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Politics of Language and Linguistic Reorganisation before and after Independence in India

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Abstract: *This article examines the politics of language and linguistic reorganisation before and after the Indian independence. Before 1947, the Indian Nationalist Movement started gathering momentum for liberation from the British. The nationalist struggle against colonial rule precluded any narrow sentiments for linguistic agitation prior to independence. Moreover, afterthe partition of Pakistan from the Indian Union and the subsequent independence of India, the desire for the linguistic reorganization of Indian states grew across the country. The 1951 constitution recognised 14 national languages, though the Constituent Assembly were silent on the linguistic reorganisation of states. Hence, immediately after independence such sentiments began to gather momentum among sections of the electorate that compelled a review of the 1951 constitution to accommodate the linguistic reorganisation. The paper concluded that with the creation of Andhra, immediately after the first general elections of 1951 - 1952, the basis for the linguistic reorganisation of Indian states was eventually laid.*

Keywords: linguistic reorganisation, cultural identity, integration, India, Devanagari.

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Introduction

Since the late 19th century, when Indian nationalism started growing, Indian states were generally focused on how to gain their freedom from British colonial administration. Hence, they were united for that purpose though there were instances when some states demanded reorganisation along linguistic lines. It must be pointed out that the British demarcated the sub-continent into provinces for administrative and economic convenience to maximise cost effectiveness. With violent agitation and demand from States like Andhra Pradesh, prior to the 1951 election, issues like the reorganisation of states occupied centre stage in the first general election, with political Reorganisation Commission in 1953.

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that the Constituent Assembly tackled the issue of language policy in the Constitution, which became a political concern for the newly independent India, by evading the term national language and designating "Hindi" in Devanagari script as the official language of the Union. The Indian Constitution stated that English could be used for fifteen years from 1950 to 1965 for official purposes alongside Hindi and stipulated a time frame for implementation and review by the Parliament for an arrangement according linguistic characterization, which was down played by the British colonialists for administrative convenience. Nevertheless, with the partition of Pakistan from the Indian Union and the subsequent independence of India, the sentiments for the linguistic reorganization of Indian states gained traction across the Indian

Union. Whilst recognizing the 14 national languages of the 1951 Constitution, the Constituent Assembly that drafted it were silent on the question of the linguistic reorganisation of states. With violent agitation and demand from States like Andhra Pradesh, prior to the 1951 election, these issues occupied centre stage in the first general election, with political parties taking up the issue during elections, leading to the creation of the States Reorganisation Commission.

The Question of Languages in India

According to A.K. Majumdar and Bhanwar Singh, between the 8th and 14th centuries, different nationalities and languages were formed in different regions on the Indian sub-continent, which had been referred to as "distinct cultural ecological zones" in the book "Regionalism in Indian Politics.":[1] "The subcontinent witnessed the growth of various languages spoken in modern India before independence. These languages also started producing their own local literature which laid the linguistic basis of nationality for the emergence of nationalism during the 15th and 16th centuries."[2]

The 1961 census identified 1,652 different languages and dialects in India; one state alone, Madhya Pradesh, had 377. There are officially 211 separate, distinct languages. It has been noted that Hindi is the principal language in

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[1] A. K. Majumdar, Bhanwar Singh, *Regionalism in Indian Politics,* New Delhi, Radha Publications, 1997, p. 32.
[2] *Ibidem*, p. 33.

family of languages on the subcontinent and it is spoken by some 240 million people as their mother-tongue, which is equivalent to 30% of the population. Hindi in Devanagari script has been recognised as the official language and, therefore, by government policy, instruction in the Hindi language in non-Hindi areas rapidly increased and large numbers of scientific and other modern words are being added to its vocabulary. Nonetheless, the government policy of increased familiarisation with the Hindi language has been confronted with stiff resistance from several non-Hindi speaking areas.[3] "The British introduced Western education for the traditionally illiterate caste with the hope of inculcating the values of Western society to support colonial administration. The British colonial policy had turned a heterogeneous society of India into a single political entity, which laid the ground for national consciousness. The British had internally divided and separated it, so skilfully as no other force in the history of the subcontinent could have done."[4]

The historical experience of British rule facilitated a common struggle among the people of India for the formation the Indian national state.[5] Similarly, eminent Indian Marxist historian and social scientist, A. R. Desai, notes that Indian nationalism from the onset had assumed a twin character.[6]

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[3] B. I. Kluyev, *India: National and Language Problem*, New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1981, p. 111.

