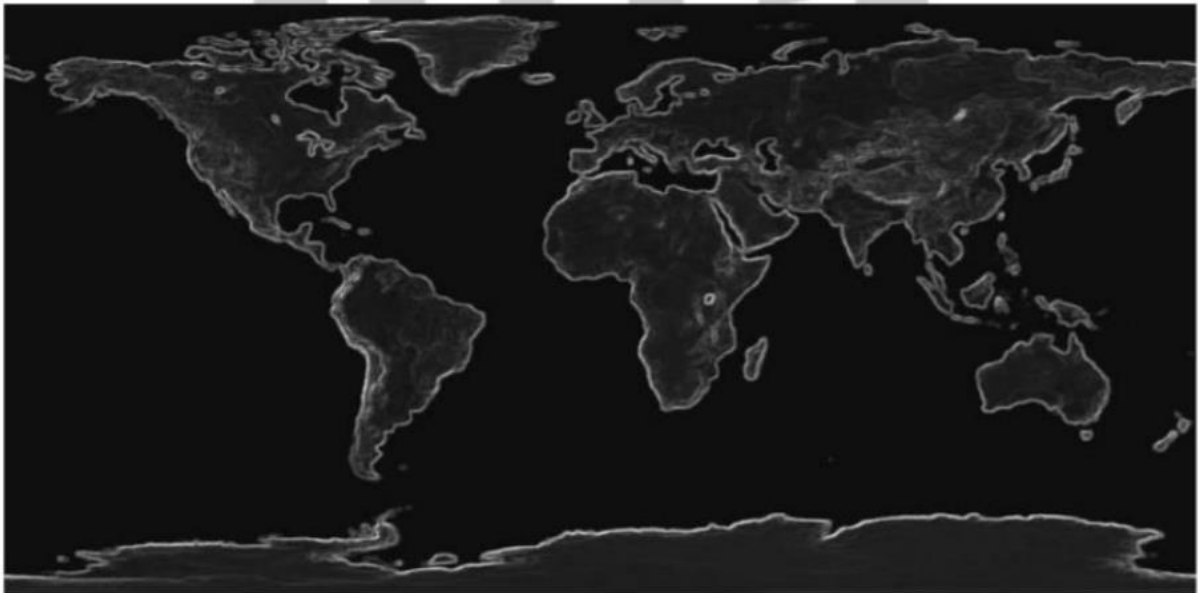




Veritas et Aequitas

THE SINO-INDIA CONNECTION

A comprehensive overview of the foreign policy dynamics between
India and China



JUNE 24, 2020
PROJECT STATECRAFT



Early Relationship

The start of what might be construed as a relationship between India and China began in 1950 when India was among the first countries to end formal ties with the Republic of China (Taiwan) and recognize the PRC as the legitimate government of Mainland China. India was the first non-communist country to extend said recognition.



Mao says there was no need for India and China to ‘quarrel’, which has Nehru responding: ‘Sometimes we have differences, but we do not quarrel’.” The picture shows Mao Zedong and Nehru at a reception organised by the Indian Embassy in Peking in 1954. | Photo Credit: XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

Soon after, Mao saw Indian concern over Tibet as a manifestation of interference in the internal affairs of the PRC. To avoid antagonizing the PRC, Nehru informed Chinese leaders that India had no political ambitions, territorial ambitions, nor did it seek special privileges in Tibet, but that traditional trading rights must continue. These rights mainly constituted the sale of tea and silk between Indian and China and took active stances against the sale of opium.

Nehru sought to initiate a more direct dialogue between the peoples of China and India in culture and literature. To Nehru, it was clear that great powers had to be accommodated and not vilified since the latter action could make them unpredictable and dangerous. Nehru was clear that the PRC was not an ordinary power. In 1950, he had stated in the Indian parliament: “Can anyone deny China at the present moment the right of a Great



Power from the point of view of strength and power?...she is a Great Power, regardless of whether you like or dislike it.”

Consequently, up until 1959, despite border skirmishes, Chinese leaders amicably had assured India that there was no territorial controversy. In January 1959, PRC premier Zhou Enlai wrote to Nehru, pointing out that no government in China had accepted as legal the McMahon Line, which in the 1914 Simla Convention defined the eastern section of the border between India and Tibet. Further straining of a nascent amicable relationship was caused when in March 1959, the Dalai Lama, spiritual and temporal head of the Tibetan people, sought sanctuary in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh. Thousands of Tibetan refugees settled in northwestern India.

The next escalation came as the PRC accused India of expansionism and imperialism in Tibet and throughout the Himalayan region. China claimed 104,000 km² of territory over which India's maps showed clear sovereignty, and demanded "rectification" of the entire border.

