

Discuss, Debate and Deliberate

Summary of Discussion held on 7 August, 2013 in Academic Block- I

“Birth of New States: Need, Significance and Drawback”

For the sake of discussion, the topic was divided into the following three sub-heads: Need for creation of new states, Impact on federal structure of India and Impact on national security.

The discussion began by raising the question whether there is need to create new states. It was argued that creation of new and smaller states will lead to administrative efficiency¹ and percolation of democracy to the lower rungs of the society, thereby ensuring greater accountability.² However it was pointed out with the example of Jharkhand that merely creation of smaller states does not necessarily guarantee higher economic and social growth³ and it even does not guarantee penetration of democracy to the grass root level.⁴ It was also pointed out that small states may face limitations in terms of natural and human resources, will lack agro-climatic diversity required for economic and developmental activities and thus would make the state dependent on Central Government for fund transfer and would even expand the span of control of Central ministries. But it was appreciated by the forum that the need of different areas might be different and creation of small states would help cater specifically to the sentiments and requirement of that specific area⁵ and would even prevent the suffering of minority at the hand of the majority. A state is formed by feeling of corporate sentiment of oneness which makes people feel like kith and kin. Thus, looking into the present unrest in the country over demands for new states the forum agreed that the demands can be judged on merit.

Then the forum discussed the impact of these demands for new states on the federal structure of India. It was argued that creation of new states would increase the number of regional parties, thereby making it difficult to form a stable government at Centre, which in turn will hamper the economic and social growth of the country. It was also apprehended that creation of new states would burden the Exchequer as a greater amount of funds would be required to develop that particular state, as compared to when it was joined to the mother state. Also,

¹ It can be inferred from the creation of 47 new districts across India during 2001-11, that creation of smaller districts leads to better administration.

² The number of legislature seats in the Uttarakhand region was 6 before separation; it was increased to 70+1 (nominated) after its creation in 2000. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uttarakhand_Legislative_Assembly) (August 8, 2013).

³ Between 2004-05 to 2011-12, the Annual Growth (GSDP) of Bihar was 11% while that of Jharkhand was only 6%. (http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-08-01/india/40960931_1_rayalseema-seemandhra-telangana) (August 8, 2013).

⁴ It was felt that the grass root level democracy (i.e. *Panchayati raj* system) depends upon the state government under the Constitution esp Article 243-G and not on the size of the states.

⁵ Since in Chhattisgarh the Scheduled Tribes are being given special consideration in various fields, thereby presenting them with greater opportunity, which were absent at the time of the united Madhya Pradesh.

after statehood follows the hard task of choosing new political leader, raising revenue, building new administrative structure and negotiating with the Central government, which would further make these small states dependent on the Central Government. But the above arguments were opposed on the ground that the presence of larger states⁶ with more seats in *Lok Sabha* gives undue bargaining power to them and in turn reduces the say of the smaller states.⁷ Moreover, it was felt that in the present constitutional setup it is more appropriate to recognize the regional aspirations of people for better representation at Centre as an expression of their specific needs and promote decentralization of political life.

The demand for new states was also opposed on ground of national security and integrity of nation. It was argued that it would create inward looking states that would imperil the consolidation of Indian national hood and even encourage separatism.⁸ It was also pointed out that creation of new states on ethnic ground will result in further ethnification of Indian society at the cost of national integration and even affect the national security because of strategic positions of number of states.⁹ But this argument was opposed on ground that no region except Punjab has experienced separatist movement after being organised as a separate state. Moreover, this could have happened even in those states which have been made on this basis, but the Central Government with its resources intact can overcome any threat to security and integrity of India. The new states will never be based only on ethnicity and thus the above concern can be taken care of.

The forum in principle agreed for setting up of the 2nd State Reorganisation Commission to look into all such demands for creation of new states and decide. It was felt that the membership of the Commission should be strictly non-political and must consist of jurists, diplomats, social workers, economist and others as considered appropriate by the Central government. The Commission should consider the following factors in order of their appearance:

1. Economy & resource sharing,
2. Demography,
3. Culture, language & ethnicity,
4. Size, and,
5. Referendum in districts seeking to form new states.

⁶ Uttar Pradesh with 80 seats.

⁷ States in the North-East and South India.

⁸ The state of Punjab created on linguistic basis subsequently turned into a separatist movement.

⁹ Gorkhaland has special strategic importance because of its position above Chicken's Neck.