

No-Patrol Zones

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In news- Recently, India and China have disengaged their troops in the Gogra Heights area of eastern Ladakh (around Patrol Point 17A).

What are No-patrolling or Buffer zones?

- When two forces disengage from a face-off point where they had been eyeball-to-eyeball or in close proximity to each other, one way to prevent new face-offs is to create a zone in which troops from neither side are allowed for a certain length of time.
- 'No-patrolling zone' is when the area becomes a zone where neither side is allowed to patrol.

No-patrolling zone between India and China

- The idea of the no-patrolling zone can be traced back to the border war between India and China in 1962.
- After China declared a unilateral ceasefire on November 21, 1962, it pulled its troops back 20 km from what it perceived was the location of the LAC on November 7, 1959.
- China, therefore, created a sort of buffer zone extending from where its forces were to where the LAC was.
- More recently, the concept was used by India in 2013. Chinese troops had pitched tents in an area known as the Bottleneck in the Depsang Plains, and India was negotiating to end the face-off.
- As part of the understanding to end the Depsang standoff, India temporarily suspended patrolling in an area further south, but within eastern Ladakh, called Chumar.

There are 10 other points in eastern Ladakh where the two

countries have a differing perception of the LAC. In addition, five friction points came up last year: PP14 (Galwan), PP15 (Hot Springs), PP17A (Gogra Post), Rezang La, and Rechin La.

- The patrolling points for India are **decided by a body known as the China Study Group (CSG), set up in 1975**, a secretary-level official group that is the sole adviser to the central government on matters related to China.
- There are over 60 patrolling points in eastern Ladakh. In **some cases these points are marked on the map**; in others, specific geographical features act as traditional patrolling points.
- At all places barring the Depsang Plains, **the patrolling points are on the LAC**. In Depsang, the **limit of patrolling is considerably inside Indian territory from the LAC**.

Current locations of no-patrol zones

- PP17A(Gogra post) where the standoff began in May 2020.
- Galwan Valley.
- The area between Finger 3 and Finger 8 in Ladakh.

Patrolling from both sides has been suspended till the standoff throughout eastern Ladakh is resolved. This means not only disengaging from the friction points, but also de-escalation. De-escalation means both sides will pull back the additional troops that have been stationed in the region since last year.