Sino-Indian War (1962)

With the independence of the Republic of India and the formation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the year 1949, one of the policies for the Indian government was that of maintaining cordial relations with China. India was so concerned about its relations with China that it did not even attend a conference for the conclusion of a peace treaty with Japan because China was not invited.

In 1954, China and India concluded the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, under which, India acknowledged Chinese rule in Tibet. In July 1954, Nehru wrote a memo directing a revision in the maps of India to show definite boundaries on all frontiers; however, Chinese maps showed some 120,000 square kilometres of Indian territory as Chinese. On being questioned, Zhou Enlai, the first Premier of the People's Republic of China, responded that there were errors in the maps.

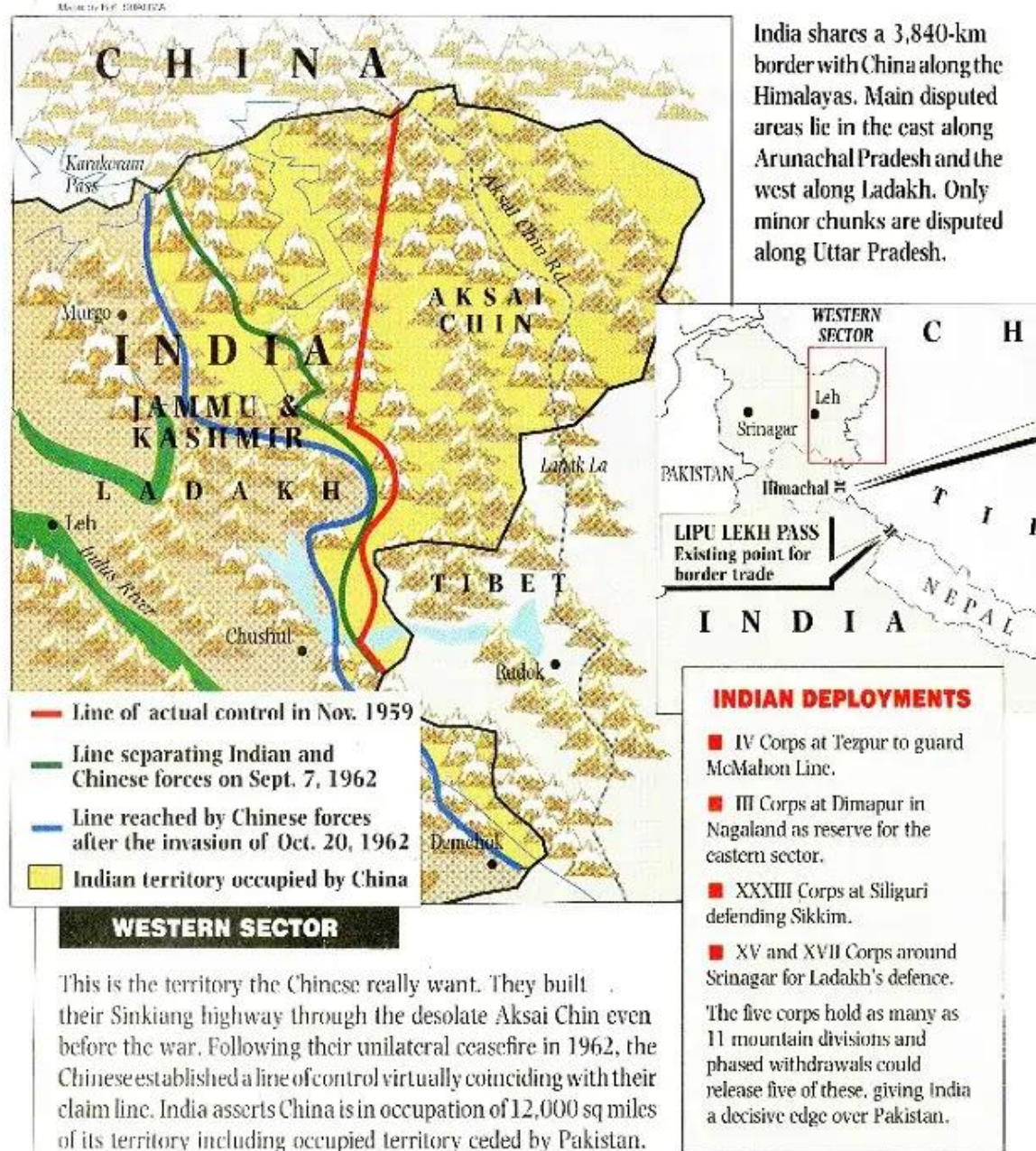


Zhou Enlai at a CPC meeting

Top People's Republic of China leader, Mao Zedong felt humiliated by the reception Dalai Lama obtained in India when he fled there in March 1959. Tensions increased between the two nations when Mao stated that the Lhasa rebellion in Tibet was caused by Indians and China started viewing India as a threat to its rule over Tibet.¹

