



Mains Practice Question

Q. The linguistic reorganization of states resulted in rationalizing the political map of India without seriously weakening its unity. Examine. (250 words)

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Approach:

- Briefly discuss the linguistic reorganisation of states in India.
- Describe how linguistic reorganisation has resulted in administrative efficacy and strengthened Indian unity.
- Discuss a few challenges related to linguistic reorganisation.

Introduction

- At the time of independence in 1947, India consisted of more than 500 disjointed princely states that were merged together to form different states. The grouping of states at the time was done on the basis of political and historical considerations rather than on linguistic or cultural divisions, but this was a temporary arrangement.

Body

- On the basis of the State Reorganisation Commission's (SRC) recommendations, the linguistic reorganisation of 14 States and six Centrally-administered territories were partially completed in 1956, with several other States to be reorganised later on. This was a massive state rationalisation exercise, not simply to establish newer modes of power and authority but to rearrange social, cultural, regional and linguistic diversities into more manageable enclaves of state power.

The formation of states on linguistic basis has rationalised the political map of India in more than one way:

- The formation of these states changed the nature of democratic politics and leadership. The path to politics and power was now open to people speaking regional languages rather than the small English speaking elite.
- Language coupled with the regional and tribal identity provided the most powerful instrument for the formation of ethnonational identity in India.
- It led to the local people participating in the administration in a larger number because of being able to communicate in a common language.

Events since 1956 have clearly shown that loyalty to a language is quite complementary to the unity of the nation such as:

- By reorganizing the states on linguistic lines, the national leadership removed a major grievance which could have led to fissiparous tendencies.
- Linguistic reorganization of the states has not in any manner adversely affected the federal structure of the Union or weakened or paralysed the Centre as many had feared.
- The central government wields as much authority as it did before. The states have also been

cooperating with the Centre in planning and economic development.

However, reorganising states on the basis of language has put forth certain challenges in front of the nation such as:

- It has led to several unintended consequences such as regionalism, linguistic chauvinism and foundation of the “Sons of the soil” doctrine.
- It has been used for divisive purposes and transformed into disruptive tendencies, such as communalism, casteism and linguistic or regional exclusiveness.
- The issues of jobs, educational opportunities, access to political power and share in the larger economic cake has fueled rivalries and conflicts based on religion, region, caste and language.
- Several issues that are a threat to India’s integrity have also emerged such as demand for new states on the basis of backwardness such as Marathwada and Saurashtra, ethnicity in the North East etc.

Conclusion

- The political leadership of newly independent India had the foresight to visualize the consequences of not acquiescing to popular aspirations. States’ reorganization did not, of course, resolve all the problems relating to linguistic conflicts.
- Disputes over boundaries between different states, linguistic minorities and economic issues such as sharing of waters, and power and surplus food still persist. However, their decision to linguistically reorganize the states has removed one important factor that would’ve jeopardized India’s integrity and thus strengthened the cause of Indian unity.

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