

**THE PATIENCE, POLITICS, AND PROWESS OF SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL
IN INTEGRATION JUNAGADH, HYDERABAD, AND KASHMIR INTO INDIA****Dr. Chetan N. Prajapati****Assistant Professor (G.E.S. – 2),****Government Arts & Commerce College, Sami, Dist. Patan****Abstract**

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, often hailed as the "Iron Man of India," played an instrumental role in the unification of the newly independent nation by integrating over 562 princely states into the Indian Union between 1947 and 1949. This paper examines his strategic handling of three particularly contentious states—Junagadh, Hyderabad, and Kashmir—through the lenses of patience, political acumen, and prowess. Drawing on historical analyses, it highlights how Patel's blend of diplomatic restraint, shrewd negotiations, and decisive action averted the balkanization of India amid post-Partition chaos. His efforts not only secured territorial integrity but also laid the groundwork for a federal republic.

Key Words: unification, independent, negotiation, diplomatic**Introduction**

The partition of British India in August 1947 left the subcontinent fragmented, with princely states covering 40% of the territory and home to 23% of the population granted the choice to accede to India, Pakistan, or remain independent (Menon 1). Sardar Patel, as Minister of Home Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister, spearheaded the integration process alongside V.P. Menon, employing a multifaceted approach that combined persuasion, economic leverage, and, when necessary, military intervention. His philosophy emphasized the primacy of the people's will over rulers' whims, as he famously stated, "The princes cannot run away with the people" (Patel 56). This paper focuses on Junagadh, Hyderabad, and Kashmir, where Patel's patience in negotiations, political maneuvering to exploit internal divisions, and prowess in executing swift resolutions exemplified his genius in nation-building.

Junagadh: Diplomatic Isolation and the Power of the Plebiscite

Junagadh, a coastal princely state in Gujarat with a 99% Hindu population ruled by a Muslim Nawab, Muhammad Mahabat Khanji III, posed an early test to India's unity when it acceded to Pakistan on September 15, 1947, despite lacking geographical contiguity and ignoring demographic realities ("Annexation of Junagadh"). Patel's patience was evident in his initial

restraint; rather than immediate military action, he urged Pakistan to reverse its acceptance and proposed a plebiscite to ascertain the people's wishes, arguing that "the question of accession should be decided according to the wishes of the people" (qtd. in Ankit 142). This diplomatic overture allowed time for internal dissent to fester, as the Nawab's decision sparked widespread protests and the formation of the Aarzi Hukumat (provisional government) in exile under Samaldas Gandhi on September 25, 1947 ("Sardar Patel-Integration of Princely States").

Politically, Patel masterfully isolated Junagadh by coordinating with neighboring states to cut off supplies, imposing an economic blockade that severed food, fuel, and communications lines, leading to financial collapse and communal tensions ("Sardar Patel-Integration of Princely States"). By November 1947, the Nawab fled to Karachi, and Indian forces assumed control to prevent anarchy, capturing 160 villages without major bloodshed (Ankit 145). Patel's prowess culminated in a plebiscite on February 20, 1948, where 99.95% of voters opted for India, formalizing integration into the Saurashtra Union and later Gujarat ("Annexation of Junagadh"). This non-violent resolution underscored Patel's preference for popular sovereignty, averting escalation while reinforcing India's moral high ground.

Hyderabad: From Standstill Negotiations to Operation Polo

Hyderabad, the wealthiest and largest princely state under Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan, declared independence in 1947, harboring ambitions of sovereignty backed by a private army and the paramilitary Razakars, who unleashed atrocities against Hindus amid the Telangana peasant uprising ("Annexation of Hyderabad"). Patel's patience shone through the Standstill Agreement of November 29, 1947, which maintained the status quo for negotiations on defense, communications, and foreign affairs, buying time to expose the Nizam's intrigues with Pakistan and Portugal ("Sardar Patel-Integration of Princely States"). Despite violations—such as border encroachments and Razakar violence that killed thousands and displaced refugees—Patel pursued talks, inviting delegations including advisor Walter Monckton, only to face threats of reprisals against India's Hindu population (Nair).

His political savvy lay in leveraging internal divisions: supporting pro-India elements, imposing an economic blockade, and drafting a compromise allowing limited autonomy in exchange for accession, which the Nizam initially signed but later reneged on due to Razakar pressure (Verma 5). When diplomacy faltered amid escalating communal riots (estimated 30,000–40,000 deaths), Patel's prowess asserted itself in Operation Polo, launched on

September 13, 1948 (Nair). Under his direction as acting Prime Minister, 35,000 Indian troops executed a five-day blitz from Vijayawada and Solapur, routing 22,000 state forces and Razakars with minimal casualties (fewer than 10 Indian deaths), forcing surrender on September 17 (Verma 7). Patel's post-operation magnanimity—appointing the Nizam as Rajpramukh—eased the transition, integrating Hyderabad by 1950 and quelling further unrest (Nair). This blend of restraint and resolve prevented a potential "cancer in the body politic," as Patel warned ("Annexation of Hyderabad").

Kashmir: Persuasion Under Siege

Jammu and Kashmir, a Muslim-majority state ruled by Hindu Maharaja Hari Singh, dithered on accession amid overtures from both dominions, complicating Patel's unification drive (Menon 312). Patel's patience was tested by the Maharaja's independence fantasies and Nehru's affinity for Sheikh Abdullah, leader of the pro-India National Conference; yet, Patel urged reconciliation, advising Singh to befriend Abdullah and accede to India for security (Madhav). The Pakistani-backed tribal invasion on October 22, 1947, which ravaged towards Srinagar, forced the issue, prompting Singh to sign the Instrument of Accession on October 26 (Sundar). Politically, Patel navigated tensions between Nehru's internationalist leanings and the need for swift action, keeping Nehru partially in the dark on military plans while confronting him: "Do you want Kashmir or not?" (qtd. in Madhav). He coordinated with Governor-General Mountbatten and V.P. Menon to airlift troops to Srinagar, repelling invaders by year's end ("The Making of a Nation"). Patel's prowess extended to infrastructure, ordering the Jammu-Pathankot road's construction in eight months to secure supply lines, and endorsing Article 370 as a temporary measure to accommodate Abdullah's demands, balancing federal unity with regional autonomy ("Sardar Patel-Integration of Princely States"). Though the conflict persists, Patel's interventions ensured two-thirds of Kashmir remained Indian, averting total loss (Sundar).

Conclusion

Sardar Patel's integration of Junagadh, Hyderabad, and Kashmir exemplified a masterful fusion of patience—to allow diplomacy room to breathe—politics—to exploit fissures and rally support—and prowess—to deploy force judiciously for lasting unity (Verma 10). By 1949, all princely states were absorbed, transforming a patchwork empire into a sovereign republic

("The Making of a Nation"). His legacy endures as a testament to pragmatic leadership, reminding us that nation-building demands both velvet gloves and iron fists.

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