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 112.

[5] *Ibidem,* pp. 31 - 32.

[6] A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Mumbai, POPULAR PRAKASHAN PVT LTD, 1948, p. x; Amalendu Guha, "Nationalism: Pan-Indian and Regional in a Historical Perspective", in: *Social Scientist,* vol. 12, no. 2, February 1984, p. 45.

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On the one hand, the anti-imperial struggle had overwhelmed the barriers of caste, religion and language at country level, whilst it had surpassed the "linguistic consciousness" of various nationalities. The organization of all these heterogeneous nationalities into a single political entity by the British served to raise their national consciousness as was manifested in 1857 Indian rebellion against the rule of the East India Company. Hence, the linguistic reorganisation of the provinces was not considered by the British as significant except when it served their imperial purpose, for example the partition of Bengal in 1905. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report of 1919 to the British parliament opposed the reorganisation of states and recommended small homogenous states.[7]

National Congress and State Formation

In 1905, the Indian National Congress supported the linguistic nationality principle during the struggle against British colonial rule by objecting to the partition of Bengal. The linguistic nationality principle was also demonstrated in the National Congress-supported creation of Bihar in 1908 and the Congress provinces of Sind and Andhra in 1917. Undoubtedly, the National Congress support for the linguistic nationality principle had not been crystal clear. Hence, Annie Besant criticised the linguistic nationality principle during the Indian National Congress Session of 1917.[8] The issue

[7] A. K. Majumdar, Bhanwar Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
[8] ***, *Report of the States Re-organisation Commission 1955*, The Secretary A.V. PAT, States Re-organisation Commission S.R.C. Section, New Delhi, Government of India

of linguistic nationality principle was discussed at the Calcutta Congress session in 1917 and by 1918, Gandhi had accepted the logic of linguistic provinces. It was during the Nagpur session of Congress in 1920 that the party turned the idea of linguistic nationality into a concrete plan by taking a resolution to reorganize the Pradesh Committee on a logistic basis.[9]

Upon the establishment of the Indian Statutory Commission in 1927, the National Congress adopted a resolution expressing their crystal opinion that: "the time has come for the redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis",[10] and they urged for constituting Andhra, Utkal, Sind and Karnataka into separate provinces. The proponents of the said resolution went further to draw up on the principles of "the right to the self-determination of the people speaking the same language and following the same tradition and culture."[11] The concept of self-determination was popularized after World War I following the publication of President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, which emphasized the right of people to determine who governs them.[12] It should be noted that the principle of self-determination was gradually gathering momentum in the colonies then as a product of post-World War I international relations and discussions at the League of Nations

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Press, 1955, pp. 12 - 13, available at https://ssanthiswaroop.files.wordpress.com, accessed on 20th March 2017.

[9] K. R. Bombwall, *The foundations of Indian federalism*, London, Asia Public House, 1967, p. 129.

[10] For detailed discussion on the concept of self-determination vis-à-vis anti-imperialist nationalism, refer to E. Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

[11] Phool Kumar Sharma, *Political Aspects of States Reorganization in India*, New Delhi, Mohuni Publications, 1969, p. 81.

[12] A. K. Majumdar, Bhanwar Singh, *op. cit.,* p. 33.

since 1919. Hence, it was no surprise that some Congress nationalists made reference to the concept self-determination.

The question of the redistribution of provinces based upon the linguistic nationality principle was also examined by the Nehru Committee of the All Parties Conference in 1928. The Committee lent its powerful support to the linguistic principle in the following terms:

If a province has to educate itself and do its daily work through the medium of its own language, it must necessarily be a linguistic area. If it happens to be a polyglot area difficulty will continually arise and the media of instruction and work will be two or even more languages. Hence it becomes most desirable for provinces to be re-grouped on a linguistic basis. Language as a rule corresponds with a special variety of culture, of traditions and literature. In a linguistic area all these factors will help in the general progress of the province.[13]

The Nehru Committee made a significant additional recommendation that *"the redistribution of provinces should take place on the basis of the wishes of the population, language, geographical, economic and financial principles."[14]*Nevertheless, in the opinion of the Nehru Committee, "the main considerations must necessarily be the wishes of the people and the linguistic unity of the area concerned."[15]The meaningfulness of "language as a principle for provincial reorganisation" was of 1951 and 1952. The Socialist Party advocated for the reorganisation of states on linguistic lines, further recognized in the Calcutta session in 1937 and the first election

