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Q6(b)

## **Examine the Geo-strategic points of contention in the bilateral relationship between India and China**

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · PSIR GS 2 · 15 marks · India and the Global Centres of Power

India and the Global Centres of Power: USA, EU, Japan, China and Russia.

### **Core demand of the question**

- Examine the geostrategic points of contention in India-China relations
- Write at 15-mark length

### **Revision summary**

The core file is an unsettled Himalayan boundary.

**Doklam 2017** and **Galwan 2020** are the named recent crises.

**CPEC** through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is a sovereignty and two-front issue.

The Indian Ocean and South Asian projects extend the contest beyond the ridge.

Status in the UN and Asian clubs is the diplomatic layer of the same rivalry.

### **Introduction**

India and China share a long disputed Himalayan frontier and a crowded Asian order. Geostrategic contention is territorial, maritime, and institutional. Doklam and Galwan are named shocks on a deeper map.

### **Body**

#### **The land frontier**

- **Unresolved boundary:** Aksai Chin, the McMahon Line, and the status of the so-called **LAC**.
- 1962 war memory structures military planning.
- **Doklam 2017:** a stand-off at the Bhutan-China-India trijunction, about a road and the Siliguri corridor's depth.
- **Galwan 2020:** lethal clash in eastern Ladakh that ended a long political pretence of managed peace.

#### **The Pakistan and Himalayan wedge**

- China-Pakistan strategic tie and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.
- India reads **CPEC** as a sovereignty and two-front problem, not only a trade road.

#### **The maritime and neighbourhood ring**

- Indian Ocean dual-use ports, submarine visits, and a growing PLA Navy.
- Influence in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Bangladesh through finance and projects.

- Tibet and the Dalai Lama remain a political-security residue of 1950s incorporation.

### Order and status

- China's rise, as Waltz would count capability, shrinks India's room in Asia.
- UN Security Council permanent membership, NSG, and Asian institutions are status contests.
- The **Quad and Act** East are Indian replies, not the cause of the border file.

### What is not the whole story

- Trade remains large. Contention is geostrategic even when shops are full.

### Flow diagram

Boundary LAC -> Doklam 2017  
Boundary LAC -> Galwan 2020  
CPEC PoK PoK -> Two-front fear  
Indian Ocean -> Two-front fear  
Doklam 2017 -> Geostrategic contention  
Galwan 2020 -> Geostrategic contention  
Two-front fear -> Geostrategic contention

### Conclusion

Points of contention are the boundary (Doklam, Galwan, Aksai Chin, Arunachal), the China-Pakistan corridor, the Indian Ocean, and status in Asian and UN order. Interdependence in trade has not dissolved the security dilemma.

### Facts & figures

#### Doklam 2017

India-China stand-off near the Bhutan trijunction over road construction and the Siliguri corridor.

#### Galwan 2020

Violent clash in eastern Ladakh that produced Indian and Chinese casualties and a prolonged deployment.

#### CPEC

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, including routes India says run through its territory in PoK.

#### LAC

**Line of Actual Control:** a practical, disputed military line, not an agreed international boundary.