



Indian and Chinese Troops Clash in Arunachal Pradesh

For Prelims: Location of Tawang Sector, Arunachal Pradesh

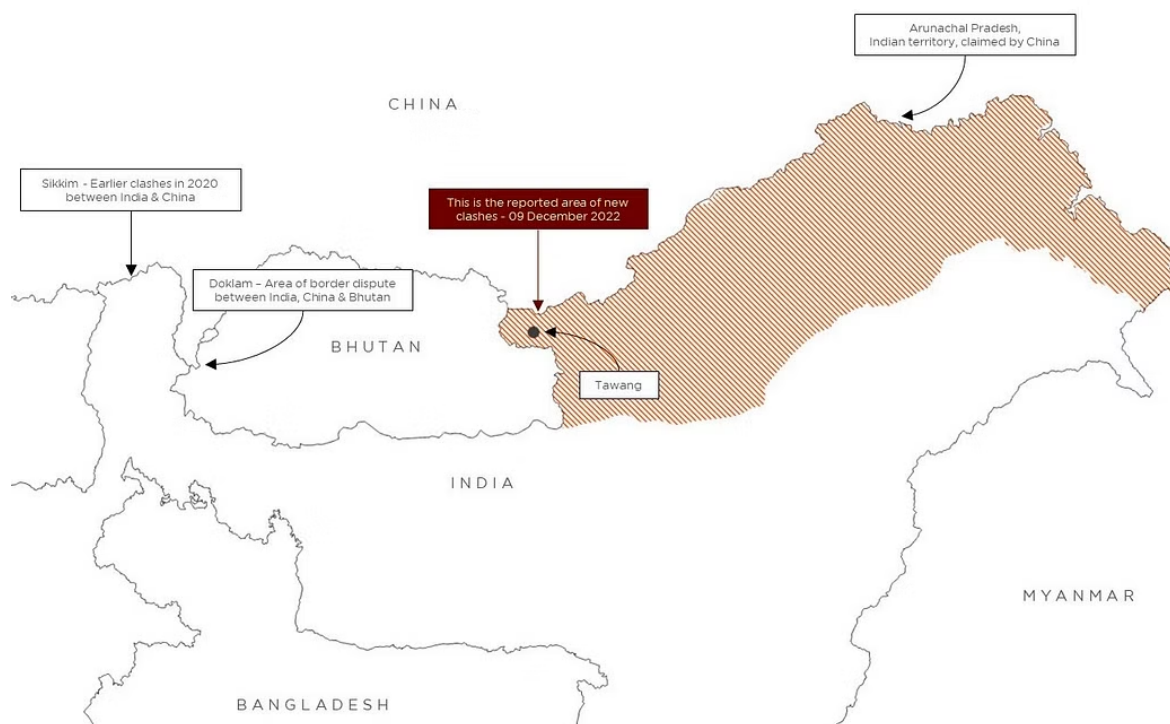
For Mains: Issues in India - China relations and the Solution

Why in News?

Recently, India and China troops clashed along the Yangste river in Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh.

- This was the **first such incident involving the Indian soldiers and Chinese PLA troops** since the [Galwan Valley incident](#) in 2020.
- Both sides patrol areas up to their claim lines and this has been a trend since 2006.

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What is the Background?

- According to the India Army, there are certain areas along the [Line of Actual Control \(LAC\)](#) in the **Tawang Sector** that are areas of differing perception.
 - The LAC is divided into western (Ladakh), middle (Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand), Sikkim, and eastern (Arunachal Pradesh) sectors.

- The incident came days after China expressed objection to [Operation Yudhabhyas](#), an India-US joint military exercise at Auli in the Uttarakhand hills, claiming it was a violation of [1993 and 1996 border agreements](#).

What is the Importance of Arunachal Pradesh from an Indian/Chinese Perspective?

▪ Strategic Significance:

- Arunachal Pradesh, known as the **Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA) until 1972**, is the largest state in the northeast and shares international borders with Tibet to the north and northwest, Bhutan towards the west and Myanmar to the east.
- The state is like a **protective shield to the northeast**.
- However, China claims Arunachal Pradesh as a part of southern Tibet.
- And while **China may lay claim to the entire state, its main interest lies in the district of Tawang**, which is in the north-western region of Arunachal and borders Bhutan and Tibet.

▪ Bhutan Factor:

- Taking control of Arunachal would mean that **Bhutan would have Chinese neighbours on both its western and eastern borders** if Beijing gained control.
 - On the western side of Bhutan, China has already begun building motorable roads linking strategic points.

▪ Waterpower:

- Since, **China has control over India's water supply to the northeastern region**. It has constructed several dams and can use water as a geo-strategic weapon against India by causing flooding or drought in the region.
- The **Tsangpo river**, which originates in Tibet, flows into India and is called **Siang in Arunachal Pradesh** before it becomes the Brahmaputra.
- In 2000, **a dam breach in Tibet caused floods** that wreaked havoc in northeast India claiming 30 lives and leaving more than 100 missing.

Why is China Interested in the Tawang Sector?

▪ Strategic Importance:

- China's interest in **Tawang could be for tactical reasons as it provides a strategic entry into India's northeastern region**.
 - Tawang is a **critical point in the corridor between Tibet and Brahmaputra Valley**.

▪ Tawang Monastery:

- Tawang, which also borders Bhutan, **hosts the Golden Namgye Lhatse**, the world's second-largest monastery of Tibetan Buddhism, the largest being the Potala Palace in Lhasa.
 - The monastery was founded by **Merag Lodroe Gyamtso in the year 1680-81 to honour the wishes of the fifth Dalai Lama**.
 - China claims that the **monastery is evidence that the district once belonged to Tibet**. They cite historical ties between the Tawang monastery and the Lhasa monastery in Tibet to support their claim over Arunachal.

▪ Cultural Connections and China's Anxieties:

- Tawang is an **important center of Tibetan Buddhism** and there are some tribes in the upper Arunachal region which have cultural connections to the people of Tibet.
 - The **Monpa tribal population practices Tibetan Buddhism** and are also found in some areas of Tibet.
- According to some experts, China fears that the presence of these ethnic groups in Arunachal could at some stage give rise to a pro-democracy Tibetan movement against Beijing.

▪ Political Significance:

- When the Dalai Lama escaped Tibet in 1959 amid China crackdown, he entered India through Tawang and stayed in the Tawang monastery for some time.

Way Forward

- India needs to be vigilant enough for any new development in China near its border to protect its interests efficiently.
- Further, it **needs to build robust infrastructure in difficult border areas** in its territory to ensure movement of personnel and other logistical supplies in an efficient manner.
- Border troops should continue their dialogue, quickly disengage, maintain proper distance and ease tensions.
- The two **sides should abide by all the existing agreements and protocols on China-India boundary affairs** and avoid any action that could escalate matters.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. “The USA is facing an existential threat in the form of China, that is much more challenging than the erstwhile Soviet Union.” Explain. **(2021)**

Q. “China is using its economic relations and positive trade surplus as tools to develop potential military power status in Asia”. In the light of this statement, discuss its impact on India as her neighbour. **(2017)**

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