
REORGANISATION OF STATES

Introduction

In India, the States Reorganization Act, 1956 was a major reform of the boundaries of India's states and territories, organizing them along linguistic lines. Although additional changes to India's state boundaries have been made since 1956, the States Reorganization Act of 1956 remains the single most extensive change in state boundaries since the independence of India in 1947.

The State Reorganization Act, 1956 came into effect at the time when the Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956, restructured the constitutional framework for India's existing states under the provisions of Articles 3 and 4 of the constitution.

Constitutional Provisions

The founding fathers of independent India, gave the country a federal, parliamentary, democratic constitution on 26 January 1950. The Constitution envisaged the creation of a layered territorial and administrative order, but little was said about the basis on which they would be created, i.e. geography, demography, administrative convenience, language, or culture. That decision was left entirely to the wisdom of Parliament. According to the constitution -

- **Article 2:** states that 'Parliament may by law admit into the Union, or establish new states on such terms and conditions as it thinks fit.'
- **Article 3:** states that Parliament 'may by law form a new state by separation of territory from any state or by uniting two or more States or parts of states.' Additionally, it may 'increase the area of any state; diminish the area of any state, alter the boundaries of any state', and 'alter the name of any state'.

Post Independence, the factors that lead to merger are

- **Indian Nationalism:** With the Independence of India in 1947, there was rise of Indian nationalism in the people of the colonies in India. This was clearly seen by the rise of nationalist local parties in those regions. Their increasing dominance in the politics of French India created an anti-French feeling in people.
- **Shift of Socialists:** This was the most important Post-independent cause, probably the sole cause that led ultimately to the liberation of French colonies in India. The members of the French India Socialist Party shifted their stance towards pro-Merger nationalist groups. This gave a catastrophic and devastating effect to the French rule in India. The switch of Edouard Goubert towards pro-Merger camp became the death knell to the French sovereignty in its colonies.

On The Eve of Independence

The history of Reorganization of states in India needs to be viewed, against the backdrop of the partition in 1947, integration of princely states and the federal crisis originated out of complex diversity across the length and breadth of India.

Freedom of India was celebrated with much exuberance and elation on 15th August 1947. But the independence had been accompanied by a multitude of problems, most immediate of which was the territorial and administrative integration of the princely states. With great skill and masterful diplomacy and using both persuasion and pressure, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel succeeded in integrating the hundreds of princely states with the Indian Union.

After the territorial and administrative integration, major challenge was of national unity or consolidation of the nation. This is also sometimes referred to as national integration or the integration of Indian people as a political community.

To achieve national unity in the midst of complex diversity was a herculean task as India consists of a large number of linguistic, cultural and geographic-economic zones. It has followers of different religions, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, Buddhists and Jews, apart from tribals with myriad belief systems. Given this diversity, the leaders of the national movement realized that India could be unified only by accepting this immense diversity and not counter posing it to the process of nation-in-the making.

Accession of the Princely States

- In colonial India, nearly 40 per cent of the territory was occupied by fifty-six small and large states ruled by the princes who enjoyed varying degrees of autonomy under the system of British paramountcy.
- With the announcement of independence, Britishers stated that 'His Majesty's Government does not intend to hand over their powers and obligations under paramountcy to India.' Consequently, rulers of several states claimed that they would become independent on 15 August 1947 when British rule will end.
- Further Jinnah stated that 'the States would be independent sovereign States on the termination of paramountcy and were 'free to remain independent if they so desired'.
- But due to this the unity of free India would have been endangered due to the presence of hundreds of large and small independent or autonomous states interspersed within it which were sovereign.

Clauses in instrument of accession

- From June to August 15 1947, 562 of the 565 India-linked states signed the instrument of accession.
- Instrument of accession granted the GOI control over specified subject matters. The nature of the subject matters varied depending on the acceding state. The states which had internal autonomy under the British signed an Instrument of Accession which only ceded three subjects to the government of India—defence, external affairs, and communications.
- Rulers of states which were talukas, where substantial administrative powers were exercised by the Crown, signed a different Instrument of Accession, which vested all residuary powers and jurisdiction in the Government of India.
- Rulers of states which had an intermediate status signed a third type of Instrument, which preserved the degree of power they had under the British.

A. Accession of Hyderabad

- Hyderabad constituted a state that stretched over 82,000 square miles (over 212,000 square kilometers) in the center of India with the population of 16 million, 85% of whom declared themselves Hindus.
- Nizam Usman Ali Khan of Hyderabad denied for integration with India.
- The strategic location of Hyderabad, which lay astride the main lines of communication between northern and southern India, could be easily used by "foreign interests" to threaten India.
- Lord Mountbatten crafted a proposal called the 'Heads of Agreement' , which called for the disbandment of the Hyderabad army, for the Nizam to hold a plebiscite and elections for a constituent assembly, and for eventual accession. While India would control Hyderabad's foreign affairs, the deal allowed Hyderabad to set up a parallel government and delay accession. But Nizam of Hyderabad rejected it.

- When all the negotiation process failed, GOI launched Operation Polo.
- On 13 September, the Indian Army was sent into Hyderabad under Operation Polo on the grounds that the law and order situation there threatened the peace of South India. The troops met little resistance by the Razakars and between 13 and 18 September took complete control of the state.