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[13] ***, *Report of the States Re-organisation Commission 1955*…, p. 13.
[14] *Ibidem,* p. 14.
[15] Barbara N. Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and their States*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 273.

manifesto of the Congress Party committed itself to linguistic reorganisation if it was voted to power.[16]

The Congress manifesto acknowledged that decision on the reorganisation of states should ultimately depend on "the wishes of the people concerned but expressed the opinion that, while linguistic reasons were important, there were other factors also, such as economic, administrative and financial considerations, which had to be taken into account."[17] Accordingly, the Congress pursued this position to its logical conclusion by practically supporting the formation of the Andhra State on the basis that the Andhra Provincial Congress, the Tamilian Congress and the Madras Government had consented to the process of reorganization. On the other hand, Congress opposed the proposal for the formation of a Karnataka State on the basis of lack of consent for the agreement of the great majority of the people of the affected states Karnataka and Mysore.[18] The Congress Working Committee adopted the Nehru Committee Report in April 1949. Henceforth, the national Congress had "broadly adhered to the views expressed in this report",[19] which became manifested in the resolutions passed by Congress since 1949 and the Congress election Manifesto for the first general election of 1951.[20]

[16] R. Kumar, *Life and Work of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, New Delhi, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1991, p. 89.

[17] ***, *Report of the States Re-organisation Commission 1955…*, p. 14.

[18] M. V. Pylee, *Constitutional Government in India*, New Delhi, S. Chand & Company, 2003, p. 73.

[19] R. Chatterjee, *The Modern Review*, Calcutta, Prabasi Press Private, Limited, 1953, p. 69.

[20] Parliament of India, House of the People, *Lok Sabha Debates,* vol. 17, no. 18 - 23, Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1999, p. 14.

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The other political parties also had their views and stand points on the key national question of reorganisation or redistribution of Indian states and had included them in their party manifestos for the first general election perhaps, because of "geographical contiguity and economic viability."[21] The Hindu Maha Sabha advocated for "the policy of formation of provinces on a linguistic basis" but with due consideration to the critical issues of defence, area and economic viability.[22]

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The British introduced Western education for the traditionally illiterate caste with the hope of inculcating the values of Western society to support colonial administration. The British colonial policy had turned a heterogeneous society of India into a single political entity, which laid the ground for national consciousness. The British had "internally divided and separated it, so skilfully as no other force in the history of the subcontinent could have done.[24]

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[21] R. Chatterjee, *op. cit.,* p. 70.
[22] A. K. Majumdar, Bhanwar Singh, *op. cit.,* p. 34.
[23] *Ibidem, p. 35.*
[24] B. I. Kluyev*, India: National and Language Problem*, New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1981, p. 111.

The Constituent Assembly and the Constitutions

The Constituent Assembly of India came under increasing pressure during the formation and the drafting of the Indian constitution on the particular issue of reorganising Indian states on linguistic lines.[25] On 17th June 1948, the President of the Constituent Assembly, Rajendra Prasad, formed the Linguistic Provinces Commission (also called the Dar Commission, named after its chairman Justice S. K Dar) to investigate the problem and to recommend whether linguistic factor should guide the reorganization of the Indian states. Nevertheless, upon the conclusion of their investigation in December 1948, the Dar Commission, concluded that "the formation of provinces mainly on linguistic considerations is not in the larger interest of the Indian nation and should not be taken in hand." Justice Dar and team were of the view that the Union of Indian states had attained the required level of nationalism to "permit the formation of autonomous provinces" and saw the need for states to operate under a delegated authority from the Centre, whilst shying away from creation of majority linguistic states for fear of promoting un-governability due to disputes. Hence, the Dar Commission recommended in their submitted report in December 1948 as thus:

Till nationalism has acquired sufficient strength to permit the formation of autonomous provinces, the true nature and function of a province under our Constitution should be that of an administrative unit functioning under delegated

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[25] ***, *Report of the States Re-organisation Commission 1955…*, p. 17.

