

Operation Polo

Operation Polo was the codename for the police action against the Princely State of Hyderabad in September 1948 by the newly Independent republic of India.

The Indian Army marched into Hyderabad following the outbreak of hostilities, overwhelming the Hyderabad military and annexed Hyderabad into the Indian Union.

This article will further give details about Operation Polo within the context of the Civil Services Examination.

Background of Operation Polo

During the partition of India in 1947, the princely states governed their realms on their own but they were still subject to the Subsidiary Alliance system that gave the British control over their external affairs.

With the Indian Independence Act 1947, the policy of subsidiary alliances was abandoned and the princely states were given three options to decide their future:

1. Accede to India
2. Accede to Pakistan
3. Remain Independent

By 1948 most of the Princely States had acceded to India but the state of Hyderabad had chosen to join neither Pakistan nor India.

Hyderabad was ruled by the Nizam, Mir Sir Osman Ali Khan, Asaf Jah VII. He presided over a largely Hindu population hped to maintain his independence with a irregular army largely recruited fro the Muslim aristocracy, known as the Razakars. India was not keen on letting a wealthy and powerful princely state be left to its own devices.

Events within Hyderabad, such as the Telangana uprising and militant Razakars gave way to fears of instability engulfing the region. Therefore, the Government of India decided it would be prudent to undertake a military operation to annex Hyderabad.

Events Preceding Operation Polo

1. Negotiations regarding Independence

The Nizam of Hyderabad initially approached the British Government with the proposal to designate Hyderabad as a constitutional monarchy within the [Commonwealth of Nations](#). The proposal was rejected by the last viceroy of India, Lord Louis Mountbatten

- Despite the British rejection, the Nizam began negotiations with representatives from European nations and even sought to buy Goa from the Portuguese so that Hyderabad would have access to the sea.
- Although Prime Minister Jawhar Lal Nehru sought to defeat Hyderabad's secessionist ventures through diplomatic means but Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Vallabhai Patel sought military means to solve the Hyderabad issue.
- The Razakars under Syed Kasim Rizvi had effectively gained power in the Hyderabad state, superseding that of the Nizam himself. Favouring an independent state with Muslim superemacy in mind, the Razakars under his orders began to eliminate all opposition including communist, Congress members, Telangana rebels and other Muslim moderates who disagreed with his extremist views.
- The Nizam also made unsuccessful attempts to seek intervention of the United Nations
- The Razakars also unleashed a wave of communal violence which forced most of the Hindu residents of Hyderabad to flee to neighboring states.

Following these events, a skirmish between the Indian army and the Hyderabad forces at Kodad prompted Vallabhai Patel to go forward with the police action against Hyderabad.

The date for the attack was fixed as 13 September, even though General Sir Roy Bucher, the Indian chief of staff, had objected on grounds that Hyderabad would be an additional front for the Indian army after Kashmir

Events during Operation Polo

- On September 13, Indian forces entered the state at 4 a.m. The first battle was fought at Naldurg Fort on the Solapur Secunderabad Highway between a defending force of the 1st Hyderabad Infantry and the attacking force of the 7th Brigade.
- Using a combination of speed and surprise, the Indian forces defeated the poorly equipped Hyderabad forces and secured Naldurg fort.
- The first day on the Western front ended with the Indians inflicting heavy casualties on the Hyderabadis and capturing large tracts of territory.

- On September 14, The force that had camped at Umarge proceeded to the town of Rajeshwar, 48 km east. As aerial reconnaissance had shown well entrenched ambush positions set up along the way, the air strikes from squadrons of Tempests were called in. These air strikes effectively cleared the route and allowed the land forces to reach and secure Rajeshwar by the afternoon.
- Leaving a company of 3/11 Gurkhas to occupy the town of Jalna, the remainder of the force moved to Latur, and later to Mominabad where they faced action against the 3 Golconda Lancers who gave token resistance before surrendering on September 15
- Most of the resistance was from Razakar units who ambushed the Indians as they passed through urban areas. The Razakars were able to use the terrain to their advantage until the Indians brought in their 75 mm guns. The artillery managed to bring the Razakers into submission by 16 September
- In the early hours of 17 September, the Indian army entered Bidar. Meanwhile, forces led by the 1st Armoured regiment were at the town of Chityal about 60 km from Hyderabad, while another column took over the town of Hingoli.

It had become evidently clear that the Razakars along with the Hyderabad military were routed on all fronts with heavy casualties. At 5 pm on 17 September, the Nizam announced a ceasefire, thus ending the armed action.

Aftermath of Operation Polo

The Indian military detained thousands of people during the operation, including Razakars, Hindu militants, and communists.

General Joyanto Nath Chaudhuri led an armoured column into Hyderabad at around 4 p.m. on 18 September and the Hyderabad army, led by Major General El Edroos, surrendered.

This was largely done on the basis of local informants, who used this opportunity to settle scores. The estimated number of people detained was close to 18,000, which resulted in overcrowded jails and a paralyzed criminal system.

The Nizam had abdicated upon the surrender of Hyderabad and the princely state ceased to exist. Subsequently, the Nizam signed an instrument of accession, joining India.