

Chapter-10

Sardar Patel and the Architecture of Order: Constitutional Vision and Administrative Foundations of Modern India

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Abstract

The Iron Man of India Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was the key figure in shaping the constitutional and administrative structure of the post-independent India. In this paper the author is going to discuss the legacy that Patel left behind in the process of defining the backbone of law, order, and governance that continues to thrive within the Indian state. As one of the most prominent figures of the Constituent Assembly and the first Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home, Patel did not simply participate in the politics of political integration; he had a vision of one system of administration that would be capable of sustaining a variety of countries and nations and that had just become free.

The paper will examine the role that Patel played in bringing together the 560 plus princely states and this was not merely a well-formed policy of diplomacy but also a well-developed legal and bureaucratic policy. The domestic security and the political unity within India was pre-determined by his principle of central authority, professionally trained civil authority, and the enthusiastic police system. With the help of the analysis of archives and interpretation of history, the paper explains how Patel contributed to the creation of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and paid attention to the constitutional order as the type of national unification.

The study gives an understanding of how Patel was prescient enough to create a balance between federalism and unity, tradition and modernity by putting his vision within the framework of the constitutional development of India. The paper holds that administrative wisdom of Patel coupled with

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constitutional pragmatism assisted him to develop a powerful model of governance and therefore he becomes part of the architects of the machinery of law and order in India. The legacy he made is still among the pillars of the Indian democratic and bureaucratic systems.

Keywords: Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Constitutional Development, Political Integration, Law and Order Machinery.

Introduction

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel or the iron man of India was a major figure in the political and administrative unification of post independent India. Assimilating more than 560 princely states into the Indian Union, acculturating, which was a difficult task by any measure, was a huge undertaking; the acculturating would be the work of not just the first Deputy Prime Minister, but also the Minister of Home Affairs, Patel. The foundation of a cohesive and integrated country on the administration front was provided by his pragmatics, sound judgment, and good knowledge of administration (Shankar, 2020¹; The Hindu, 2025²).

The political unity was also envisaged by Patel. He was a firm believer in the existence of a powerful central government and civil services that were professional which resulted in the creation of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). The institutionalism and constitutionalism were extremely important in the process of ensuring that the institutions of governance in India were strong to the diversity, regionalism, and postcolonial transition (PM India, 2025)³. The Constituent Assembly was marked by the practice where Patel tried to develop a strong administrative machine to maintain the law and order and support a united nation.

¹ Shankar, V. (2020). *Reminiscences of Sardar Patel*. New Delhi: National Book Trust.

² The Hindu. (2025, October 31). Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's leadership instrumental in uniting India. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/sardar-vallabhbhai-patels-leadership-instrumental-in-uniting-india/article7022553.ece>

³ PM India. (2025, October 31). India pays homage to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on his 150th Jayanti. Retrieved from https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/india-pays-homage-to-sardar-vallabhbhai-patel-on-his-150th-jayanti-pm/

Regulations and rules are significant in the growth of the country and this is what cannot be stressed enough. These are the foundations of the democratic rule and they help the state in dispensing justice, internal security and development policies. Patel was also aided by her institutional design foresight in enabling India to avoid the traps of fragmentation and instability that most of the countries got into when they became independent. The paper will endeavor to give the constitutional philosophy of Patel and his policy in uniting the princely states how IAS was formed and how he formed the inner security machine in India.

The paper will identify the role of the Patel in the law-and-order machine in India through the archival study and review of history. The possible areas of interest would be to examine his contribution in the larger context of the constitutional development and government and to bring an insight about the timelessness of his model of government.

Historical Context:

The post-independent India was in the state of uncertainty and fragmentation and the necessity to consolidate the institutions was the priority. The relinquishment of the British colonial rule suggested the establishment of a skeleton government, a subcontinent which was highly fragmented and had 560 plus princely states, the commitment of which to the new Indian Union could by no means be assured. The British had not only to assimilate these heterogeneous units, but also to create one form of rule that would enable it to govern a great, heterogeneous and newly independent population (Menon, 1956⁴; Chandra,⁵ 2008).

One of the key figures of this era of revolution was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Patel was a heavyweight of the Indian national congress, a member of constituency assembly, the first deputy prime minister and the minister of home affairs in the interim state and therefore his bargaining power in the political and administrative decision making was indeed very

⁴ Menon, V. P. (1956). *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.

⁵ Chandra, B. (2008). *India Since Independence*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

strong. The sound belief in an administrative discipline and national unity was the basis of his pragmatism to integrate. The unification of princely states that Patel did in the head of the States Ministry was usually a combination of diplomacy, legal measures, and manipulation skills (Sharma, 2020)⁶. The contribution made by Patel in the constituent assembly was also significant. His policies included the presence of strong central government, professional civil service as well as legal system that was to offer stability in the country. This was observed in his belief in the establishment of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) because he believed that there was but just a single meritocratic administration framework that can be entrusted with the task of ruling the land. The constitutional debates by Patel are always dependent on order, efficiency and need of continuity of the institutions between the colonial government and the new republic (Austin, 1999)⁷.