¹ Lal, Dinesh. Indo-Tibet-China Conflict. Kalpaz Publications, 2008

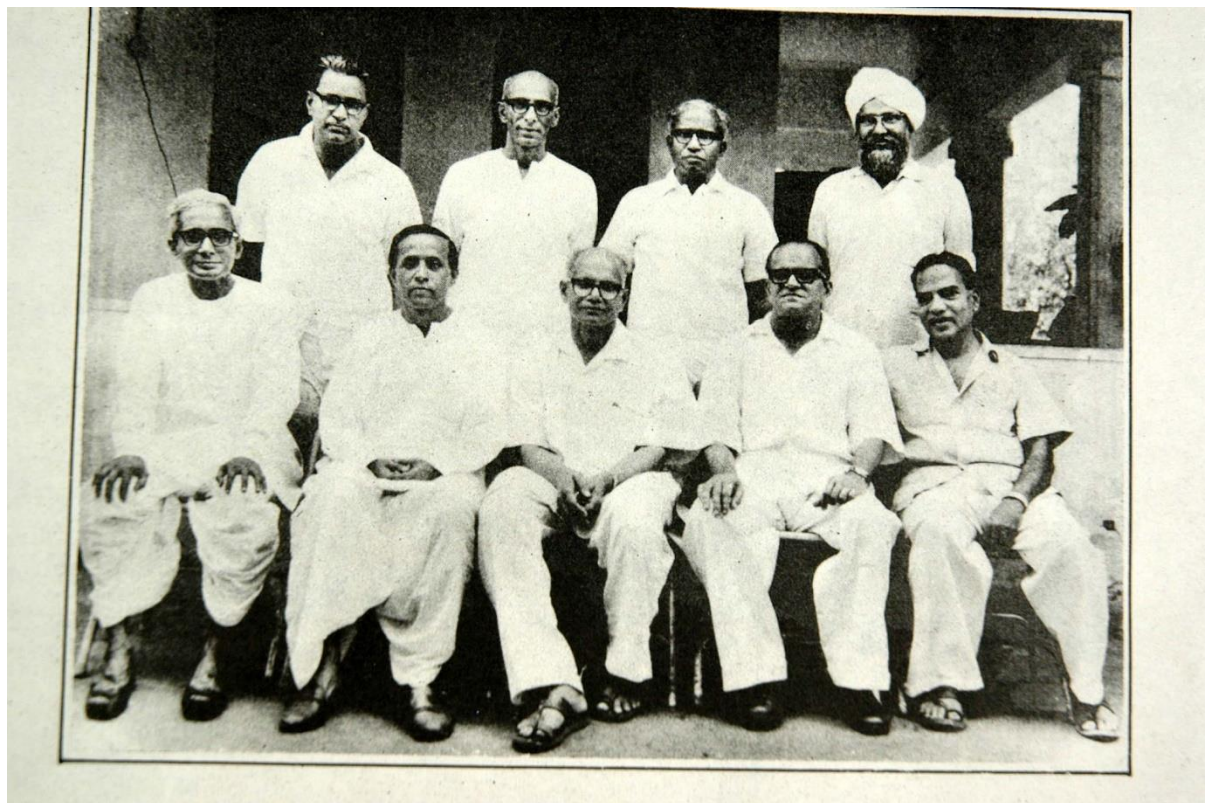
THE BORDERS OF CONTENTION



Sino-Indian War (1962) - Source: India Today

At the time of Sino-Indian border conflict, India's Communist Party was accused by the Indian government as being pro-PRC, and a large number of its political leaders were jailed.² CPI(M) due largely to the continued adherence of the CPI to the USSR and the adherence of the dissidents who formed the CPI(M) to the People's Republic of China. The CPI(M) was formed at the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of India held in Calcutta from 31 October to 7 November 1964. CPI(M) held some contacts with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for some time after the split but did not fully embrace the political line of Mao Zedong.

² Shah, S.K. India's Foreign Policy: Past, Present and Ties with the World. Vij Books India Private Limited, 2017.



The founding members of the CPI(M)

Relations between the PRC and India deteriorated during the rest of the 1960s and the early 1970s. Between 1967 and 1971, an all-weather road was built across territory claimed by India, linking PRC's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region With Pakistan; India could do no more than protest, through the Karakoram tract.³

The PRC continued an active propaganda campaign against India and supplied ideological, financial, and other assistance to dissident groups, especially to tribes in northeastern India. The Indian government was unable to integrate the tribals of North-East to the mainland and the conditions of the farmers near West Bengal, Orissa was in a bad state and the Indian government couldn't do much about the issue. China supported Naga and Mizo immigrants and used their propaganda to influence these people to use Mao's way of revolution which led to the Naxalbari movement.

