



TATHASTU ICS

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS



SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

S.NO.	TOPIC
1.	ZONAL COUNCIL
2.	CHINA-PHILIPPINES TUSSLE: SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTE

ZONAL COUNCIL

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

WHY IN NEWZ?

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah chaired the 31st meeting of the Northern Zonal Council in Amritsar

ABOUT ZONAL COUNCILS:

- ❖ In **1956**, India's first Prime Minister, **Jawaharlal Nehru**, introduced the notion of establishing **Zonal Councils**.
- ❖ This was suggested **during the course of debate on the report of the States Re-organisation Commission**
- ❖ The proposal aimed to create a **high-level advisory platform** with the **following objectives**:
 - To **mitigate the impact of linguistic tensions** prevalent during that era.
 - To foster a **harmonious relationship between the states** and the central government.
- ❖ Consequently, in accordance with the idea promoted by Prime Minister Nehru, **five Zonal Councils were established under the States Re-organisation Act of 1956**.
- ❖ Zonal Councils hold a **statutory status**
- ❖ These five councils are named as follows:
 - **Northern Zonal Council**: Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and India. Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, Delhi National Capital Territory, and Chandigarh Union Territory.
 - **Central Zonal Council**: Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
 - **Eastern Zonal Council**: Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal.
 - **Western Zonal Council**: Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Dammam and the Federal Territories. Diu and Dadra & Amp; Nagar Haveli.
 - **Southern Zonal Council**: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry.
- ❖ Notably, the **North Eastern States are not part of the Zonal Councils**; instead, their distinct issues are addressed by the **North Eastern Council, formed under the North Eastern Council Act of 1972**.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE ZONAL COUNCILS:

Position	Responsibilities
Chairman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Union Home Minister serves as the Chairman of each Zonal Council.
Vice Chairman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chief Ministers of the States within a zone take turns as Vice-Chairman for one-year terms.
Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chief Minister and two other Ministers chosen by the Governor from each State within the zone. ▪ Two members from Union Territories situated in the same zone.

Advisers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One nominee appointed by the Planning Commission (now NITI Aayog) for each Zonal Council. ▪ Chief Secretaries and another officer or Development Commissioner nominated by each State within the Zone.
Union Ministers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Union Ministers may be invited to participate in Zonal Council meetings when deemed necessary.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ZONAL COUNCILS:

- **PROMOTING REGIONAL UNITY:**
Zonal Councils are instrumental in fostering unity and solidarity among states and UTs within a particular region. This regional approach helps address common issues and concerns effectively.
- **INTER-STATE AND CENTRE-STATE RELATIONS:**
They serve as high-level advisory bodies for minimizing linguistic hostilities and enhancing the inter-State and Centre-State environment, thus contributing to harmonious governance.
- **REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**
Zonal Councils facilitate joint planning and coordination of resources for regional development. They help identify key developmental priorities and allocate resources accordingly.
- **CONFLICT RESOLUTION:**
They provide a platform for resolving disputes and conflicts among states and UTs. Through dialogue and consensus-building, they aim to find solutions to regional challenges.
- **INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY:**
Zonal Councils can work on projects and initiatives that promote infrastructure development and connectivity within the region. This can include road networks, railways, and more.
- **RESOURCE SHARING:**
Member states and UTs can share resources and best practices to address issues such as water management, disaster management, and healthcare.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: PRELIMS SPECIFIC

- ❖ After India got its independence, it adopted interim federalism on a temporary basis where four types of states were demarcated:

Category	Details
Category A	All British Provinces (Governor province of British India) – Assam, Bihar, Bombay, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, The United Provinces, West Bengal
Category B	Princely states with the legislature – Hyderabad, Jammu Kashmir, Madhya Bharat, Mysore, Patiala, Eastern Punjab
Category C	Medium-sized princely states – States comprising Ajmer, Bhopal, Bilaspur, Cooch- Bihar, Coorg
Category D	It Included Special status states – Territories comprising The Andaman and Nicobar Islands

- ❖ The early integration of princely states into India lacked a structured approach and was ad-hoc. As regional demands, especially from South India, for linguistic-based state reorganization grew, the Government formed several commissions to address these requests.

