



## Galwan Valley Clash

This article is based on [“Galwan: Postscript to a tragedy”](#) published in The Hindu on 19/06/2020. It talks about recent confrontation between India and China troops on the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

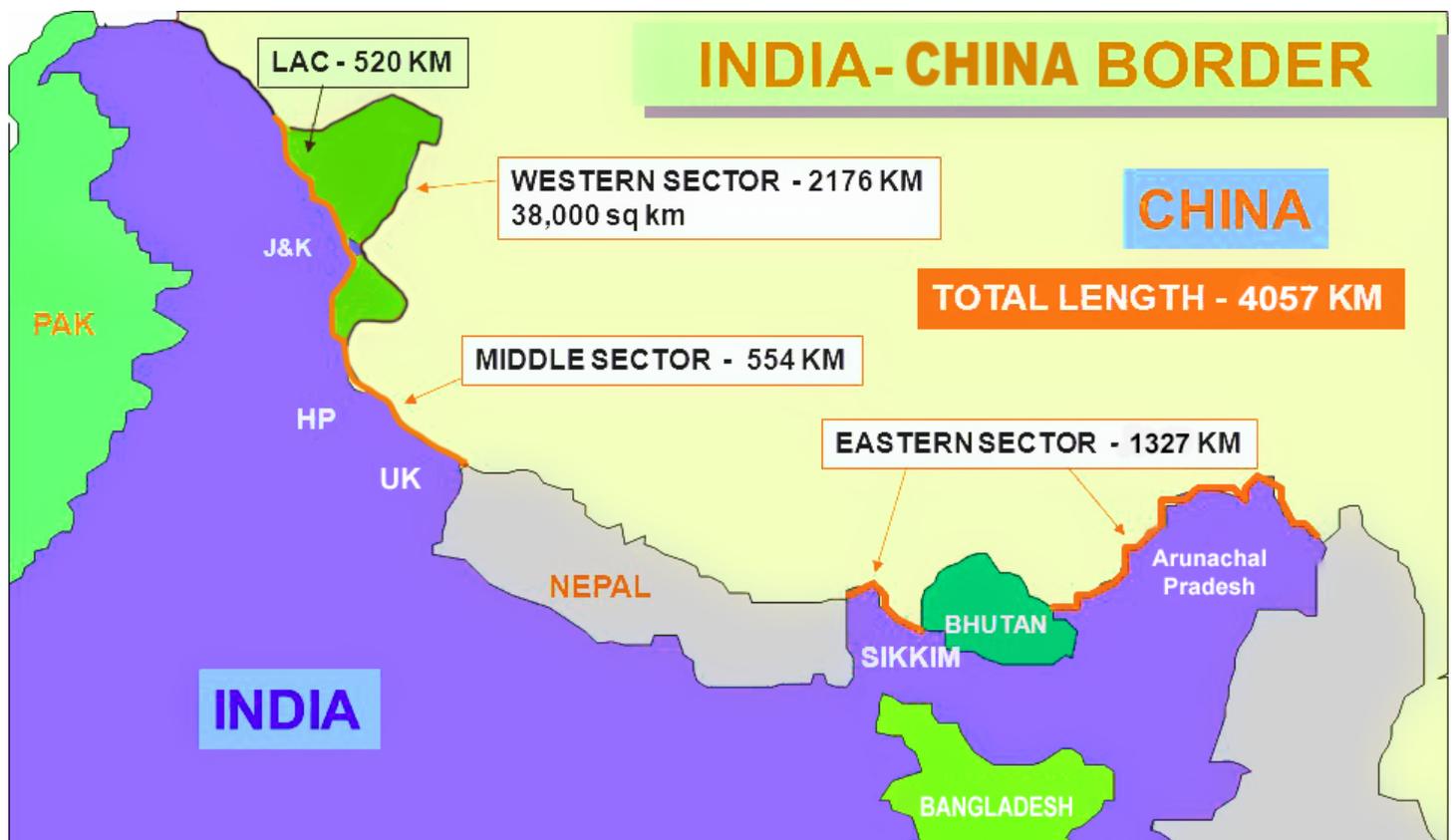
Recently, twenty Indian Army personnel, including the Commanding Officer of 16<sup>th</sup> Bihar Regiment, lost their lives at the hands of Chinese troops in the **Galwan Valley of Ladakh**.

This was an unprovoked attack by the Chinese border troops on Indian soldiers, after confirming the implementation of the [de-escalation plan](#) by the Chinese in Galwan valley. The plan of de-escalation is based on a phased withdrawal of troops to their respective predetermined ground positions, were decided on June 6 during the corps commanders-level talks.

The incident represents a watershed in India’s relations with China and marks the end of a 45-year chapter which saw no armed confrontation involving loss of lives on the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**.

