

Geography Optional 2023 - 24

NEETU SINGH

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY OF INDIA AND RELATED ISSUES

India faces territorial issues with many of its neighbors. Over the past 70 years, it has succeeded to resolve its boundary issues only with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The un-demarcated boundaries with Myanmar, Bhutan and lately with China, Pakistan and Nepal have often flared up into tensions.

In 1974, India could resolve its maritime boundary dispute with Sri Lanka by abdicating claim on Katchatheevu -- an uninhabited island of 235 acres.

But there seems no end to boundary disputes with China and Pakistan, which often turn into a major military and diplomatic standoffs. To resolve boundary issues with China, special representatives of both countries have so far held 22 rounds of negotiations since 2003.

Boundary disputes with China

- Aksai Chin: Located in the northwestern part of the Tibetan Plateau, it is approximately 35,241 sq km in size, administered by China and part of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. India considers it a part of its union territory of Ladakh.
- Depsang Plains: The Depsang Plains are located on the border of the union territory of Ladakh and disputed zone of Aksai Chin. The Chinese Army controlled most of the plains during its 1962 war with India, while India controls the western portion of the plains.
- Demchok, Chumar: Both in the Leh district of Ladakh, controlled by India.
- Kaurik, Shipki La: In the Kinnour district of Himachal Pradesh.



- Nelang, Pulam Sumda, Sang, Jadhang and Lapthal: In the Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand.
- Barahoti: In the Chamoli district of Uttarakhand whose grazing fields are disputed by China, which is also in the state of Uttarakhand and is controlled by India.
- Trans-Karakoram Tract: An area of nearly 5,800 square kilometers (2,239 sq mi) along both sides of the Shaksgam River, is entirely administered by China as a part of Kargilik County in the Kashgar Prefecture of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

It was claimed by Pakistan until 1963, and still claimed by India as part of the Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan gave up its claim to the tract under a border agreement with China in 1963 with the proviso that the settlement was subject to the final solution of the Kashmir dispute.

Arunachal Pradesh: Arunachal Pradesh is a state of India created on Jan. 20, 1972, and located in the far northeast. The majority of the territory is claimed by China as part of South Tibet.

India and China are trying to out-build each other along their disputed Himalayan border.

The recent stand off

The 255km (140-mile) Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldi (DSDBO) road - which winds through mountain passes up to the world's highest airstrip more than 5,000m above sea level in the Ladakh region - was finished last year after nearly two decades of work. Its completion could increase India's ability to move men and materiel rapidly in a conflict.

The completion of the DSDBO road, which connects the crucial Daulat Beg Oldi airstrip - put back in use in 2008 - to the regional capital Leh, has strengthened India's ability to move equipment quickly. The all-weather road lies about 20km from the Karakoram Pass and runs parallel to the LAC in eastern Ladakh.

India has long stationed men at Daulat Beg Oldi but, before the reactivation of the airstrip and the completion of the road, the men there could get supplies only through helicopter drops, and nothing could be removed, turning the airstrip into a "graveyard for equipment".

Disputed China-India border area



China has been putting its renowned construction abilities to use in recent years by building a network of air bases, cantonments and other physical infrastructure along the frontier.

Beijing began building roads in the Himalayan region as early as the 1950s, and now has an extensive road and rail network in Tibet and Yunnan Province.

Key infrastructure along India-China border

Since 2016, China has upped the stakes by increasing connectivity to areas near its boundary with India, Bhutan and Nepal.

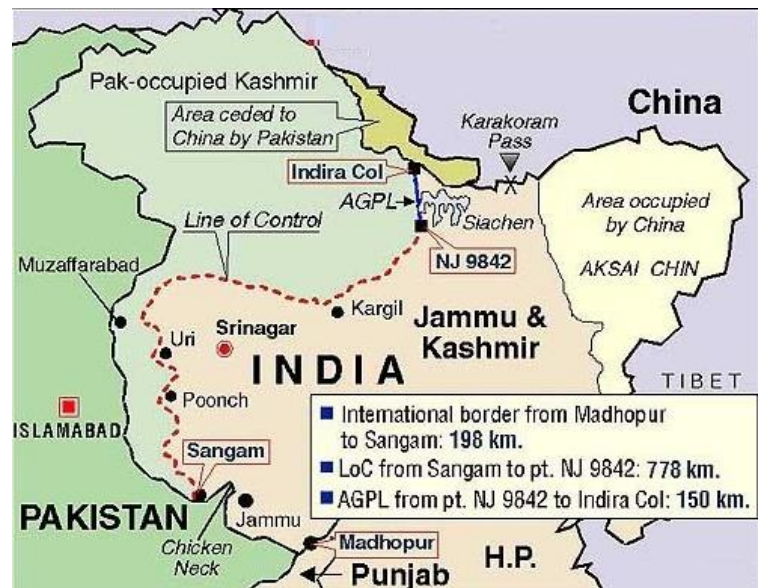
It is working on linking the old Xinjiang-Tibet Road to National Highway G219, which runs along almost the entire China-India border. A concrete road between Medog and Zayu near India's Arunachal Pradesh state - which China claims - will be completed by the end of this year.

