



Towards a resolution of the Arunachal-Assam border dispute

CROSSING THE LINE



Borderline

> Assam's the common strand that connects most border disputes. The decision to carve states out of Assam seen as root cause for the inter-state conflicts. Arunachal got statehood in 1987, Nagaland in 1963, Meghalaya 1972, Mizoram 1987, to accommodate territorial aspirations of Nagas, Khasis, Garos and Mizos. But the new states' boundaries did not conform to the region's ethnic boundaries. For example, sizeable populations of Mizos and Nagas live in the Cachar Hills, making it possible for both Mizoram & Nagaland to claim territories in Assam

> The longest and bloodiest of the disputes has been between Assam and Nagaland after Nagas did not accept the boundary ● Meghalaya has 12 points of dispute along the 733-km Assam-Meghalaya border ● Initially, both Arunachal and Mizoram accepted its notified borders, but later raised issue of Assamese 'encroachment'

● Assam-Mizoram border has been relatively calm

RECENT CLASHES

- Aug 2014:** Armed Nagas shot dead 14 villagers living on the Assamese side of the border in Golaghat district
- July 2014:** Mizos threaten villagers to quit settlements at Kochurtal forest in Assam's Hailakandi district
- Feb 2014:** Armed people from Arunachal shot dead 10 villagers living on the Assamese side of the border in Sonitpur

Context:

Less than a month after the Union government gave the seal of approval to an agreement to partially resolve the disputed sectors on the **Assam-Meghalaya border**. Assam and Arunachal Pradesh governments agreed to **set up district level committees** headed by cabinet ministers to end the decades old border dispute between them in a time-bound manner

This has set the ball rolling for the two States to address the issue on the basis of the **“fifty-fifty” or “give-and-take” model** Assam and Meghalaya followed for closure of the disputes in six of its 12 troublesome sectors.

Why does Arunachal Pradesh have a boundary dispute with Assam?

1. Assam has had boundary disputes with all the north-eastern States that were carved out of it.
2. While Nagaland became a State in 1963, Meghalaya first became an Autonomous State in 1970 and a full-fledged State in 1972.
3. Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram were separated from Assam as Union Territories in 1972 and as States in 1987.
4. None of the new States accepted the **“constitutional boundary”** that they said was dictated by the partisan administration of undivided Assam without consulting the tribal stakeholders.
5. They also claimed that the disputed areas were traditionally under the control of tribal chieftains before Assam, post-India's independence, inherited the **“imaginary boundaries”** drawn during British rule.
6. The issue with Arunachal Pradesh has more to do with a 1951 report prepared by a sub-committee headed by Assam's first Chief Minister.

What is the genesis of the dispute?

1. **Arunachal Pradesh and Assam** have disputes at about 1,200 points along their **804 km boundary**.
2. The disputes cropped up in the 1970s and intensified in the 1990s with frequent flare-ups along the border.
3. However, the issue dates back to 1873 when the British government introduced the inner-line regulation vaguely separating the plains from the frontier hills that were later designated as the **North-East Frontier Tracts in 1915**.
4. This area became the **North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA)** in 1954, three years after a notification based on the 1951 report saw 3,648 sq. km of the “plain” area of Balipara and Sadiya foothills being transferred to the Darrang and Lakhimpur districts of Assam.
5. Arunachal Pradesh has been celebrating its statehood on a grand scale with an eye on China since 1987, but what has been causing resentment is the inability of the people living in the transferred patches to join in the celebration.

6. Leaders in Arunachal Pradesh claim the transfer was done arbitrarily without consulting its tribes who had customary rights over these lands.

Their counterparts in Assam say the 1951 demarcation is **constitutional and legal**.

Did the two States try settling the boundary dispute earlier?

1. There were several efforts to demarcate the boundary between Assam and NEFA/Arunachal Pradesh between 1971 and 1974.
2. To end the stalemate, a **high-powered tripartite committee** involving the Centre and the two States was formed in April 1979 to delineate the boundary based on Survey of India maps.
3. About **489 km of the inter-state boundary** north of the Brahmaputra River was demarcated by 1984, but Arunachal Pradesh did not accept the recommendations and staked claim to much of the areas transferred in 1951.
4. Assam objected and approached the Supreme Court in 1989, accusing Arunachal Pradesh of **“encroachment”**.
5. The SC appointed a **local boundary commission in 2006** headed by one of its retired judges.
6. In its September 2014 report, this commission recommended that Arunachal Pradesh should get back some of the areas transferred in 1951 besides advising both the States to find a middle path through discussions. This didn't work.

