

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION IN TELANGANA: THE FORMATION OF A SEPARATE STATE (2009–2014)

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the dynamics of social and political mobilization that culminated in the creation of Telangana as India's twenty-ninth state on 2 June 2014. Drawing on social movement theory, resource mobilization frameworks, and regional political economy, the study traces the evolution of the Telangana movement from the early agitations of 1969 through the decisive legislative phase of 2009–2014. The paper argues that the formation of Telangana was not merely a political event engineered by electoral parties, but rather the outcome of a sustained, multi-layered mobilization involving students, civil society organizations, Joint Action Committees (JACs), cultural activists, caste associations, and labour groups. The study foregrounds the roles of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), student organisations and the JAC platforms in sustaining momentum across six decades of intermittent agitation. Theoretically, the paper engages with Charles Tilly's resource mobilization model, Rokkan's cleavage-structure framework, and Langman's five-element theory of social mobilization to explain the movement's resilience and eventual success. The findings suggest that effective political mobilization requires not only organizational infrastructure but also the fusion of emotive identity politics with substantive developmental grievances. The Telangana case offers significant comparative lessons for sub-national movements seeking statehood within democratic federal systems.

Keywords: Telangana, Social Mobilization, Political Mobilization, Statehood Movement, Regionalism

1. INTRODUCTION

The formation of new states in democratic federal polities is rarely a purely administrative exercise. It is invariably the product of protracted popular mobilization, political bargaining, and the crystallization of regional identity. The creation of Telangana as India's twenty-ninth state in June 2014 stands as one of the most instructive examples of this process in contemporary South Asian politics. What began as a grievance-driven agitation in the late 1960s transformed, over six decades, into a sophisticated and multi-dimensional mobilization that eventually compelled the Indian Parliament to bifurcate Andhra Pradesh and give birth to a new state.

The Telangana movement was distinctive in several respects. First, it was not a secessionist movement but a demand for internal reorganization within the Indian Union—a demand for equity, recognition, and development within the framework of democratic federalism. Second, it was sustained by an unusually diverse coalition of actors: students who constituted the movement's vanguard, political parties that translated popular aspirations into legislative demands, cultural organizations that kept the flame of regional identity alive, and civil society platforms that bridged local grievances with national political discourse. Third, the movement demonstrated remarkable resilience, surviving multiple cycles of suppression, co-optation, and apparent demise, before culminating in success in 2014.

The decade from 2004 to 2014 represents the most intense and consequential phase of the Telangana movement. During this period, political parties; most prominently the Telangana Rashtra Samithi

(TRS) founded by K. Chandrashekar Rao in 2001; forged strategic alliances, contested elections, and engaged in agitational politics to keep the demand for a separate state at the top of the national political agenda. Simultaneously, students, intellectuals, artists, and civil society groups constructed a powerful narrative of Telangana identity rooted in the region's distinct history, culture, dialect, and developmental disparities vis-à-vis the Andhra and Rayalaseema regions of the composite Andhra Pradesh.

This paper undertakes a systematic analysis of this mobilization process. It addresses four core questions: What were the structural grievances that underpinned the movement? How were those grievances transformed into organized political and social action? What roles did different actors; political parties, student organizations, Joint Action Committees, and cultural groups; play in sustaining and intensifying the movement? And what theoretical frameworks best illuminate the dynamics of the Telangana mobilization? The paper proceeds through a literature review, historical overview, thematic analysis of key actors and strategies, theoretical interpretation, and conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Social Movement Theory

The study of social movements has generated a rich body of theory that this paper draws upon to interpret the Telangana case. Resource mobilization theory, associated with McCarthy and Zald (1977) and elaborated by Charles Tilly (1978), shifts analytical attention from grievances; which are ubiquitous; to the organizational resources and capacities that enable groups to act collectively. As Tilly famously argued, without mobilization “a group may prosper, but it cannot contend for power, since contending for power means employing mobilized resources to influence other groups” (Tilly, 1978: 78). This insight is directly applicable to the Telangana case, where the transformation of long-standing grievances into effective political action required decades of organizational building.

