



Counteracting China's Influence by Improving Self-Capacity

This editorial is based on [Tackling China's infra build-up along LAC](#), which was published in Hindustan Times on 14/06/2022. It talks about China's infrastructure buildup along the LAC and the steps India can take for deterrence against any Chinese attack.

For prelims: India-China border mapping, Tibetan plateau, Xinjiang region, PLAAF, IAF

For mains: Implications for India due to improvement on infrastructure by the Chinese side on LAC and how can India respond to this threat.

With the rise of belligerent China and its increasing level of infrastructure buildup near India's border area, there is a need for India to enhance its infrastructure capabilities to deter China from pursuing any misadventure along the [LAC \(Line of Actual Control\)](#), and to further develop its long term strategy to contain China.

What's the Issue?

- China has been **developing infrastructure along with LAC**. The latest satellite images revealed that China was **building a second bridge over the [Pangong Tso](#)**. This bridge can **carry tanks and facilitate faster movement of military forces between the north and south banks of the lake**.

What kind of Infrastructure is being built by China?

- **For Improving Air Assets:** The first type of area is aimed at enhancing the capabilities of the **PLAAF (Chinese air force)**, as earlier, it has a limited no of operational airfields in the **Tibetan plateau**, and **problems of operating from high altitudes were a severe handicap** for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force.
 - After the [Doklam incident](#) in 2017, **37 airports and heliports within Tibet and Xinjiang** have been newly **constructed or upgraded**, of which **at least 22 are identifiable as military or dual-use facilities**.
 - Dual-use facilities are those infrastructures that can have both military and civilian applications. **These facilities include:**
 - Hardened shelters for housing military aircraft,
 - Underground facilities to ensure survivability,
 - Air defense missiles for protection,
 - Runways extension,
 - Helicopter operations facilities.

- **For Enhancing Logistics:** The **second area** is focused on the ability of the **PLA (People's Liberation Army)** to **rapidly mobilize its forces from its mainland bases** to their battle locations through an improved road and rail network.
 - In between 2015 and 2020, **Tibet's highways grew from 7,840 km to 11,820 km, a 51% increase,**
 - In June 2021, a **high-speed rail line connecting Lhasa and Nyingchi entered service, covering the 435 km distance in 2.5 hours.**
- **For Ramping up Forward Movement:** The infrastructure is also being developed for speedy application of combat power at LAC.
 - China has **constructed at least eight key roads toward LAC** from the G219 highway, These roads provide **connectivity to areas opposite important Indian military posts in Ladakh**, from [Daulat Beg Oldie](#) to [Galwan Valley](#), **Pangong Tso, and Chumar**. In addition, infrastructure such as **the bridge at Pangong Tso will assist in the faster north-south movement of troops.**

What are China's Intentions?

- China's infrastructure buildup is aimed at **reducing India's advantage** in the employment of airpower during a conflict along LAC.
- It is to **overcome their shortfalls, neutralize India's airpower edge over Tibet, and increase the PLA's combat capability for war fighting along LAC.**

What are the Challenges for India?

- It would increase the **PLA's combat capability** for war fighting along LAC.
- With the improved infrastructure in Tibet and Xinjiang, China could **quickly mobilize its troops** on the border from its bases.
- China would be able to **neutralize India's airpower edge over Tibet.**

What is the response from the Indian side?

- The Indian Army has **redeployed significant forces from the Pakistan border to the northern front.**
- A major push has been given to infrastructure development, **improving surveillance, and construction of roads.**
- After the 2020 standoff in eastern Ladakh, the government has sanctioned the **construction of 32 roads along LAC.**

What Could be the Way Forward?

- **Build Deterrence:** India must develop a **strategy that strengthens its deterrent posture.**
 - **Deterrence** is based on a **strong army deployment** along with LAC.
 - **India must focus on capabilities that seek to impose punishing costs in the event of a conflict.**
- **Tactical Thinking:** Apart from infrastructure development and troop deployments, which are necessary measures, there is the need for India to define a **long-term military strategy.**
- **Superior role of the IAF and Navy:** It is needed to ensure operational readiness and dominant role of airforce in **high-altitude** operations as China doesn't have many forward bases in the region, further harsh climate of Tibetan plateau makes transportation and mobilization of troops very difficult.
 - India also need to develop a **dominant naval position** in the Indian Ocean.
- **Going Beyond traditional means:** Capabilities must be developed in all domains to impose costs beyond the immediate area of conflict through long-range missiles, cyber warfare, space weapons, etc.

Drishti Mains Question

Q)What are the areas of contention between India and China and what steps India could take to counter

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. 'Hand-in-Hand 2007' a joint anti-terrorism military training was held by the officers of the Indian Army and officers of Army of which one of the following countries? (2008)

- (a) China
- (b) Japan
- (c) Russia
- (d) USA

Ans: (a)