



India–China Border Issues

Border Overview

- India and China share a land border of **3,488 km**, the **longest disputed border India has**.
- **Line of Actual Control (LAC):** Emerged after the **1962 war** as the de facto boundary.
 - **Not clearly demarcated on ground.**
 - **Different perceptions** by both countries → frequent **face-offs and standoffs**.
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Three Border Sectors

A) Western Sector – Ladakh

- Most contentious sector, revolves around **Aksai Chin**.
- Dispute origins:
 - **Johnson Line (1860s)**: British line placing Aksai Chin in J&K → India's claim.
 - **McDonald Line (1890s)**: China's claim line placing Aksai Chin in China.
- Post-1962 war: China occupies ~37,000 sq km of Aksai Chin, connecting **Tibet to Xinjiang via G219 highway**.

B) Middle Sector – Himachal Pradesh & Uttarakhand

- Least problematic sector.
- Boundary not formally demarcated, but **map exchanges show broad agreement**.

C) Eastern Sector – Arunachal Pradesh & Sikkim

- Dispute centers on **McMahon Line (1914, Simla Convention)**.
- India recognizes it; China rejects it → claims **entire Arunachal Pradesh (~90,000 sq km)** as “South Tibet”.
- **Tawang region**: Sensitive due to historic ties of **Tawang Monastery with Lhasa Monastery**.

Major Issues on the LAC

1. **Different Perceptions**: No common map; each side patrols up to its own claim line → face-offs.
2. **Infrastructure Gap**: China has all-weather roads, bridges, airstrips; India is catching up.
3. **Military Deployments**: ~60,000 troops each side since 2020; heavy weapons increase escalation risk.
4. **Salami Slicing & Grey Zone Tactics**: Incremental Chinese intrusions in Depsang Plains, Pangong Tso, Doklam.

5. **Lack of Trust & Verification:** Agreements exist (1993, 1996, 2005, 2013) but no ground demarcation → repeated crises.

Major Skirmishes along LAC

1. **1962 War** – China captured ~37,000 sq km Aksai Chin; ceasefire; India modernized armed forces.
2. **1967 Nathu La & Cho La** – India successfully resisted Chinese attack in Sikkim; morale boost.
3. **2014 Chumar** – Face-off during Xi Jinping's visit; resolved after disengagement.
4. **2017 Doklam** – China tried road construction in Bhutan; India intervened to protect Siliguri corridor. Disengagement followed.
5. **2020 Galwan Valley** – Hand-to-hand clash; 20 Indian soldiers martyred; first deadly clash in 45 years.
6. **2020–2022 Pangong Tso, Gogra, Hot Springs, Depsang** – Series of standoffs; infrastructure buildup continues; ~60,000 troops on each side.

Measures to Reduce LAC Trust Deficit

1. Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs)

- Agreements since 1993: Peace & Tranquillity, CBMs, Protocols.
- Focus: No firing, flag meetings, controlled patrols.

2. Diplomatic Engagements

- **WMCC (2012):** Regular mechanism to handle standoffs.
- High-level talks: NSA Ajit Doval – FM Wang Yi (2025, BRICS); PM Modi – President Xi discussions.
- 31st WMCC (2025): Talks “frank, constructive, forward-looking.”

3. Military Measures

- Verified **disengagement** at Galwan, Pangong, Gogra, Hot Springs.
- Coordinated patrols; flag meetings; hotlines for crisis management.

4. Surveillance & Monitoring

- India's **satellites, drones, radars, cameras** monitor LAC in real time.

5. Infrastructure Development

- Roads, tunnels, bridges, airstrips (DS-DBO road, strategic bridges in Ladakh, ALGs in Arunachal).
- Reduces asymmetry and strengthens India's position.

6. Multilateral Platforms

- BRICS, SCO, G20 used to keep diplomatic channels open.
- Peace at border → prerequisite for bilateral ties.