Morrison (1971) distinguished between norm-oriented and value-oriented social movements, noting that the former seeks changes within an existing social system while the latter aim to transform the system's fundamental values. The Telangana movement was primarily norm-oriented: its protagonists did not seek to challenge Indian federalism or democratic governance, but rather demanded equitable application of those principles to the Telangana region. This characteristic made the movement more amenable to institutional resolution; ultimately via parliamentary legislation; than movements that challenge the legitimacy of the state itself.

Sidney Tarrow's concept of “cycles of contention” (1994) is also illuminating. The Telangana movement passed through several such cycles: the 1969 agitation, the relative quiescence of the 1970s and 1980s, the intellectual ferment of the 1990s, and the mass mobilization of 2004–2014. Each cycle built upon the organizational legacy of the preceding one, even as new actors and repertoires of contention emerged.

2.2 Political Mobilization Frameworks

Arun Swamy (2011) provides a useful distinction between macro-analytic approaches that examine structural cleavages and micro-analytic ones that focus on elite agency and individual strategies. The Telangana movement requires both lenses. At the macro level, the movement was embedded in structural cleavages of language, region, and developmental disparity that date to the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956. At the micro level, the choices made by individual leaders; K. Chandrashekar Rao's decision to launch TRS, his strategic hunger strike in 2009, or the JAC leadership's decisions about escalation and negotiation: were critical turning points.

Lipset and Rokkan's (1968) cleavage-structure framework, while developed primarily in the European context, offers analytical leverage in identifying the persistent social divisions that shaped political mobilization in Telangana. The centre-periphery cleavage; between the historically dominant Andhra-Seemandhra interests and the relatively marginalized Telangana region; was the primary axis of mobilization. This cleavage was reinforced by developmental, linguistic, and cultural dimensions that gave it unusual depth and durability.

Lauren Langman's (2012) theory of social mobilization identifies five elemental dimensions: legitimization crises, identity, emotions, morality, and vision. All five are discernible in the Telangana movement. The repeated failure of the central government to implement the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1956, the Mulki Rules, or the recommendations of successive committees constituted a legitimization crisis of the Indian federal system in Telangana. The construction and assertion of a distinct Telangana identity; rooted in the Telangana dialect, folk traditions, and shared historical memory; provided the motivational substrate. Emotional appeals drawing on the sacrifice of movement martyrs, the humiliation of regional subordination, and the aspiration for self-governance animated mass participation. The moral framing of the movement in terms of justice, equity, and democratic rights gave it ethical force. And the vision of a prosperous, self-governing Telangana provided a positive horizon toward which the movement could orient itself.

2.3 Existing Scholarship on Telangana

The scholarly literature on the Telangana movement has grown substantially in recent decades. Gautam Pingle's (2014) comprehensive study traces the fall and rise of Telangana across six decades, documenting the discriminatory implementation of employment quotas and resource allocation in the composite state. Kodanda Ram (2007, 2008) provides both historical and analytical accounts of the movement's evolution, with particular attention to its ideological dimensions. Kingshuk Nag (2011) offers a journalistic but rigorously researched account of the movement's trajectory, situating it within the broader context of Indian political history.

Louise Tillin's (2013) comparative study of India's new states examines the political origins of state reorganization, arguing that new states are not simply products of popular demand but of specific conjunctions of elite interests, popular mobilization, and central political calculations. This framework helps explain both the timing of Telangana's creation; which came when the Congress party perceived electoral advantage in conceding the demand; and the particular form it took; bifurcation rather than further reorganization.

Vernon Hewitt's (2007) analysis of political mobilization and democracy in India provides a useful comparative context, demonstrating that Indian democracy has repeatedly accommodated sub-national demands for reorganization through a combination of popular pressure and elite bargaining. The Telangana case fits within this broader pattern while exhibiting features; the extraordinary duration of the movement, the role of cultural mobilization, the JAC innovation; that make it analytically distinctive.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE LONG ROAD TO STATEHOOD

3.1 The Formation of Andhra Pradesh and Its Discontents (1956–1969)

To understand the Telangana movement, one must begin with the historical circumstances of Andhra Pradesh's formation. Telangana was historically part of the Hyderabad State, a princely state under the Nizam that encompassed three linguistic regions; Telugu-speaking Telangana, Marathi-speaking Marathwada, and Kannada-speaking Gulbarga. Following the Indian government's armed integration

of Hyderabad in 1948; the so-called Police Action or Operation Polo; the state came under central administration, with M.K. Vellodi appointed as the first Chief Minister on 26 January 1950.

