

Post-independence Consolidation and Reorganization of States

- When the British decided to quit India, the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Muslim League did not come to any conclusion and was unable to make a united front for independence.
- For creating a consensus, Britain sent the Cabinet Mission to India. Muslim League did not agree on the proposals of Cabinet Mission, and Jinnah proclaimed "Direct Action Day" on 16th August 1946.
- Violence erupted on both sides of the borders.
- To stop the violence and to avoid a civil war situation, Congress accepted the partition plan.
- On 14th August 1947, India got divided into the dominions of India and Pakistan.
- Later, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was further divided, and a new dominion of the People's Republic of Bangladesh was created in 1975.
- The Indian Independence Act 1947 made the necessary provision for the independence of India and Pakistan.
- India chose to become a secular country, whereas Pakistan decided to become an Islamic County.
- The actual geographic demarcation of the areas between India and Pakistan was entrusted upon by Sir Cyril Radcliffe.

Status on the eve of independence

- After independence, the world saw one of the most abrupt and haphazard transfers of people in human history. There were brutal killings, rapes, atrocities in the name of religion on both sides of the border.
- In an estimate, about 80 lakh people were forced to migrate across the border to a new place. Also, around 10 lakh people were killed during Partition in religious violence.
- India created a department of rehabilitation for the resettlement of refugee in various refugee camps.
- At the time of partition, the number of princely states was approximately 565, having different types of revenue-sharing arrangements with the British and apart from that there were several colonial enclaves controlled by France and Portugal.
- The political integration of all these territories into India was the first objective and was a big challenge of the newly formed government of India.

The Accession of the princely states

- The Sardar Patel assumed additional charge of the newly created states department in Jun 1947 with V.P. Menon as its Secretary.
- In its first step, Patel appealed to the princes whose territories fell inside India to join the Indian Union in at least three subjects which can affect the common interests of the country, namely, defence, foreign affairs and communications.
- He also gave an implied threat he would not be able to restrain the impatient people post-August 15, 1947. States have been issued an appeal with an implied threat of anarchy and chaos.
- He also convinced Mountbatten to take efforts necessary for the integration of India. Mountbatten persuaded the Princes, and finally, all the states accept the instrument of accession except few.

- With his masterful diplomacy by using both persuasion and pressure, the Sardar Patel succeeded in the integration of most of the princely states.
- However, integration of the princely states of Hyderabad, Junagadh, Jammu & Kashmir and Manipur proved more difficult than the rest.
- In 1948 a plebiscite was conducted in Junagarh which went almost unanimously in favour of India and hence were integrated with India.
- The Nizam of Hyderabad wanted to be independent; however, the people were in favour of accession to India. Considering the geographical location and wish of majority people of the Hyderabad, Patel decided to use force, and finally, **Hyderabad** became the part of India through **Police action**.
- Jammu and Kashmir state was under the control of Maharaja Hari Singh, a Hindu ruler, although the state had a Muslim majority. Initially, he signed a Standstill Agreement with Pakistan as well as with India and decided to remain independent.
- However, due to intrusion from Pakistan, the Maharaja of Kashmir wrote to India, asking for military assistance and signed an Instrument of Accession with India.
- Bodhchandra Singh, the Maharaja of Manipur signed the Instrument of Accession with India on the assurance of internal autonomy of Manipur.

The Accession of States under France and Portuguese

- After the successful integration of princely states, the issue of French settlement and Portuguese settlements were taken into consideration by the Indian Government.
- After prolonged negotiation by the Government of India, Pondicherry and other French possessions were being handed over to India in 1954.
- However, the Portuguese were not ready to handover their areas.
- Its NATO allies supported Portugal's position, and India supported peaceful means.
- There was an independence movement which was going in Goa and India was patiently observing.
- But in 1961 when that popular movement demanded support, Indian troops marched in Goa under Operation Vijay and Portuguese surrendered without any fight.

Accession of Sikkim

- Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim were the three Himalayan states bordering India, in which, Nepal and Bhutan initially maintained status quo and later became independent.
- Historically, the Sikkim was a British dependency and was therefore considered to be with India. However, on independence, the Chogyal of Sikkim resisted for full integration into India.
- In 1973, an anti-Chogyal agitation broke out in Sikkim in which protestors demanded popular elections. This was supported by India, and in the elections, the opponents of the Chogyal won an overwhelming victory.
- With this, a new Constitution was drafted for Sikkim which made provisions for full integration with the Republic of India in 1975.

State reorganization

- After the accession of the Princely States and British Provinces, the states were grouped on the basis of historical and political considerations rather than on cultural or linguistic divisions. However, this was just a temporary arrangement.

- At this juncture, there was a need for the reorganization of states on a permanent basis.
- **Dhar Commission** – Due to the growing demand of reorganization of states on a linguistic basis, a commission was appointed in the chairmanship of SK Dhar in 1948. However, the commission preferred reorganization of states on the basis of administrative convenience including historical and geographical considerations instead of linguistic lines.
- **JVP Committee** - The JVP Committee was constituted in 1948 and consisted of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabh Bhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya. The Committee submitted its report on April 1949 and rejected the idea of the reorganization of states on a linguistic basis. However, it said that the issue might be looked with a fresh perspective in the light of public demand.
- **Andhra Movement** – Due to huge protests, the first linguistic state of Andhra for Telugu-speaking people was born in 1953. Due to a prolonged agitation Potti Sriramulu, the government separated the Telugu speaking people from Madras. Similar demands started from here onwards.
- **Fazl Ali Commission** - Jawaharlal Nehru appointed a new commission under Fazl Ali in 1953 to consider these new demands. The commission submitted its full report in 1955 and made a suggestion for the reorganization of the whole country into 16 states and three centrally administered areas. However, the government did not agree with the recommendations entirely and divided the country into 14 states and six union territories bypassing the States Reorganisation Act in 1956.
- **Shah Commission** – On the recommendation of the Shah Commission report the Punjab Reorganisation Act was passed in 1966 by the Parliament and the state of Haryana was formed. However, Chandigarh was made a union territory with a common capital of Punjab and Haryana.
- In 1969 the state of Meghalaya and in 1971 the state of Himachal Pradesh came into existence. Also, the Union Territories of Tripura and Manipur were converted into states. This made the total number of Indian states to 21.
- Thereafter, Sikkim was made a state in 1975, and Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh in 1987. The Goa became the 25th state of the Indian Union in May 1987. In November 2000, three new states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal were formed and on June 2, 2014, Telangana became the 29th state of India.
- Recently the parliament of India passed the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Bill 2019 which created two union territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.
- In this way presently, India has 28 States and 09 Union Territories.

Way Forward

- To a large extent, the integration and reorganization of Indian states have been done in a very holistic way by balancing the local requirement and administrative convenience. The same need to be maintained in future.
- India needs to resolve their issues in an aggressive and integrated way, which has been seen in the recent decision of Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Bill 2019.
- In every decision, the confidence of people in the area should be taken care of and their issues need to be resolved.
- Being the largest democracy, India should look into the rights aspect of the citizens also while taking any decision on the reorganization of states.