Other Major Concerns in India–China Relations

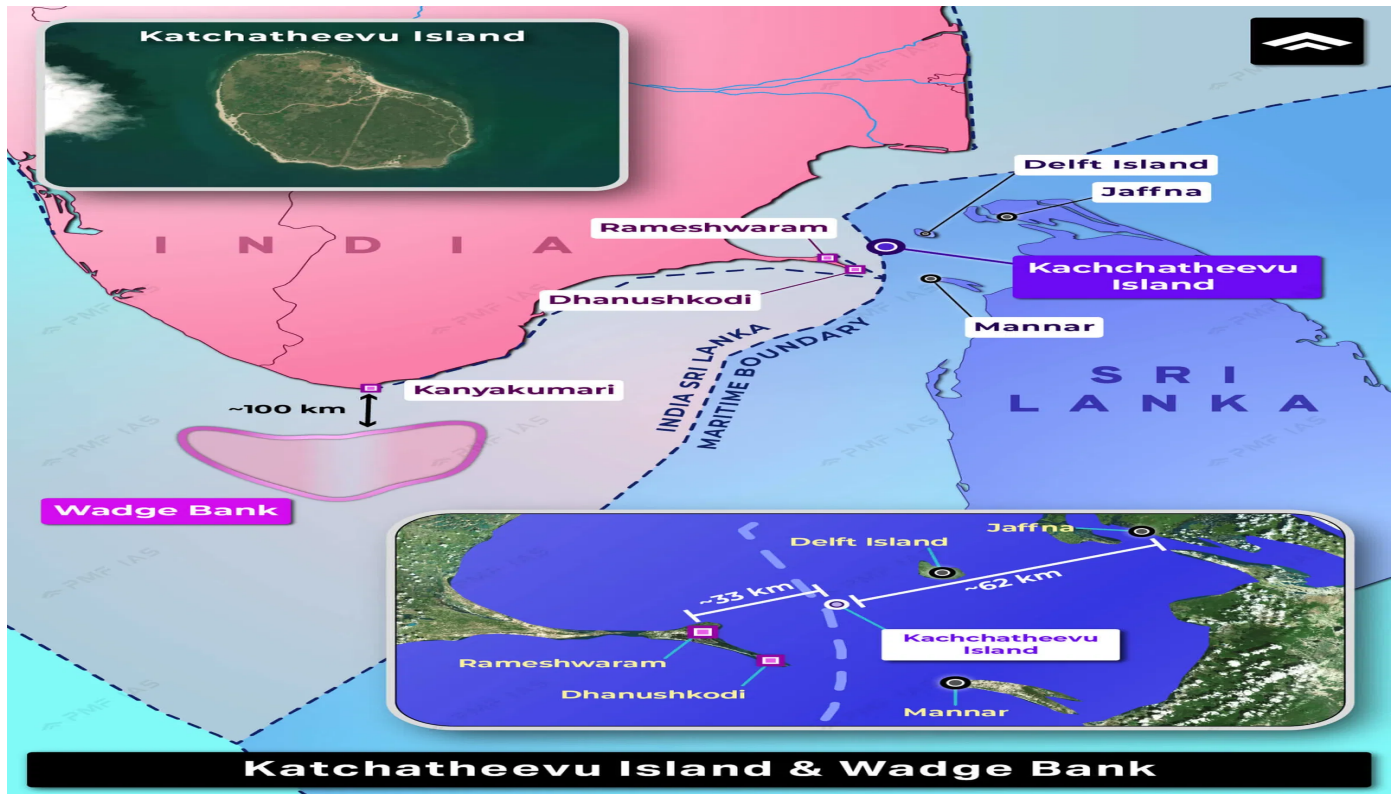
1. **Economic Imbalance:** India's trade deficit ~USD 85B; dependence on China for pharma APIs, semiconductors.
2. **China–Pakistan Axis:** CPEC passes through PoK; challenge to India's sovereignty.
3. **Water Security:** China controls Brahmaputra & Sutlej upper reaches → flood/drought risks.
4. **String of Pearls:** Chinese ports/bases in IOR (Gwadar, Hambantota, Maldives, Bangladesh, Myanmar) → maritime security concern.
5. **Freedom of Navigation:** China's South China Sea claims affect global trade & Indian Ocean security.