The formation of Andhra Pradesh on 1 November 1956, based on the States Reorganization Commission report and a negotiated Gentlemen's Agreement between Telangana and Andhra leaders, merged the Telugu-speaking portions of Hyderabad State with the pre-existing state of Andhra. This merger was contentious from the outset. The Gentlemen's Agreement contained specific provisions to protect Telangana's interests in employment, education, and resource allocation, but these provisions were systematically flouted in the years that followed. Andhra-domiciled officials and professionals colonized positions reserved for Telangana residents, Telangana's revenues were channelled disproportionately to Andhra development, and the culturally and linguistically distinct Telangana identity was submerged under a homogenized Andhra Pradesh identity.

These structural grievances produced the first major eruption of the Telangana movement in 1969. Students of Osmania University were at the forefront of this agitation, which demanded implementation of the Mulki Rules; regulations that reserved employment in Hyderabad for those with long-term domicile in the region. The agitation was intense and violent: approximately 300 agitators were killed in confrontations with police. Marri Channa Reddy launched the Telangana Praja Samiti (TPS) to provide political leadership to the movement, and for a brief period it appeared that Telangana might achieve statehood. However, the central government's intervention, the six-point formula of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and ultimately the co-optation of Channa Reddy into the Congress party structure brought the movement to a temporary halt.

3.2 Cyclical Resurgence: 1972-2001

The Jai Andhra movement of 1972, launched in the Andhra-Rayalaseema regions as a counter to Telangana agitation, further complicated the political landscape. By demanding either, the abolition of the Mulki Rules or the separation of Andhra from Hyderabad State, the Jai Andhra movement demonstrated that the 1956 merger had created structural tensions that could not be managed through incremental accommodation. The result was the Presidential Order of 1975, which modified the Mulki Rules and attempted to balance competing regional interests; but satisfied neither side.

The 1980s saw a renewed, if lower-intensity, phase of Telangana mobilization led primarily by leftist parties and civil society organizations. Intellectual debates about Telangana's developmental subordination intensified in the 1990s, as liberalization policies began to concentrate investment and infrastructure in the Andhra coastal districts while Telangana's agrarian economy stagnated. The 1990s also saw the emergence of a distinct Telangana cultural movement, with writers, poets, and artists asserting the region's linguistic and cultural distinctiveness through the Telangana dialect; Telangana. Telugu as opposed to the Andhra-inflected standard Telugu promoted by the composite state's cultural institutions.

The 1998 and 1999 elections marked an important political turn. The BJP and Congress parties, respectively, made electoral promises of a separate Telangana state; promises that were not fulfilled once in power but that demonstrated the growing electoral salience of the Telangana demand. The founding of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) by K. Chandrashekar Rao in 2001 provided the movement with a dedicated political vehicle for the first time since the TPS, and set the stage for the intensified mobilization of 2004–2014.

3.3 The Final Phase: 2004-2014

The period 2004–2014 witnessed the transformation of the Telangana movement from a regional political demand into a mass mobilization that ultimately proved irresistible. The TRS entered into pre-election alliances with the Congress party in both 2004 and 2009, extracting commitments on Telangana statehood as the price of its support. When these commitments were not honoured, the movement escalated. The pivotal moment came in November–December 2009, when TRS president K. Chandrashekar Rao launched a high-profile hunger strike that mobilized hundreds of thousands of supporters across Telangana. The central government's announcement on 9 December 2009 that it would initiate the process of creating a separate Telangana state, though subsequently hedged and delayed, demonstrated the movement's coercive capacity.

The formation of the Srikrishna Committee in February 2010 to examine options for Telangana reflected both the central government's recognition of the movement's force and its attempt to manage the process through deliberative delay. The committee's December 2010 report presented six options, with the fifth option; a separate Telangana state with Hyderabad as its capital; representing the movement's core demand. The committee's own preferred recommendation was a unified Andhra Pradesh with enhanced arrangements for Telangana, but the movement's sustained pressure eventually made the fifth option politically unavoidable. The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act was passed by Parliament on 18 February 2014, and the state of Telangana formally came into existence on 2 June 2014.

