

CUET · POLITICAL SCIENCE · CLASS XII · CODE 323

Challenges of Nation Building

CUET unit: Politics in India Since Independence — Nation-building, Partition, Integration of Princely States, Reorganisation of States

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Snapshot

- Establishes the three foundational challenges of independent India in 1947: (i) shaping a united nation accommodative of diversity, (ii) establishing democracy, and (iii) ensuring all-round development and well-being.
- Traces the trauma of Partition — its process (religious majority principle), consequences (~80 lakh displaced, 5–10 lakh killed), and its lasting questions about secularism.
- Explains the integration of 565 Princely States, with focus on Sardar Patel's diplomacy and the difficult cases of Junagadh, Hyderabad and Manipur.
- Details the reorganisation of states on linguistic lines — Potti Sriramulu's fast, formation of Andhra (1953), the States Reorganisation Commission (1953) and the States Reorganisation Act (1956).
- CUET frequently tests dates, key figures, princely state cases, and the logic of linguistic reorganisation from this chapter.

Detailed Notes

2.1 Core concepts

India attained independence at the hour of midnight on 14–15 August 1947. Jawaharlal Nehru delivered his famous "tryst with destiny" speech to the Constituent Assembly that night, dedicating the new republic to the service of India and her people (NCERT §"Challenges for the new nation-state", p. 3). Independent India faced **three foundational challenges**. The first was **shaping a nation that was united, yet accommodative of diversity**: India was a land of continental size and diversity, with people speaking different languages, following diverse cultures, practising different religions and worshipping in their own ways. Could a country of this size and diversity stay together? The second challenge was **establishing democracy**: the Constitution had granted fundamental rights and universal adult franchise, yet practising democracy in a poor, unequal, illiterate society was no easy matter. The third challenge was **ensuring development and well-being of the entire society**, especially the socially and economically disadvantaged groups — Directive Principles of State Policy were the constitutional articulation of this commitment (NCERT §"Three Challenges", pp. 4–5).

Partition was the immediate context. It was the result of the "two-nation theory" advanced by the Muslim League, which the Indian National Congress had consistently

opposed. Political developments in the 1940s, combined with the British role, led to the creation of Pakistan (NCERT §"Partition: displacement and rehabilitation", p. 8). Partition followed the **principle of religious majorities**: Muslim-majority areas were to make up Pakistan; the rest was to stay with India. But there was no single belt of Muslim-majority areas — hence Pakistan consisted of West and East Pakistan (the latter eventually becoming Bangladesh in 1971), separated by Indian territory (NCERT §"Process of partition", p. 8). **Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan**, the undisputed leader of the North Western Frontier Province (known as the "Frontier Gandhi"), staunchly opposed the two-nation theory, but his voice was ignored and the NWFP was merged with Pakistan. **Punjab and Bengal** — two Muslim-majority provinces with large non-Muslim areas — had to be bifurcated at district and lower levels on religious majority. This bifurcation was not finalised by 14–15 August 1947, and the Boundary Commission Award came after Independence, contributing to enormous human dislocation (NCERT §"Process of partition", p. 8).

The **consequences** were apocalyptic. Partition caused the largest, most abrupt and tragic transfer of population in human history. About **80 lakh** people migrated across the new border, and between **five to ten lakh** were killed in Partition-related violence (NCERT §"Consequences of partition", p. 11). Thousands of women were abducted, forced to convert and marry; many were killed by their own family members to preserve "family honour." Survivors described Partition as a "**division of hearts**" — more than a territorial line, it was a violent rupture in communities that had lived together for centuries. Yet even after this massive migration, the Muslim population in India accounted for **10–12 per cent** of the total population in 1951 (NCERT §"Consequences of partition", p. 11). **Mahatma Gandhi** did not participate in the independence-day celebrations on 15 August 1947; he was in Kolkata, pacifying Hindu-Muslim riots through his moral presence. He undertook his last fast in January 1948 in Delhi for communal harmony and to ensure that India's financial commitments to Pakistan were honoured. He was assassinated by **Nathuram Vinayak Godse** on 30 January 1948, a martyrdom that decisively shaped India's commitment to secularism (NCERT §"Mahatma Gandhi's sacrifice", p. 12).

