

A **BOUNDARY** is a line established by law, treaty, accord or practice that marks the limit of a political unit's territory. It is synonymous with **BORDER**.

Principal Types of BOUNDARIES

- Ethnic/cultural
- Physiographic/Natural
- Geometric

Ethnic/Cultural Boundaries

- Conform to the borders between traditional ethnic homelands or borders between culture groups.
 - More commonly used as boundaries between civil divisions than between States.
 - Difficult to define and prone to change, and thus problematical as State boundaries due to lack of certitude. (*absolute certainty or conviction that something is the case.*)

Ethnic/Cultural boundaries- boundaries between states that coincide with differences in ethnicity, especially language and religion; another **cultural boundary** is drawn according to geometry. **Example:** Based on language, Quebec, and a can be considered a **cultural boundary**.

Physiographic/Natural boundaries

A **physical boundary** is a natural barrier between two areas. Rivers, mountain ranges, oceans, and deserts are **examples**. ... For **example**, the **boundary** between France and Spain follows the peaks of the Pyrenees mountains. Rivers are common **boundaries** between nations, states, and smaller political areas, such as counties.

correspond to a component of the physical environment, such as

- Coastlines

- Rivers
- Lakes
- Mountain ranges
- Ridge lines
- Watersheds

Geometric Boundaries are

straight lines drawn to reflect

- Latitude
- Longitude
- An expanse connecting two well-defined points agreed to by treaty.

Geometric boundaries necessitate a common system of latitude and longitude. Because they are abstract concepts, they are not prone to change by geomorphic agencies or human actions.

Geometric boundaries are formed by straight lines (such as lines of latitude or longitude), or occasionally arcs (Pennsylvania/Delaware), regardless of the physical and cultural features of the area. The Canada/US border along the 49th parallel is an **example** of a **geometric boundary**.

Boundary:

It implies the physical limit of sovereignty and jurisdiction of a state; it is a manifestation of integration and its oriental inward

Characteristics of boundary

1. It is still possible to recognize frontier characteristics in boundaries, specially is sparsely populated region, such as desert. This lead to minimum fiction. An example is the boundary between Spain and Potogal.

2. It is an appropriate concept for the modern state where all that is within the boundary is bound together by common law, economy, physical feature, idea or creed with a government or central authority in effective control of the territory and activities within the boundary.
3. It may be reached by expanding in to frontier when the natural limit are reached. For instance, the westward expansion of USA in to desert frontiers to the coastline were reached.
4. It is an outer line of effective control of the central government keeping the enemy out and the resource in.
5. It is a legal political phenomenon which is not created by fixed by the political decision makers.
6. It significant different in goal, ideology, structure, interest etc from those of the neighboring state

Frontier:

The term 'frontier' in political geography has two different meanings: it can refer to either the political division between two states or the division between the settled and uninhabited parts of one state. In either case the frontier may be considered as a line or a zone. While the context normally prevents confusion between the two meanings, problems of interpreting the sense can easily arise. It is for this reason that some geographers have attempted to restrict the use of the term to features possessing width, referring to simple linear divides as boundaries. Although the English, French (la frontiere and la limite) and Italian (confine and la frontiera) languages permit this convenient distinction, it has not been consistently employed by geographers.

In the past, during the political evolutions of a state, states were separated by areas, not lines. The function of the intervening area was to prevent direct contact between the neighboring states and it was referred to as a frontier.

A frontier, can, thus, be defined as a politico-geographical area, lying beyond defined borders of a political unit into which expansion could take place (for instance, European penetration into the Zulu-Natal area and, in modern times, Antarctica). It is a physical and moral concept which implied looking outwards and moving outwards. It is not an abstract concept but a 'fact of life'—a manifestation of the tendency for spontaneous growth of [ecumene](#).