4. ACTORS AND STRATEGIES OF MOBILIZATION

4.1 Student Organizations and the Vanguard Role

Students have historically constituted the vanguard of the Telangana movement, and the 2004–2014 phase was no exception. The Osmania University campus in Hyderabad remained the crucible of student activism, as it had been in 1969. Organizations such as the Telangana Students' Front, the Students' Federation of India (SFI)'s Telangana wing, and numerous university-specific JAC platforms mobilized tens of thousands of students across Telangana's educational institutions.

Student mobilization in this phase was characterized by several distinctive features. First, it was geographically dispersed: unlike earlier phases concentrated in Hyderabad, the 2004–2014 agitation reached into district towns and rural areas, reflecting the expansion of higher education across Telangana. Second, it employed a wide repertoire of protest tactics: rallies, hartals (strikes), hunger strikes, walkouts from examinations, and the formation of human chains. Third, it connected developmental grievances; the relative scarcity of educational and employment opportunities in Telangana; with cultural and identity assertions, giving the movement both material and symbolic dimensions.

The student movement also provided the Telangana cause with its most potent symbols: the martyrs who died in agitation, whose anniversaries were commemorated annually to renew collective memory and commitment. The figure of the Telangana student; idealistic, self-sacrificing, committed to the cause against all odds; became a powerful cultural archetype that animated successive generations of activists. This symbolic dimension of student mobilization was crucial to maintaining movement identity across the cycles of quiescence and resurgence that characterized the movement's long history.

4.2 Political Parties and Electoral Mobilization

The relationship between the Telangana movement and political parties was complex and evolving. The founding of the TRS in 2001 represented a decisive step in the professionalization and electoralization of the movement. Unlike the TPS of 1969, which was essentially a single-issue agitational platform, the TRS developed into a full-fledged political party with a legislative presence, alliance-making capacity, and organizational infrastructure extending across all ten districts of the Telangana region.

The TRS's electoral strategy combined two complementary approaches. The first was alliance politics: by offering electoral support to larger national parties; Congress in 2004 and again in 2009, the BJP in the 2014 elections—in exchange for commitments on Telangana statehood, the TRS leveraged its regional base into national political influence. The second was constituency building: the TRS invested in developing organizational presence at the grassroots level, connecting with farmers' associations, artisans' organizations, dalit groups, and other social constituencies that had a material stake in the Telangana demand.

Other political parties also played significant roles in the mobilization. The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) and its various offshoots had long been active in organizing Telangana's rural poor and had contributed to the movement's leftist intellectual tradition. The Indian National Congress, despite its ambivalence on the Telangana question, contained significant pro-Telangana factions, particularly among politicians whose electoral survival depended on Telangana constituencies. Even the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), which was ambivalent or opposed to bifurcation at the all-state level, contained Telangana legislators who faced pressure from their constituents to support the demand.

The multiplicity of parties supporting the Telangana cause was itself a form of mobilization—it demonstrated the breadth of political support for statehood and made it increasingly difficult for the central government to dismiss the demand as factional or parochial. The formation of multi-party platforms, such as the Political Joint Action Committee (PJAC), formalized this inter-party coordination and enhanced the movement's political leverage.

4.3 Joint Action Committees: Innovation in Civil Society Coordination

Perhaps the most organizationally innovative aspect of the 2004–2014 Telangana mobilization was the emergence of Joint Action Committees (JACs) as coordinating bodies that bridged the gap between political parties, student organizations, and civil society groups. The JAC model, which brought together disparate organizations under a common platform without requiring organizational merger or the subordination of any constituent group's autonomy, proved remarkably effective in sustaining broad-based participation across the movement's diverse constituencies.

The principal JAC platform at the movement-wide level was the Telangana Joint Action Committee (TJAC), led by Professor M. Kodandaram of Osmania University. The TJAC served as the de facto coordinating body for the movement during its most intense phases, calling bandhs (general strikes), organizing rallies, and negotiating with the central government on behalf of the broader movement. Its leadership, drawn from academia, civil society, and cultural organizations rather than electoral politics, gave it a degree of legitimacy and credibility that purely partisan platforms lacked.