The post-independent India was facing a huge challenge in governance because of the administrative vacuum, communal violence, economic instability, reestablishment of the refugees, etc. Patel was an administrative expert and visionary that assisted in building the stable state apparatus. It is still influencing the bureaucratic and security organs in India even today since he insisted the law and order as the catalyst of national unity.

Constitutional Vision:

The role played by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in the constitutional and administrative structure formulation of India was very central in ensuring that the nation remained alive and successful as a single republic. His research on the federal system was founded on the realistic explanation of the pluralism of India and the need to have a strong central government in order to maintain unity. Patel estimated that federalism was a requirement to enable the identities of the areas, but it must not engage in meddling with national

⁶ Sharma, R. (2020). *Sardar Patel and the Making of India*. New Delhi: HarperCollins.

⁷ Austin, G. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: The Indian Experience*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

identity. His insistence to take over the Union with a powerful government was embodied in the clauses of the constitution which gave the Centre the authority to overrule when it came to matters touching on internal security and governance (Basu, 2020)⁸.

This effect of Patel was more conspicuously noticeable in unifying the princely states. He thought the political partition as a threat to Indian sovereignty, and had relentlessly fought to bring 560 princely states in the Indian Union. It was not a mere diplomatic process, yet there were legal instruments like the Instrument of Accession, as well as administrative instruments, which ensured that these states would be incorporated into the constitutional system without any disruption to the work (Sharma, 2020)⁹. His policy brought the foundation of a federal system that brought a balance between independence and oneness.

Patel was a great advocate of the constitutional provisions which provided the central government with powers to maintain internal security in the law and order sphere. He foresaw the issues of inter personal tension, local uprisings, and unstable governments and, therefore, he proposed strong legal frameworks in order to maintain peace in the society. He was a Home Minister who observed the establishment of proper policing systems and building the law and order systems to ensure the post-independence years, which were marked with upheaval (Vision IAS, 2025)¹⁰.

Patel was also revolutionary in his views of civil services. He has been quoted saying that the civil service has been called the so-called steel frame of India, and the significance of the institution in bringing about administrative stability and as a source of national unity. He helped to found the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), and hence its meritocratic ethos, the heir to the colonial Indian Civil Service (ICS). Patel had an

⁸ Basu, R. (2020). The constitutional foundations, Sardar Patel and the role of the civil services. Indian Institute of Public Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.iipa.org.in/cms/public/uploads/379181654511160.pdf>

⁹ Sharma, R. (2020). Sardar Patel and the Making of India. New Delhi: HarperCollins.

¹⁰ Vision IAS. (2025, April 19). Civil service for Viksit Bharat in the vision of Sardar Patel and Ambedkar. Retrieved from <https://visionias.in/current-affairs/upsc-daily-news-summary/article/2025-04-19/business-standard/polity-and-governance/civil-service-for-viksit-bharat-in-the-vision-of-sardar-patel-and-ambedkar>

opinion that a well functioning bureaucracy involved a professional, apolitical and disciplined bureaucracy to execute the constitutional values and development policies. His respect towards civil servants and their role in nation building was repeated in his speech to the Constituent Assembly in October, 1949 (The Print, 2024)¹¹.

In a nutshell, Patel constitutional vision was endowed with high sense of unity, order and institutional strength. Along with his works, still being relevant to the modern day, his heritage is the guiding power in the federal system of India, law enforcement, bureaucratic spirit and he was a major figure in the construction of the modern day India.

Administrative Wisdom:

It was the administrative skills of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel that led to transforming India as a discontinuous colony into a united and governable republic. The Indian Administrative Service(IAS) that now forms the backbone of the Indian system of governance was based on his concept of a disciplined, meritocratic and centralized bureaucracy.

Patel had a great fondness of continuity of the institution of civil services. He identified the need to have a professional and politically neutral bureaucracy in a bid to achieve the development programs and constitutional values in the newly independent country. Patel wrote in his most popular speech to the Constituent Assembly on October 10 1949: The Union will go, you will not have a united India, unless you have a good All-India Service (The Print, 2024)¹². The outcome of his promotion was the official establishment of the IAS that replaced the colonial Indian Civil Service (ICS) without gaining any administrative rigor and national identity (Basu, 2020)¹³.

¹¹ The Print. (2024, October 29). Sardar Patel civil services legacy: A two-pronged rescue mission. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/opinion/how-sardar-patel-saved-civil-services-from-double-jeopardy-british-and-congress/2332873>

¹² The Print. (2024, October 29). Sardar Patel civil services legacy: A two-pronged rescue mission. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/opinion/how-sardar-patel-saved-civil-services-from-double-jeopardy-british-and-congress/2332873>

¹³ Basu, R. (2020). The constitutional foundations, Sardar Patel and the role of the civil services. Indian Institute of Public Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.iipa.org.in/cms/public/uploads/379181654511160.pdf>

The second significant contribution was the contribution of Patel who brought the Indian Union together by including over 560 princely states. This was not only a pompous venture, but also included a good policy on administration. Patel as the head of the States Ministry used such legal means as the Instrument of Accession and made use of the art of persuasion with the help of a powerful will to ensure successful acculturation. His efforts prevented potential secessive trends and laid the groundwork on the security in the state and homogeneity in the management (Sharma, 2020).