Boundary and frontier

1. A boundary is oriented inward. It is a manifestation of integration, and it is a conceptual force, a frontier is oriented outward and is a manifestation of spontaneous tendency to grow, of ecumene, and it is a centrifugal force.
2. Boundary is created and maintained by the will of government. It is not of its own. Not even a material existence, a frontier is a fact of life and exists physically on ground as a dynamic entity.
3. A boundary is well-defined and regulated by law. It possesses uniform characteristics. A frontier is a phenomenon of history and, like history, it is unique.
4. A boundary is a separating factor whereas a frontier provides scope for mutual interaction and exchange.

Conclusion: Existence of boundary shows that a political community has reached a relative degree of maturity, orderliness, and being and law-abiding. Frontier and boundary are products of socio-political forces and are, thus, subjective, not objective. In order to have a stable internal political structure, distinction is required between domestic and foreign policy. Boundary facilitates this distinction. Super-nation, non-national and other factors, undermine the significance of boundary to some extent.

FRONTIER can mean different things • Nowadays it is often synonymous with border. • Originally, an area lying beyond a country's territory and into which it could expand. • In U.S. history, territory at the farthest extent of the country's settled or inhabited regions. • Lightly settled territory adjacent to a remote non-emarkated boundary.

Other kinds of unoccupied and/or “un-owned” territory between states • No Man's Land. Land between opposing armies that neither controls. • Demilitarized Zone. An un-owned tract of land created by protocols that marks a former “front line” between warring armies.

• Buffer Zone. (A) Synonymous with either of the above. (B) A zone of weakness that lies between major powers and it intended to mitigate conflict between them. Classically consists of one or more States that are militarily weak.

Sri Lanka is separated from **India** by a narrow channel of sea, formed by Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar.

The **India–Nepal border** is an open international **border** running **between India and Nepal**.

The 1,770 km (1,099.83 mi) long **border** includes the Himalayan territories as well as Indo-Gangetic Plain.

India and Myanmar **the Patkai Hills were unilaterally designated as the northern boundary**.

McMahon Line, frontier between **Tibet** and **Assam** in British **India**, negotiated between Tibet and Great Britain at the end of the **Shimla** Conference (October 1913–July 1914) and named for the chief British negotiator, Sir Henry McMahon. It runs from the eastern border of **Bhutan** along the crest of the **Himalayas** until it reaches the great bend in the **Brahmaputra River** where that river emerges from its Tibetan course into the Assam Valley.

Delegates of the Chinese republican government also attended the Shimla Conference, but they refused to sign the principal agreement on the status and boundaries of Tibet on the ground that Tibet was subordinate to [China](#) and had not the power to make treaties. The Chinese have maintained this position to the present day and also have claimed that Chinese territory extends southward to the base of the Himalayan foothills. This frontier controversy with independent India led to the Sino-Indian hostilities of October–November 1962. In that conflict the Chinese forces occupied Indian territory south of the McMahon Line but subsequently withdrew after a cease-fire had been achieved.

Buffer zone

A **buffer zone** is a neutral zonal **area** that lies between two or more bodies of land, usually pertaining to countries. Depending on the type of **buffer zone**, it may serve to separate regions or conjoin them.

Bhutan, and Sikkim were **buffer**-states between the British Empire and China, later between China and India, which in 1962 fought the Sino-Indian War in places where the two regional powers bordered each other.

Poland and other states between Germany and the Soviet Union have sometimes been described as **buffer** states, with reference both to when they were non-communist states before **World War II**, and to when they were communist states after **World War II**.