Alongside the TJAC, numerous sector-specific JACs emerged: employee JACs coordinating agitation among government workers, student JACs mobilizing across campuses, lawyer JACs organizing the legal profession, and teacher JACs engaging the educational sector. This proliferation of JACs effectively extended the movement's organizational reach into every stratum of Telangana society,

ensuring that no sector felt excluded from the collective project of statehood. The JAC model also provided organizational resilience: when one platform faced repression or exhaustion, others could sustain momentum.

4.4 Cultural Organizations and Identity Mobilization

The cultural dimension of the Telangana mobilization deserves sustained analytical attention, as it was both organizationally significant and theoretically illuminating. Cultural organizations; writers' associations, folk artists' collectives, literary societies, and dialect-promotion groups; played a crucial role in constructing and disseminating a coherent narrative of Telangana identity that could animate mass participation.

The Telangana dialect, often dismissed by standard Telugu purists as a corrupt or inferior form of the language, was rehabilitated and celebrated as a mark of regional pride. Telangana literature, which had long been marginalized in the cultural institutions of Andhra Pradesh, found new platforms for expression and recognition. Folk traditions; the Bathukamma festival, the Bonalu celebrations, the Perini Sivatanadava dance form; were recovered, promoted, and consciously deployed as symbols of Telangana's distinct cultural heritage. This cultural mobilization served several functions simultaneously: it strengthened in-group solidarity among Telangana communities, it communicated the movement's identity claims to external audiences, and it provided the movement with a positive, constructive agenda beyond mere opposition to Andhra dominance.

The figure of the poet-activist was particularly important in this cultural mobilization. Telangana's protest literature; songs, ballads, and poems composed in the Telangana dialect; circulated widely through audio recordings, public performances, and eventually digital media, reaching constituencies that conventional political communication could not access. This "culture of resistance" (Scott, 1990) gave the movement an expressive dimension that made participation emotionally rewarding and that sustained commitment through periods when political progress seemed remote.

4.5 Caste Associations and Social Groups

The Telangana movement also engaged the region's complex caste structure as a mobilizational resource. While the movement was officially cross-caste and sought to project a unified Telangana identity that transcended caste divisions, in practice different caste communities participated in the movement in ways shaped by their specific grievances and aspirations.

Backward class communities (OBCs) were strongly represented in the movement's grassroots base, as they perceived Andhra dominance as a barrier to their social and economic mobility within the composite state. Dalit and Adivasi communities in Telangana's interior districts, historically the most economically marginalized, were mobilized through connections between the Telangana demand and issues of land rights, forest rights, and social justice. The Goud community (toddy tappers), the Padmasali community (weavers), the Yadava community (pastoralists), and other occupational groups organized their own JAC platforms and contributed to the movement's breadth.

The engagement of these diverse social constituencies transformed the movement from an elite or student-led agitation into a genuinely mass phenomenon. It also gave the Telangana movement a social reform dimension that distinguished it from purely ethnic or regional movements: the demand for statehood was increasingly framed not just as a matter of regional pride but as a prerequisite for addressing the developmental and social justice concerns of Telangana's most vulnerable communities.

5. STRUCTURAL GRIEVANCES AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF REGIONAL DISPARITY

5.1 Employment and Bureaucratic Discrimination

The most consistently articulated grievance of the Telangana movement was the systematic discrimination against Telangana residents in government employment within the composite state. The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1956 had guaranteed Telangana residents preferential access to government jobs in the Telangana region, but these guarantees were routinely violated. By the 1990s, detailed empirical studies demonstrated that Andhra-domiciled officials held disproportionate shares of senior administrative positions in Telangana districts, that Telangana candidates were underrepresented in the state civil services, and that the Mulki Rules protecting Telangana employment had been effectively rendered inoperative.

These employment disparities had political as well as economic significance. Bureaucratic control translated into political influence, as senior officials exercised discretionary power over resource allocation, project approvals, and implementation of government schemes. The dominance of Andhra officials in Telangana's administrative machinery meant that the region's developmental trajectory was shaped by outsiders who had limited accountability to Telangana communities and limited understanding of their needs. This structural dynamic reinforced the movement's demand for a state government; and hence a state bureaucracy; that would be accountable to Telangana's people.