Key infrastructure along India-China border
Projects completed or under construction

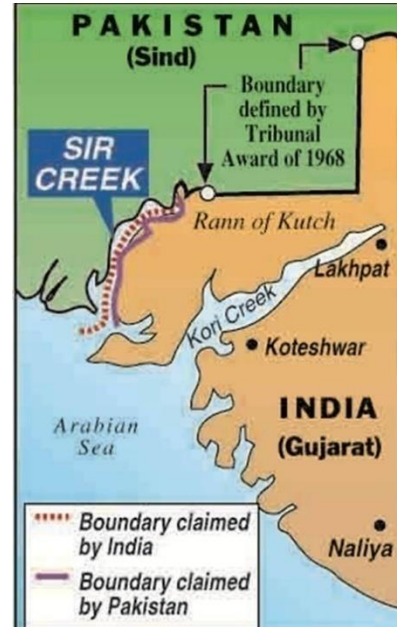


Border dispute with Pakistan

- Jammu and Kashmir: It is the center of the major dispute between Pakistan and India. Three wars have been fought between the two countries over Jammu and Kashmir.
- Siachen Glacier: The Siachen Glacier is located in the eastern Karakoram in the Himalayas just east of the Actual Ground Position Line between India-Pakistan. India controls all of the Siachen Glacier itself, including all tributary glaciers. At 70 km (43 mi) long, it is the longest glacier in the Karakoram and second-longest in the world's non-polar areas.



- **Saltoro Ridge:** The Saltoro Mountains is a subrange of the Karakoram Heights or of Saltoro Ridge. They are located in the heart of the Karakoram, on the southwest side of the Siachen Glacier. They are claimed as part of Ladakh union territory by India and as part of Gilgit-Baltistan by Pakistan. In 1984, India assumed military control of the main peaks and passes of the range, with Pakistani forces into the glacial valleys just to the west.
- **Sir Creek:** The Sir Creek is a 96 km (60 mi) strip of water disputed between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch marshlands. Pakistan claims the line to follow the eastern shore of the estuary while India claims a center line.



Border dispute with Nepal

- **Kalapani:** Kalapani is an area under territorial dispute in Darchula District of Sudurpashchim Pradesh, Nepal and Pithoragarh District of Uttarakhand, India, area 400 square km.

Although claimed by Nepal, Kalapani has been administered by India's Indo-Tibetan Border Police since the 1962 border war with China. This discrepancy in locating the source of the river led to boundary disputes between India and Nepal, with each country producing maps supporting their own claims. India has now released its new political map which includes all of Kalapani in India without any consent of Nepal.