India's Stand

- LAC peace is **prerequisite for normal ties**.
- Restoration of **status quo ante (pre-April 2020)** insisted.
- Strategic infrastructure development continues within sovereignty rights.
- Diplomatic engagement remains open via **WMCC, corps talks, BRICS/SCO summits**.

Katchatheevu

- A small barren uninhabited island (about 285 acres) in the Palk Strait, between Tamil Nadu (India) and Sri Lanka. It has no permanent people living there.
- **St. Anthony's Church:** An important site where fishermen from both countries go for an annual festival.



History of the Dispute

- Long ago, the island belonged to the Raja of Ramnad (Tamil Nadu) and later came under the British (Madras Presidency).
- After 1947, both India and Sri Lanka claimed it.

Key Agreements:

- **1974 Agreement (Indira Gandhi – Sri Lankan PM Bandaranaike):** India officially gave the island to Sri Lanka. But Indian fishermen could still go there to rest, dry their nets, and visit the church.
- **1976 Agreement:** India agreed that its fishermen cannot fish around Katchatheevu, i.e., fishing rights were fully stopped.
- In return, New Delhi got **sovereign rights over Wadge Bank**, located near Kanyakumari, known for its rich resources.

Palk Strait

- **Location:** Narrow strip of water between **Tamil Nadu (India)** and **Sri Lanka**.
- **Length & Width:** Approximately **85–100 km long** and **40–120 km wide** in different stretches.
- **Connection:** Links the **Bay of Bengal** (northeast) to the **Gulf of Mannar** (southwest).
- **Strategic Importance:**
 1. **Fishermen's Livelihood:** Rich fishing grounds; traditional livelihood for Tamil Nadu fishermen.
 2. **Maritime Security:** Sensitive corridor; any conflict or illegal crossings affect India–Sri Lanka relations.
 3. **Environmental Significance:** Contains **coral reefs, marine biodiversity**, and is prone to ecological stress due to overfishing.
 4. **Economic Activities:** Shipping, trade routes, and fishery exports depend on it.

Controversies around Katchatheevu

Sovereignty Dispute:

- Tamil Nadu politicians argue ceding territory without Parliament approval may be unconstitutional (Article 368 debate).
- Supreme Court has scheduled a final hearing to address petitions challenging the 1974 and 1976 agreements that ceded Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka.

Political Controversy:

- Tamil Nadu leaders demand the return of Katchatheevu to protect fishermen.
- Sri Lanka firmly rejects the claim, calling it part of its sovereignty.
- The issue often becomes political during Tamil Nadu elections.

Fishermen's Livelihood:

- Fishermen from Tamil Nadu have traditionally fished around Katchatheevu.
- After 1976, Indian fishermen were not allowed to fish near the island, leading to frequent arrests by the Sri Lankan Navy.

Maritime & Security Issues:

- Katchatheevu is in the Palk Strait, a sensitive sea area.
- Problems here include: illegal crossings by fishermen; smuggling and drug trafficking risks; and disagreements between India and Sri Lanka over enforcement.

Environmental Concerns:

- Overfishing and bottom trawling near Katchatheevu damage marine ecology.
- Fish stocks and coral reefs in the Palk Strait are under threat.

Way Forward

1. Ensure safe fishing zones and alternative fishing opportunities for Tamil Nadu fishermen.
2. Strengthen India–Sri Lanka maritime cooperation to prevent arrests and conflicts.
3. Protect religious access to St. Anthony's Church.
4. Promote sustainable fishing to protect marine ecology.
5. Educate fishermen about boundaries and safe practices.