Need for the Interstate Boundary Commission:

1. Considering the contesting claims of both the parties and the complexity of the issue, the foremost priority in working out a solution should be the institution of an **Independent Interstate boundary commission**.
2. After a careful consultative study, the commission should **ideally formulate a solution** that is considerate of all the stakeholders' concerns.
3. One option could be the **utilization of the disputed lands** by the central government after compensating both the states.
4. Alternatively, an option of compensating one state and awarding land to the other or awarding the disputed land to both the states concerned equally could be considered as per stakeholders' acknowledgement.

5. Whatever be the solution once worked out and accepted by the states, the Court could play a **role of a guardian** and take **serious note of its arbitrary acts**.

What are the chances of a solution emerging this time?

1. The **Assam-Meghalaya boundary agreement** has raised hopes of the Assam-Arunachal boundary dispute being resolved, especially with the Centre egging the north-eastern States to end their territorial issues once and for all by August 15, 2022, when the country celebrates 75 years of independence.
2. Moreover, there is a general belief that the region's sister-States are in a better position to fast-track the resolution .
3. Following the model adopted in the exercise to resolve the dispute with Meghalaya, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh have agreed to form **district-level committees** that will be tasked with undertaking joint surveys in the disputed sectors **to find tangible solutions to the long-pending issue** based on historical perspective, ethnicity, contiguity, people's will and administrative convenience of both the States.
4. The two States have decided to form 12 such committees involving the districts sharing the boundary.
5. Assam has eight districts touching the boundary with Arunachal Pradesh, which has 12 such districts.

Way Ahead steps:

Boundary disputes between the states can be settled by **using satellite mapping of the actual border locations**.

Reviving the Inter-state council can be an option for resolution of an Inter-state dispute.

Under **Article 263 of the Constitution**, the Inter-state council is expected to inquire and advise on disputes, discuss subjects common to all states and make recommendations for better policy coordination.

Conclusion:

Zonal councils need to be revived to discuss the matters of common concern to states in each zone—matters relating to social and economic planning, border disputes, inter-state transport, etc.

India is the epitome of unity in diversity. However, to strengthen this unity furthermore, both the Centre and state governments need to imbibe the ethos of cooperative federalism.

India's Semiconductor Diplomacy

Semiconductors are the basic building blocks that serve as the heart and brain of all modern electronics. These semiconductor chips are now an integral part of contemporary automobiles, household gadgets and essential medical devices such as ECG machines.

India in the last few years has put its special focus towards the domestic manufacturing of semiconductor chips in India. Although a plethora of initiatives in this regard are appreciable, it is not sufficient. **To become self-sufficient in chip manufacturing India needs a Semiconductor Diplomacy Action Plan.**

Why is the Significance of Semiconductors?

- Semiconductor chips are the **lifeblood of the modern information age**. They enable electronic products to compute and control actions that simplify our lives.
- The process of making the meticulous semiconductor chips is an **excellent example of peacetime global cooperation**.
 - For instance, it would not be difficult to imagine that the chip in the devices that we use are made by a Japanese engineer working on Dutch machinery in an American foundry in Taiwan to produce wafers which were shipped to Malaysia for packaging before being sent to India as a finished product.
- These semiconductor chips are the **drivers for ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) development** and one of the key reasons for the current **flattening of the world**.
- Semiconductors are **used in critical infrastructures such as communication, power transmission etc.**, that have implications for **national security**.
- Development of the semiconductor and display ecosystem will have a **multiplier effect across different sectors of the economy with deeper integration to the global value chain**.

Where does India Stand in the Growth Story of the Semiconductor Market?