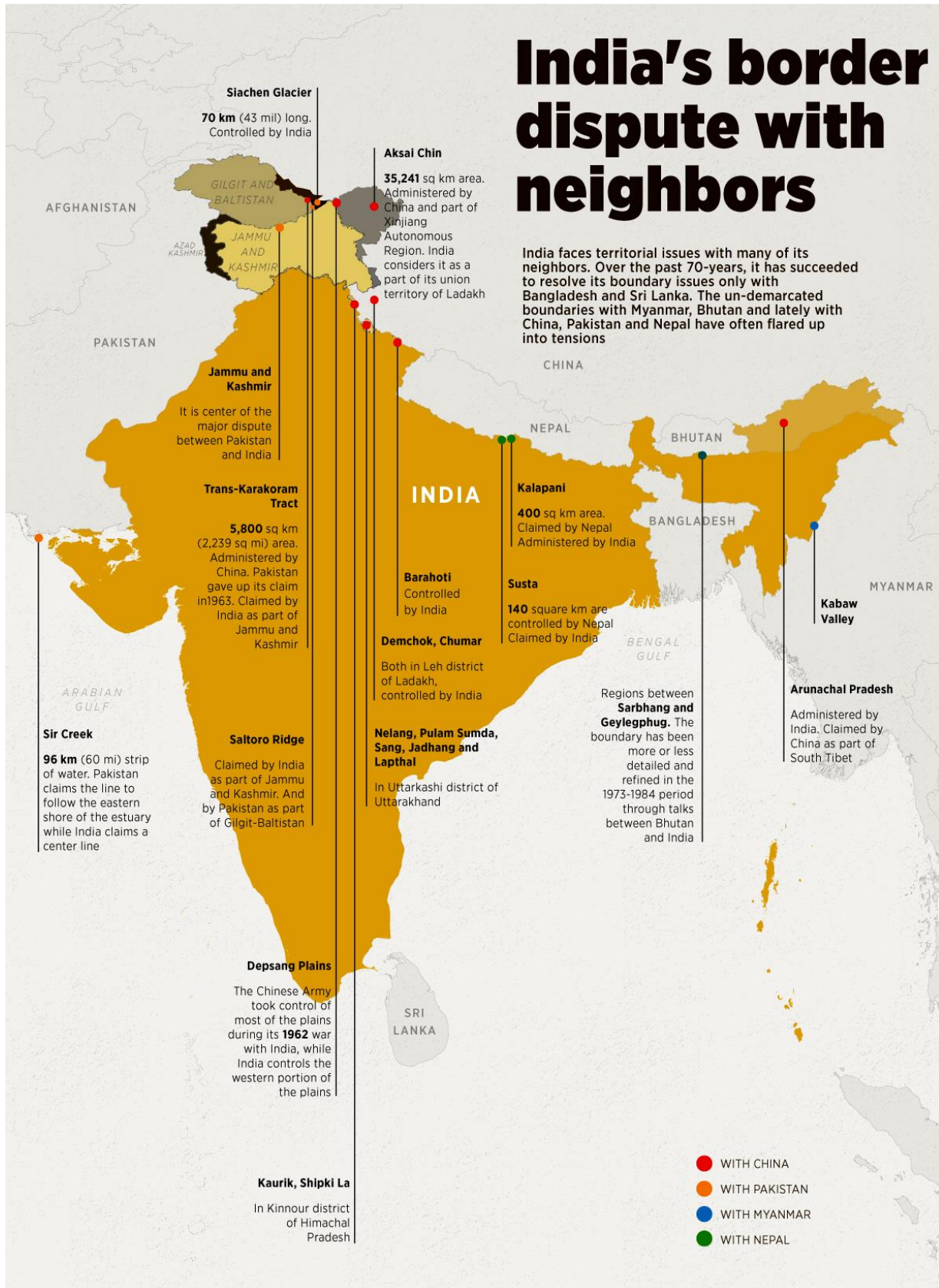


Nepal in turn has issued a new national map incorporating 300 square kilometers (115 square miles) of mountainous land incorporating Lipulekh, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani, currently with India.

- **Susta:** Susta is an area under territorial dispute currently in Tribenisusta, Lumbini Zone, Nepal and near Nichloul, Uttar Pradesh, India. The area under dispute totals over 14,000 hectares (140 square km) and is controlled by Nepal.