De-escalation efforts- The Colombo Conference

Sri Lanka played the role of chief negotiator for the withdrawal of Chinese troops from the Indian territory. Both countries agreed to Colombo's proposals. The interest for Colombo in playing the role of negotiator between India and China was to ensure full-scale war did not break out between the two countries. India had received backing from both the US and UK and Nehru was firm in his stance of fighting the Chinese till the end. For a nation that depended on both India and China for trade, it was in the interest of Sri Lanka to keep this situation from escalating.

³ Garver, John W. *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century*. University of Washington Press: 2002. ISBN 0-295-98074-5.



The non-aligned nations remained non-aligned, on the basis that if they were to mediate they could not take sides in the dispute. Six of the non-aligned nations — Egypt, Burma, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Ghana and Indonesia, selected on the basis that they were all acceptable to India and China - met in Colombo on 10 December 1962.

The conference considers the existing de-facto ceasefire, a good starting point for a peaceful settlement of the India-China conflict.

- Concerning the ‘Western Sector’, the conference would like to appeal to the Chinese Government to carry out the 20-kilometre withdrawal of its military posts from the LOAC as of 7 November 1959, as defined in maps III and V circulated by China.
- The existing military posts which the forces of the Government of India will keep will be on, and up to, the line as of 7 November 1959. The demilitarized zone of 20 km created by Chinese Military withdrawals will be administered by civilian posts of ‘both sides’.
- Concerning the ‘Eastern Sector’, the Indian Forces can move up to the South of the McMahon Line, except in two areas, namely, Che Dong (Dhola), Thagla Ridge and Longju, over which there is a difference of opinion between India and China.
- In the ‘Middle Sector,’ the status quo should be maintained.

Although the mediation effort was encouraged, the failure of these six nations unequivocally to condemn China is said to have deeply disappointed India. India accepted the proposals in toto while China accepted them in principle as the basis to start negotiations. The final agreement was signed in Shimla confirming that the border was, in fact, the British set McMahon line.⁴

Soon after the Colombo proposals were first formulated, the criticism was made that the proposals favoured China. So much so that the Indian press, as well as the local press, spared no efforts in decrying the efforts of the Colombo powers. Later on, after the Indian Government had decided to accept the Colombo Conference proposals, the press reactions were that the Colombo Conference Powers had given inconsistent interpretations in Peking and New Delhi.

The Chinese Government expressed the view that the Colombo Conference countries had gone beyond the positions of mediators and would be functioning as arbitrators or judges if the Chinese Government were called upon to accept the proposals in toto as a pre-condition for direct negotiations between India and China.

While India accepted the proposals in toto, China said it agreed ‘in principle’ but not in toto. In its reaction dated 6 January 1963, China said: “Since the conflict occurred in both the Eastern and Western Sectors, the same principle of withdrawal should apply to all sectors. In no case should one side be called upon to withdraw, and the other side allowed to advance. If there should be disengagement, this should be done all along the entire Sino-Indian Boundary and not just in one of the sectors.” The Colombo proposals had allowed India to advance up to the McMahon Line, which China had dubbed as an ‘illegal’ border.

⁴ Smith, Jeff M. *Cold Peace - China-India Rivalry in the Twenty-First Century*. Lexington Books, 2015.



However, China unilaterally made a concession. It said it would withdraw from Che Dong (Dhola), Longju, and Wuji. It would set up only seven civilian posts in Ladakh. But there was a condition – India should not set up any military or civilian posts in the vacated areas.

Nathu La and Cho La Incidents

In late 1967, there were two more conflicts between Indian and Chinese forces at their contested border, in Sikkim. The first conflict was dubbed the "Nathu La incident", and the other the "Cho La Incident".



- In September 1967, Chinese and Indian forces clashed at Nathu La. On 11 September, Chinese troops opened fire on a detachment of Indian soldiers tasked with protecting an engineering company that was fencing the North Shoulder of Nathu La. This escalated over the next five days to an exchange of heavy artillery and mortar fire between the Indian and Chinese forces. Sixty-two Indian soldiers were killed, the casualties on the Chinese side, however, were far higher, with some Indian sources claiming a 1:4 ratio.
- Soon afterwards, Indian and Chinese forces clashed again in the Chola incident. On 1 October 1967, some Indian and Chinese soldiers argued over the control of a boulder at the Chola outpost in Sikkim (then a protectorate of India), triggering a fight that escalated to a mortar and heavy machine gun duel. On 10 October, both sides again exchanged heavy fire. While Indian forces would sustain eighty-eight troops killed in action with another 163 troops wounded, China would suffer fewer casualties, with 32 killed and 91 wounded in Nathu La, as well as forty in Cho La.⁵

⁵ Madan, Tanvi. "How the U.S. Viewed the 1967 Sikkim Skirmishes between India and China." Brookings, Brookings, 13 Sept. 2017, www.brookings.edu/opinions/how-the-u-s-viewed-the-1967-sikkim-skirmishes-between-india-and-china/.