Boundary problems of N.E. India



Border areas have their own problems and peculiarities. Such areas are in general less accessible, making provision of basic facilities more difficult and costly. Such areas are often more vulnerable to illegal infiltration of population, which adds pressure on their economic and environmental resources. Moreover, porous nature of the border enables easy cross border passage for insurgents and criminals including drug traffickers. Thus, governments of the states with international border are required to bear heavier burden for not only providing basic facilities to the people living in such areas but also for the broader national goal of securing the border. The Northeast region with 99 per cent of its boundary being international border, the problems and peculiarities are even more accentuated. The region consists of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. The region is located between latitudes 29° and 22° North and longitudes about 89.46° and 97.5° East. The region is covering an area of 262185 sq. km, which is nearly 8 per cent of the total geographical area of the country. The region has a population of 389.84 lakh that is 3.79 per cent of the total population of India. The region has a vast coverage of forest nearly 55 per cent of the total geographical area. **The States of the region are surrounded by China, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Bhutan.** In fact, the region has a long international border of (5182 km), which is more than 99 percent of its total geographical boundary. These States have international border with China (1395 km), Bhutan (455 km), Myanmar (1640 km), Bangladesh (1596 km) and Nepal (97 km). On the other hand the region is connected with the mainland India through a very narrow strip of land with the width of about 22 km called ‘chicken neck’. The region is best known for its picturesque topography, cultural heritage, ethnic beauty and rich natural resources. The region has rich bio diversity, oil and natural gas, coal, limestone, hydro potential and forest wealth. Given the peculiar geo-political location, the region can develop cross-border markets, which are likely to

be more cost effective for North East India's surplus production than the distant national markets. The region is famous for its exotic flora and fauna. It is ideally situated to produce spices, fruit & vegetables, flowers and herbs. Therefore, the North East India can emerge as an exporter of orchids, flowers, apple, orange, pineapples, spices, herbs, etc. to the South East Asian Region. The vast array of aromatic plants of the region can be used in aromatic industry for the manufacture of perfumes, incenses, etc. Rich bio-diversity, heritage sites & ethnic beauty can make it a destination for the tourists. Several big & small rivers flowing across this region are suitable to construct hydro projects to generate electricity. Moreover, owing to climatic advantage the region can also be a major producer and exporter of tea. In spite of resourcefulness the entire region is regarded as underdeveloped. The remoteness, difficult terrain, infrastructural bottlenecks and unfriendly neighbors are the serious impediments of the development of the region. Being a border area, the region is suffering from specific problems like illegal cross-border movements, law and order, security, insurgency, smuggling etc. In this age of globalization and increased international cooperation, however, border areas also signify some new opportunities. Such opportunities are believed to be immense for Northeast India due to its geographical proximity to the prosperous East and Southeast Asian economies. However preparing the region to exploit such opportunities also first requires investment in the necessary infrastructure. While the need for additional resources for states with international border may be easily understood, the fixation of quantum of such additional resource flows needs further investigation and estimation. Accordingly a comprehensive study of the border areas of the country falling in the Northeast region is made under the sponsorship of the Thirteenth Finance Commission (TFC) of Government of India. The topography, accessibility, climate, altitude, population density, ethnicity, levels of development, the relationships with the border countries etc. of the entire border

region of the North East widely vary. Therefore, the development strategy for different border segments will be different. For example, the development strategy of border areas of Arunachal Pradesh with China will be different from Assam's border with Bangladesh. Besides the problems of development, different border segments have different social problems such as incursion, infiltration, migration, smuggling, drug trafficking, AIDS etc. Therefore, different segments of border have been studied by different research teams,

ASSAM: The State of Assam has three international border segments, viz., **western Assam Bangladesh** border, northwestern Assam-Bhutan border and southern Assam-Bangladesh border.

Socio-economic Profile of the Border Areas (Assam):

- (i) The District of Dhubri of Assam bordering Bangladesh is partly land and partly riverine. Though border fencing has been started in many stretches, fencing is incomplete and even nonexistent. The border demarcation over the river is not entirely clear. Guarding of Assam's border with Bangladesh is complicated due to the existence of char islands dotted along the border some of which fall in India and some in Bangladesh. The cultural continuity of the inhabitants of Indian and Bangladeshi chars complicates policing of these areas. Therefore, the administration is loose. Incidence of crime against women, incursions by dacoits, theft and robbery, from across the border, are very frequent in border areas. Illegal cattle trading from India to Bangladesh and smuggling are very common in the border areas.
- (ii) Out of the three districts of southern Assam, Karimganj District has the longest borderline with Bangladesh, which is 92 km in length. The blocks bordering Bangladesh are Patharkandi, the North Karimganj, South Karimganj and Badarpur. Out of these four border Blocks only the North

Karimganj Block has been selected for intensive study. The total population of the sample Block is 1.19 lakh that is 44 per cent of the district population. The sample Block consists of 126 villages. The villages covered for the study are Latu, Maizgram, Ranibari and Mahishashan.