India's border dispute with neighbors

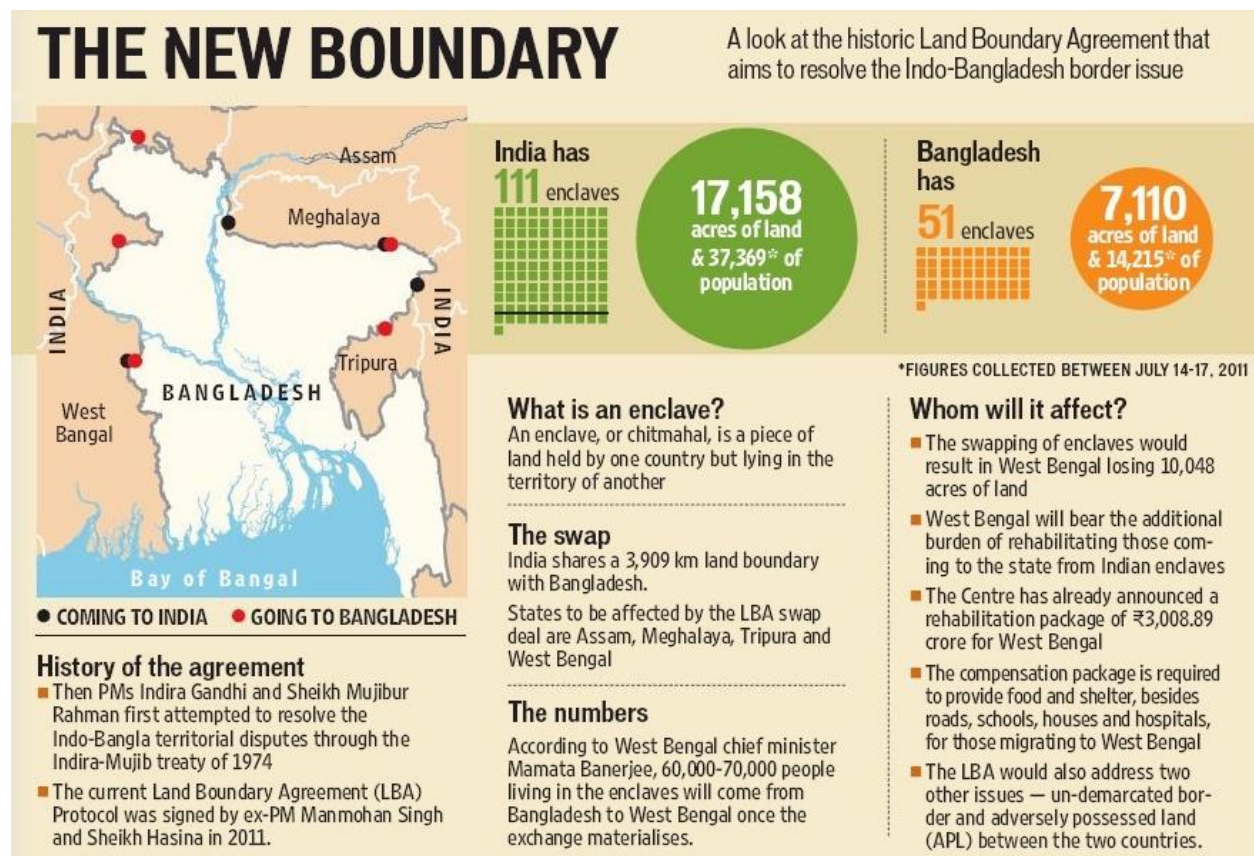
India faces territorial issues with many of its neighbors. Over the past 70-years, it has succeeded to resolve its boundary issues only with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The un-demarcated boundaries with Myanmar, Bhutan and lately with China, Pakistan and Nepal have often flared up into tensions



India- Bangladesh

India also settled its land and maritime boundaries with Bangladesh, by resolving the issue of South Talpatti Island or Bangabandhu Island -- a small uninhabited offshore sandbar landform in the Bay of Bengal, off the coast of the Ganga-Brahmaputra Delta region.

After decades of strenuous negotiations, both countries also exchanged enclaves five years ago, which were in adverse possession. Inside the main part of Bangladesh, there were 111 Indian enclaves (17,160 acres), while inside the main part of India, there were 51 Bangladeshi enclaves (7,110 acres).

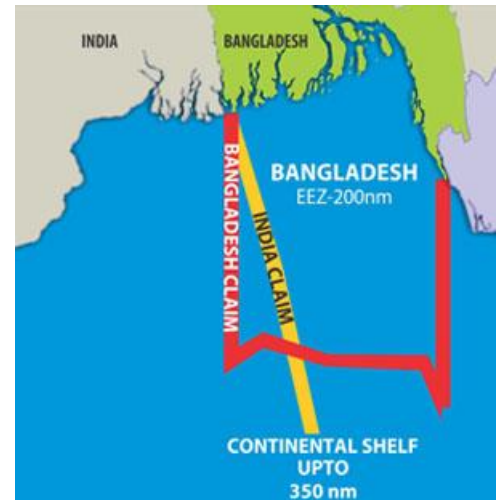


India has always emphasized on bilateral mechanisms for resolution of problems with its smaller neighbours. It has always stood against international/third-party involvement, particularly in the case of Pakistan. However, Bangladesh not only managed to convince India to accept third-party

arbitration, but also won its case favourably. The acceptance of arbitration by both the parties means that the verdict is final and binding.

The controversy began when, in 2008, Bangladesh claimed a sizable block of sea for oil exploration deep in the Bay of Bengal. The area announced by Bangladesh overlapped the claimed Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of both the neighbouring countries, and therefore, attracted opposition from India and Myanmar.