According to independent sources, the Indian forces achieved a "decisive tactical advantage" and defeated the Chinese forces in these clashes. Many PLA fortifications at Nathu La were said to be destroyed, where the Indian troops drove back the attacking Chinese forces.

Analysis of the Clashes and Aftermath

The competition to control the disputed land in Chumbi valley had played a key role in escalating tensions in these events. These incidents demonstrate the effects of China's "regime insecurity" on the use of force.

Three factors in these clashes emphasized the role of "declining claim strength in China's decision to initiate the use of force" against India.

- First is the Indian Army's expansion of size after the 1962 war leading to the strengthening of its borders with China.⁶
- Second is the apparent Indian aggression in asserting its claims near the border.
- The third is the Chinese perception of Indian actions, that the most unstable period of the Cultural Revolution in China, which coincided with these incidents, was a possible contributing factor. The Chinese leaders possibly magnified the potential threat from India due to the border-tensions and the perceived pressure from India to strengthen its claims across the border and decided that a severe attack was needed.

Role Conception	Spatial	Orientation	Functional	Instrumental
Indira Gandhi's images	Scope of region	Images about world order and security	Interests, goals, functions	Modes of behaviour
Security Seeker Role	Subcontinent as the core domain and of 'special concern'	Regional system is intimidating and 'requires toughness'	Shaping sub-continental order is of paramount importance	Leverage the balance of power
	Extended Asian neighbourhood as a peripheral area	High sensitivity to local balance of power and external influence in the subcontinent	Counter cold war spillover in the sub-continent	Coercion is no longer eschewed
		Bipolar world order entrenched and the superpowers do not require bridges	Avoid extra regional responsibilities or involvement	India will 'resist force' ⁷

⁶ GATES, SCOTT. LIMITED WAR IN SOUTH ASIA: from Decolonization to Recent Times. ROUTLEDGE, 2019.

⁷ Singh, Zorawar Daulet. Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies during the Cold War. Oxford University Press, 2019.



Sikkim became an Indian state in 1975, after a referendum which resulted in "overwhelming support" for the removal of monarchy and a full merger with India. The Indian annexation of Sikkim was not recognised by China during the time. In 2003, China indirectly recognised Sikkim as an Indian state, on the agreement that India accept the Tibet Autonomous Region as a part of China, though India had already done so back in 1953. This mutual agreement led to a thaw in Sino-Indian relations with Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao saying in 2005 that "Sikkim is no longer the problem between China and India."

Discourse in the 1970s and 1980s

The 1971 Indo-Pak War

The PRC sided with Pakistan in its December 1971 war with India. The Chinese official attitude towards the crisis and the issues arising out of it was made public, for the first time, on 12 April, in a message by Mr Chou En-lai to President Yahya Khan. A close study of this letter shows the Chinese point of view regarding the crisis, namely:

- I. That China considered the "happenings in Pakistan" as "a purely internal affair" to be settled by the Pakistani people without "foreign interference". This adherence to the principle of non-intervention could also be seen in China's protest Note to India of 6 April 1971;
- II. That China opposed the separatists as was reflected in the expression: "the unification of Pakistan and the unity of the people of East and West Pakistan are the basic guarantees" for Pakistan's prosperity and strength;
- III. That China considered the separatists to be in a minority, "a handful of persons who want to sabotage the unification of Pakistan";
- IV. That as regards the means for settling the problem, China's preference for negotiations can be easily discerned in the expression that "through the wise consultation and efforts" of the Government and "leaders of various quarters in Pakistan", the situation would be restored to normal;
- V. Taking note of the "gross interference" by India in the affairs of Pakistan, China considered the USSR and the US guilty of collusion with India. In its protest Note of 6 April also China had accused India of flagrantly interfering in the internal affairs of Pakistan;
- VI. That China's firm support to Pakistan was assured if "the Indian expansionists dare to launch aggression against Pakistan;"⁸
- VII. That the message made no mention of the "refugee" problem as emphasised by India.

