

LAC standoff at Ladakh and Sikkim

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Source: *The Hindu*

Related Issue

Manifest pedagogy: India-China bilateral relations is an important topic for UPSC. Now with the standoff of both armies at the LAC, one has to study in detail the history of Indo-China border dispute including aftermath of Sino-Indian wars.

In news: Tensions have continued between India and China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Placing it in syllabus: India-China relations

Dimensions:

- What is the issue about?
- Agreements to solve border disputes

1. Rajiv Gandhi- 1988
2. Narasimha Rao- 1993
3. Manmohan Singh – 2013

Content:

What is the issue about?

- Chinese forces have put up tents, and moved heavy equipment several kilometres inside what had been regarded by India as its territory.
- Stand-offs are reported in at least **three locations**: the *Galwan valley, Hot Springs and Pangong lake* to the south.



- Soldiers from the two sides have also confronted each other in Naku La, on the border between China and Sikkim.

[gdlr_styled_box content_color="#ffffff" background_color="#1e73be" corner_color="#bababa"]Naku La sector is a pass in the state of Sikkim located ahead of Muguthang or Cho Lhamu (source of River Teesta). The other passes located in the state of Sikkim are Nathu La Pass and Jelep La Pass[/gdlr_styled_box]

Possible reasons:

- **India's decision to ramp up infrastructure** has infuriated Beijing.
- A **new map put out by Nepal** has accused India of encroaching on its territory by building a road connecting with China.
- **Spot near Galwan River** is where the LAC is **closest to the new road India has built** along the Shyok River to Daulet Beg Oldi (DBO) – the most remote and vulnerable area along the LAC in Ladakh.
- The **Galwan Valley region is considered Chinese territory** and India is being blamed for changing the status quo along the LAC.
- China is also unhappy when India initially banned all exports of medical and protective equipment to shore up its stocks soon after the coronavirus pandemic started earlier this year.

The stand-off has happened in some strategic areas that are important for India. E.g. If Pangong lake is taken, Ladakh can't be defended. If the Chinese military is allowed to settle in the strategic valley of Shyok, then the Nubra valley and even then Siachen can be reached.

[gdlr_styled_box content_color="#ffffff" background_color="#1e73be" corner_color="#bababa"]Pangong Tso

lake is a 135-km long salt water lake, located in the Himalayas, with its 45 km stretch in Indian control while the rest of the 90 km under Chinese control. It is formed from Tethys geosyncline. [/gdlr_styled_box]

Agreements to solve border disputes:

Rajiv Gandhi- 1988

- Indian and Chinese patrols were coming in more frequent contact.
- In the backdrop of the **Sumdorongchu standoff**, when PM Rajiv Gandhi visited Beijing in **1988**, the two sides agreed **to negotiate a border settlement**, and pending that, they would maintain peace and tranquillity along the border.

Narasimha Rao- 1993

- During Chinese Premier Li Peng's 1991 visit to India, the then PM P V Narasimha Rao and Li reached an understanding to maintain peace and tranquillity at the LAC.
- **India formally accepted the concept of the LAC when Rao paid a return visit to Beijing in 1993**
- The two sides signed the Agreement to Maintain Peace and Tranquillity at the LAC.
- The reference to the LAC was unqualified to make it clear that it was not referring to the LAC of 1959 or 1962 but to the LAC at the time when the agreement was signed.
- The two countries agreed that the **Joint Working Group on the border issue** would take up the task of clarifying the alignment of the LAC.

Manmohan Singh – 2013

- In 2013, the **People's Liberation Army (PLA) patrol had set up a new LAC, occupying 640 sq km of Indian**

territory in Eastern Ladakh.

- The land grab by the PLA happened after India had signed nine agreements, including the **Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA)**, the same year in March ahead of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's visit to India.
- However, the BDCA, like all other previous bilateral agreements signed by the two sides in 1993, 1996, 2005 and 2012, has remained ineffective in checking Chinese incursions in Ladakh.

Though maps have been “shared” for the western sector they are never formally exchanged, and the **process of clarifying the LAC has effectively stalled since 2002**. There is **no publicly available map depicting India's version of the LAC**. During his visit to China in May 2015, PM Narendra Modi's proposal to clarify the LAC was rejected by the Chinese.

Mould your thought: What are the reasons for the recent standoff at the Indo-China border along LAC? Explain the agreements signed by both India and China so far to tackle the border disputes?

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