

India-China LAC Dispute

What is the issue?

- There is a national security crisis going on with the multiple Chinese intrusions across the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- India needs to change its national security strategy.

What has happened?

- The intrusions across the LAC are at Galwan River, Hot Springs, Pangong Tso in Eastern Ladakh and Naku La in North Sikkim.
- The MEA has made three perfunctory statements about the diplomatic and military engagements to defuse the situation.
- No formal statement has been made on the military situation at the sites of the intrusions or along the rest of the LAC.
- However, the Chief of Army Staff said that the Army is disengaging in a phased manner, starting from the Galwan river valley.

What is the pattern?

- The Depsang 2013, Chumar 2014, Doklam 2017 and now Eastern Ladakh 2020 are some of the Indo-China crises.
- Over the last seven years, India has followed a familiar pattern to resolve national security crises arising due to the ever-shifting Chinese claim lines on the undemarcated LAC.
- The Chinese actions catch us by surprise at strategic and tactical level.
- India reacts post-haste with a much higher force level.
- The exact place and extent of intrusion are never formally acknowledged.
- The outcomes of these engagements and concessions meted out are not put out in public domain.
- Disengagement happens again and India repeats the same process.

What is the government's concern?

- The jury is still out on the outcome of the 2020 crisis.
- The primary concern of the government in such a crisis that portends possible loss of territory is its fallout on domestic politics.

What is the problem with India's approach?

- Denial and obfuscation by peddling the **logic of differing perceptions** is the escape route.
- This virtually endorses China's stand that the PLA is operating in its own area and it is India that is interfering with its patrols.
- Instead of calling China the initiator of the crisis, India creates an ambiguity in the minds of the public and international community.
- This approach also misleads the nation about our military capabilities.
- India negotiates from a position of weakness, and hence concessions given are a cause of bigger worry.

What is India's national security strategy?

- No clear national security strategy has been spelt out by any Indian government so far.
- The capabilities are more tailored to fight the last war and not future wars.
- The Defence Planning Committee has had the mandate to formalise a national security strategy since 2018, but little seems to have been done.
- India has created a military suited to fight the wars of the 20th century.
- With incremental changes, India is desperately trying to adapt this military to fight high technology-driven short wars of the 21st-century.
- Moreover, in the absence of political guidance in the national security strategy, the military is always looking over its shoulders during a crisis.

What should be India's national security strategy?

- The logical approach to national security must begin with a strategic review to establish what the present and future security challenges are.
- This would help in evolving a comprehensive national security strategy.
- This must be formalised and put under parliamentary scrutiny.
- Unclassified aspects must be in the public domain so that in any crisis, it is generally known as to how the government will act.
- The national security strategy is the starting point for all security planning as it formally spells out the vision to tackle the threats faced.
- It leads to the acquiring of much-needed capabilities.
- It spells out the capabilities required in terms of force levels, technology and structures.
- The military works out the details, and after approving them, the government allocates the financial resources.
- Also, from the national security strategy flows the joint military strategy.

What is China's approach?

- In the last few decades, China has followed the logical approach towards

national security and transformed its military.

- China is prepared to use the same to pursue its policy and has started the current border incidents to assert its hegemony over India.
- It wants to enforce a status quo with respect to border infrastructure on its own terms.

What should India do?

- The violence on the LAC is an ominous warning for the government to review its approach towards handling the current crisis.
- This crisis has to be managed without losing any territory.
- As a first step, India must delink national security from domestic politics.
- The onus for this is on the government.
- It must take the Opposition, Parliament, the media and the public into confidence, and apply the security principle of need-to-know.
- They must explain the reality on the ground so that the nation can present a united front.
- India's military has the capability to stalemate the PLA, which is defeat for China.

Source: The Indian Express