During the Indo-Pakistan War, which began on 22 November, when the Indian Army crossed into East Pakistan, China remained in constant contact with the Government of Pakistan, reaffirming its support to Pakistan and denouncing India and the Soviet Union on various occasions, such as the reception on the Albanian Independence Day, that on the Tanzanian National Day, the banquet in honour of the Sudanese delegation and the UN forum. After the outbreak of the war, the Chinese criticism of India and the Soviet Union became sharper. This was because of India's admission of crossing the East Pakistan border for "self-

⁸ The New York Times, New York, 22 October 1971; In an article published in Washington Post, the American columnist Joseph Alsop said that even before Mrs. Gandhi's tour to Western countries Indian divisions on the East Pakistan frontier began to be reinforced to make a total of 12. Washington Post, Washington, 26 November 1971.



defence" which convinced Peking that India had been the aggressor. China's objection to the Soviet Union's role stemmed not merely from its differences with Moscow, but also its opposition to the big Powers' interference and diplomatic expansion in Asia. The Soviet Union was, for the first time, singled out as the Power "fanning the flames" in the subcontinent by "supporting and encouraging" Indian "subversive activities" and "military provocation" against Pakistan.⁹

Presumably, one of China's motives, in condemning and "exposing" the Soviet Union in the UN, was to lower Moscow's prestige in the Third World nations who saw a dangerous precedent in the dismemberment of Pakistan.

China's support to Pakistan was not confined to verbal criticism of the Indo-Soviet role but was also practically demonstrated in the UN. China moved a draft resolution (which it later withdrew) which condemned India, asked the warring parties to withdraw their troops and called upon "all States to support Pakistan" in its struggle to resist "Indian aggression".¹⁰ China voted for the General Assembly resolution of 7 December and the Security Council resolution of 21 December calling for a ceasefire and withdrawal of troops, however, it expressed its dissatisfaction with the resolution that it did not condemn India and support Pakistan against the Indian aggression.¹¹ It expressed its solidarity with Pakistan by strongly opposing the Soviet proposal to invite a "Bangladesh" representative to take part in the UN debate and by vetoing the Soviet resolution that called for a ceasefire without withdrawal. Had China not been a permanent member of the Security Council, the Soviet resolution of 5 December, which secured two affirmative votes of Moscow and Poland with 12 abstentions, would have been passed. Thus China's presence in the UN proved a source of strength for Pakistan.

In China, different groups have advocated different approaches to foreign policy, one favouring rapprochement with the US while the other advocating close relations with the USSR. True, Chairman Mao and Premier Chou have succeeded in maintaining the upper hand, as is indicated by the recent disappearance of Lin Pao and the purge of several Chinese officials on the charges of collusion with the Soviets. However, given the leftists' pressure, who wanted to support the "revolutionaries" in Ceylon and Pakistan, China had to follow a moderate course regarding the Indo-Pakistan War.

Another major deterrent was the fear of Soviet intervention, the possibility of which was apparent from the USSR's warning to other countries to stay out of the conflict, and its assertion that the "Soviet Union cannot remain indifferent to the developments. . . taking place in the direct proximity of the USSR's borders and therefore, involve the interests of its security".¹² That the USSR was prepared to come to India's help, in case China entered into the war, was evident from the reported massing of USSR troops on the Soviet-Afghan border and its promise to India to start a diversionary action in Sinkiang against the Chinese in case latter intervenes in Ladakh.¹³ Besides, China had not forgotten the happenings in Czechoslovakia. The presence of 44 Russian divisions along the Chinese border in the north figured prominently in Chinese eyes as did its own relatively weak defence capability.

⁹ See the NCNA commentaries in *Ibid.*, 1 and 6 December 1971.

¹⁰ The draft resolution in *Peking Review*, Peking, 10 December 1971, p. 10.

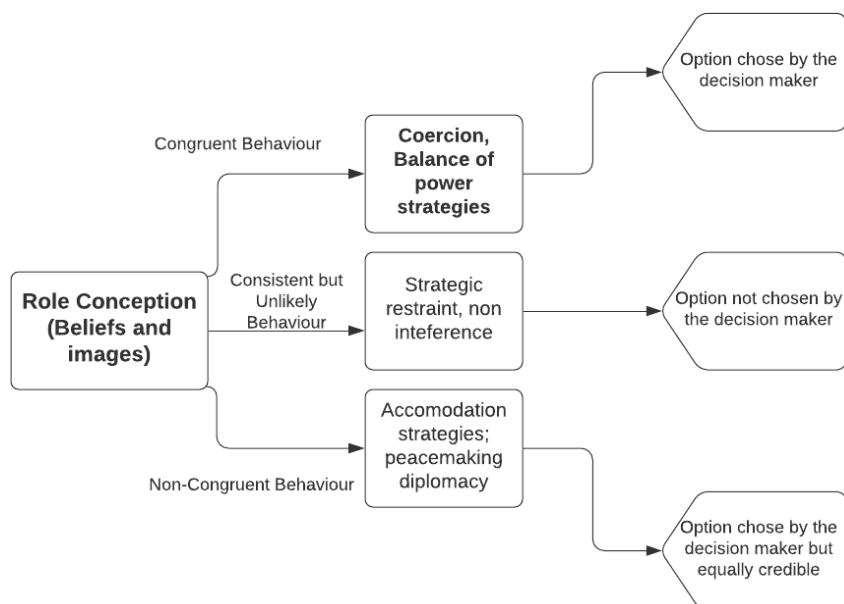
¹¹ See Huang Hua's speech in the UN in *Ibid.*, 31 December 1971, p. 4.