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authority from the centre and subject to centre's overriding powers in regard to its territory, its existence, and its functions. These powers are required to form new provinces and to mitigate the rigour of government by linguistic majorities, to prevent a breakdown of the administration on account of disputes amongst linguistic groups, to check fissiparous tendencies and strengthen national feelings, and above all to build up an Indian nation.[26]

The recommendations of the Committee did not go down well with sections of the Congressmen, particularly those from areas outside Hindi dominance. Following a petition for a review of the recommendation of the Commission, a three-man Committee comprising Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabbhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya was set up at the Congress session of December 1948 to review the Dar Commission recommendation,[27] but could not endorse the linguistic principle. Prakash Karat narrated that: "the temper of radicalism roused by the mass struggle for independence, the struggle in Telangana and partition made Nehru and the Congress leadership reject the linguistic nationality question."[28] The Constituent Assembly that drafted the 1950 Constitution listed 14 national languages in the Eight Schedule (Articles 343 and 344),but were silent on the question of the reorganisation of the Provinces. Moreover, efforts were not made to promote other regional languages. The significance of language to national identity was discussed at large.[29]

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[26]*Ibidem*, p.14.
[27]*Ibidem,* pp. 17 - 18.
[28] Mahendra Prasad Singh, "Reorganization of States in India", in: *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 43, no. 11, 15th – 21st March 2008, p. 71.
[29] A. K. Majumdar, Bhanwar Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 34 - 35.

Hence it was no surprise that issues were brought to a head immediately after independence as various groups started demanding a linguistic reorganisation of Indian states starting with the popular demand of Andhra Pradesh. The Indian Union was created out of partition as the Muslim League was successful in the secession of Pakistan before Independence in 1947. Hence, secessionist feelings posed a threat to the unity of India among the Naga tribes in the north-east of India and among some princely states following Indian independence from Britain in 1947.[30]It has been observed that the apparent preference of the British colonial rulers was the divide and rule approach:

[a] policy of administrative divisions with a view to creating an environment of conflict between people of different nationalities – the Assamese against the Bengalese, the Tamils against the Telugus, the Bengalese against the Orisa etc. Added to this was the principal concern of the colonial policy to subordinate the interest of India to those of the empire. This resulted in a stunted growth of colonial economy and society.[31]

Hence the British were not interested in the linguistic reorganisation of the provinces, but rather their key preoccupation was colonial administrative convenience to maximise the imperial economic gains of the colonial treasury and to ensure the security and sustainability of the colonial order. It

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[30] B. Shiva Rao, *The Framing of India's Constitution: A Study [with] Select Documents,* vol. VI, New Delhi, Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1968, p. 476.

[31] J. S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 186; Krishna Kodesia, *The Problem of Linguistic States in India*, Delhi, Sterling Publishers (P) Ltd., 1969, pp. 93 - 94.

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was on the basis of this, the State Reorganisation Commission narrated accordingly:

The formation of provinces had been mainly governed by considerations of British colonial administrative convenience and economy and by reasons of military strategy and security. To this extent, therefore, there was a conscious or deliberate design behind the demarcation of the territories of administrative units; it was grounded in imperial interests or the exigencies of a foreign government and not in the actual needs, wishes or affinities of the people. Administrative convenience itself required compact units with some measure of homogeneity. In some cases, therefore, various factors conducive to the growth of natural units operated in the background. They were, however, subordinate to the prime considerations of administrative and military exigencies.[32]

The first decade after independence witnessed a huge programme of integration and reorganisation of states in India.[33] The reorganisation of the Indian states actually started after the 1951 - 1952 election, which had witnessed greater demand for the creation of states based upon language, which became commonly known as linguistic states. Apart from the partition of Indian states into India and Pakistan, the organisational structure of the Indian states in 1947 at independence was based upon the form created under the 1935 Constitution Act. During the drafting of the Indian Independence Bill, the Indian government began negotiations with the several Indian rulers or the so-called "Princely States", for consideration regarding inclusion into the Indian Union through accession. This idea of

[32] Prakash Karat, *Language and Nationality Politics in India*, Madras, Orient Longman Limited, 1973, p. 35.
[33] Debojit Dey, "Impact of Language on National Identity: An Analysis from Historical Perspective", in: *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS),* vol. 10, no. 5, May – June 2013, pp. 6 - 11.

inclusion was welcomed by many of the rulers upon first opportunity and also served as great motivation for many to follow suit. This process of accession for Indian states has ensured the unity of the Indian Union that became a federation with several provinces and states as basic units. Similarly, another significant dimension of this process of accession was that it provided a sound basis for honouring centuries old agreements aimed at safeguarding all-India interest through "Stand-still Agreements" between the Indian Union and the rulers of the states. "Stand-still Agreements" ensured the continuity of the relationship and administrative arrangements between Britain and the Princely rulers immediately after the attainment of Indian independence.[34] This prevented the country from degenerating into chaos and confusion upon the termination of the powers of the British Crown in 1947.[35]