Bangladesh, realizing the importance of the issue for its future maritime endeavours, and aware of the hiccups involved in bilateral dispute resolution, decided to opt for international mechanisms available under the existing laws and submitted its case for resolution of its maritime boundary with India



India- Bhutan

Resting at the eastern end of Bhutan is the Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary. Spanning some 750 square kilometers, it is spread out across a densely forested area of the Himalayan Mountains. The sanctuary is far better known for its unique flora and fauna (including the red panda and, reputedly, the fabled yeti) than its geographic boundaries. But the latter is precisely what brought it to international attention in June 2020. Early that month, Bhutan sought a grant for the sanctuary from a global environmental organization that funds sustainable development projects. Unexpectedly, China’s representatives to that organization opposed the grant. Their reason: China considers the sanctuary to be “disputed territory.”

That came as a surprise to Bhutan. For although Beijing and Thimphu do contest several areas along their border, China had never before claimed the land of the Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary or, for that matter, any land in eastern Bhutan. Even more puzzling, Beijing had not mentioned the region during the 36 years of diplomatic talks that the two sides have held to resolve their boundary differences.

The India Factor

No doubt, China’s new territorial claim has also raised eyebrows in India, which shares a close relationship with Bhutan. During the Doklam incident, it was New Delhi to which Thimphu turned for help. In response, India rushed forces into the region, and a months-long standoff between Chinese and Indian troops ensued.

To be sure, the Doklam Plateau is just as important to India as it is to Bhutan because the plateau sits near a narrow part of India, called the Siliguri Corridor, which connects its northeastern states with the rest of the country. Chinese control of the plateau would put China in a better position to sever the corridor and cut India in two. Conversely, Indian control of the plateau would put India in a better



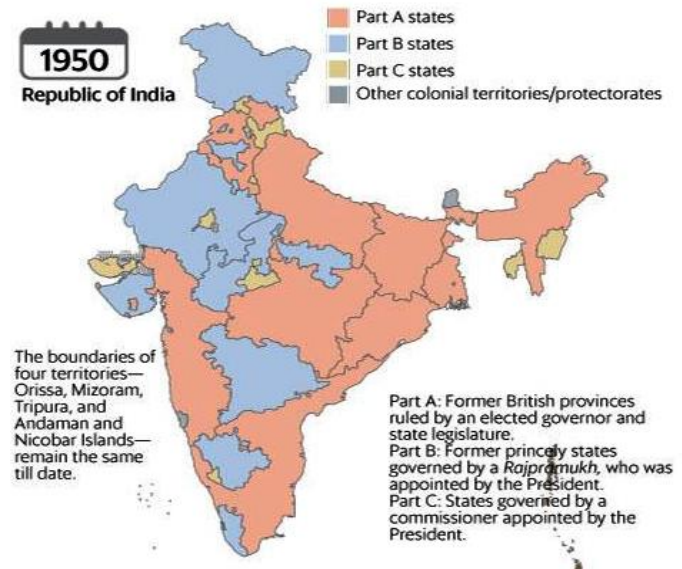
position to dominate the Chumbi Valley, through which Chinese forces would have to pass to seize the Siliguri Corridor. And so, India likely acted in as much its own interests as Bhutan's. China's new claim may draw in India again since the Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary abuts Arunachal Pradesh, an Indian state that China also claims as its territory.

INDIAN STATE REORGANIZATION

At the time of independence in 1947, India consisted of 571 disjointed princely states that were merged together to form 27 states. The grouping of states at the time was done on the basis of political and historical considerations rather than on linguistic or cultural divisions, but this was a temporary arrangement. On account of the multilingual nature and differences that existed between various states, there was a need for the states to be reorganized on a permanent basis.