The **integration of Princely States** was the next great challenge. Princely States covered nearly one-third of the British Indian Empire's land area; one in four Indians lived under princely rule. With British paramountcy lapsing on Independence, **565 princely states** could legally choose to join India or Pakistan, or remain independent. **Travancore** announced independence first, followed by the Nizam of Hyderabad; the Nawab of Bhopal was averse to joining the Constituent Assembly (NCERT §"The problem", pp. 14–16). **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**, Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, negotiated firmly but diplomatically with the rulers. The government's approach was guided by three considerations: (i) the people of most princely states clearly wanted to join India; (ii) flexibility and autonomy was offered to some regions; and (iii) consolidation of territory was urgent in the wake of Partition. Before 15 August 1947, most contiguous states signed the "**Instrument of Accession**" joining the Union of India (NCERT §"Government's approach", p. 16).

Three difficult cases dominate this topic. **Junagadh** — a small Kathiawar state whose Muslim Nawab acceded to Pakistan — was resolved through a **plebiscite** in which the people confirmed their desire to join India. **Hyderabad** — the largest princely state, ruled by the Nizam — was a far more protracted struggle: the Nizam signed a **Standstill Agreement** with India in November 1947 for one year while negotiations continued, but his para-military force, the **Razakars**, unleashed atrocities targeting non-Muslims. The Telangana peasantry rose against the Nizam, and in September 1948 the Indian army moved in under what came to be known as **Operation Polo**. The Nizam surrendered, and Hyderabad acceded to India (NCERT §"Hyderabad", pp. 17–18). **Manipur** — Maharaja **Bodhachandra Singh** signed the Instrument of Accession with the assurance that the internal autonomy of Manipur would be maintained. Manipur went on to hold elections in June 1948 on the basis of **universal adult franchise** — making it the **first part of India** to hold an election on this principle. The **Merger Agreement** was signed in September 1949 amid considerable controversy (NCERT §"Manipur", p. 18).

The third great task was the **reorganisation of states on linguistic lines**. The national movement had accepted the linguistic principle (since the Nagpur session of the Congress in 1920) as the basis for state formation, but after Independence the leadership postponed it, fearing disruption (NCERT §"Reorganisation of States", p. 19). The **Vishalandhra movement** demanded a separate Telugu-speaking Andhra state out of the Madras province. **Potti Sriramulu**, a Congress Gandhian, undertook a fast unto death from **19 October 1952** and died on **15 December 1952** after **56 days**. His death set off violent protests across Telugu-speaking areas, and a separate Andhra state was announced in December 1952. The **States Reorganisation Commission (SRC)** was appointed in **1953**; its report accepted that state boundaries should reflect the boundaries of different languages. The **States Reorganisation Act, 1956** created 14 states and 6 Union Territories on this basis (NCERT §"Reorganisation of States", p. 21). The bilingual state of **Bombay** was bifurcated into Maharashtra and Gujarat in 1960; Punjab was reorganised in 1966 (creating Haryana and Himachal Pradesh); Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura emerged in 1972; Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh in 1987; Nagaland in 1963; Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand in 2000; Telangana on 2 June 2014 (NCERT §"Fast Forward — Creation of new states", p. 23).