On 15th August 1947, Lord Louis Mountbatten was noted to have paid tribute to Sardar Patel, who played a visionary role in facilitating the smooth succession, during his address to the Constituent assembly.[36] Mountbatten was the last Viceroy (or British colonial ruler) and First Governor General of India, who conducted the transfer of power from the British Colonial India to independent Union of Indian States in 1947 in line with the Cabinet Mission's plan. Mountbatten replaced Field Marshal Viscount Archibald Percival Wavell as the last Viceroy of India in 1947

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[34] A.K. Majumdar, Bhanwar Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
[35] Larry Collins & Dominique Lapierre, *Mountbatten and the Partition of India Volume I: March 22 - August 15, 1947,* New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1982, pp. 3- 4.
[36] Sri Ram Sharma, *Constitutional History of India [1765 to 1954]*, Bombay, Macmillan and Co Limited, 1955, pp. 256 - 258.

amid some controversial administrative changes in the colonial office following a change of Government from Prime Minister, Winston Churchill to Prime Minister Clement Attlee.[37]

The transfer of power from the British colonialists to the Indian Union immediately witnessed extraordinary revolutionary change throughout the Indian states.[38] The situation was such that, upon accession to the Union of India, the states could not resist the process of change even though it was against their will. This dramatic change was achieved principally through a dual process of "integration" and "merger." The integration process involved "joining two or more contiguous states" to constitute a new feasible unit of the Union of India. On the other hand, the process of merger entailed the subsuming of a state unit or the "outright disappearance of a state unit by its incorporation into a province within which it was situated."[39] Thus, with the exception of three states, namely Hyderabad, Mysore, Jammu and Kashmir, the total number of states in the Indian Union, approximately 500, had been reduced to a very small number.

It is important to note that whilst the process of integration and merger was in progress, a bureaucratic process of asserting authority over the states by the Centre at Union level was also in motion. This assertion of control under the Centre was extended to include federal financial integration which covered all the states. The urge for the democratisation of

[37] Manmath Nath Das, *Partition and Independence of India: Inside story of the Mountbatten Days*, New Delhi, Vision Books, 1982, pp. 13 – 17.
[38] R. Palme Dutt, *India Today and Tomorrow*, London, Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 1955, pp. 264 - 266.
[39] M.V. Pylee, *India's Constitution*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1962, p. 38,

bureaucratic structures at state level by democratic movements also gained much ground in many states and fully-fledged responsible government[s] had already taken over administration, which created a level playing field between the provinces and the states in the Union.[40]

The process of integration and merger has taken several factors into consideration including linguistic, ethnic homogeneity and historical tradition within the limits of practicability. Hence the process of integration and merger of states had to be "transitionally expedient"in nature; and, therefore, it was practically impossible to run away from incorporating the "old order" during the drafting of the constitution in 1949. This led to the birth of a peculiar state system under the constitution without any uniformity of states as constituent units of the Indian Union. But, instead, they were categorised into the following three recognised groups of states: Part A, Part B, and Part C States.

The Part A states, numbering 10, were generally those that comprised part of the former British India, which constituted the Indian Union. Many of these states became larger in size following the merger and integration of some Indians states into their territories. On the other hand, some of them became smaller due to the partition of the country into India and Pakistan in 1947. All States that were fully-fledged members of the Union and their status was guided by the principle of federalism.[41]

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[40]R. C. Bhardwaj, *Constitution Amendment in India*, New Delhi, Northern Book Centre, 1957, p. 256.
[41] M.V. Pylee, *India's Constitution…*, p. 56.

Part B States included eight states mainly created out of the integration process and enjoyed similar status of membership to the federated Union of India like Part A States. Nevertheless, Part B States were a step blow Part A States in terms of political process, and "were not entitled to enjoy the fullest measure of autonomy as defined by the constitution", encapsulated in Article 371 of the Constitution. According to Article 371, the government of each Part B State was to "be under the general control of and comply with such particular directions of the Central Government." The Part B States were headed by Rajapramukhs,[42] which was a distinctive characteristic of this group of states, instead of being headed by Governors, as was the case in the Part A categories of states.