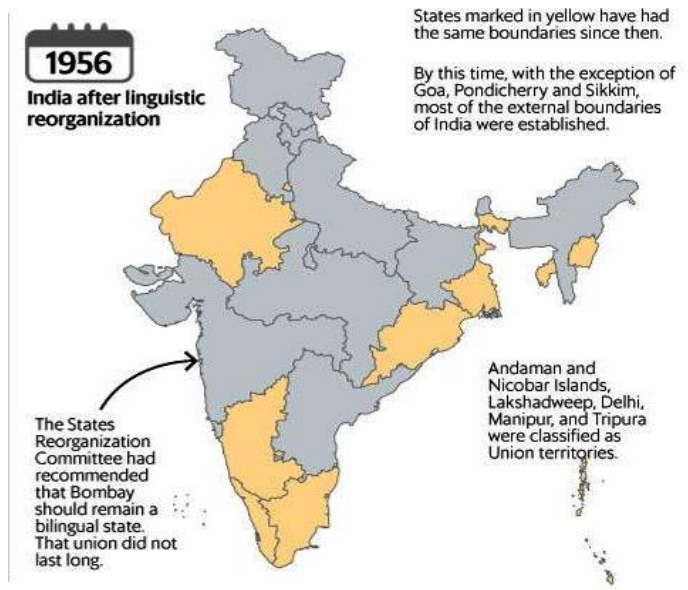
Chronology of Development

- In 1948, SK Dhar - a judge of the Allahabad High Court - was appointed by the government to head a commission that would look into the need for the reorganization of states on a linguistic basis. However, the Commission preferred reorganisation of states on the basis of administrative convenience including historical and geographical considerations instead of on linguistic lines.
- In December 1948, the JVP Committee comprising Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabh bhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya was formed to study the issue. The Committee, in its report submitted in April 1949, rejected the idea of reorgansation of states on a linguistic basis but said that the issue could be looked at afresh in the light of public demand.
- In 1953, the first linguistic state of Andhra for Telugu-speaking people was born. The government was forced to separate the Telugu speaking areas from the state of Madras, in the face of a prolonged agitation and the death of Potti Sriramulu after a 56-day hunger strike. Consequently, there were similar demands for creation of states on linguistic basis from other parts of the country.
- On December 22, 1953, Jawaharlal Nehru appointed a commission under Fazl Ali to consider these new demands. The commission submitted its report in 1955 and it suggested that the whole country be divided into 16 states and three centrally administered areas.



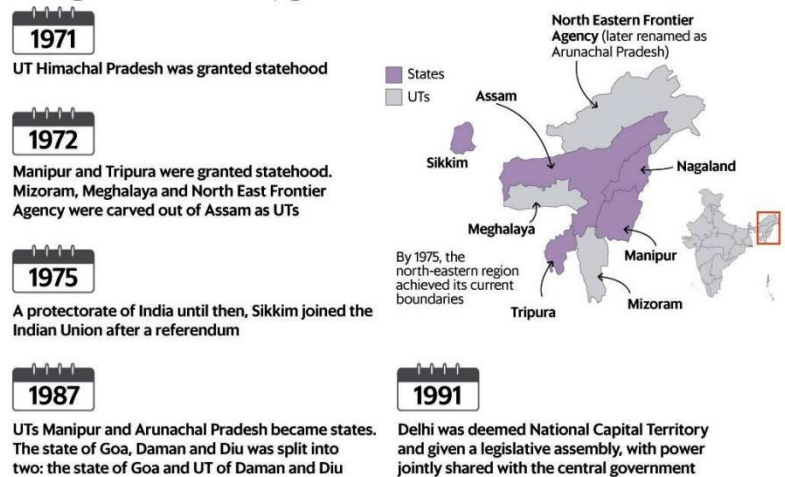
- The government, while not agreeing with the recommendations entirely, divided the country into 14 states and 6 union territories under the States Reorganization Act that was passed in November 1956. The states were Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Bombay, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Madras, Mysore, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The six union territories were Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindivi Islands, Manipur and Tripura.

- In 1960, the state of Bombay was bifurcated to create the states of Gujarat and Maharashtra following violence and agitation. In 1963, the state of Nagaland was created for the sake of the Nagas and total number of states stood at 16.
- The areas of Chandernagore, Mahe, Yaman and Karekal from France, and the territories of Goa, Daman and Diu from the Portuguese, were either made union territories or were joined with the neighbouring states, after their acquisition.



- Based on the Shah Commission report in April 1966, the Punjab Reorganisation Act was passed by the Parliament. Following this, the state of Haryana got the Punjabi-speaking areas while the hilly areas went to the Union Territory of Himachal Pradesh. Chandigarh, which was made a Union Territory, would serve as the common capital of Punjab and Haryana.

Chart 3
Fixing the North-East jigsaw (1971-1991)



- In 1969 and in 1971, the states of Meghalaya and Himachal Pradesh came into being respectively. With the Union Territories of Tripura and Manipur being converted into states, the total number of Indian states rose to 21.

- Thereafter, Sikkim in 1975 and Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh in February 1987 also acquired the status of states. In May 1987, Goa became the 25th state of the Indian Union, while three new states of Jharkhand,

Linguistic reorganization continues right after 1956 SRC (1956-1966)

1957

Naga Hill Tuensang Area was carved out of Assam as UT



1961

Goa joined the Indian Union and with it, European colonialism came to an end on the subcontinent

1962

Pondicherry officially became a part of the Union

1963

Nagaland was granted statehood

1966

Punjab, Haryana, UTs Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh were created

Akali Dal's protests for linguistic reorganization led to the former states of East Punjab, Patiala and East Punjab States Union and Himachal Pradesh.