2.2 Definitions to memorise

Term	Definition	Page
Two-nation theory	Muslim League's claim that India consisted of two 'people' — Hindus and Muslims — hence demanding a separate Muslim country, Pakistan.	8
Paramountcy / Suzerainty	Form of control by the British crown over Princely States; lapsed at Independence.	14
Instrument of Accession	Document signed by rulers of Princely States agreeing their state would become part of the Union of India.	16

Term	Definition	Page
Standstill Agreement	Agreement between Hyderabad and India (November 1947) for one year while negotiations continued.	17
Razakars	Para-military force unleashed by the Nizam of Hyderabad; committed atrocities targeting non-Muslims.	17
Operation Polo	Indian army action of September 1948 that led to Hyderabad's accession.	18
Vishalandhra movement	Movement demanding a separate Telugu-speaking Andhra state from the Madras province.	19
Potti Sriramulu	Congress Gandhian whose 56-day fast (19 Oct – 15 Dec 1952) catalysed the creation of Andhra.	21
Division of hearts	Phrase used by Partition survivors to describe Partition as a violent separation of communities.	11
Imagined community	Concept describing a nation held together by common beliefs, history, aspirations.	25
Tryst with destiny	Nehru's midnight speech of 14–15 August 1947 to the Constituent Assembly.	3
Three challenges of nation-building	Unity-in-diversity, democracy, development.	4–5
Universal adult franchise	Right to vote for every adult citizen, irrespective of property or literacy.	4
Directive Principles of State Policy	Constitutional articulation of development and well-being commitments.	5
Frontier Gandhi	Title of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, NWFP leader who opposed two-nation theory.	8
Boundary Commission	Body that finalised bifurcation of Punjab and Bengal at district level.	8
Merger Agreement (Manipur, Sept 1949)	Agreement merging Manipur into India after the Instrument of Accession of 1947.	18
States Reorganisation Commission (1953)	Commission whose report formed the basis of the 1956 Act.	21
States Reorganisation Act, 1956	Created 14 states and 6 Union Territories on linguistic lines.	21
565 princely states	Approximate number of princely states at Independence.	14
Nagpur session of Congress (1920)	Where the Congress accepted the linguistic principle for state formation.	19
Bilingual Bombay (1960 bifurcation)	Split into Maharashtra and Gujarat.	23
Telangana (2 June 2014)	Most recent state created.	23

2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

Several powerful images recur as CUET stimuli. The **three stamps issued in 1950** for the first Republic Day (26 January 1950) depict the challenges of the new republic and recur as visual stimuli (p. 5). The **photograph of a refugee train (1947)** on p. 9 captures the human face of mass migration. The **map of princely states** on p. 15 — showing Junagadh, Hyderabad, Kashmir, Manipur and others — is the standard stimulus for match-the-following questions on accession. The **map of post-1956 reorganisation states** on p. 20 carries an exercise asking the original parent state of Gujarat (Bombay), Haryana (Punjab), Meghalaya (Assam) and Chhattisgarh (Madhya Pradesh) — drill these parent-state pairings, since CUET has tested them in match-the-following format. **Shankar's cartoons** — "Struggle for Survival" (26 July 1953) on linguistic states and "Coaxing the Genie back" (5 February 1956) on the SRC — and the **R.K. Laxman cartoon** on Patel's approach to the princely states issue (p. 18) are recurring image-based MCQ stems.

Two process lines should be memorised. **Process A — Partition timeline (1947):** Two-nation theory → principle of religious majorities → bifurcation of Punjab and Bengal at district level → Boundary Commission Award after 14–15 August → mass migration of 80 lakh, 5–10 lakh killed → Muslim population in India still 10–12% in 1951 → Gandhi's last fast (Jan 1948) → Gandhi's assassination (30 Jan 1948 by Godse). **Process B — Princely states timeline:** Paramountcy lapses (14–15 August 1947) → Travancore and Hyderabad announce independence → Patel + Menon strategy → most states sign Instrument of Accession before 15 August → Junagadh plebiscite → Hyderabad Standstill Agreement (Nov 1947) → Razakar atrocities → Operation Polo (Sept 1948) → Hyderabad accedes → Manipur election June 1948 (first universal-franchise election) → Manipur Merger Agreement (Sept 1949). **Process C — Linguistic reorganisation:** Nagpur Congress (1920) accepts linguistic principle → Vishalandhra movement → Potti Sriramulu fast (19 Oct–15 Dec 1952; 56 days) → Andhra announced December 1952 → SRC appointed 1953 → States Reorganisation Act 1956 → Bombay split (1960) → Punjab reorganised (1966) → North-eastern states (1972, 1987) → Chhattisgarh/ Uttarakhand/Jharkhand (2000) → Telangana (2 June 2014).