The Part C states were ten in number and were territories directly administered by the Centre through unitary system of administration and hence were not states that were part of the federal Union. Some of the states were once part of the Chief Commissioner's Provinces under the British Colonial administration. In September 1951, the Centre decided that Part C States would elect members to the Legislative Assemblies as well as House of the People.[43] From 1952, some of the states among the Part C category were allowed to have their own Legislative Assemblies, with Ministers responsible to them. However, "the powers of these Assemblies were subject to the direct control of Parliament and the Union Executive was

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[42] *Ibidem,* p. 57.
[43] S. V. Kogekar, Richard L. Park, *Report on the Indian General Elections 1951-52,* Bombay, Popular Book Deport, 1956, p. 298.

responsible to Parliament for their administration."[44] There were a number of territories listed under Part D namely Islands of the Bay of Bengal (Andaman and Nicobar Islands), which were part of the Union of Indiabut under direct administration and full control of the Central Government. Unfortunately, islands do not represent the topic of this paper and they will be left out for feature research. The tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 below gives a better explanation of the state distribution as discussed above.

Table 1: Part A States

PART A STATES	SQ. MILES	POPULATION
1.Andhra	63.608	20.801.792
2. Assam	85,012	9.043.707
3. Bihar	70.330	40.225.947
4. Bombay	111.434	35.956.150
5. Madhya Pradesh	130.272	21.247.533

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[44] M. V. Pylee, *India's Constitution…*, p. 59.

6. Madras	60.263	35.736.489
7. Orissa	60.136	14.645.946
8. Punjab	37,378	12.641.205
9. Uttar Pradesh	113,409	63.215.742
10. West Bengal	30,775	24.810.308

Source: M. V. Pylee, *India's Constitution*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1962, p. 59.

Table 2: Part B States

PART B STATES	SQ MILES	POLPULATION
1.Hyderabad	82,168	18.655.108
2.Jammu & Kashmir	92,780	4.410.000
3.Madhya Bharat	46.478	7.954.254
4 Mysore	29.489	9.074.972
5.PEPSU	10.078	3.493.685
6.Rajastthan	130.207	15.290.797

| 7.Sourashtra | 21,431 | 4.137.359 |
| 8.Travancore-Coehin | 9,144 | 9.280.425 |

Source: M.V. Pylee, *India's Constitution...*, p. 59.

Table 3: Part C States

PART C STATES	SQ MILES	POLPULATION
1. Ajmer	2,417	693.372
2. Bilaspur	453	126.099
3. Bhopal	8,878	836.474
4. Coorg	1.586	229.405
5. Delhi	578	1,744,072
6. Himachal Pradesh	10,451	983,367
7. Kutch	16,742	567,606
8. Manipur	8.628	577,635

9. Tripura	4,032	639.029
10.Vindhya Pradesh	23.603	3.574.690

Source: M.V. Pylee, *India's Constitution…*, p. 60.

Table 4: Part D States

PART D STATES	SQ. MILES	POLPULATION
The Andamans and the Nicobar Islands	3.215	30.971

Source: M.V. Pylee, *India's Constitution….*, p. 60.

Due to several challenges (including linguistic) posed by the structural organisation of the Union of Indian States and by popular demand among the electorate, the organisation of the state system or structure as once sanctioned by the 1951 constitution had to be revised. This ushered in a period of linguistic reorganisation of the Indian states.

The Commission for the Reorganisation of Indian States

One year after the general election and in line with the commitment of the Congress to their election manifesto of 1951, on 22nd December 1953, Prime Minister Nehru announced in the Parliament that a Commission would be appointed "to examine 'objectively and dispassionately' the question of the

[re]organisation of the States of the Indian Union 'so that the welfare [of] the people of each constituent unit as well as the nation as a [w]hole is promoted".[45] Accordingly, a Commission was set up under the Resolution of the Government of India in the Ministry of Home Affairs on 29th December 1953. The mandate of the Commission had been clearly elucidated inArticle7 of the Resolution as thus: "The Commission will investigate the conditions of the problem, the historical background, the existing situation and the bearing of all important and relevant factors thereon. They will be free to consider any proposal relating to such reorganisation."[46] The Indian Government expected the Commission to submit recommendations on broad principles which should govern the solution of this problem and, if they so choose, the broad lines on which particular states should be reorganised and submit interim reports for the consideration of Government",[47] not later than 30th June 1955. However, the period was extended to 30thSeptember 1955.