1960

Gujarat and Maharashtra were carved out of Bombay



Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal were formed in November 2000. On June 2, 2014, Telangana officially became India's 29th state.

Presently, India has 29 states and 7 union territories. The states are: Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, West Bengal and Telangana. The union territories are: Delhi, Chandigarh, Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar haveli.

Linguistic Reorganization

- It would lead to the local people participating in the administration in larger numbers because of being able to communicate in a common language.
- Governance would be made easier in areas, which shared linguistic and geographical features.
- This would lead to the development of vernacular languages, which had long been ignored by the British.

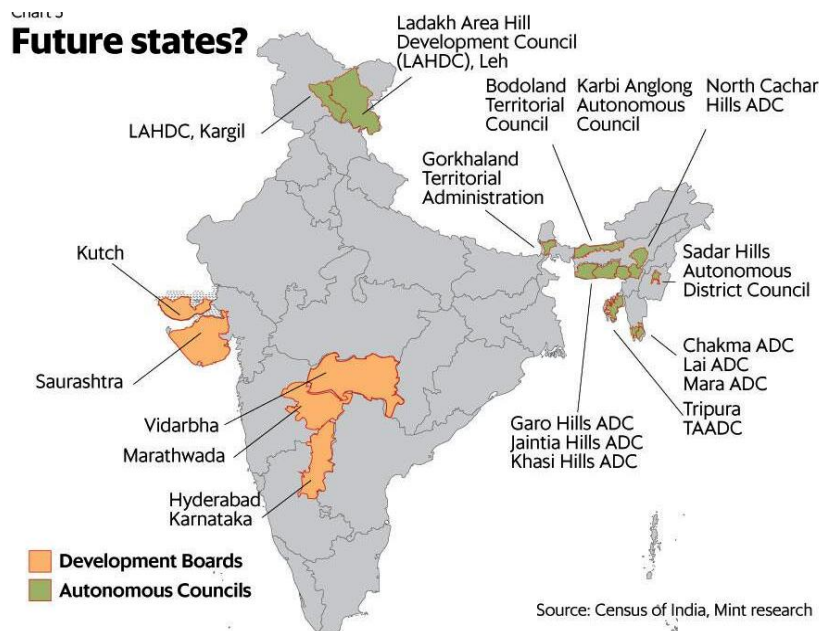
Dynamics of Reorganization

- One main reason was the cultural or social affiliations. For instance, the state of Nagaland in the Northeast was created taking tribal affiliations into account.
- Another reason was economic development. For instance, Chhattisgarh felt that the region could grow economically only through separate statehood because the region's development needs were not being met by the state government. For an aggrieved region, there is a strong sense that overall development will not come to them in the bigger state because of inequitable distribution of resources and lack of adequate opportunities for growth.
- There is also a shift in power from the Centre to the states and with the growth of diverse communities, the existing federal structure is probably not sufficient to meet the aspirations of the rising numbers.
- Also, parties tend to associate themselves with identity politics to get attention on the national stage and for gaining a vote bank. Hence, there is an increasing demand for formation of new states based on social and cultural identities

Demand of new States

India may have at least 50 states in future if demands for new states are to be conceded as the Home Ministry has received representations for creation of more than 20 states.

- The demands for separate states have come from across the country -- for Kukiland in northeastern state Manipur to Kongu Nadu in south Indian state Tamil Nadu, for Kamatapur in east Indian state North Bengal to Tulu Nadu in south Indian state Karnataka.
- However, except north Indian Uttar Pradesh, which during the Mayawati- led Bahujan Samaj Party government proposed to create four states dividing the country's most populous state, no state government had given any recommendation for carving out a new state.



