

## **Federalism & State Reorganization**

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The idea of federalism as an organizing principle between different levels of a state is quite old. Greek city states had it. Lichchavi kingdom of northern India in the 6th century BC is a celebrated example of a republican system. In the modern world, this continues to be the most popular system in larger countries like US, Brazil, Mexico and India. In fact, the European Union is a recent example of the idea of federalism being implemented at a trans-national level to leverage its various advantages in the economic sphere.

The concept was celebrated by political philosophers like Montesquie as “confederate republic constituted by sovereign city states”. The architect of Indian Constitution, Baba Saheb Ambedkar believed that for a culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse and heterogeneous country like India, federalism was the ‘chief mark’, though with a strong unitary bias. This understanding differed from what Mahatma Gandhi put forward in his speeches which advocated “Village Decentralization”. Hopefully through the establishment of Panchayati System and after 73<sup>rd</sup> & 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Acts, this thought of Bapu was also incorporated in our federal system.

But with Globalization & Rise of Regional Political Leadership, the face of federal system has constantly changed with time. States are more and more becoming parties to political as well economic activities in India and claiming huge stakes in activities which were traditionally thought to be unitary or centre related.

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## **The Changing Dynamics in Indian Federalism: State Reorganizations & Rising Demand for Newer States**

India has always been a country full of diversities culturally, linguistically and ethnically. In the ancient and medieval times when there were large kingdoms ruling the Indian Subcontinent, the development of regional affinities was limited. Despite the diversities, the whole subcontinent was seen as single unit and all the divisions done were mostly administrative.

With the coming of Europeans, and their division of states into administrative units, the scenarios started changing. And moreover, after the rise of INC and the beginning of national movement, the people started finding affinities within region on the basis of religion, caste and language. This provided our leaders with a trigger point for the movement and they started embracing the linguistic reorganization of Indian States. Starting from Bal Gangadhar Tilak to Mahatma Gandhi all the leaders advocated for linguistic reorganization of states in India. The Congress Provincial Committees were formed on the basis of language and this was seen as easy way to reach the grassroots.

This eventually led to a successful movement, and India working on this model achieved Independence in 1947. After 1947, people started demanding State Reorganization on linguistic grounds. Fearing of Balkanization of Indian Subcontinent, the leaders refused to see to the issue so early after the independence.

But after the political movements led by P.Sriramalu in Andhra Pradesh, DMK in Tamil Nadu and others in Gujarat and Bombay State etc, State Reorganization Act was passed in 1956. Though the leaders and the SRC denied the role of language in State Reorganization, the major basis was evidently language only.

From that time onwards, there has been reorganization of states leading to formation of new states from time to time. Reasons have been different in different scenarios. For e.g. Assam State was reorganized to settle the separatists movements in North Eastern States. Himachal and Haryana were reorganized for administrative purpose. Chattisgarh, Uttarakhand & Jharkhand were formed due to their rapid development vis-à-vis the larger state they were part of.

Recently Telangana was formed after reorganizing the State of Andhra Pradesh, mainly due to issues between communities in Telangana region and their cultural alienation from the rest of Andhra Pradesh.

The effect of this reorganization has been both positive as well as negative on Indian Federalism. Positive Outcomes have been the rise of local leadership and local parties, ease of administration, more participation of state into political scenarios and situations, efficient seepage of benefits in smaller states with some affinity.

One more very interesting outcome has been the rise of “regional” vigor in states after reorganization. States have started competing with each other and improving their human development indexes and statuses to have better hold over finances from Centre. This has led to rise of “Competitive Federalism” in India.

The slogan “*Jai Hind, Jai Maharashtra*”, Kerala’s improved human development stats, Bengal’s Political Isolation from Rest of the Country all set up a beautiful example as to how the regionalism has led to improved federal setup in our country.

But on the other side, there have been negative implications of this also. The most stark of them all is the rising demand for separate smaller states.

To put into perspective the whole scenario we will have to take a look into the demands for separate states all over India:

- **Assam:** Bodoland, KarbiAnglong, Dimaraji
- **Bihar:** Bhojpur, Mithila
- **Gujarat:** Bhilistan, Kutch, Saurashtra
- **Karnataka:** Tulu Nadu, Kodagu
- **MP:** Baghelkhand, Bundelkhand, Vindhya Pradesh, Malwa, Gondwana, Mahakoshal
- **Maharashtra:** Khandesh, Konkan, Marathawada, Vidharbh
- **Manipur:** Kukiland
- **Odisha:** Kosal
- **TN:** Konga Nadu
- **UP:** Harit Pradesh, Awadh, Purvanchal, Bundelkhand

- **WB:** Kamtapur, Gorkhaland
- **Nagaland, Manipur, Assam:** Nagalim
- **Andhra:** Rayalseema

These are the demands which have been there for smaller states across India. What it does to the federal structure is that it makes the administration by the Centre over State very difficult, the administrative costs increase, election and representation costs increases.

Sometimes, these demands take radical stance as observed in the case of demand for Nagalim and Gorkhaland. People under the influence of regional leaders are creating new affinities, turning hostile towards other cultures or ethnicities and becoming intolerant towards diversities. They are demanding isolated spaces to work for their community or affiliations.

Though the demands have not been very strong as yet but, clearly fault lines have been visible across the country. Issues like interstate disputes, lack of autonomy, lack of representation and development problems are now taking radical colors and leading to demand for separate state. The fears of Sardar Patel are taking real shape and one day “Balkanisation” fears might haunt India’s unity in diversity.

Nevertheless, till date reorganizations have never proved to be a threat to Indian sovereignty and have been embraced very strongly by our federal structure, making it stronger rather than weakening it, which was feared by our early leaders.

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