On 24th April 1954, the Commission announced an invitation in the press soliciting submissions of memoranda on issues of reorganisation, from the interested general public and public associations. It was also requested that each suggestion for reorganization should be accompanied by historic evidence, statistical data and maps, among others, as supportive documentation.

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[45] Parliament of India, House of the People, *op. cit.,* p. 28.
[46]*Ibidem,* p. 60.
[47]***, *Report of the States Re-organisation Commission 1955…*, p. i.

The total number of such documents received reached the figure of 152,250 submissions of memoranda, including simple telegrams and printed resolution, among others, relating to the wishes of particular groups or localities on how they should be included in process of reorganisation of one province or the other. The Commission considered about a total number of memoranda not exceeding 2,000.[48]

According to Pylee, a notable Indian scholar on the constitutional Government of India, "the constitutional provisions establishing the three-tier state- system were the product of expediency. No one was happy with this arrangement and desired to end it at the earliest opportunity. But the situation underwent an unexpected change in 1952 after the first general elections when the central government took a sudden decision to create a separate State of Andhra out of certain parts of the former undivided Part A State of Madras, on account of the compelling demands of the Telugu-speaking people in the Madras State."[49] Hence the new State of Andhra was created on 1st October 1953, though that was not an isolated case:

[the] formation of the new states on a linguistic basis and the consequent reorganisation of the entire state-system became almost a militant demand all over the country. Political leadership found it no longer possible to stem the tide of this surging demand. The result was the appointment of the States Reorganisation Commission in December 1953, to go into the entire question of reorganisation "objectively and dispassionately" and make its recommendation with a view to settling this tangled problem.[50]

[48]*Ibidem*, p. ii.
[49]*Ibidem*, p. 59.
[50]*Ibidem*, p. 60.

The key task of leading the reorganisation was given to Fazl Ali, Justice of the Supreme Court of India, while two other distinguished members were H. N.Kunzru and K. M. Panikkar. Following a year and a half of strenuous operations, the Commission developed a comprehensive report that was submitted on 30th September 1955. The Commission, after careful consideration of critical problems and issues relating to the reorganisation of states, arrived at four substantial principles that the Commission proffered needed utmost attention in any scheme of reorganisation. These four principles were as follows:

I.Preservation and strengthening of the unity and security of India;

II.Linguistic and Cultural Homogeneity

III.Financial, economic and administrative considerations; and

IV. Successful working of the national plan.[51]

The States Reorganisation Commission further elaborated other significant factors that also require addressing, though at a step below their four recommended cardinal principles, as fundamental basis of the reorganisation process. This category included "a common historical tradition which fosters a sense of kinship and oneness, geographical contiguity, administrative considerations and the wishes of the people to the extent that they were objectively ascertainable and did not come into conflict with larger national interests."[52] In spite of articulating and enumerating the various factors and principles that generally impinge on the

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[51]*Ibidem,* pp. 61 - 62.

[52] M. V. Pylee, *India's Constitution…*, p. 59.

key issues of reorganisation, the Commission further observed that the problems defer from one region to the other. Hence the Commission smartly pointed out that there could not be a 'one size fit all' approach as thus:

It has to be kept in mind that the centuries-long interplay of historical, linguistic, geographical, economic factors, among others, has produced peculiar patters in different regions. Each case, therefore, has its own background. Besides, the problems of reorganisation are so complex that it would be unrealistic to determine any case by a single test alone. We have, accordingly, examined each case on its merits and in its own context and arrived at conclusions after taking into consideration the totality of circumstances and on an overall assessment of the solutions proposed.[53]

The Commission made the following key recommendations:

1) Abolition of the classification of states into three categories, Part A, Part B, and Part C, which was essentially a temporary expedient, and the constitution of states enjoying a uniform status.
2) Abolition of the special agreements with the Union in regards to the financial integration of Part B States. Also, abolition of the general control vested in the Government of India by Article 371 as well as the abolition of the institution of Rajapramukhs.
3) Since there was no adequate recompense for all the financial, administrative and constitutional difficulties which the Part C States presented, they were to be merged with the adjoining states, with the exception of three (Delhi, the Federal capital, Manipur and Andaman and Nicobar Islands), which were to be centrally administered.
4) On the basis of these [proposed] changes, the Commission recommended the creation of 16 States and 3 centrally administered territories.[54]

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[53]*Ibidem,* p. 60.
[54] ***, *Report of the States Re-organisation Commission 1955…*, p. ii.

