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New York: Metropolis Born of a Merger

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In 1898, modern New York City was born when the City of Brooklyn merged with the counties that encompassed Manhattan, the Bronx, Queens and Staten Island. The unification helped propel the metropolis originally known as “Greater New York” on its rise to becoming a pre-eminent global center for trade, industry, finance, media and culture.

Some who have studied New York, like the urban activist [Jane Jacobs](#), have argued that the merger helped the ascent of the city as a whole, and Manhattan in particular, at the expense of the other boroughs.

Many Staten Island residents felt so aggrieved by what they believed was the shortchanging of their borough that they voted in 1993 [to secede from New York City](#), a bold move that was thwarted by Albany.

Through the years, the various scandals and troubles the city has endured — particularly the fiscal crisis of the 1970s — made it a national symbol of government gone awry. But Mitchell L. Moss, a professor of urban policy and planning at [New York University](#), contends that the merger was a boon to all the boroughs by creating a highly centralized government capable of attracting high-caliber managers who have helped the city adapt.

“The story of the last 30 years is that New York government has gotten better and more efficient,” Mr. Moss said, “while government in the suburbs has gotten more expensive and worse.”