



India – China Relations

Context:

- The India-China confrontation along the LAC should not be seen as a standalone event.
- The current intensification of tension between China and India following the escalation of Chinese troop build-up in Ladakh is but one sign that Beijing is increasingly feeling beleaguered.



What does the intensification of tension between India-China suggests?

China is feeling threatened:

- An authoritarian regime whose legitimacy rests primarily on its economic performance is faced with a situation where growth is expected to plummet.
- It is a sign that Beijing is increasingly feeling beleaguered.
- In response, it has embarked on a strategy of brinkmanship with several goals in mind.
- External adventurism, when cloaked in the garb of ultra-nationalism, can shore up a regime's legitimacy at home.

It could be a move to divert the attention of the world:

- Simultaneously, it can act as a diversionary measure to escape international criticism for Beijing's attempt to cover up the spread of the coronavirus.
- Many countries hold China responsible for the huge cost in human lives and suffering as well as the unprecedented economic distress.
- In the face of such criticism, the Chinese regime is increasingly using jingoistic jargon to build up domestic support.
- President Xi Jinping's recent speech to the PLA is an outstanding example of this strategy.
- He exhorted the Chinese armed forces to "prepare for war" in order to "resolutely safeguard national sovereignty" and "the overall strategic stability of the country".
- This is a sign that the Communist Party of China (CPC) feels increasingly threatened both domestically and externally.



Deterioration of the US-China relations:

- China's relations with the U.S. have been **going downhill** almost since the beginning of the **Donald Trump presidency**.
- Washington has **periodically imposed economic sanctions** on China and Beijing has retaliated in kind.
- Trade talks have faltered because of **growing protectionist sentiments in the U.S.** and Chinese inability to adequately respond to them.
- The chipping away at **Hong Kong's autonomous status** by Beijing and the suppression of the **pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong** has led to severe criticism by the U.S. administration and in the Congress.
- Differences over **the issue of Taiwan** have added to tensions, with China viewing the U.S. as the primary impediment preventing Taiwan's integration.
- The Trump administration has significantly **increased support to Taiwan** with arms sales that have added to China's concern.

U.S.-China rivalry in South-China Sea:

- Above all, the **U.S.-China rivalry in the South China Sea** acts as the potential flashpoint that may well lead to a shooting war.
- So far, it has been careful that these moves **do not trigger a serious confrontation with the U.S.**
- Washington has a strong interest in **preventing China from asserting control over the South China Sea** as maintaining free access to this waterway is important to it for economic reasons.
- It also has **defence treaty obligations to the Philippines**, which has vigorously contested Chinese territorial claims.
- Further, China's control of the South China Sea would be a major step toward **replacing the U.S. as the foremost power** in the Indo-Pacific region.

Conclusion:

- Increased Chinese adventurism could result in an escalation of U.S.-China confrontation in the South China Sea. If that happens, the India-China face-off in Ladakh could become part of a much larger "great game", with the U.S. trying to preserve the status quo and China attempting to change it to further its objective of regional dominance at the U.S.'s expense. The current India-China crisis should, therefore, be seen in its proper context and not as an isolated event.