- (iii) Assam shares about 262 km of international border with Bhutan. Altogether four districts viz, Udalguri, Baksa, Chirang and Kokrajhar share their northern boundary with Bhutan. Baksa District was selected for the study. The District shares 83 km border with Bhutan that is about 32 per cent of the border Assam with Bhutan. The Assam Bhutan border does not have any clear demarcation. The Assam-Bangladesh border is economically one of the most backward pockets of Assam. The per capita income and Human Development Index of the border Districts of Dhubri is the lowest in Assam. People are dependent on agriculture. There is no industry. Before partition, Dhubri was the gateway for trade and commerce for the entire Brahmaputra valley and other parts of the North East. Illegal immigration from Bangladesh is a major problem of the District. Indigenous population harbours a sense of being outnumbered by the immigrants. Literacy rate of the border area is very low and access to health care facility is inadequate. The Border Area Development Programme (BADP), the Minority Development Programme (MDP) and the Char Area Development Programme (CADP) could not make much headway in this region. Such programmes are poorly implemented and grossly inadequate. The delivery of basic services viz., health care, education etc. in the char areas of the border. The border police force is not adequately equipped. Flood and erosion is a major problem in the area. The District of Karimganj of Assam

bordering Bangladesh suffers from acute poverty and lack of any kind of development. The people of this border area strongly feel that they are deprived of all development facilities because they are in the border areas. Scarcity of safe drinking water is a major problem of this border area. Another problem peculiar to this area is the existence of the border fencing. This fencing has created problem for those whose land and property and even houses which have fallen on the other side of the fencing. There is no 'no man's land' in this border area. All the villagers of the border area have vented out their anger for the poor quality of life, the apathy of the government, bad road condition, and inadequate educational facilities. 9 The Bhutan border areas in Assam are facing the inadequate transport facilities for poor road condition. Non-availability of proper health care facility is another problem of the border area. Scarcity of safe drinking water is also a major problem of this border District. Malaria is still taking heavy tolls of life in the area. The villagers of the area are still deprived of proper sanitation facilities and majority of the people use open fields for defecation. Power supply in the District is highly inadequate as only 40 per cent of the households are found to have electricity connections. Nonavailability of banking facilities is another problem of the border villages. An absentee doctor is a common phenomenon in this border area.

Border Disputes in North-Eastern India

Border areas have their own problems and peculiarities and more often vulnerable to illegal infiltration of population, which adds pressure on their economic and environmental resources. The North-East region of India comprises of eight states, namely Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. The region is known for a multitude of conflicts that undermines the idea of India as a prosperous and

a functioning democracy. In this article, we have discussed on the problems and peculiarities on the border disputes in North-Eastern India which help the reader to understand the geopolitical problems **in North East India**.

Historical reasons for the Border Disputes in North-Eastern India

The people of the north east India are largely of Tibeto-Burman/Mongoloid stock and closer to Southeast Asia than to South Asia. It is ethnically, linguistically and culturally very distinct from the other states of India. It is interesting to know that the cultural and ethnic diversity per say are not causes for conflict but the process of delineation of state boundaries which ignored the ethnic and cultural specificities in the 1950s, giving rise to discontentment and assertion of one's identity.

Border Disputes in North-Eastern India

The border disputes raging in the region for decades have enveloped the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur and Nagaland.

1. Border Dispute between Assam and Nagaland

It is the most prominent border dispute with a history of violent, clashes between border communities. Both the states have accused each other of illegally occupying each other's territories. The dispute between the two began right at the time of inception of Nagaland state in 1963.

