The Undercurrents along LoC and LAC

What is the issue?

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- Despite clearer border arrangements with Pakistan, the Indo-China border has been more peaceful.
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- This calls for a nuanced analysis of the tactical differences involved.
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How does the disputed Indo-Pak border fare?

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- **Ceasefire Line Era -** India and Pakistan have unsettled border disputes in the Jammu & Kashmir sector, which is a legacy of the 1948 war.
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- When peace was agreed, a ceasefire line (CFL) was also demarcated mutually, which was marked on the maps and jointly surveyed by both the armies.
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- This CFL, with minor variations, became the Line of Control (LoC) after the Shimla Agreement, which followed the 1971 war for Bangladeshi liberation.
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- The new nomenclature was meant to show that J&K was a bilateral dispute between the Pakistani and Indian, which would have to be resolved mutually.
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- **Line of Control Era -** LoC remained largely peaceful since Shimla, until the worsening of internal security situation in J&K in the 90s changed it.
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- While the J&K crisis itself was largely attributed to Pakistan, Kargil and the subsequent cross border aggressions opened up direct confrontations.
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- While things became peaceful again with the 2003 ceasefire, by late 2015, the LoC started heating up again.
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- Notably, 2017 was particularly bad with as much as 860 ceasefire violations

and 32 soldier deaths.
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How did India evolve its border arrangement with China?

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- Border disputes between Indian and China culminated in the 1962 Sino-Indian war, and no border arrangement was agreed upon in the subsequent peace.
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- Notably, China was able to assert its control over disputed territories, particularly in Ladakh (Aksai Chin).
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- While the concept of “Line of Actual Control” (LAC) came about in a bilateral agreement in 1993, there was no concrete settlement on ground positions.
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- Significantly, India and China have differing views on where the LAC lies and even its total perceived length by both sides are at a glaring variance.
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- Despite these confusing ground realities, the last ever violent clash recorded was in 1975, when an Assam Rifles patrol was ambushed and killed.
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- But notably, besides minor clashes between patrols, tense border standoffs have occurred in “Sumdorong Chu in 1987, Depsang in 2013, Chumar in 2014 and Doklam in 2017”.
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What is causing this LoC - LAC anomaly?

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- While there is no clear LAC demarcation, military commanders concede that both sides understand and agree on the other’s perception for 95% of the LAC.
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- Also, the mechanisms for border management between India and China, has been well defined and formalised, which include ceremonial border gatherings.
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- Moreover, a lot of quiet informal strategic meetings, coordinated

humanitarian assistance and disaster relief training exercises also happen regularly.
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- Contrarily, such structures haven't evolved in the Indo-Pak LoC, mainly due to the mutual deep-rooted hostility between India and Pakistan.
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- Both armies perceive each other as cultural and historic enemies, which has been reinforced through current political narratives.
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- The fact that Pakistan is actively aiding militancy in Kashmir and the speculation that it is covertly sponsoring terrorism elsewhere in India only reinforces hatred.
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What needs to be done?

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- Each incident stokes anger on either side, and an unending cycle of retributive violence is set in motion, which can have dangerous consequences.
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- While the border ranks view stand-offs with the Chinese as a professional call of duty, the Pakistan case is seen through an emotional and personal prism.
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- Reducing emotional rhetoric is indeed difficult but is crucial in easing tensions at the border, which both sides must realise.
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Source: Indian Express

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