¹² *Tas* s statement quoted in *Dawn*, Karachi, 7 December 1971.

¹³ *The Daily Telegraph*, London, 10 January 1972. President Nixon in his Foreign Policy Report stated that the Soviet Union was willing to "make military moves to deter China on India's behalf". *USIS News Text*, Karachi, 9 February 1972, d. 16.



Front page of The Tribune. Picture Courtesy: National Herald
In one of the most decisive short wars, India summarily dismantled Pakistan in 13 days



Late 70s and 80s

In 1979, the Indian Minister of External Affairs Atal Bihari Vajpayee made a landmark visit to Beijing, and both countries officially re-established diplomatic relations. India's stance had been to establish relations with China and not to have hostilities.

In China Deng Xiaoping was in power, In India, it was the Janata Dal ka Government under Morarji Desai, AB Vajpayee was MEA. The PRC modified its pro-Pakistan stand on Kashmir reducing all overt support to claims made by Pakistan and appeared willing to remain silent on India's absorption of Sikkim and its special advisory relationship with Bhutan as the first step to a broadening of relations. This happened as a consequence of the Soviet Union presence in Afghanistan and the breakdown of Sino Soviet Relations at the time. Chinese benefit was that if the Soviet Union was becoming hostile then it couldn't afford tensions with India as well. This change in China's Kashmir policy was also due to a paradigm shift on its domestic front. China under Deng Xiaoping was keen to jettison Maoist policies of confrontation which, in Deng's understanding, was contributing nothing to China's welfare. China thus readjusted its foreign policy and started a process of integrating with the global economy and looking forward to a peaceful and stable environment conducive for its economic growth. The change in China's Kashmir policy in the 1980s reflected this overall pattern in Chinese foreign policy.¹⁴

In 1980, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi approved a plan to upgrade the deployment of forces around the Line of Actual Control. India also undertook infrastructural development in disputed areas which included the building of roads, basic long term permanent infrastructure, and troop fortifications including bunkers.

India and the PRC held eight rounds of border negotiations between December 1981 and November 1987. In 1985 the PRC insisted on mutual concessions without defining the exact terms of its "package proposal" or where the actual line of control lay.



In 1986 and 1987, the negotiations achieved nothing, given the charges exchanged between the two countries of military encroachment in the Sumdorong Chu Valley. China's construction of a military post and helicopter pad in the area in 1986 and India's grant of

¹⁴ https://idsa.in/idsacomments/RevisitingChinasKashmirPolicy_pksingh_011110 Prashant K Singh: Revisiting China's Kashmir Policy



statehood to Arunachal Pradesh (formerly the North-East Frontier Agency) in February 1987 caused both sides to deploy troops to the area.

By the summer of 1987, however, both sides had backed away from conflict and denied military clashes had taken place.

The longest standoff between the Indian and Chinese armies at Sumdorongchu in 1986 which was similar to one at the recent Doklam and was "orchestrated" by India to intensify military confrontation while setting up a border state of Arunachal Pradesh. This made Rajiv Gandhi feel uneasy. He was worried that if things continued like that, the opposition party would use it against him in the next general election, threatening his continuation in office. His observation about Sumdorongchu valley, which is located east of tri-junction with Bhutan and not far from Doklam, was interesting as for the official accounts of India it was sparked off by Chinese troops occupying an Indian patrol point, vacated during winter. Indian army in a daring counter move placed the troops in dominating heights and set up posts closer to the Chinese positions. Status quo was restored in Sumdorong Chu after about seven years of negotiations to stabilise the situation.

This Indian counter move at Sumdorongchu was widely regarded as strengthening New Delhi's stature ahead of Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Beijing in December 1988 during which both the sides agreed to negotiate a boundary settlement and would maintain peace and tranquillity at the boundary.

A warming trend in relations was facilitated by Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in December 1988. The two sides issued a joint communiqué that stressed the need to restore friendly relations based on the Panchsheel. India and the People's Republic of China agreed to achieve a "fair and reasonable settlement while seeking a mutually acceptable solution" to the border dispute. The communiqué also expressed China's concern about agitation by Tibetan separatists in India and reiterated that anti-China political activities by expatriate Tibetans would not be tolerated. Rajiv Gandhi signed bilateral agreements on science and technology co-operation, established direct air links, and on cultural exchanges. The two sides also agreed to hold annual diplomatic consultations between foreign ministers, set up a joint committee on economic and scientific cooperation, and a joint working group on the boundary issue. The latter group was to be led by the Indian foreign secretary and the Chinese vice minister of foreign affairs.

