



India-China: the making of a border

Why in news: The **India-China border dispute** continues to shape regional geopolitics, with historical roots in colonial-era demarcations, the **1962 war**, and subsequent negotiations.

India-China Border History

- The border was the product of **Manchu and British empires** and was not precise.
- After Independence, India insisted it knew the border based on **British-era maps**, without actual control on the ground.

Beginning of the Conflict

- China built a **highway through Aksai Chin** to connect Xinjiang with Tibet and occupied it.
- India established control over **Tawang** based on the **1914 McMahon Line** agreement with Tibet.
- In 1959, China proposed a **Line of Actual Control**; in 1960, Zhou Enlai proposed a **territorial swap** (Aksai Chin for Arunachal Pradesh).
- India refused, leading to the **1962 war**. China withdrew in the east but **retained areas in Ladakh**.

Post-war Developments

- Both sides stayed away from the border for 15 years.
- In 1975, India set up a **China Study Group** to map and patrol the border.
- In 1979, **Atal Bihari Vajpayee** visited Beijing, restoring some normalcy.
- **Deng Xiaoping** revived Zhou's proposal of recognising McMahon Line if India accepted the status quo.
- India rejected Chinese proposals, including the 1983 **LAC Plus proposal**.

Negotiations Phase

- Border talks resumed in **1981**, but no progress due to differing approaches (package deal vs sector-wise talks).
- By 1985, China shifted focus to the **Tawang tract**, linked to Tibetan Buddhism and Tibet policy.
- India-China clashes occurred at **Nathu La and Cho La (1967)**, and Chinese protests followed India's **integration of Sikkim (1975)**.
- In 1986, the **Wangdung crisis** led to **Operation Falcon**, with India forward-deploying forces, surprising China.

Move towards Normalcy

- By 1985, with the Soviet threat reduced, China sought to balance India's ties with the U.S.
- **Rajiv Gandhi's 1988 visit to Beijing** marked true normalisation of ties after 1962.

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China's Military Parade:

- Beijing's **Tiananmen Square** hosted a **military parade** recently marking **80 years since the end of the Second World War**.
- China calls WW2 the "**Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War**."
- The parade displayed **advanced Chinese weaponry**, including the **DF-5C ICBM with a 20,000 km range**, along with drones and missiles, showcasing rapid weapons development.
- China's commemoration reflects an **increasingly nationalistic narrative**, tied to its historical memory of **Japanese aggression** and the **Nanjing massacre (1937)**. Initially, the CCP downplayed WW2, but from the late **1970s**, amid **Mao's death and reform-era legitimacy crises**, the war narrative was revived as a **unifying nationalist tool**.
- **Japan's revisionist tendencies** and Taiwan's rejection of China's narrative further sharpened Beijing's stance.
- By framing the war as a battle against **fascism**, China positions itself to criticise **the West and Japan** while tying it to the "**Century of Humiliation**".



- Both sides agreed to develop relations while keeping border talks under a **Joint Working Group (JWG)**.
- The focus shifted to **peace and tranquillity on the border** while working for a “**mutually acceptable solution**.”

Modi–Xi Meeting at SCO Summit 2025 and the Road to Normalisation

- PM **Modi met Chinese President** in Tianjin during the **SCO Summit**, marking his first visit to China in **seven years**.
- Both leaders noted the **positive momentum** since their last meeting at the BRICS Summit in **Kazan (2024)**.
- They agreed on the importance of **peace and tranquillity in border areas** and reaffirmed commitment to cooperation based on **mutual respect, mutual interest, and mutual sensitivity**.
- India emphasised that ties should be viewed **bilaterally**, not through the lens of other countries.
- Relations had worsened after the **2020 Galwan clashes** in Ladakh where 20 Indian soldiers were killed. India restricted **Chinese investments** as an immediate response. In 2024, both sides announced **disengagement agreements** and resumed high-level interactions. Steps for normalisation included **resumption of Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, visa relaxations, and ministerial visits**.

Key Issues Discussed

- **Border Dispute:** Both sides highlighted the need for **peace on the border**, but India underlined it as crucial for the development of relations, while China said it should not define ties.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** India stressed that ties should not be viewed through a **third-country lens**, reaffirming its independent foreign policy.
- **Trade Relations:** India emphasised reducing the **\$100 billion trade deficit** and expanding trade and investment. Previous mechanisms (2019 high-level group) were stalled due to **border clashes and Covid-19**.
- **Chinese Overcapacity:** Xi highlighted the issue of **industrial overproduction and dumping**, but addressing it could hurt China’s economy.

The Upshot

- The meeting signals **support for the normalisation process**, but **no major agreement** was reached.
- Persistent **differences on the border issue, trade deficit, and China’s support to Pakistan** remain challenges to deepening ties.

[Current Affairs Course is now Live](#). Course will start in October 2025 1st week.

Modules will include class notes, monthly compilation, quarter compilation and annual compilation. This will help in regular revision r/t in the fag-end of preparation.

I will provide my annual compilation, like last year, on Telegram in May 1st week.

[Last year I had promised 20 questions in Prelims from my notes & 28+ Questions could be answered from the same.](#)

30 questions is my aim for 2026 prelims. To meet that, I have analyzed why I missed 5-6 C.A. questions in 2025 and I have increased my coverage accordingly.

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