructure, education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. The perception is that successive state governments, primarily based in Bengaluru, have allocated more resources and attention to the southern part of the state, neglecting the northern region.

Economic Disparity: Despite being rich in natural resources, North Karnataka has not witnessed the same level of industrialization as the southern region.

Infrastructure: Poor road networks, lack of efficient rail connectivity, and inadequate urban planning have hindered the region's economic growth.

Social Services: Educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and public services in North Karnataka are considered inferior when compared to the south, leading to lower human development indicators.

2. Historical Grievances

The feeling of neglect in North Karnataka isn't new. It has historical roots that go back to the integration of Karnataka from various princely states and regions under the States Reorganization Act of 1956.

The Bombay-Karnataka and Hyderabad-Karnataka regions (which now form parts of North Karnataka) were brought into the state from the Bombay and Hyderabad presidencies, respectively. Over time, the perception has grown that these areas have not received their fair share of state resources or political attention.

Hyderabad-Karnataka (Kalyana-Karnataka)

Issue: This region was part of the Nizam's Hyderabad and continues to be economically backward. Though the Indian Constitution (through Article 371J) gives it special status, implementation of affirmative action policies has been slow.

Belgaum Border Dispute: The Belgaum district, part of North Karnataka, has been a contentious issue between Karnataka and Maharashtra. While the region has stayed with Karnataka, the linguistic and cultural differences have fostered dissatisfaction, further fueling the call for a separate state.

Image:1 Northern Part and Southern Part of Karnataka Map

Source:

3. Future Development Opportunities

Proponents of a separate North Karnataka state argue that the creation of a new state would bring the region's challenges into sharper focus. With its own governance structures, North Karnataka could prioritize its economic, social, and infrastructural needs, much like other newly formed states in India (e.g., Telangana, Uttarakhand).

Opportunities to the development:

Resource Management: North Karnataka has rich mineral resources, especially in the districts of Ballari and Raichur. An independent state could better manage these resources for the region's benefit.

Industrial Development: With better governance, the region could focus on attracting industries, particularly in agriculture, textiles, and mining,

sectors in which North Karnataka has inherent strengths.

Cultural and Tourism Development: The region is home to historically significant sites like Hampi, Badami, and Bijapur. A separate state could more aggressively promote tourism and preserve its unique cultural heritage.

Balanced development across all regions of Karnataka is critical for ensuring equitable economic growth, social progress, and infrastructure development. To address the disparities between the northern and southern parts of the state, it is essential to focus on strategies that target both underdeveloped and emerging regions. Here are key areas where balanced development opportunities can be harnessed in Karnataka:

Image:2 Northern Part and Southern Part of Karnataka Map



Source:

1. Decentralized Industrial Growth

Currently, most industries and corporate investments are concentrated in Bengaluru and surrounding areas. Expanding industrial hubs to other parts of Karnataka, particularly North Karnataka, can reduce regional imbalances.

Development of Industrial Corridors: Regions like Hubli-Dharwad, Belagavi, Kalaburagi, and Ballari can be developed as industrial hubs. Special Economic Zones (SEZs) can be established in these areas to attract industries such as agriculture-based industries, textiles, and mining.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPP): Encourage partnerships between the government and private sector to set up industrial parks, IT parks, and manufacturing zones in tier-2 and tier-3 cities.

Incentives for Investment: Providing tax incentives, subsidies, and other benefits to businesses willing to set up operations outside Bengaluru can spur development in the underdeveloped regions.

2. Infrastructure Development

Balanced infrastructure is key to economic and social development. North Karnataka, particularly rural areas, needs greater investment in roads, railways, airports, and urban planning to improve connectivity and quality of life.

Road and Rail Connectivity: Improve the road networks connecting rural areas to urban centres. Expanding the railway network and introducing more intra-state train services will facilitate better movement of goods and people.

Regional Airports: Boosting air connectivity by upgrading existing airports (like Hubli, Belagavi) and constructing new ones can attract business and tourism to these regions.

