

LINGUISTIC REORGANIZATION OF STATES: POLITY

NEWS: What R N Ravi's criticism of linguistic states misses

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

After independence, India faced intense demands for reorganisation of state boundaries along linguistic lines, as people felt language best represented their cultural and administrative identity. This led to the formation of the **States Reorganisation Commission (1953)** and the subsequent **States Reorganisation Act, 1956**, redrawing state boundaries primarily on linguistic basis.

Recent Context

- The **Tamil Nadu Governor** criticised the **linguistic basis** of state reorganisation, calling it a contributor to the creation of “second-class citizens”.
- This reignited the debate on whether **language-based federalism** weakens or strengthens national unity.

Historical Background at Independence (1947–1950)

- **Colonial Legacy:** India inherited a mosaic of:
 - **British provinces** (under direct rule).
 - **565 princely states** (under indirect control).
- **Constitution of India (1950):**
 - Declared India as a “**Union of States**”.
 - Classified states into **Part A, B, C, and D** for administrative convenience:
 - **Part A:** Former governors' provinces of British India (e.g., Bombay, Bengal).
 - **Part B:** Former princely states (e.g., Hyderabad, Mysore).
 - **Part C:** Chief Commissioners' provinces and some princely states.
 - **Part D:** Only **Andaman & Nicobar Islands**, administered by a Lieutenant Governor.

Initial Opposition to Linguistic States

- **JVP Committee (1948–49):**
 - Formed by INC: Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, and Pattabhi Sitaramayya.

- **Recommendation:** Rejected **language** as a primary basis for state formation.
- Concern: Linguistic reorganisation may **endanger national unity** and lead to **disintegration**.

Turning Point: Andhra Movement (1952)

- **Potti Sriramulu**, a Gandhian, went on a **56-day hunger strike** demanding a **Telugu-speaking state**.
- His **death in 1952** led to widespread agitation and mass support.
- Outcome: Creation of **Andhra State** in **October 1953** (first linguistic state).

States Reorganisation Commission (SRC), 1953

- Set up by the Government in **December 1953**.
- **Chairperson:** Fazl Ali; **Members:** **K.M. Panikkar** and **H.N. Kunzru**.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Language can be an important factor, but not the **sole criterion**.
 - Opposed the idea of "**One Language – One State**".
 - Called for **administrative viability**, **unity**, and **cultural affinity** as guiding principles.

States Reorganisation Act, 1956

- **Key Features:**
 - Abolished the **Part A, B, C, D** classification.
 - Created **14 states and 6 union territories**.
 - States like **Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh** were reorganised on linguistic lines.
- Led to:
 - **Unification of Kannada-speaking areas** to form **Mysore (later Karnataka)**.
 - Formation of **Kerala** by merging Malabar district with Travancore-Cochin.
 - Redrawing of many state boundaries.

Subsequent Reorganisations

- **1960: Bombay Reorganisation Act** created **Maharashtra** (Marathi-speaking) and **Gujarat** (Gujarati-speaking).

- **1966: Punjab Reorganisation** created Haryana and transferred some areas to Himachal Pradesh.
- **1963–1987:** Creation of North-Eastern states (Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, etc.)
- **2000:** Formation of **Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand**.
- **2014:** Formation of **Telangana** from Andhra Pradesh.

ON JANUARY 26, 1950



AFTER 1956 REORGANISATION



Impact & Success of Linguistic Reorganisation

1. Preservation of Unity through Diversity:

- Contrary to fears, linguistic states have **strengthened unity**.
- Helped accommodate diverse regional identities, preventing **alienation**.
- Avoided mistakes seen in **Sri Lanka** (Sinhala-only policy) and **Pakistan** (denial of Bengali identity).

2. Improved Governance:

- Smaller, linguistically homogeneous states improved **administrative efficiency**.
- Better **public service delivery** and **representation** in local governance.

3. Cultural Recognition & Integration:

- Affirmed **regional languages, scripts, and cultures**.
- Fostered **local pride** while remaining within the Indian Union.

4. Reduced Secessionist Movements:

- **Second ARC (2008)** noted major secessionist movements (Nagaland, Punjab, Kashmir) were based on **ethnicity or religion**, not language.
- Linguistic accommodation **tamed potential discontent**.

Way Forward

- **Promote Cooperative Federalism:**
 - Balance between **regional aspirations** and **national integrity**.
- **Institutional Review Mechanisms:**
 - Periodic evaluation of state boundaries and **inter-state equity**.
 - Adaptation to **population growth, economic development, and cultural demands**.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-history/what-r-n-ravis-criticism-of-linguistic-states-misses-10162580/>