Defence & Security · GS - III

In the context of the evolving India-China security environment, air power is increasingly important for deterrence, surveillance and rapid military response. Critically examine its strategic utility and limitations in high-altitude border regions.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Air superiority, strategic deterrence, LAC, high-altitude operations, ISR, precision strike capabilities, logistics, terrain and weather constraints, integrated air defence, jointness, indigenous defence technology.

Model Answer

Introduction

The India-China border presents a complex security environment characterised by difficult terrain, high-altitude conditions and rapid military infrastructure development. In this context, air power is a critical instrument of deterrence and operational preparedness.

Strategic Utility of Air Power

1. **Deterrence:** Credible air capabilities increase the potential costs of aggression and strengthen India's ability to respond.
2. **Surveillance and intelligence:** Aircraft, drones and airborne surveillance systems improve monitoring of military movements and border developments.

3. **Rapid mobilisation:** Transport aircraft facilitate the movement of troops, equipment and supplies to remote operational areas.
4. **Operational flexibility:** Fighter aircraft and precision-strike capabilities provide options for responding to emerging threats.
5. **Joint operations:** Air support enhances the effectiveness of land forces through reconnaissance, logistics and coordinated operations.

Limitations in High-Altitude Regions

- **Geographical constraints:** Mountainous terrain and high-altitude airfields complicate aircraft operations.
- **Weather conditions:** Turbulence, low temperatures and unpredictable weather affect operational availability.
- **Air defence threats:** Advanced enemy air defence systems can restrict operational freedom.
- **Infrastructure dependence:** Effective operations require reliable airbases, maintenance facilities and logistics.
- **Escalation risks:** Air operations during a crisis may rapidly intensify military confrontation.

Way Forward

India should strengthen integrated air defence, indigenous aerospace capabilities, intelligence-sharing and joint planning among the armed forces. Investment in surveillance, electronic warfare, logistics and resilient border infrastructure is equally important.

Conclusion

Air power is a vital component of India's deterrence posture, but it cannot operate in isolation. Its effectiveness depends on integration with land forces, technological preparedness and credible strategic decision-making.