Smart City Projects: Expanding smart city projects beyond Bengaluru to cities like Hubli-Dharwad, Mangalore, and Kalaburagi can lead to improved urban infrastructure and better living conditions.

3. Promotion of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industries

Karnataka has a strong agricultural base, particularly in the northern and central regions. To achieve balanced growth, it is important to modernize the agricultural sector and integrate it with agro-based industries for value addition.

Agro-Processing Zones: Setting up agro-processing clusters in districts like Raichur, Bidar, and Bagalkot can create job opportunities and promote the rural economy.

Irrigation Projects: Completing ongoing irrigation projects in drought-prone areas of North Karnataka and introducing micro-irrigation techniques will boost agricultural productivity.

Farmer Cooperatives and Market Access: Strengthen farmer cooperatives to give small-scale farmers better bargaining power and improve their access to markets through digital platforms and agricultural export zones.

4. Tourism Development

Karnataka has rich cultural heritage sites, natural beauty, and a diverse ecological landscape. Developing tourism beyond the conventional

southern tourist spots can generate revenue and employment across the state.

Promoting Heritage and Eco-Tourism: Hampi, Badami, Bijapur, and other North Karnataka heritage sites have tremendous potential. Developing infrastructure around these areas, promoting eco-tourism in the Western Ghats, and creating heritage circuits can attract tourists.

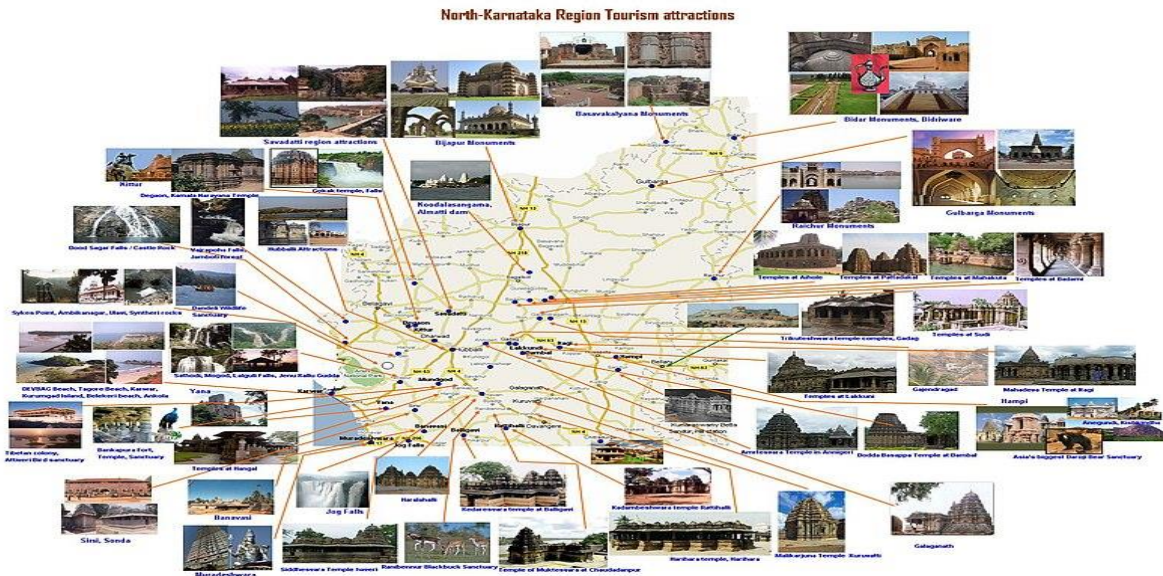
Mainly the temples of Hampi and Pattadakal, which are among Karnataka's World Heritage Sites, and the numerous tourist spots of the

Western Ghats are primarily located in the Uttara Kannada district, known as the 'home of waterfalls.

Homestay and Rural Tourism: Promote rural tourism by incentivizing homestay models and agro-tourism initiatives, where tourists can experience village life and local culture.

Digital Promotion: Using digital platforms and social media campaigns to market lesser-known destinations in Karnataka can diversify the tourism industry.

Image:3 Tourism Places of Northern Part of Karnataka.