2.5 Key Articles / Treaties / Events

Reference	Source / Subject	NCERT cite
14–15 August 1947	Independence; Nehru's "tryst with destiny" speech	p. 3
Partition principle	Religious majority — Muslim-majority areas to Pakistan	p. 8
Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan (NWFP)	Frontier Gandhi opposing two-nation theory	p. 8
Punjab and Bengal bifurcation	At district/lower level on religious majority	p. 8
Partition figures		p. 11

Reference	Source / Subject	NCERT cite
	~80 lakh migrated; 5–10 lakh killed; Muslims 10–12% in 1951	
Gandhi's last fast (January 1948)	For communal harmony and India's financial commitments to Pakistan	p. 12
Gandhi's assassination (30 January 1948)	By Nathuram Vinayak Godse	p. 12
565 Princely States	Number at Independence	p. 14
Instrument of Accession	Document signed by acceding rulers	p. 16
Junagadh plebiscite	Resolved accession to India	p. 16
Hyderabad Standstill Agreement (Nov 1947)	One-year holding agreement	p. 17
Operation Polo (September 1948)	Indian army action ending Nizam's resistance	p. 18
Manipur election (June 1948)	First universal-franchise election in any part of India	p. 18
Manipur Merger Agreement (September 1949)	Final merger	p. 18
Nagpur Congress, 1920	Linguistic principle accepted	p. 19
Potti Sriramulu fast (19 Oct – 15 Dec 1952)	56-day fast unto death for Andhra	p. 21
States Reorganisation Commission, 1953	Recommended linguistic boundaries	p. 21
States Reorganisation Act, 1956	14 states + 6 UTs created	p. 21
Telangana, 2 June 2014	Most recent state created	p. 23

2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

1. **SRC appointment vs Act passage** — Commission was appointed in **1953**, but the **Act** was passed in **1956**. Students conflate the two.
2. **Potti Sriramulu** began his fast on **19 October 1952** and died on **15 December 1952** after **56 days** — Andhra was announced in December 1952 but the state was formally created later.
3. **Manipur was the first** part of India to hold elections on universal adult franchise (**June 1948**) — students often wrongly attribute this to Mysore or Travancore.
4. **Junagadh** acceded after a **plebiscite**; **Hyderabad** acceded after **military action** (Operation Polo, September 1948) — not the same instrument.

5. **Partition figures** — approximately **80 lakh** migrated, **5–10 lakh** killed. Distractors often invert these.
6. **Two-nation theory** was advanced by the **Muslim League**, not by the British or the Congress; Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan opposed it.
7. **Pakistan in 1947 had two wings — West and East** (the latter becoming Bangladesh in 1971), separated by Indian territory.
8. **Gandhi was NOT present at independence celebrations** on 15 August 1947 — he was in Kolkata pacifying riots (p. 12).
9. **The Muslim League** was a colonial-era body, NOT formed after Partition (p. 11 — Partition section, common MCQ trap).
10. **Three challenges of nation-building** are unity-in-diversity, democracy and development — NOT building a strong military or rapid industrialisation (pp. 4–5).
11. **Bombay was bifurcated in 1960** (Maharashtra + Gujarat); Punjab in 1966 (Haryana + Himachal carve-out). NTA tests these years.
12. **Standstill Agreement was specifically a Hyderabad-India arrangement** (November 1947) — not a general inter-princely-state document (p. 17).