Following the publication of the report by the States Reorganisation Commission in 1953, disturbances erupted in several parts of the country, which felt affected by and unhappy with the recommended changes. Reactions included the Commission's rejection of the demands for splitting Bombay (into Maharashtra and Gujarat) and Punjab, or the merger of states, or the disqualification of linguistic status for some other areas or states. The result was rioting in Maharashtra and Gujarat leading to loss of lives, looting and destruction of property. It has been acknowledged by many that the recommendations of the Commission were by no means flawless and, in spite of the identified principles, the pattern that was developed was made up of basically unilingual States only, which might also appear inevitable due the prevailing circumstances in the country.[55]

The Report was finally submitted to both Parliament and State Assemblies, which debated the issues for a long period. Following prolonged discussions in both houses, which culminated into negotiations between the Union Cabinet and interested parties, the government proclaimed its decision through a Bill called the States Reorganisation Bill. In view of the proposed reforms, the constitution had to be amended in several places to reflect the changes of the reorganisation process. Based upon the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission, both the amendment of the constitution and the Reorganisation Bill were successfully passed in 1956 and became operational on 1st November 1956. Although the provisions of the amendment of the constitution and State

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[55]*Ibidem,* p. 25.

Reorganisation Act were based upon the recommendations of the Commission, some other decisions were also included, specifically relating to the creation of the Bombay State and the united Telugu-speaking State of Andhra Pradesh. Similarly, the number of centrally administered areas was increased to six states.

The structures of the reorganised union of states showed that the Indian Union comprised fourteen states and six centrally administered territories. This witnessed further changes due to intense and persistent popular demand when Bombay was divided based upon linguistic factors into two new states: Maharashtra (Marati-speaking) and Gujarat (Gujarati-speaking). Maharashtra had a population of 32,003,086, and a land area of 118,459, sq. miles, whilst Gujarat had a population of 16,262,135 and a land area of 72,137 sq. miles. Prior to the reorganisation of States, Madhya Pradesh was the largest among Indian states in terms of land area with 130,272 sq. miles. But after the reorganisation, Bombay became the largest with a land area of 190,668, sq. miles. However, when Bombay was divided into the two states of Maharashtra and Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh once again became the largest state in the Union. The smallest state of the union was Kerala with a land area of 15,000 sq. miles. In terms of population, Uttar Pradesh had the highest with a total of 63.2 million people. With a population of 4.02 Million, Jammu and Kashmir had the smallest population. However, in terms of population density, Kerala had the highest with about 1,000 persons per sq. mile.[56]

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[56]*Ibidem*, pp. 61 - 62.

Conclusion

This article discusses the politics of language and linguistic reorganisation of India before and after independence, the transformation of the new independent Union of Indian States as a nascent democracy that struggled to cope with the neo-colonialist impact of the British administration.

The nationalist leaders under the guidance of the Indian National Congress and various nationalist movements, groups and parties rallied round the people with the key objective of attaining independence and self-government, which was achieved in 1947, but not before the partition of Pakistan from India. The new leaders under Nehru, conscious of the herculean task of nation building, began promoting the concept of merger and integration and advocated for democratic constitutionalism. A Constituent Assembly was tasked to draft the constitution of the Union, which retained a federal constitution with various levels or categories of power relationship between the Centre and the regional states, rated accordingly. Some of the states had more autonomy in administration and financial management from the Centre, whilst others had restricted administration and financial management. Others were virtually administered directly by the Centre of the Union. Nevertheless, the constitution guaranteed a democratic system which was respected with democratic structures and processes and key among them were multi-party

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politics and the institution of election, coordinated by the Election Commission.

Undoubtedly, the linguistic principle of reorganisation of Indian states, an unfinished colonial business, was re-ignited immediately after independence because people value their language and cultural identity and hence wanted to be identified as such. Thus, understandably, various nationalities and states which were affected called for the linguistic reorganisation of their states beginning with the strong demand of Andhra Pradesh, prior to 1951 - 1952 general elections, attracting federation-wide attention. Hence, this article discusses the politics of language and linguistic reorganisation before and after Independence. The linguistic principle of reorganisation became a highly political issue that all major political parties used in their party campaigns and manifestos to gain popular support for the purpose of winning elections and administrating the central union or state governments. The net result was a domino effect that swept across the Indian Union following the creation of the linguistic State of Andhra in 1953 as more linguistic minorities in the provinces began to agitate for the formation of their own linguistic states to preserve their language and cultural identity.

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