Patel philosophy of governance emphasized on discipline, responsibility and service to the nation. According to him, bureaucracy was meant to act as the stabilizing mechanism that could not be affected by the political and was committed to the welfare of people. His concepts of an effective centralized government and a unified administrative regime were not dictatorial, but pragmatic, and was to prevent anarchy in a young independent and diverse country (Vision IAS, 2025)¹⁴.

In brief, Patel possessed administrative visions that were foresighted, institutionalised and governance visions. The spirit of bureaucracy of India, its domestic security system, and the system of the federal organization are still conditioned by his legacy.

Law and Order Machinery:

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was the most important source of law and order machine in India and the country of her domestic and unified stand in her administration. Patel, who had been the first Home Minister of the independent India took an interest in the establishment of a centralised and disciplined police service and in the education of a professional civil service capable of dealing with the complex issues of a new independent nation.

¹⁴ Vision IAS. (2025, April 19). Civil service for Viksit Bharat in the vision of Sardar Patel and Ambedkar. Retrieved from <https://visionias.in/current-affairs/upsc-daily-news-summary/article/2025-04-19/business-standard/polity-and-governance/civil-service-for-viksit-bharat-in-the-vision-of-sardar-patel-and-ambedkar>

The Indian Police Service (IPS) was institutionalised in the company of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) by Patel so as to uphold the values of the Constitution and good governance was effective. His biggest supposition was that the solution to law and order could be achieved through effective police force and a robust and non-partisan bureaucracy in a multicultural society not to mention a disintegrated one. The other principle of governance that his vision highlighted on was merit, discipline and loyalty towards the nation.

The challenge to the strategy of internal security adopted by Patel was the princely states. He sanctioned a military operation Polo in Hyderabad that was a sudden intervention to defy the threat of secession and reestablish the constitutional sanity. Patel responded to the Nawab of Junagadh with Pakistan both militarily and politically resulting in a plebiscite and the unification of the State with India. It proved to be more difficult in Kashmir but the determination of the administrative institutions, and the determination of Patel on ensuring that the borders were prepared the groundwork of the future policy.

The case studies provide a demonstration of how an institutional structure like a legal structure, military structure and the bureaucratic structure can be utilised strategically by Patel to instil some sense of unity and civil order. Even today his legacy still exists in the internal security system of India where the ratio between the federal and regional autonomy portrays his ideals.

Legacy and Impact:

It is the administrative system that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel developed and which was the basis of a centralised and strong government structure that has remained a successful factor in the successful establishment of the bureaucratic and defence institutions in India. The various princely states should have been integrated into the homogenous and nationalist administration of the diverse, postcolonial nation by the creation of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS)

(Basu, 2020)¹⁵. Lack of disintegration of India may be because of unspoken need of discipline, meritocracy and continuity of the institution that Patel advanced.

Patel was virtually the sole leader who was practical as opposed to other leaders who were founders of the company. Where Jawaharlal Nehru had socialist planning and constitutional idealism to mind, what Patel had to mind was administrative stability, and internal security. His legacy adds up to the great Nehru vision as he found it on the sound bureaucratic system (Austin, 1999)¹⁶. The concept of a very powerful central government and the civil service being apolitical is one that is applicable in the present day governance particularly at such a time the federal strife, bureaucratic waste and domestic security dilemma.

Patel model is mentioned in the contemporary world as far as the reformation of the administration, nationalisation, and the role of the civil service are concerned. His prudence in creating unity with federalism, traditionalism and modernity is innate in enlightening the ethos of governance in India and hence the factor that makes him not only a figure in the history but also a standard architect of an institution.

Conclusion:

This essay is dedicated to the extremely important role that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was playing in writing the constitution and governing India. His contribution towards the integration of princely states, establishment of Indian Administrative Service (IAS), and consolidation of domestic security were the elements of the unified and powerful form of government. Patel attributed the idea of discipline, centralised power and institutional continuity which assisted in ensuring that the law and order machinery would survive in India even after the independence.

His legacy has continued to make a mark on the bureaucratic ethos and inner security models of India in the perspective of

¹⁵ Basu, R. (2020). The constitutional foundations, Sardar Patel and the role of the civil services. Indian Institute of Public Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.iipa.org.in/cms/public/uploads/379181654511160.pdf>

¹⁶ Austin, G. (1999). *Working a Democratic Constitution: The Indian Experience*. Oxford University Press.

having a professional, apolitical civil service continue to be significant in the management of the people. Patel has a realistic perception of the federalism and the governance and this may offer long term lessons to policy-makers today.

Future research can focus on a comparative study of the administrative philosophy of Patel and the modern patterns of governance, the development of the IAS under his original concept and how his strategies of integrations can be applied to solve the conflicts in the region and federal level today.

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