- ❖ **Dhar Commission (1948):** Formed to explore the possibility of linguistic state organization but recommended states based on administrative convenience.
- ❖ **JVP Committee (1948):** Composed of Jawahar Lal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, and Pattabhi Sitaramayya, it **rejected language as the basis for state reorganization** and led to the creation of Andhra State(1953) in response to Potti Sreeramulu's hunger strike.

- ❖ **State Reorganisation Commission (Fazal Ali Commission, 1953):** Established after the creation of Andhra Pradesh, this three-member commission acknowledged **four major factors for state reorganization: linguistic and cultural similarities, unity and integrity of India, administrative and economic considerations, and promoting people's welfare.**

- ❖ **STATE REORGANISATION COMMISSION OUTCOME:**
 - Government accepted recommendations with minor modifications.
 - **States Reorganisation Act 1956 and 7th Amendment Act 1956 were enacted.**
 - **Distinction between Part-A and Part-B states removed, and Part-C states abolished.**
 - Some states merged with adjacent states, while others became union territories.
 - By November 1956, **India comprised 14 States and 6 Union Territories.**

CHINA-PHILIPPINES TUSSLE: SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTE

SOURCE: [IE](#)

WHY IN NEWZ?

The Philippines has removed a floating barrier installed by China to block Philippine fishing boats entering a contested area in the South China Sea.

BACKGROUND:

- Ongoing dispute since 2012 between China and other countries over territorial claims in the South China Sea.
- The South China Sea involves **Brunei, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam**.
- "Nine-dash line" represents China's territorial claims but exceeds UN treaty limits.
- China's "nine-dash line" claims about **90% of the South China Sea**, contested by other nations.
- Disputes over islands like **Scarborough Shoal and Parcel and Spratly chains**.



SIGNIFICANCE OF SOUTH CHINA SEA:

1. CHINA:

- Economic Interests:** China's economic growth and energy security heavily rely on maritime trade routes passing through the South China Sea. It's a vital passage for its exports and imports.
- Resource Exploration:** The sea is believed to have significant oil and natural gas reserves. China seeks control over these resources to meet its energy demands.
- Geopolitical Influence:** Control over the South China Sea allows China to expand its geopolitical influence in the region and assert itself as a major maritime power.

2. ASEAN Countries (Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia):

- Sovereignty Claims:** Several ASEAN nations claim parts of the South China Sea, primarily for their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). For example, the Philippines has the Scarborough Shoal within its EEZ.
- Resource Rights:** These countries rely on the sea's resources for their economies, including fishing and potential offshore oil and gas reserves.
- Territorial Integrity:** Protecting their territorial integrity and sovereignty is crucial, given China's assertiveness in the area.

3. United States:

- Freedom of Navigation:** The U.S. emphasizes the importance of freedom of navigation in international waters, including the South China Sea. It conducts Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) to challenge excessive maritime claims.

- b) **Security Alliances:** The U.S. has security alliances with some ASEAN countries, like the Philippines and Vietnam, and seeks to counterbalance China's growing influence.

4. India:

- a) **Economic Interests:** India has a significant stake in maintaining freedom of navigation through the South China Sea because a large volume of its trade passes through the Strait of Malacca.
- b) **Resource Exploration:** India collaborates with Vietnam to explore petroleum resources in the South China Sea, a venture opposed by China.
- c) **Geopolitical Influence:** India aims to strengthen its presence in the Indo-Pacific region, which includes the South China Sea, to counterbalance China's influence.

5. Resource Availability:

- a) **Oil and Gas Reserves:** The South China Sea is estimated to hold substantial oil and natural gas reserves, making it a valuable region for energy resource exploration.
- b) **Biodiversity:** The sea houses one-third of the world's marine biodiversity, making it ecologically significant.