Practice MCQs

PYQ Alignment

This chapter is a high-yield CUET 2023–25 topic; questions typically test the three challenges of nation-building, the process and consequences of Partition (figures: 80 lakh / 5–10 lakh), accession of specific princely states (Junagadh-plebiscite, Hyderabad-army action under Operation Polo, Manipur-first universal franchise election), key personalities (Sardar Patel, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, Potti Sriramulu, Gandhi, Godse), and dates of the SRC (1953) and States Reorganisation Act (1956). Match-the-following and assertion-reason questions are common from princely states integration and linguistic reorganisation. The 2 June 2014 Telangana date and parent-state pairings (Maharashtra/Gujarat from Bombay; Haryana from Punjab) are recurring direct-recall items.

CUET 2023 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.3 (CUET 2023) “Tomorrow we shall be free from the slavery of the British dominion, but at midnight India will be partitioned. Tomorrow will be a day of rejoicing as well as mourning.” Who made this statement?

- A) Mahatma Gandhi (4 August 1947) B) Jawaharlal Nehru (2 August 1942) C) Saadat Hasan Manto (15 August 1947) D) D. K. Barooah (15 July 1945) **Tests:** Challenges of nation-building / Partition **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.4 (CUET 2023) Match List I with List II (Present State – Original State): A. Gujarat B. Haryana C. Meghalaya D. Chhattisgarh I. Punjab II. Assam III. Bombay IV. Madhya Pradesh
Options:

- A) A-IV, B-I, C-II, D-III B) A-III, B-IV, C-I, D-II C) A-III, B-I, C-II, D-IV D) A-I, B-II, C-III, D-IV

Tests: Challenges of nation-building / Partition **Answer:** Not in extracted key

CUET 2024 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.1 (CUET 2024) Who among the following entered into Standstill Agreement with India in November 1947?

- A) Maharaja of Manipur B) Nizam of Hyderabad C) Nawab of Junagadh D) Maharaja of Kashmir

Tests: Challenges of nation-building / Partition **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.2 (CUET 2024) Which of the following Princely States were reluctant to sign the Instrument of Accession with India?

- A) Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Punjab B) Kerala, Hyderabad, Bombay C) Assam, Goa, Tripura D) Hyderabad, Junagadh, Kashmir

Tests: Challenges of nation-building / Partition

Answer: Not in extracted key

Q.3 (CUET 2024) The ‘two-nation theory’ was advanced by which of the following party?

- A) Janata Dal B) Muslim League C) Socialist Party D) Swatantra Party

Tests: Challenges of nation-building / Partition **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.4 (CUET 2024) Who was known as ‘Frontier Gandhi’?

- A) Mahatma Gandhi B) Sardar Patel C) Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan D) Potti Sriramulu

Tests: Challenges of nation-building / Partition **Answer:** Not in extracted key

CUET 2025 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.1 (CUET 2025) Which among the following was not a challenge to nationhood in the immediate post-independent India?

- A) To shape an united nation accommodative of diversity B) To nurture democratic practices through elections C) To develop democratic practices in accordance with the Constitution D) To evolve policies addressing economic development and eradication of poverty

Tests: Challenges of nation-building / Partition **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.2 (CUET 2025) Which of the following statements are correct about the problems of the Partition of India? (A) There was no single belt of Muslim majority areas in British India. (B) Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan of the NWFP opposed the two-nation theory. (C) There were areas in Bengal and Punjab where non-Muslims were in majority. (D) Minorities on both sides suffered violence due to Partition. Options:

- A) (A), (B), (C) and (D) B) (A), (B) and (C) only C) (B), (C) and (D) only D) (A), (C) and (D) only

Tests: Challenges of nation-building / Partition **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.6 (CUET 2025) Which political leader did not participate in the Independence Day celebrations on 15 August 1947?

- A) Jawaharlal Nehru B) B.R. Ambedkar C) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel D) M.K. Gandhi

Tests: Challenges of nation-building / Partition **Answer:** Not in extracted key