Source:

5. Human Capital Development and Skill Enhancement

To reduce regional disparities in employment, it is crucial to focus on education, skill development, and vocational training programs that align with the industry requirements of different regions.

Educational Institutions and Universities: Establish more high-quality educational institutions in North Karnataka to reduce the migration of students to South Karnataka. Promoting research and development centers can help boost local innovation.

Skill Development Centers: Set up vocational training and skill development centers in underdeveloped regions to train the local youth in emerging industries like IT, manufacturing, textiles, and tourism.

Digital Literacy and Access: Expanding digital literacy initiatives and internet access across rural Karnataka will enable residents to participate in the digital economy and access remote job opportunities.

6. Healthcare and Social Welfare

The healthcare infrastructure in North Karnataka is weaker compared to the more

urbanized South Karnataka. Equalizing access to healthcare and social services is essential for balanced development.

Telemedicine and Health Infrastructure: Strengthen telemedicine services in remote areas and improve health infrastructure by building more hospitals, especially in rural regions. This will ensure better access to healthcare facilities.

Health Awareness Campaigns: Implement public health awareness campaigns to address issues like maternal health, child nutrition, and disease prevention in backward areas.

Social Safety Nets: Expanding social welfare schemes, such as healthcare insurance and rural employment guarantees, can improve the living conditions of marginalized communities.

7. Sustainable Development and Environmental Conservation

To ensure balanced growth that does not strain Karnataka's natural resources, sustainable development strategies need to be implemented across the state.

Renewable Energy Development: Northern Karnataka has great potential for solar and wind energy generation. Investing in renewable energy

projects in these regions can promote sustainable growth.

Afforestation and Water Conservation: Initiatives like afforestation, water conservation projects, and watershed development programs can prevent land degradation and drought, particularly in dry areas like North Karnataka.

Sustainable Urbanization: As smaller cities develop, planning for sustainable urban infrastructure—such as green buildings, public transport systems, and waste management—can reduce the environmental impact of growth.

8. Balanced Governance and Decentralization

For balanced development to occur, governance structures need to ensure equitable allocation of resources and decision-making power across all regions of Karnataka.

Decentralized Administration: Strengthening local governance and empowering regional administrative bodies will allow districts and towns to better address their specific needs.

Participatory Planning: Involving local communities in development planning processes can ensure that projects and initiatives meet the actual needs of the population.

Fair Resource Allocation: Ensuring that budget allocations for development projects consider the disparities between different regions can help bridge the gap between North and South Karnataka.

A comprehensive strategy focused on equitable industrial growth, improved infrastructure, enhanced human capital, and sustainable development can drive balanced development in Karnataka. This requires political will, strategic investments, and public-private cooperation to ensure that both North and South Karnataka progress together, minimizing regional disparities and maximizing growth potential for the entire state.

4. Challenges to Separate Statehood movement for Northern part of Karnataka

The movement for a separate statehood for the northern part of Karnataka has been driven by concerns over regional disparities and long-standing grievances about underdevelopment. However, the movement faces significant challenges that make the creation of a separate state both politically and practically difficult. Here are the key challenges:

1. Political Resistance

One of the major challenges to the separate statehood movement is strong political opposition from both state and central governments. Politicians from various parties in Karnataka, especially from the southern part, are generally opposed to any division of the state, as it could weaken Karnataka's political clout.

Loss of Power and Influence: Dividing the state would reduce Karnataka's size and political representation in the Indian Parliament, which could weaken its influence at the national level.

Lack of Political Consensus: While the movement has localized support, particularly in North Karnataka, it has not gained enough momentum among state leaders or national political parties. Many political parties fear that supporting the division of Karnataka could backfire and alienate voters in other regions of the state.

Government Reluctance: The central government is cautious about agreeing to demands for separate statehood, as it could set a precedent for other similar demands in different parts of India, leading to further fragmentation.

2. Economic Viability and Resource Management

A major concern surrounding the demand for separate statehood is whether North Karnataka can sustain itself economically as a separate entity.

