

Squaring off again in the Himalayan Heights: India China Deadlock

What is the issue?

The Indian and Chinese soldiers will remain to be deployed against each other in the icy cold deserts of Ladakh this winter.

What is the reason behind China's aggressive focus on India?

- The PLA incursion into Barahoti, a demilitarised zone in Uttarakhand in August was a significant pointer to the renewed Chinese aggression against India.
- The incursion of Chinese patrols in Arunachal Pradesh have also increased in frequency and duration.
- The major reason for China's aggressiveness is to further the institutional interest as the army of the revolution which is currently losing its pre-eminence in Taiwan and South China Sea.
- PLA's view that the Indian military has been exerting a greater presence on Chinese territory in the border areas in the last 10-12 years is also a reason.
- The Doklam stand-off of 2017, when Indian soldiers walked onto Bhutanese territory claimed by China, was a turning point in the PLA's approach.
- Beijing's unilateral action of changing the status quo resulted in the [Ladakh crisis](#).



What was New Delhi's response to Chinese aggressions?

- **The Indian military has inducted more modern military platforms backed by infrastructure construction in the China border.**
- The Indian military always maintained a defensive deterrence against the PLA.

- India's advantage in dissuading a major military conflict with China is that as a lesser power, it has to only deny an outright military victory to the PLA.
- Also, India's primacy of Air Force is an added advantage.

What are the challenges?

- **Military modernisation** - The sharp decline in the Indian economy after demonetisation and the coronavirus pandemic made it difficult to generate enough resources for military modernisation.
- The parliamentary standing committee on defence has repeatedly warned about the increasing technological asymmetry with PLA.
- **Divisive majoritarian politics** - India's foreign policy in the neighbourhood is adversely affecting the Indian interests.
- The UAE brokered backchannel deal with Pakistan fell through because of New Delhi's policies in Kashmir.
- **The treatment of religious minorities and the issues over the influx of Myanmar refugees in Mizoram has made India-Bangladesh relation weaker.**
- **Power competition in the Indo-Pacific** - Groupings like Quad (India, the United States, Australia, Japan) does not have a 'hard power' agenda yet unlike the trilateral security pact, AUKUS.
- **Executive's shadow** - The lack of institutional checks and balances on the political executive imposes a bigger cost in decision-making on national security issues.
- **The removal of an official report about Chinese presence across the LAC from the Defence Ministry's website and non-acknowledgement of Indian soldiers in Chinese captivity after the Galwan clash have been done to evade political accountability.**
- **Neither the Parliament has been allowed to ask**

questions nor the parliamentary standing committee deliberated upon the issue.

What is the future ahead?

- The Indian government's aim is to restore the *status quo* on the LAC in Ladakh that existed before May 2020 has not happened so far.
- A new *status quo* has been created which curtails Indian patrolling rights while the PLA remains to be settled in the Indian territories of Depsang, Hot Springs and Demchok.
- India now has no choice but to be prepared for all eventualities on the Sino-India border.

Reference:

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/squaring-off-again-in-the-himalayan-heights/article37116226.ece>
2. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/india-china-border-point-issue-has-a-past-pullback-ther-e-is-key-to-de-escalation-in-region-7566864/>