6. Multilateralism and UNCLOS:

- a) **Credibility of International Law:** The South China Sea has become a litmus test for multilateralism, especially concerning the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The world community is concerned that China's assertive actions may undermine UNCLOS and freedom of navigation principles.

KEY DISPUTES IN THE REGION:		
Dispute	Countries Involved	Description
Territorial Disputes	China, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Taiwan	These disputes concern sovereignty over specific islands, reefs, and features in the South China Sea, such as the Spratly Islands and the Paracel Islands. Multiple countries claim ownership of these features.
Nine-Dash Line Dispute	China, Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan	China's "nine-dash line" claims encompass approximately 90% of the South China Sea, including areas within the EEZs of other nations. Other countries reject this claim, challenging China's territorial ambitions.
Scarborough Shoal Dispute	China, Philippines	The Scarborough Shoal (Huangyan Island) is claimed by both China and the Philippines. It has been a focal point of tension, with incidents of fishing vessel standoffs and disputes over access.
Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)	Various ASEAN countries	Multiple countries, including Vietnam and the Philippines, have overlapping EEZ claims. This leads to conflicts over resource exploration, fishing rights, and economic activities.
Freedom of Navigation	U.S., China	The U.S. conducts Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) to challenge China's excessive maritime claims and assert the right to freely navigate international waters.
Resource Exploitation	China, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia	These nations compete for access to the South China Sea's abundant fishing grounds and potential offshore oil and gas reserves. Resource disputes have led to confrontations and tensions.

WAY FORWARD:

1. Diplomacy and Dialogue:

- Encourage all involved parties to engage in peaceful diplomacy and dialogue to resolve disputes.
- Support bilateral and multilateral negotiations to find mutually acceptable solutions.

2. Adherence to International Law:

- Emphasize adherence to international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), as a basis for resolving disputes.
- Promote respect for the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruling on the South China Sea.

3. Code of Conduct (COC):

- Expedite the negotiation and adoption of a Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea among ASEAN member states and China.
- Ensure the COC is legally binding and promotes peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution.

4. Preventing Escalation:

- Encourage all parties to exercise restraint and avoid actions that could escalate tensions, such as military buildups or aggressive maneuvers.
- Establish mechanisms for crisis communication and conflict de-escalation.

5. Joint Resource Development:

- Promote joint resource development agreements that allow countries to share the benefits of the South China Sea's natural resources while setting aside territorial disputes.

6. Track II Diplomacy:

- Encourage Track II diplomacy initiatives involving non-governmental organizations, scholars, and experts to facilitate discussions and generate potential solutions.

PRELIMS SPECIFIC: UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA (UNCLOS)

TERM	DESCRIPTION
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is an international treaty that defines the rights and responsibilities of nations regarding their use of the world's oceans.
HISTORY	UNCLOS was adopted in 1982 and entered into force in 1994.
PURPOSE	It establishes a legal framework for the use and protection of the world's oceans , ensuring the peaceful use of marine resources.
TERRITORIAL WATERS	Coastal states have sovereignty over these waters, extending up to 12 nautical miles from their baselines.
EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE (EEZ)	Coastal states have special rights over resources in this zone, extending up to 200 nautical miles.
CONTINENTAL SHELF	Coastal states have rights to the resources of the continental shelf, extending beyond the EEZ.
ARCHIPELAGIC WATERS	Specific rules apply to archipelagic states with regard to sovereignty and navigation.
CONTIGUOUS ZONE	Extends 12 nautical miles beyond territorial waters, allowing for certain law enforcement actions.

INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE LAW OF THE SEA (ITLOS)	An independent body that resolves disputes related to UNCLOS.
INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY	Manages resources of the seabed beyond national jurisdiction.
COMMISSION ON THE LIMITS OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF (CLCS)	Assesses outer limits of the continental shelf.