Resource Management: While North Karnataka is rich in natural resources (such as minerals in Ballari and Raichur), the region still heavily relies on agriculture and lacks industrial diversification. Ensuring economic stability post-separation would require substantial investment in industries and infrastructure, which could be challenging in the short term.

Revenue Dependency: Much of Karnataka's revenue comes from Bengaluru, the state's IT hub. A separate North Karnataka state would likely face a loss of access to these resources and revenue streams. The region would need to build new economic engines to fund its development and services.

Setting Up New Administrative Structures: The cost of creating a new state administration, including building new government offices, appointing bureaucrats, and establishing legal frameworks, would require significant financial investment. There are concerns about whether the northern region could afford this transition.

3. Social and Cultural Integration

Karnataka has historically integrated diverse linguistic, cultural, and social groups under one state. A division could weaken these ties and create new challenges related to identity, language, and social cohesion.

Cultural Fragmentation: The linguistic, cultural, and social integration of Karnataka has been strong since the state's formation in 1956. Dividing the state could create cultural fragmentation and exacerbate tensions between North and South Karnataka, where there are already differences in dialects, traditions, and even political inclinations.

Opposition from the Southern Population: Many people in South Karnataka are opposed to the idea of dividing the state. This could result in social unrest and disputes over resource allocation, particularly over water resources shared between regions (e.g., the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers).

4. Lack of Public Consensus

While there is some support for separate statehood in certain parts of North Karnataka, the movement does not have overwhelming popular backing across the entire region. Many people are more focused on development within a united Karnataka rather than pursuing separation.

Internal Divisions: Even within North Karnataka, opinions about separate statehood are divided. Some groups prefer greater autonomy and development within the existing state framework, while others are pushing for complete separation. This lack of a unified voice weakens the movement's impact.

Focus on Development Over Separation: Many people in North Karnataka prioritize immediate solutions to developmental issues, such as better infrastructure, education, and healthcare, over the long-term and uncertain goal of separate statehood.

5. Administrative and Governance Challenges

The logistics of forming a new state present major governance and administrative challenges. Creating a new state would involve restructuring existing governance frameworks, which could lead to confusion and inefficiency during the transition period.

Dividing Resources and Administration: Dividing existing infrastructure, including state government offices, transportation networks, and bureaucratic institutions, would be a difficult and contentious process. Decisions regarding the distribution of assets and resources, including water, energy, and land, would likely lead to disputes between the two regions.

Transition to a New Government Structure: Forming a new state would require the establishment of new legislative bodies, courts, and governance institutions. Managing this transition efficiently while ensuring that public services and governance functions continue smoothly would be a significant challenge.

6. Geopolitical and Border Disputes

Separating North Karnataka from the rest of the state could also trigger or exacerbate border disputes with neighbouring states like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana, especially in regions with existing tensions, such as the Belagavi district.

Border Dispute: Mainly to The Belagavi district, which borders Maharashtra, has been a contentious area, with linguistic and cultural tensions between Marathi-speaking and Kannada-speaking populations. A separate state could reignite this issue and lead to further border disputes with Maharashtra.

Resource Sharing: Water-sharing agreements between Karnataka and neighbouring states (such as Maharashtra, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana) could become more complex in the event of a state division. Negotiating new agreements for sharing

river water resources, especially the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers, would be a contentious and potentially difficult process.

7. Impact on National Unity and Precedent

The creation of a new state could set a precedent for other regions in India with similar grievances to demand separate statehood. This could lead to further fragmentation of states and pose challenges to national unity.

Increased Fragmentation: If North Karnataka were to succeed in gaining separate statehood, other regions in India with similar demands, such as Vidarbha (in Maharashtra) or Bundelkhand (in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh), might feel encouraged to push harder for their own separation. This could lead to increased political instability and make governing large states more challenging.

Impact on National Cohesion: The Indian government is often cautious about demands for new states, as it must maintain a delicate balance between federalism and national unity. A new state could lead to tensions in the broader context of Indian federalism.

