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Delimitation After 2027, Redrawing Power in India

Context

- Every democracy must periodically realign political representation to reflect demographic change.
- In India, this process, **delimitation**, is constitutionally mandated but politically fraught.
- The exercise due after **Census 2027** will be the most consequential redistribution of power since Independence, reshaping **representation**, **federalism**, and the ethical foundations of democratic fairness.

Historical Context and the Frozen Constitution

- The Constitution originally required delimitation after every Census to ensure equal suffrage.
- This principle was suspended in **1976**, freezing the inter-State distribution of **Lok Sabha** seats at **1971** population levels so that States would not be penalised for controlling population growth.
- The **84th Amendment** (2001) extended this freeze until the first Census after **2026**.
- As a result, India's parliamentary map reflects a country of **548 million**, not today's **47 billion** people.
- With the suspension expiring after Census 2027, redistribution becomes unavoidable, raising profound constitutional and political challenges.

Demographic Divergence and the Moral Paradox

- In the 1970s, fertility rates across States were broadly similar. Today, sharp divergence defines India's demographic landscape.
- Southern and western States invested in **education**, **health**, and **women's empowerment**, achieving below-replacement fertility.
- Northern States such as **Uttar Pradesh** and **Bihar** continue to record higher population growth.
- Population-based redistribution would dramatically increase northern representation.
- Projections suggest that in an expanded House of around **888 seats**, U.P. and Bihar together would command over a quarter of Parliament.
- Although southern States gain seats in absolute terms, their share of total representation declines.
- This creates a moral paradox. States that demonstrated **governance** success and adhered to national population goals face diminished political influence, while those that did not gain power. The ethical reasoning behind the original freeze therefore remains compelling.

Arithmetic versus Assurances

- Political assurances that no State will lose seats offer limited comfort. Parliamentary power functions through absolute numbers, not proportional guarantees.
- Even if southern States retain current seat counts, the dramatic rise in northern representation weakens their bargaining capacity.
- Suspending redistribution indefinitely to preserve balance risks violating **Article 14**, which guarantees equality and fair representation.
- The dilemma is thus structural: reconciling **constitutional fairness** with political stability.

Evaluating the Options

- **Extending the freeze** preserves balance but undermines democratic equality.
 - Expanding the Lok Sabha ensures no State loses seats but fails to address disproportionate dominance by larger States.
- **A weighted formula, combining population with development indicators** such as literacy, health, or sustained fertility control, offers a more ethically balanced model, rewarding outcomes rather than numbers alone.
- **Strengthening the Rajya Sabha** as a truly federal chamber could offset Lok Sabha imbalances.
- **Restoring domicile requirements** and restructuring seat allocation to emphasise State equality, rather than population, would revive its moderating role.
- **Bifurcating Uttar Pradesh** presents another federal solution.
 - Dividing its projected strength across multiple States would prevent excessive concentration of power while addressing long-standing regional demands.
- Finally, **phased redistribution across two election cycles** would reduce political shock while respecting constitutional obligations.

Procedural Integrity and Democratic Trust

- Beyond numerical formulas, legitimacy depends on procedure.
- The **Delimitation Commission** must be transparent, inclusive, and supported by expertise in demography and constitutional law.
- Meaningful State participation and public consultation are essential, particularly when redrawing internal constituencies and allocating **SC/ST** reserved seats.
- Poorly managed discretion risks perceptions of manipulation and deepening distrust.
- Delimitation also intersects with reforms such as **women's reservation**, complicating timelines and political consensus.
- Without careful sequencing, overlapping changes may strain institutional credibility.

Conclusion

- Delimitation will reshape **coalition politics**, alter regional influence, and test the balance between democratic equality and federal justice.
- If guided by transparency, empathy, and institutional imagination, it can modernise representation while reinforcing national unity.

- If driven solely by political arithmetic, it risks eroding trust and injuring the **federal spirit**.
- The Census will count India's people; delimitation will judge its democracy. Once numbers harden into seats, consensus will fade.
- The present moment therefore demands dialogue, foresight, and shared responsibility, before the moral balance of the Republic is redrawn.

Delimitation After 2027, Redrawing Power in India FAQs

Q1. What is delimitation in the Indian context?

Ans. Delimitation is the constitutional process of redrawing electoral boundaries and redistributing parliamentary seats based on population changes.

Q2. Why was delimitation frozen after 1976?

Ans. Delimitation was frozen to ensure that States were not penalised for successfully controlling population growth.

Q3. What moral paradox arises from population-based redistribution?

Ans. Population-based redistribution reduces political influence of States that achieved better governance and population control.

Q4. How could strengthening the Rajya Sabha help federal balance?

Ans. Strengthening the Rajya Sabha could counterbalance Lok Sabha dominance by ensuring greater equality among States.

Q5. Why is the upcoming delimitation politically significant?