B. Accession of Junagarh

- Junagadh was a small state on the coast of Saurashtra surrounded by Indian territory and therefore without any geographical contiguity with Pakistan. Yet. Its Nawab announced accession of his state to Pakistan on 15 August 1947 even though the people of the state, overwhelmingly Hindu, desired to join India.
- Consequently, there was unrest in the region. There were two principalities of Junagadh. They declared independence and opted for merger with India. Sensing insecurity the Nawab fled to Pakistan and established a government in exile (Arzi Hukoomat) in Pakistan territory.
- India asked Pakistan not to accept accession and instead agree for plebiscite in the princely state. But Pakistan did not agree.
- Indian army entered Junagadh and its administration was transferred to Indian control. A plebiscite was held in which 99% favored merger with India. The state is now in Saurashtra region of Gujarat. Thus the process of integration of princely states to India was complete.

C. Accession of J&K

- The state of Kashmir bordered on both India and Pakistan.
- Its ruler Hari Singh was a Hindu, while nearly 75 per cent of the population was Muslim. Hari Singh too did not accede either to India or Pakistan. Fearing democracy in India and communalism in Pakistan, he hoped, to stay out of both and to continue to wield power as an independent ruler.
- But On 22 October, with the onset of winter, several Pathan tribesmen, led unofficially by Pakistani army officers, invaded Kashmir and rapidly pushed towards Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. The ill trained army of the Maharaja proved no match for the invading forces, in panic, on 24 October, the Maharaja appealed to India for military assistance. Nehru, even at this stage, did not favour accession without ascertaining the will of the people. But Mountbatten, the Governor-General, pointed out that under international law India could send its troops to Kashmir only after the state's formal accession to India. Sheikh Abdullah and Sardar Patel too insisted on accession.
- On 26 October, the Maharaja acceded to India and also agreed to install Abdullah as head of the state's administration. Even though both the National conference and the Maharaja wanted firm and permanent accession, India, in conformity with its democratic commitment and Mountbatten's advice, announced that it would hold a referendum on the accession decision once peace and law and order had been restored in the Valley.
- After accession, the Cabinet took the decision to immediately fly troops to Srinagar. This decision was bolstered by its approval by Gandhiji who told Nehru that there should be no submission to evil in Kashmir and that the raiders had to be driven out. On 27 October nearly 100 planes airlifted men and weapons to Srinagar to join the battle against the raiders.
- Fearful of the dangers of a full-scale war between India and Pakistan, the Government of India agreed, on 30 December 1947, on Mountbatten's suggestion, to refer the Kashmir problem to the Security Council of the United Nations, asking for vacation of aggression by Pakistan.
- The Security Council, guided by Britain and the United States, tended to side with Pakistan. Ignoring India's complaint, it replaced the 'Kashmir question' before it by the 'India-Pakistan dispute'.

- It passed many resolutions, but the upshot was that in accordance with one of its resolutions both India and Pakistan accepted a ceasefire on 3 December 1948 which still prevails and the state was effectively divided along the ceasefire line.
- In 1951, the UN passed a resolution providing for a referendum under UN supervision after Pakistan had withdrawn its troops from the part of Kashmir under its control. The resolution has remained infructuous since Pakistan has refused to withdraw its forces from what is known as Azad Kashmir. Since then Kashmir has been the main obstacle in the path of friendly relations between India and Pakistan.

Accession of States under France and Portuguese

- In the 1950s, France still maintained the regions of Pondicherry, Karikal, Yanam, Mahe and Chandernagore as colonies and Portugal maintained Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Goa remained as colonies.

Factors responsible for accession of French colonies

- **Insignificant in population and area:** The total area of the settlements was well under 2,000 square miles (5,200 km²), that of the Union (excluding Kashmir) well over 1,000,000 square miles (2,600,000 km²). The total population of the settlements was less than 1,000,000 that of the Union over 360,000,000.
- **Lack of clear cut frontiers with India:** Very few of the settlements had clear-cut frontiers with India. There were many enclaves entirely surrounded by Indian territory, especially in Pondicherry district.
- **Economic Factors:** The very economic existence of the settlements depended on Indian goodwill.
- **Lack of military resistance:** If India wished to annex the settlements forcibly there was very little that France could do to stop her.

Accession of Daman and Diu

- Portugal had resisted diplomatic solutions, and refused to transfer power.
- Local people protested against the government with the support of RSS and United Front of Goans and occupied Daman and Diu. Later merged with India in 1961.

Accession of Goa

- Many Goans living under colonial rule resented the presence of the Portuguese colonialists for their brutal policies and mandates, and their relentless campaigns to convert the predominantly Hindu Goans to Christianity.
- GOI started Operation Vijay over Goa and annexed it in 1961. Goa was incorporated into India as a centrally administered union territory and, in 1987, became a state.

Accession of Sikkim

- Sikkim was a British dependency, with a status similar to that of the other princely states. On independence, however, the Chogyal of Sikkim resisted full integration into India. Given the region's strategic importance to India, the Government of India signed first a Standstill Agreement and then in 1950 a full treaty with the Chogyal of Sikkim which in effect made it a protectorate which was no longer part of India. India had responsibility for defence, external affairs and communications, and ultimate responsibility for law and order, but Sikkim was otherwise given full internal autonomy.
- In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Chogyal PaldenThondup Namgyal, supported by the minority Bhutia and Lepchaupper classes, attempted to negotiate greater powers, particularly over external