- India currently imports all chips and the market is estimated to touch \$100 billion by 2025 from \$24 billion now. However, for the domestic manufacturing of semiconductor chips, India has recently launched several initiatives:
 - The Union Cabinet has allocated an amount of **₹ 76,000 crore for supporting the development of a 'semiconductors and display manufacturing ecosystem'**.
 - India has also launched the **Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors (SPECS)** for manufacturing of electronics components and semiconductors.
 - The MeitY also launched the **Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme** to nurture at least 20 domestic companies involved in semiconductor design and facilitate them to achieve turnover of more than Rs.1500 Crore in the next 5 years.
- Considering that the **global semiconductor market is projected to be \$1.2 trillion by 2030, India needs to be well-positioned to capture it.**
 - The recently announced **Semicon India programme** which provides \$10 bn fiscal support and other non-fiscal measures is a step in the right direction.
 - Due to the **USA's allegations on China** for worsening **Covid-19** and **India-China conflict** and **recent developments because of it**, numerous multinational companies (MNCs) are shifting their production out of China.
 - This is the right **opportunity to establish India as the right choice** for setting up production houses for semicon chips.

What are the Issues Regarding Domestic Manufacturing of Semiconductors?

- **Dominance of Certain Countries:** The semiconductor manufacturing capacities are **concentrated in a few geographies**. Nearly all leading edge (sub 10nm) semiconductor manufacturing capacity is **limited to Taiwan and South Korea, with nearly 92% located in the former.**
 - Further, 75% of the semiconductor manufacturing capacity is concentrated in **East Asia and China.**
 - The concentration of capacities poses many challenges, leading several countries to be vulnerable to a few.

- The short point is that there could be moments of stress and conflict between India and the major powers.
 - In order to preserve the capacity to stay autonomous, **India needs not just smart alliances but also indigenous capability.**
- **Pursuing Western Companies:** Although India has a decent chip design talent, it never built up chip fab capacity. It would also require convincing western companies to set up advance silicon fabs in India.
 - However, the coming of several semiconductor fabs to India is not sufficient. It would also require **maintaining a balance between pursuing globalisation in this field while ensuring that the vision of Atma Nirbhar Bharat is not undermined.**

How India's Semiconductor Diplomacy can Help Overcome This Problem?

- **Seizing the Recent Opportunities:** The current decade presents a unique opportunity to India as;
 - **Companies are looking to diversify their supply chain** and for alternatives to their bases in China.
 - The **chip shortages due to Covid-19** have hit automakers with a revenue loss of \$110 bn in 2021.
 - The **Russia-Ukraine conflict** and its implications for raw material supplies for the semiconductor value chain has also poised chipmakers to invest in strengthening the semicon supply chain.
 - India must seize this opportunity and become an attractive alternative destination for semiconductor manufacturing.
- **Conceptualising A Semicon Diplomacy Action Plan:** Placing **semicon diplomacy at the heart of India's foreign policy** is essential both strategically and economically.
 - The establishment of the value chain for semiconductors would ensure a multiplier effect on the entire economy.
 - Further, since electronics items form one of the most highly imported items after oil and petroleum products, **domestic production would be saving forex and reducing the balance of payments**, especially vis a vis China.

- **Merging Semicon Diplomacy with Act East Policy:** Semicon diplomacy is pivotal to **India's Act East Policy**, which aims to build resilient ties in the Asia Pacific region.
 - Considering that the semiconductor manufacturing and testing bases are heavily concentrated in East Asia, the Act East policy provides an **opportunity to connect and strengthen ties with key players** in the region.
 - At the same time, keeping an eye on the larger vision - **frequent technological exchanges between a regional bloc like ASEAN** via tracks in forums like the **East Asia Summit** and the **ASEAN regional forum** will also be beneficial.
- **Potential of QUAD in Semicon Diplomacy:** One of the ways of leveraging semicon diplomacy is increasing multilateral and bilateral cooperation. A key institution with immense potential in this regard is the **Quad**.
 - **Australia, being rich in raw materials** required for semiconductors, can be an **important supplier to fill in India's deficits**.
 - The **US and Japan can be leveraged for capacity building** and their advanced semiconductor technology in logic and memory segments.
 - The **Quad Semiconductor Supply Chain Initiative** is a good starting point; India shall push for a **Quad Supply Chain Resilience Fund to immunise the supply chain** from geopolitical and geographic risks
- **Strengthening Engagement with Semicon Hubs:** **Technical collaboration with Vietnam may be stressed**, as it is home to many technical research and academic institutes in the area of microchip design and development besides having abundant availability of trained and skilled manpower.
 - **Strategic partnership with Taiwan**, a leading global hub for semiconductor design and manufacturing, with leading producers of the semiconductor chip like Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., which caters to the needs of Apple, Intel, AMD, Nvidia and other conglomerates, will also be a good beginning in this direction.