5.2 Water Resources and Irrigation Disputes

Water resources were another major axis of grievance. The Krishna and Godavari rivers flow through both Andhra and Telangana regions, and the allocation of their waters between the two regions was a perennial source of conflict. Telangana activists argued that the composite state's irrigation policy systematically favoured Andhra farmers: major irrigation projects like Nagarjunasagar and Srisailem were sited and managed in ways that maximized water availability to Andhra districts while leaving large areas of Telangana dependent on rainfall. The resulting disparities in agricultural productivity and income between Andhra's irrigated coastal districts and Telangana's rain-fed interior further fuelled the sense of economic marginalization.

The water dispute had a symbolic as well as material dimension: it represented, in tangible and visible form, the argument that the composite state's development policy was inherently biased against Telangana. The Jalayagnam irrigation program launched under Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy in the mid-2000s was welcomed in principle but criticized in practice for allegedly favouring projects that benefited Andhra constituencies. These debates about water allocation were extensively covered by the regional media and contributed to the mobilizational narrative of Telangana's systemic underdevelopment under Andhra dominance.

5.3 Budgetary Allocations and Developmental Disparities

Telangana activists produced detailed analyses of budgetary allocations and development expenditure in the composite state, arguing that Telangana's contribution to state revenues; particularly through Hyderabad's economic activity; was disproportionate to its share of developmental spending. These analyses, which circulated widely in movement publications, academic journals, and regional media, provided an empirical foundation for the political argument that Telangana would be better served by its own state government with full control over its revenues and expenditures.

The Human Development Index disparities between Telangana and Andhra-Seemandhra districts were regularly invoked to demonstrate the developmental cost of the composite state arrangement.

Indicators including literacy rates, infant mortality, per capita income, access to drinking water, and road connectivity showed persistent gaps between the regions, with Telangana's interior districts; particularly in Adilabad, Khammam, and Warangal—among the most deprived in the entire composite state. The farmer suicides that swept through Telangana's agrarian communities in the 1990s and 2000s; among the highest rates in India; became a particularly potent symbol of the developmental crisis that the movement attributed to Andhra governance.

6. THE DECISIVE PHASE: MOBILIZATION AND STATEHOOD (2009–2014)

6.1 KCR's Fast and the December 2009 Declaration

The year 2009 marked a turning point in the Telangana movement. Following the 2009 general elections, in which the TRS performed below expectations, and frustrated by the Congress party's failure to honour its Telangana commitments despite depending on TRS support for its coalition government, K. Chandrashekar Rao announced an indefinite hunger strike on 29 November 2009. The strike rapidly became a focal point for mass mobilization across Telangana: students walked out of examinations, government employees went on strike, and hundreds of thousands participated in rallies and demonstrations expressing solidarity with KCR and the Telangana cause.

The movement's emotional intensity during this phase was extraordinary. The prospect of KCR's death by hunger strike; a possibility that medical reports rendered credible as his condition deteriorated; galvanized a level of popular mobilization that had not been seen since 1969. The TJAC coordinated bandhs and demonstrations, student organizations occupied university campuses, and the regional media provided saturation coverage that further amplified the movement's reach. The central government, alarmed by the scale of unrest, announced on 9 December 2009 that it would begin the process of creating a separate Telangana state—a declaration that prompted KCR to suspend his fast.

The December 2009 declaration, however, was almost immediately walked back under pressure from Andhra and Seemandhra leaders within the Congress party, who threatened to resign their parliamentary seats and disrupt governance in the composite state if bifurcation proceeded. This reversal produced a further intensification of movement activity: the TJAC called for an indefinite shutdown, students launched relay hunger strikes, and the sense of betrayal generated by the government's equivocation added a new note of bitterness to movement rhetoric. The central government's response was to appoint the Srikrishna Committee, a device that allowed it to defer a decision while maintaining the appearance of engagement with the Telangana demand.

6.2 The Srikrishna Committee and Its Aftermath

The Srikrishna Committee, formally the Committee for Consultations on the Situation in Andhra Pradesh, submitted its report in December 2010. The report's five options; ranging from maintaining the status quo to bifurcation; reflected the genuine complexity of the Telangana question, particularly given the contested status of Hyderabad, which both regions claimed as their capital. The committee's recommendation was for a unified state with enhanced arrangements for Telangana; a position that was rejected by Telangana movement leaders as inadequate.