Ans. The upcoming delimitation will significantly reshape political power, coalition politics, and federal relations in India.

Source: **The Hindu**

India and the EU — A Fit Partnership in a Divided World

Context

- In an era of **geopolitical uncertainty**, moments of **strategic clarity** are increasingly rare yet profoundly consequential.
- The evolving relationship between the **European Union** and **India**, highlighted by the visit of senior EU leaders to New Delhi for India's 77th Republic Day and the 16th India-EU Summit, marks such a moment.
- Their presence signals a deliberate shift toward deeper alignment, driven by shared concerns about global instability and a common pursuit of **autonomy** in foreign policy decision-making.

Changing Global Context and Strategic Urgency

- The strengthening of India–EU ties must be understood against a backdrop of eroding trust in traditional **alliances**.
- India’s relationship with the United States has come under strain due to punitive **tariffs** and sharp rhetoric linked to India’s energy ties with Russia.
- Europe has faced similar disillusionment amid shifting U.S. priorities and the consequences of the Ukraine conflict.
- These experiences have reinforced a shared conclusion: reliance on any single power is increasingly risky, and strategic diversification is essential for long-term stability.

Untapped Potential in India-EU Relations

- Despite clear complementarities, India–EU relations have historically fallen short of their promise.
- Engagement has been uneven, often sidelined by disagreements over Russia and China or overshadowed by stronger ties with Washington.
- The current moment, however, reflects a recalibration. Both sides now view the relationship not as secondary, but as central to their broader global strategies, creating conditions for more sustained and meaningful engagement.

The Strategic Importance of the Free Trade Agreement

- A key pillar of this renewed engagement is the long-pending **Free Trade Agreement** between India and the EU.
- Negotiated intermittently since 2007, the FTA has taken on new significance as a tool of economic and strategic diversification.
- Its conclusion could expand **trade** across sectors such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, machinery, and digital services.
- For India, it offers greater access to European markets and support for its manufacturing ambitions.
- For the EU, it provides an opportunity to reduce over-dependence on China by engaging one of the world’s fastest-growing major economies.

Climate Equity and Trade Challenges

- The FTA negotiations also expose important tensions, particularly around **climate equity**.
- The EU’s **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism**, which imposes carbon-related charges on imports such as steel and cement, has emerged as a major concern for India.
- These measures risk undermining the economic benefits of the agreement by acting as de facto non-tariff barriers.
- A balanced approach, one that recognises developmental differences while maintaining environmental ambition, is essential to prevent climate policy from becoming a source of strategic friction.

Defence and Security Cooperation

- Beyond economics, **defence** cooperation represents a critical dimension of India–EU engagement.

- Proposals for a dedicated security and defence **partnership**, comparable to EU arrangements with Japan and South Korea, reflect growing strategic convergence.
- For Europe, closer ties would open access to India's defence market and enable co-production opportunities.
- For India, such cooperation aligns with domestic manufacturing goals and enhances access to advanced technology.
- Expanded collaboration would also strengthen **security** in the Indian Ocean region, an area of increasing geopolitical competition.

A Model for a Multipolar World

- At a systemic level, the India-EU relationship has the potential to serve as a template for cooperation in a **multipolar**
- Both partners emphasise **sovereignty** and resist external vetoes over national decision-making, whether from Washington, Beijing, or Moscow.
- Having experienced the costs of over-dependence-on energy supplies, markets, or security guarantees-India and the EU increasingly view strategic **resilience** as a shared objective.
- Their partnership demonstrates how flexibility, mutual respect, and pragmatic **cooperation** can coexist with differing domestic priorities.

Conclusion

- The deepening India-EU relationship reflects a broader search for stability and balance in a rapidly changing global order.
- By advancing collaboration in trade, climate policy, defence, and global governance, both sides can translate long-standing potential into durable outcomes.
- Success will depend on political resolve and the ability to overcome bureaucratic inertia.
- If sustained, this partnership could strengthen **multilateralism** and contribute meaningfully to a more balanced, equitable, and resilient international system.

India and the EU — A Fit Partnership in a Divided World FAQs

Q1. Why is the current India-EU engagement considered strategically important?

Ans. It reflects a shared response to geopolitical uncertainty and a mutual shift toward strategic autonomy.

Q2. What has prompted India and the EU to reassess their traditional alliances?

Ans. Both have experienced instability and unpredictability in their relationships with long-standing partners.

Q3. Why is the India-EU Free Trade Agreement significant beyond economics?

Ans. It serves as a tool for strategic diversification and reduced dependence on a single global power.

Q4. What is India's main concern regarding the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism?

Ans. India views it as a potential trade barrier that could undermine the benefits of the FTA.

Q5. How could the India-EU partnership influence the global order?

Ans. It could model cooperation in a multipolar world based on sovereignty, resilience, and mutual respect.

Source: The Hindu

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