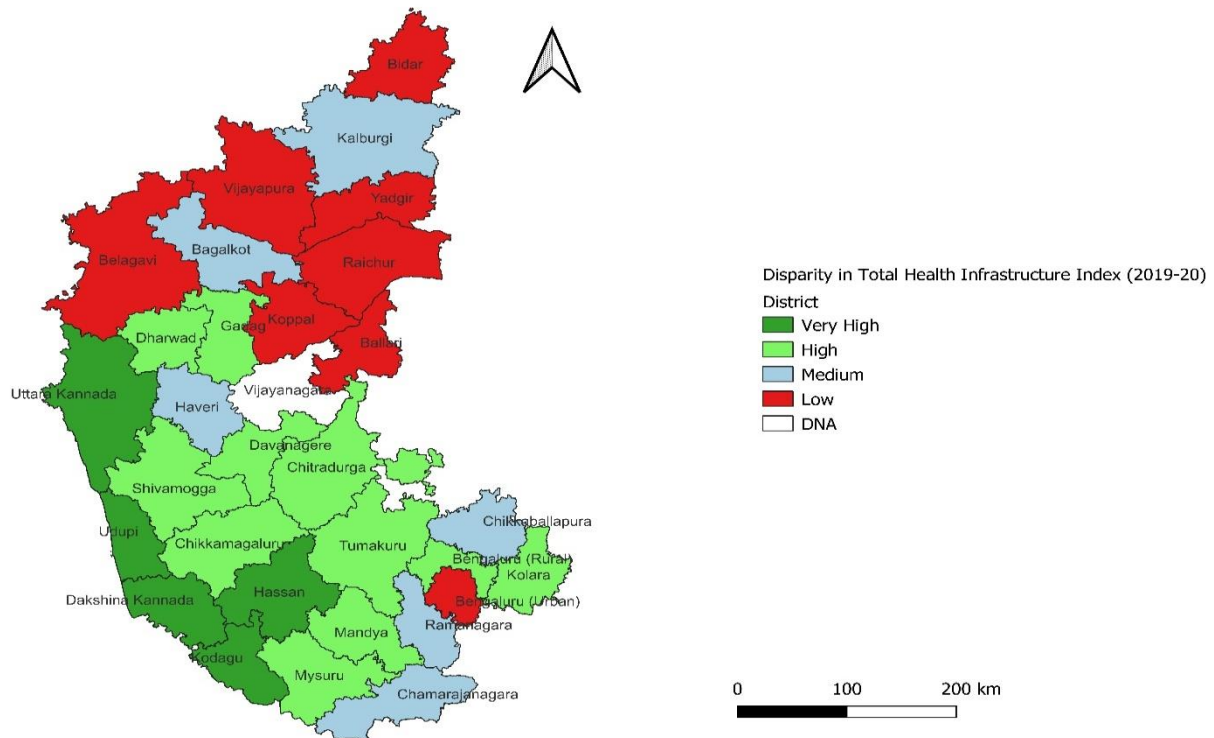
Findings:

Persistent Regional Disparities: The research confirms the long-standing regional disparities between North and South Karnataka. While South Karnataka, particularly Bengaluru and Mysuru, have experienced rapid industrialization and urbanization, North Karnataka continues to be predominantly agrarian, with lower per capita income, limited industrial growth, and poorer infrastructure. These disparities are reflected in lower Human Development Index (HDI) scores, lower literacy rates, and inadequate healthcare and educational facilities in the northern districts.

Historical Marginalization and Political Grievances: The historical integration of regions like Hyderabad-Karnataka and Bombay-Karnataka into the state post-1956 has resulted in feelings of marginalization. The promises made under Article 371J of the Indian Constitution, which aimed to promote equitable development in the Kalyana-Karnataka region, have largely been unfulfilled. There is also a sense of political underrepresentation, with decision-making being perceived as concentrated in Bengaluru, further alienating the northern regions from the state's development agenda.

Economic Dependence on Agriculture: North Karnataka remains heavily dependent on agriculture, with limited access to irrigation and advanced farming technologies. Erratic monsoons and inadequate government support for agrarian development have exacerbated rural distress in the region. Additionally, the region has been unable to attract significant industrial investment, resulting in fewer employment opportunities and higher levels of migration to southern cities like Bengaluru.