- The demands for separate states are: In Uttar Pradesh, there have been demands for Awadh Pradesh, Poorvanchal, Bundelkhand and Pachimanchal or Harit Pradesh.
- There is also demand for creation of a Braj Pradesh, consisting of Agra division and Aligarh division of Uttar Pradesh and districts of Bharatpur and Gwalior from Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.
- A demand for creation of Bhojpur comprising areas of eastern UP, Bihar and Chhattisgarh has also been received by the Home Ministry.
- There has been an old demand for creation of a separate Vidarbha by curving out the Vidarbha region of west Indian state Maharashtra.
- The most vocal demands for separate states came from Gorkhaland, by curving out Darjeeling and its adjoining areas in West Bengal.
- Demands for Bodoland, comprising Bodo dominated areas in Western Assam, and a separate state of Karbi Anglong, comprising the Karbi tribals living areas under Karbi Anglong autonomous district in Assam, have also been pending with the Centre.
- There is a demand for Mithilanchal comprising Maithili speaking regions of Bihar and Jharkhand.
- The Centre has received demand for creation of Saurashtra by curving that region out of Gujarat.
- The Dimasa people of Northeast have been demanding a separate state called Dimaraji or Dimaland comprising the Dimasa inhabited areas of Assam and Nagaland.
- There is a demand for creation of Kongu Nadu comprising parts of southwest of Tamil Nadu, southeast of Karnataka and east of Kerala.
- Demand for creating a Coorg state, comprising the Coorg region of Karnataka has also come to the Centre.
- Representation has also received for creation of separate Kosal state comprising some districts of Odisha, parts of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.
- There is a demand for Tulu Nadu comprising a region on the border between Karnataka and Kerala.
- The demand for separate Kukiland, comprising Kuki tribal inhabited areas in Manipur has also been raised.
- A demand for creation of Konkan, comprising Konkani speaking part of Western India along the Arabian sea coastline has also been raised.
- There has been a demand for creation of Kamtapur comprising some districts West Bengal, including Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri.

- Some people from Garo regions of Meghalaya are demanding for a new state of Garoland.
- Besides, there is a demand for a separate Eastern Nagaland by curving out some parts of the Northeastern state.

Geopolitical concerns behind India's decision of bifurcation of J&K and scrapping of Article -370

In order to understand the geopolitics of the region the historical facts must be taken into consideration. First of all, the problem of Kashmir is a long-standing issue between India and Pakistan which got separated during the partition of 1947. Although, Kashmir was not a part of any of the two countries at the time of Independence but became a part of India in October 1947 through an instrument of accession signed with India by the then king Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir when Pakistani forces attacked Kashmir. The matter got worsened in subsequent times and India- Pakistan fought 3 wars on the issue of Kashmir.

The political leaders on both sides had few who believed in a softer stance for the solution of the Kashmir issue. The same was started by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and continued till the period of Manmohan Singh. The greatest initiative of the bus journey by the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Lahore was a testimony to this softer stance doctrine. Of course, the response to this softer stand of India has been reverted in the form of Kargil war from Pakistan.

India's relationship with China is not that good due to the race for superiority between the two countries in the South Asia region, aggravated by the border disputes among them. China is an all-weather friend of Pakistan and it can more openly support Pakistan against India due to the void created by the withdrawal of US forces from the region. Further, instability in Kashmir is favorable for the Chinese administration in two ways. First of all, a disturbed Kashmir will compel Indian administration to focus on the same without much attention on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passing through Gilgit and Baltistan of Pak occupied Kashmir (POK) hampering sovereignty of India as it has time and again claimed. Secondly, the free mujahideen of Afghanistan after the end of the war can be directed to Kashmir with the active help of Pakistan so that they are not a threat to CPEC.

Pakistan, on the other hand, is not in a position to stand against India in the war for its demand on Kashmir due to its fragile economic conditions. Hence, Pakistan after the scrapping of Article-370 and the bifurcation of J&K has maintained a wait and watch policy. Now due to domestic pressure, it has cancelled trade ties, Samjhauta Express with India and also has downgraded diplomatic relationship by sending Indian high commissioner back. Pakistan is also waiting for the withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan so that it can have a strategic edge in the region without the US imposition.

In this changing geopolitical scenario when the power equation is about to change in South Asia region after the withdrawal of US, the government of India has taken this decision of ending greater autonomy of J&K by making it a UT. This greater control of centre over J&K can negate instability that will likely be created by Pakistan in future. Adding to that, the centre can control militancy in an effective way and can improve the security scenario in the region which was getting hindered by the state government and by Article 370. Separatist and terror sympathizers can be dealt with an iron hand by the centre.

Dividing Ladakh from J&K has not only fulfilled the demands of the people of the region but also has sent a clear message to China that it is an integral part of India where Indian constitution holds despite China sometimes claiming it to be its own territory.

Along with domestic and political considerations, there are also geopolitical and security considerations which are taken into account before taking such a great decision. However, all these should not lead to alienation of the people of J&K and in restoring normalcy in public life and political discourse should be a top priority of the central government. Security, development, employment in the whole region can help in the real integration of Kashmir with India making the idea of one India true in its sense and spirit that certainly got mileage after the scrapping of Article-370 and Article-35A.