### What is the issue?

- The Indian and Chinese armies are engaged in the standoff in **Pangong Tso, Galwan Valley, Demchok and Daulat Beg Oldie** in eastern Ladakh.
  - A sizable number of Chinese Army personnel even transgressed into the Indian side of the de-facto border in several areas including Pangong Tso.
  - The actions on the northern bank of Pangong Tso are not just for territorial gains on land, but enhanced domination of the **resource-rich lake**.
- The stand-off at Ladakh’s **Galwan Valley** has escalated in recent weeks due to the infrastructure projects that India has undertaken in the recent years. India is building a strategic road through the Galwan Valley - close to China - connecting the region to an airstrip.
  - China is opposed to any Indian construction in the area. In 1962, a stand-off in the Galwan area was one of the biggest flashpoints of the 1962 war.
- The border, or [Line of Actual Control](#), is not demarcated, and China and India have differing ideas of where it should be located, leading to regular border “transgressions.” Often these don’t escalate tensions; a serious border standoff like the current one is less frequent, though this is the fourth since 2013.
  - Both countries’ troops have patrolled this region for decades, as the contested 2,200-mile border is a long-standing subject of competing claims and tensions, including a brief war in 1962.
- **Reasons:** The violent clash happened when the Chinese side departed from the consensus to respect the LAC and attempted to unilaterally change the status quo.
  - It is part of China’s **‘nibble and negotiate policy’**. Their aim is to ensure that India does not build infrastructure along the LAC. It is their way of attaining a political goal with military might, while gaining more territory in the process.



## What is the Line of Actual Control (LAC)?

- The LAC is the demarcation that separates Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory. India considers the LAC to be 3,488 km long, while the Chinese consider it to be only around 2,000 km.
- The India-China LAC in Ladakh is an outcome of the territory illegally retained by China after the 1962 conflict. The Chinese occupation of parts of **Aksai Chin** is not supported by historical or legal documents.
- It is divided into three sectors:
  - the eastern sector which spans Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim
  - the middle sector in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh
  - the western sector in Ladakh
- The **Galwan Valley area** comes under Sub Sector North (SSN), which lies just to the east of the Siachen glacier and is the only point that provides direct access to Aksai Chin from India.

## How to Deal with a Problem?

- **Devolution of comprehensive China strategy:** Strong political direction, mature deliberation and coherence are keys to handling the situation.
  - The Army can make tactical adjustments and manoeuvres to deter the Chinese, but a comprehensive China strategy and its determination should devolve on those tasked with national security policy in the highest echelons of the Government of India.
- **Strategic communication:** The responsibility of effective strategic communication too rests with political leadership. It is important to perceive the signals of transgressions on a serious note and adopt adequate strategy with clear instructions for forces.
- **Clarification on LAC:** India should take the initiative to insist on a timely and early clarification of the LAC. Pockets of difference of alignment as perceived by each side have to be clearly identified and these areas demilitarised by both sides through joint agreement pending a settlement of the boundary.

- Diplomatic channels must continue to be open and should not be fettered in any way because their smooth operability is vital in the current situation.
- **Scaling down of military contact:** India must stand resolute and firm in the defence of territory in all four sectors of the border. Contacts between the two militaries through joint exercises and exchanges of visits of senior Commanders should be scaled down for the foreseeable future.
- **Counterbalance for the outside world:** India's leverage and balancing power within the Indo-Pacific and the world beyond stems from its strong democratic credentials, the dynamism of its economy, its leading role in multilateral institutions.
  - The **strategic advantage** of its **maritime geography** is an asset possessed by few nations, and which must be deployed much more effectively to counterbalance the Chinese ingress into this oceanic space that surrounds us.
- **Reconsider RCEP engagement:** The time has also come for India to reconsider its stand on joining the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership**.
  - If India is to disengage from economic involvement with China, and build the capacities and capabilities it needs in manufacturing, and in supply chains networks closer home, it cannot be a prisoner of the short term.
  - It is time to boldly take the long view in this area as also on its South Asia policy.

## Conclusion

The events in Galwan Valley should be a wake-up call to many of India's Asian friends and partners enabling a high-resolution envisioning of Chinese aggressiveness. This is also an opportunity for India to align its interests much more strongly and unequivocally with the U.S. as a principal strategic partner and infuse more energy into its relations with Japan, Australia, and the ASEAN.

### ***Drishti Mains Question***

"In the wake of Galwan Valley incidents, apart from insisting on a timely and early clarification of the LAC, India should take a long view of its South Asia policy". Discuss.

This editorial is based on "**H-1B Visa Ban by US**" which was published in The Indian Express on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Now watch this on our Youtube channel.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/galwan-valley-clash>