Map 4: Disparity in Total Health Infrastructure Index 2019-20.



Source:

Lack of Infrastructure and Industrialization: Key findings reveal that inadequate transportation, power, and water infrastructure have impeded North Karnataka's economic growth. The lack of a robust industrial base has meant that the region remains dependent on traditional industries and agriculture, with minimal diversification into sectors like IT-BT, which have fuelled South Karnataka's growth. Despite the region's rich natural resources, particularly in districts like Ballari, there is little value-added industrial activity.

Growing Demand for Separate Statehood: The demand for separate statehood is primarily driven by socio-economic inequalities and political marginalization. The findings suggest that while some groups advocate for greater autonomy within Karnataka, a significant section of the population, particularly in districts like Kalaburagi and Belagavi, believes that a new state would ensure more localized governance, better resource management, and targeted development policies. However, the movement lacks widespread public consensus and faces opposition from political leaders in South Karnataka.

Challenges to Statehood: The findings also highlight the challenges of creating a new state. These include the economic viability of North Karnataka as a standalone entity, the costs of setting up new administrative structures, and potential inter-regional conflicts over shared resources, particularly water from the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers. Additionally, political resistance from the state and central governments remains a significant obstacle.

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Suggestions:

Balanced Regional Development Programs: The Karnataka government should prioritize balanced regional development through targeted policies that address North Karnataka's specific needs. A stronger implementation of Article 371-J provisions, including better funding for infrastructure, education, and healthcare in Kalyana-Karnataka, could alleviate some of the grievances driving the statehood demand.

Decentralization of Governance: To mitigate political alienation, the state should adopt a more decentralized governance model. Establishing regional administrative hubs in North Karnataka with greater financial autonomy and decision-making power can help ensure that development policies are tailored to the unique needs of the region.

Focused Industrial Policy: A dedicated industrial policy for North Karnataka, incentivizing investments in manufacturing, agro-based industries, and information technology, could spur economic diversification. The government should provide tax incentives, subsidies, and infrastructure development to attract industries to the region, creating employment opportunities and reducing economic disparity.

Investment in Infrastructure: Significant investment in transportation networks (roads, railways), power generation, and water infrastructure is critical to improving North Karnataka's economic competitiveness. Upgrading irrigation facilities and building more dams in the

region would also help tackle the recurring agricultural distress caused by erratic monsoons.

Educational and Skill Development Initiatives: North Karnataka lags behind in education and skill development. The government should establish more universities, technical institutes, and vocational training centres in the region. Enhancing access to quality education and skill development programs would empower the youth and create a more employable workforce, reducing migration to southern cities.

Greater Representation in Political Decision-Making: The research suggests that political alienation is a key grievance in the separate statehood demand. Ensuring greater representation of leaders from North Karnataka in state and national decision-making bodies, as well as creating dedicated ministerial portfolios for the region's development, could help address these concerns.

Conclusion:

The demand for separate statehood in North Karnataka is rooted in deep-seated socio-economic inequalities and political marginalization that have persisted since the region's integration into Karnataka. Historical grievances, coupled with continued underdevelopment in areas such as infrastructure, education, healthcare, and industrialization, have intensified regional discontent. While the demand for state bifurcation has gained some momentum, the movement faces significant challenges, including political opposition, economic viability, and public consensus.

Rather than state division, the findings of this study suggest that a more effective solution lies in addressing the root causes of regional disparity through targeted development policies and decentralization of governance. By implementing robust infrastructure development programs, fostering industrial growth, improving educational facilities, and ensuring greater political representation, the state can work towards achieving balanced development across North and South Karnataka. This would not only mitigate the demand for separate statehood but also unlock the region's potential for sustainable and inclusive growth. Ultimately, equitable regional development, rather than administrative bifurcation, offers the best path forward for addressing the grievances of North Karnataka and promoting long-term prosperity for the entire state.

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