Assam claims that more than fifty thousand hectares of its territory has been annexed by Nagaland. Whereas the **Nagaland State Act of 1962** had defined its borders, according to the 1925 notification when Naga Hills and Tuensang area were integrated into a new administrative unit and made an autonomous area. Nagas did not accept the boundary delineation and demanded that Nagaland should comprise the erstwhile Naga Hills and Naga dominated area in North Cachar and Nagaon districts, which were part of the Naga territory.

Since Nagaland did not accept its notified borders, tensions between Assam and Nagaland soon flared up resulting in the first border clashes in 1965 at Kakodonga Reserve Forest. Since then, violent clashes along the Assam-Nagaland border have become a regular feature, with major armed conflicts reported in 1968, 1979 and 1985.

Marine Protected Areas in India

2. Dispute between Assam and Meghalaya

The states of Assam and Meghalaya have been embroiled in a border dispute for decades now. It first started when Meghalaya challenged the Assam Reorganisation Act of 1971, which gave parts of Mikir hill of Assam and those, according to Meghalaya, are parts of United Khasi and Jantia hills.

However, there are regular clashes between both the sides along the border, which has resulted in the displacement of a large number of inhabitants and loss of life and property.

3. Dispute between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh

Another dispute is that of between the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. The Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh was formed on 20th January, 1972. Later when Arunachal Pradesh was carved out of Assam in 1987 as a state under the North-East Reorganisation Act, 1971, the people of Arunachal Pradesh accepted their notified borders with Assam. However, subsequent to this, there has been the issue of Assamese encroachment. Amidst the widespread sense of helplessness, there is also an overwhelming desire and force to be free from such a situation of conflict which cripples the people from all sides. At such time, we require that the government should come up with the practical and, acceptable solutions to the interstate border problems at the earliest. All states with disputed borders should first work at maintaining law and order and ensure that peace prevails in the area. So the need of the hour is to find a lasting solution to the long pending interstate border disputes in North-East disputes.

Regional Distribution of Tribes in India

4. Dispute between Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram

Two other states of the region that were carved out of Assam, namely, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram are also entangled in border disputes with Assam. Initially, both Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram accepted their notified borders with Assam, but later on started raising the issue of Assamese encroachment leading to border clashes. In the case of the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border, clashes were first reported in 1992 when the Arunachal Pradesh Government alleged that people from Assam are building houses, markets and even police stations on its territory.

Since then, intermittent clashes have been taking place making the border tense. In 2005, for example, during an eviction drive by the Assam Government, some 100 houses in East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh were allegedly set ablaze by Assam Police and forest officials. Again in 2007, tensions flared up along the Assam-Arunachal border when villagers from across the border fired at a peace meeting in Assam injuring eight people. Since then several incidents of violence and clashes took place in the disputed region.

5. Dispute between Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram

Apart from all the problems and peculiarities of border areas, the Assam-Mizoram border has remained relatively calm despite the disputed nature of the border. However, there were a few instances in 1994 and in 2007 when tensions along this border flared up. But because of timely intervention by

the Central Government, a major crisis was averted and the situation was quickly brought under control. Following the 2007 border incident, Mizoram declared that it does not accept the present boundary with Assam and that the inner line of the Inner Line Reserved Forest as described in the 1875 notification under the East Bengal Frontier Regulation of 1873 should be the basis for delineating the border.

Major Inter-State Water disputes in India

Steps to resolve the interstate border dispute

1. If the states could treat disputed areas as neutral zones, states could organise village development councils in all the disputed areas and members of the councils should comprise of representative from both the communities.
2. States should share the financial and logistical requirements for all development activities in the disputed areas.
3. No state should claim its right to the areas and development should be the joint effort of the respective departments of both governments.
4. To restore peace in the area, it is necessary to create the atmosphere for peace and help people regain confidence. Confidence building is also another important objective if we are to bring peace in the conflict areas.

Hence, we can say there will be no peace in the North-East region if there is no solution to the interstate border disputes and the solution to the problem is not by dividing people, but by promoting peace, unity and harmony because we are all part of one country. Let us stop behaving like nations fighting for a piece of land when we are one country.