

## BALKAN WOES AND VOTE BANKS

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### Abstract

Ethnic chauvinism harms national interests. Historically, no political entity has been static and unchanging in the past. While under Harshavardhan and Prithviraj Chauhan, Tabarhind (Bhatinda) and Ajmer may have been part of a single kingdom, today one cannot easily imagine Ashok Gehlot and Prakash Singh Badal taking tea in joint administrative ventures. Change is the only constant in geopolitics, so much so that Chinese claims to Tibet and demands for Tibetan independence are often based on facts and figures that span less than a century! It may be hard to believe that in the nineteenth century, Afghanistan and Myanmar were as much a part of India as Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh are today. So, in that regard, one has to be careful how we segregate people. Our country once had to bear the brunt of partition, and as various authors demonstrate, such a time can provoke conflicting reactions: on the one hand, as Amitav Ghosh pointed out in *The Shadow Lines*, these boundaries are often not written in people's psychology even afterward. The maps have been tainted by a new rift cutting through the fields and settlements, on the other hand, these actions can result in long-term and traumatic experiences for more than a generation. Agreements signed and bills passed by a select few define how people are governed and history is written.

**Keywords:** balkanization; State Reorganization Commission; Telangana

### Introduction

The world may remember the Ottomans for their glorious rule and the flourishing cultural and economic state of their kingdom, but one aspect related to the Ottomans that contemporary society has set as a precedent for recent geopolitical developments is the balkanization of former Ottoman territories [1]. In the nineteenth century, the former lands of the Ottomans in the Balkan Peninsula were divided and divided until what is now known as the Jugosphere was broken up to give the world tiny sovereign nations. Some of the countries created were as small as Tripura and Nagaland, while others, such as Serbia and Croatia, were significantly larger. However, a persistent problem concerning these states has been instability and the economic policy of the beggar neighbor, which aims for economic progress at the expense of the economic stability of neighboring countries, a violent environment that continues to anger the people of these countries.

Similar reports, though not at such an advanced and volatile stage, appeared in India. Recently, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government agreed to create the 29th state of India – Telangana. And it was a momentous decision, judging by the reactions it elicited from people across the country. Where on one side pink streamers from the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) littered the roads and public places of Hyderabad, dejected legislators of the Seemandhra region were devising ways to powerfully express their displeasure. While it may seem to many of us that this is just another geopolitical maneuver by the ruling classes, it may be necessary to analyze the issue a little further to truly assess the importance of such moves and the possible consequences that may follow. Further, after a period that included popular movements like the Vetti Chakiri movement, it was hardly an

ideal state. The 1955 report of the State Reorganization Commission (SRC) [2] clearly highlights the apprehension of merging Telangana with greater Andhra. There was unrest arising from various factors: Development plans like the Nandikonda project, which the people of Telangana felt would not benefit Telangana as much as other Andhra regions; the fact that the people of Telangana were educationally backward compared to others in Greater Andhra at the time of the SRC report; most importantly, the SRC Report categorically mentions (Para 379, SRC Report 1955) that Telangana could be a unit in its own right, given its then income of around 17 crores, and hence could survive independently! After independence, there were problems like inappropriate representation in politics and legislation, and a lack of jobs for the people of Telangana. As the State Secretariat employed less than 15% of people from Telangana, GO (Government Order) 610, issued in 1985, which gave the legislature the means to repatriate non-locals who had been recruited in Telangana, besides burning a number of youths became a political tool for those seeking a separate Telangana. All said and done, Telangana finally seems to be on the verge of statehood.

However, this raises an important question: Does our country need more states? How can political constructs in the form of states be defined? The answer may be language limitations. From 1955 we had states largely defined on linguistic lines until in 2000 the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government created the trio: Uttaranchal, Chattisgarh, and Jharkhand, recognizing that not only language defines the identity of individuals and communities. Given the country's population, India has far fewer states than many other countries. This raises the angle of administration: whether smaller political units can have more capable administrations, or whether larger states can remain the same. Historically, at the time of independence, there were 562 princely states that spanned the length and breadth of the Indian subcontinent. Most of these were petty kingdoms, although others had their own seats under the British regime. Nizam Asaf Jah VII, the ruler of Hyderabad, initially advocated remaining independent. But due to the state's location, Indian leaders summarily rejected the demand and asked Sardar Patel to win Hyderabad for India. Yet, even after the kingdom's integration with India, following a military annexation codenamed Operation Polo, a certain part of the former state remained backward and underdeveloped compared to other parts of the state of Andhra Pradesh. What came a cohesive whole? Our past experience with smaller states does not give a clear answer. While all three states formed in 2000 had a rather unstable political system, there was an evident increase in employment, healthcare, and civic amenities in these states. One interesting aspect of this debate is that the creation of new states leads to the establishment of local bureaucratic and civic bodies, which in turn leads to growth in public sector employment, although the downside is often the long period of time and effort involved in setting up new legislatures, courts, and authorities. No wonder Congress took the easy way out to solve the Hyderabad problem by declaring that Hyderabad would remain the joint capital for the next 10 years.

Another relevant question that arises is who assesses the right of a particular community to claim a state and then passes judgment on the legitimacy of the claim. Can the national

### **References**

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