The period 2011–2013 saw sustained agitation, periodic escalations, and extended political negotiations as the Congress-led central government attempted to find a formula that would satisfy Telangana's demands without alienating Andhra constituencies. The movement-maintained pressure through periodic bandhs, relay hunger strikes, and cultural events that kept the issue in public consciousness. The TJAC's continued organizational activity, the TRS's political maneuvering, and

the sustained engagement of civil society organizations collectively prevented the movement from losing momentum during this prolonged period of political uncertainty.

6.3 The Parliamentary Endgame and Statehood

The final phase of the movement's political trajectory began in July 2013, when the Congress Working Committee announced its decision to proceed with the creation of a separate Telangana state. This decision reflected a calculation that the electoral benefits of satisfying Telangana's demand outweighed the costs of alienating Andhra constituencies, particularly as the 2014 general elections approached. The announcement triggered fierce opposition from Seemandhra legislators, some of whom staged prolonged protests in the Parliament building, and from the Telugu Desam Party, which feared the electoral consequences of bifurcation in the Andhra region.

Despite this opposition, the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha in February 2014, passed amid considerable procedural controversy, and received Presidential assent on 1 March 2014. The state of Telangana formally came into existence on 2 June 2014, with K. Chandrashekar Rao sworn in as its first Chief Minister. The TRS won a decisive majority in the first Telangana state assembly elections held concurrently with the general elections, providing the movement's political vehicle with an unambiguous mandate to govern the state it had done so much to create.

7. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS: UNDERSTANDING THE TELANGANA MOBILIZATION

7.1 Resource Mobilization and Organizational Capacity

The Telangana movement's success can in large measure be explained through the lens of resource mobilization theory. By the 2004–2014 phase, the movement had assembled an impressive array of organizational resources: the TRS provided electoral infrastructure and financial resources, the TJAC and its affiliated JACs provided coordinating capacity, student organizations provided mobilizational manpower, and cultural organizations provided symbolic resources. The movement also benefited from the organizational learning accumulated over six decades: each phase of agitation had built organizational capacity and trained activists who went on to lead subsequent phases.

The movement's financial resources were derived from multiple sources: membership fees and donations from TRS supporters, contributions from Telangana communities in the diaspora (particularly in the Gulf countries and the United States), and—critically—the free labour of student activists and volunteers who sustained the movement's day-to-day activities. The ability to mobilize these diverse resources gave the movement organizational resilience that purely party-led or purely street-based movements typically lack.

7.2 Identity, Emotion, and the Affective Dimensions of Mobilization

Langman's five-element framework illuminates dimensions of the Telangana mobilization that resource mobilization theory tends to underemphasize. The emotional dimensions of the movement; the grief, anger, pride, and aspiration that animated participants; were not merely epiphenomenal to the movement's organizational logic but were constitutive of its distinctive character and force.

The construction of a coherent Telangana identity was a major achievement of the movement's cultural wing. By recovering and celebrating the region's distinct dialect, folk traditions, and historical memory, cultural activists gave the movement a positive identity—not just opposition to Andhra dominance but pride in Telangana's own heritage. This positive identity was emotionally motivating in ways that purely grievance-based narratives are not: it gave participants something to fight for, not just against. The annual Bathukamma celebrations, the revival of Perini Sivatandava, and the

publication of Telangana dialect literature all served to reinforce and enrich this identity, making it available as an ongoing source of movement motivation.

7.3 The Cleavage Structure and the Limits of Accommodation

Rokkan's cleavage-structure framework helps explain why the Telangana movement was ultimately irresolvable within the framework of the composite state. The centre-periphery cleavage between Andhra and Telangana was not merely a product of political competition but was embedded in structural features of the composite state's political economy: the demographic weight of the Andhra-Seemandhra region, the dominance of Andhra capital in Hyderabad's economy, and the institutional advantages that accrued to Andhra communities in government employment. These structural features meant that any accommodation of Telangana's demands within a unified state would have required a degree of positive discrimination that the Andhra majority would not accept. The only durable solution was, as the movement had always argued, a separate state.

The failure of successive central government committees; the Wanchoo Committee, the Bhargava Committee, the Girglani Commission; to resolve the dispute through recommended reforms illustrates this structural logic. Each committee identified genuine grievances and recommended remedial measures; each set of recommendations was partially implemented, generating new conflicts between Andhra and Telangana interests, and ultimately failing to satisfy either side. The structural cleavage was too deep and too institutionally entrenched to be managed through administrative accommodation; it required a political solution.

8. COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES AND BROADER IMPLICATIONS

The Telangana case invites comparison with other sub-national statehood movements within India and beyond. Within India, the creation of Jharkhand (2000), Chhattisgarh (2000), and Uttarakhand (2000) provides a useful comparative set. Like Telangana, these new states were created in response to sustained popular mobilizations rooted in a combination of developmental grievances, cultural identity claims, and political mobilization. Like Telangana, their movements employed a combination of agitational politics and electoral leverage to build irresistible pressure for statehood.

Several features of the Telangana case, however, are distinctive. The movement's extraordinary duration spanning six decades; represents an unusual test of organizational resilience and identity maintenance. The role of Hyderabad as a contested capital; a major metropolitan centre that both bifurcated regions claimed; added a dimension of complexity not present in the Jharkhand or Chhattisgarh cases. And the cultural dimension of Telangana mobilization; the recovery and celebration of the Telangana dialect and folk traditions; was more sophisticated and organizationally significant than in comparable movements.

Beyond the Indian context, the Telangana case offers lessons for sub-national movements in other federal democracies. The movement's success demonstrates that sustained popular mobilization can ultimately compel constitutional change in democratic systems, even in the face of initial elite resistance. The JAC model of multi-organizational coordination offers a practical template for movements that must unite diverse constituencies without requiring organizational amalgamation. And the integration of cultural mobilization with political organization provides a model for movements that seek to build durable identity-based coalitions.

At the same time, the Telangana case cautions against over-optimism about the developmental consequences of new state creation. The formation of Telangana did not automatically resolve the developmental disparities that had fuelled the movement; addressing those disparities required

sustained investment in infrastructure, education, employment, and agricultural development that the new state's government has pursued with varying degrees of success. The creation of a state is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the developmental transformation that movement participants sought.

CONCLUSION

The formation of Telangana as India's twenty-ninth state in June 2014 was the outcome of one of the most sustained and multi-dimensional social and political mobilizations in post-independence Indian history. This paper has traced the movement's evolution from the structural grievances generated by the 1956 merger of Hyderabad State and Andhra, through the cyclical phases of agitation and quiescence from 1969 to 2001, to the decisive mobilization of 2004–2014 that finally achieved statehood.

The analysis has highlighted several key findings. First, the movement's success was grounded in the accumulated organizational capital of six decades of activism: the structures, identities, and tactical repertoires developed in each phase of agitation provided resources for subsequent phases. Second, the JAC model of multi-organizational coordination proved to be a significant organizational innovation that enabled the movement to maintain broad participation without sacrificing coherence. Third, the integration of cultural mobilization; particularly the recovery and celebration of Telangana dialect and folk traditions; with political organization gave the movement an affective depth and resilience that purely interest-based movements typically lack.

Fourth, the movement illustrates the importance of political entrepreneurship in translating social mobilization into institutional outcomes. The TRS's strategic alliance-making, K. Chandrashekar Rao's hunger strike of 2009, and the TJAC's sustained coordination of civil society pressure were all essential to converting the movement's organizational strength into political leverage that ultimately compelled legislative action. Social mobilization without political translation does not produce institutional change; political entrepreneurship without social mobilization lacks the popular legitimacy to overcome elite resistance.

Theoretically, the Telangana case affirms the complementarity of resource mobilization theory, cleavage-structure analysis, and identity-based frameworks for explaining the dynamics of sustained sub-national movements. No single theoretical framework is sufficient; the movement's complexity requires multiple analytical lenses. Future research might profitably examine the post-statehood trajectory of Telangana's social movements, as the organizations and identities forged in the struggle for statehood are redirected toward the challenges of governance, development, and social transformation in the new state.

The Telangana case ultimately demonstrates the enduring power of popular mobilization in democratic politics. Against the skepticism of those who see sub-national movements as mere elite manipulation or ethnic essentialism, Telangana shows that organized popular action, sustained over decades, rooted in genuine grievances, and animated by authentic cultural identity, can reshape the constitutional map of a large and complex democracy. It is a lesson with implications far beyond Telangana's borders.

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