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, known as the Panchsheel¹⁵ are a set of principles to govern relations between states. The principles are:

- I. Mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- II. Mutual non-aggression.
- III. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
- IV. Equality and cooperation for mutual benefit.
- V. Peaceful co-existence.

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¹⁵ "The Panchsheel Agreement." Indian Defence Review, www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/the-panchsheel-agreement/



Developments in the 1990s and 2000s

The top-level dialogue continued with the December 1991 visit of PRC premier Li Peng to India and the May 1992 visit to China of Indian president R. Venkataraman. Six rounds of talks of the Indian-Chinese Joint Working Group on the Border Issue were held between December 1988 and June 1993.

Progress was also made in reducing tensions on the border via mutual troop reductions, regular meetings of local military commanders, and advance notification about military exercises.

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and Premier Li Peng signed a border agreement dealing with cross-border trade, cooperation on environmental issues and radio and television broadcasting. A senior-level Chinese military delegation made a goodwill visit to India in December 1993 aimed at "fostering confidence-building measures between the defence forces of the two countries."

In January 1994, Beijing announced that it not only favoured a negotiated solution on Kashmir but also opposed any form of independence for the region. Talks were held in New Delhi in February aimed at confirming established "confidence-building measures", discussing clarification of the "line of actual control", reduction of armed forces along the line, and prior information about forthcoming military exercises. China's hope for settlement of the boundary issue was reiterated.

This was brought on by Beijing seeking the normalisation of relations with New Delhi and trying to negotiate the border dispute around the Aksai Chin region in a more favourable manner. China's stance on Kashmir taking a pro-India turn was brought on additionally by the goodwill gained through bilateral agreements signed to exchange technology and bolster trade.

In 1995, talks by the India-China Expert Group led to an agreement to set up two additional points of contact along the 4,000 km border to facilitate meetings between military personnel. The two sides were reported "seriously engaged" in defining the McMahon Line and the line of actual control vis-à-vis military exercises and prevention of air intrusion.

Sino-Indian relations hit a low point in 1998 following India's nuclear tests. In 1998, China was one of the strongest international critics of India's nuclear tests and entry into the nuclear club. The likely reason for this particular reaction is that China has begun to see developing Indian capabilities and intentions through the lens of the multi-dimensional security challenges that India could pose over the medium term. First among these is the enhancement of India's conventional capability, which China believes could have a direct impact on the situation in Tibet and over the boundary dispute.¹⁶

China has been an active supporter of the Pakistan nuclear program. China's proliferation to Pakistan achieves twin strategic objectives of encirclement of India, and a proliferation buffer, wherein Pakistan in turn further proliferates Chinese nuclear technology, giving China leeway in investigations.¹⁷

¹⁶ Yogesh Kumar Gupta, "Common Nuclear Doctrine for India Pakistan and China", Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 20 June 2004, accessed at <http://www.ipcs.org/article/india/commonnuclear-doctrine-for-india-pakistan-and-china1413.html>, 09 July 2011

¹⁷ China-Pakistan Nuclear Alliance-An Analysis-Siddharth Ramana http://www.ipcs.org/issue_briefs/issue_brief_pdf/SR109.pdf



China looks upon India's strategic relations in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly growing India-U.S. and India-Japan strategic partnerships and the convergence of maritime democracies, as a part of a process aimed at China's strategic containment and has taken many efforts over the years to curtail the advancement of the same.

The Kargil War

The Indo-Pak.rivalry in Kargil was seen by the Chinese from the perspective of the implications of the Kosovo bombings on the internal affairs of China, incidentally in areas contiguous to Kargil. Here, the Sino-Indian tensions on the nuclear, issues, border problem, cooperation with Pakistan and- the like were seen in terms of "non-antagonistic contradictions"—which did not threaten the overall objectives of the Chinese foreign policy at that moment.

During the 1999 Kargil War China voiced support for Pakistan but also counselled Pakistan to withdraw its forces. The only “support” was in the form of diplomatic efforts to prevent outright condemnation of Pakistan via the international community in the form of prevention of UN action.

The 2000s

In 2003, China officially recognised Indian sovereignty over Sikkim as the two countries moved towards resolving their border disputes. This extended to the longest relatively amicable thaw in relations between the two nations as seen in 2004 when the two countries proposed opening up the Nathula and Jelep La Passes in Sikkim. 2004 was a milestone in Sino-Indian bilateral trade, surpassing the US \$10 billion marks for the first time.

In April 2005, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited Bangalore to push for increased Sino-Indian cooperation in high-tech industries. The same year In the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit, China was granted observer status. While other countries in the region were ready to consider China for permanent membership in the SAARC, India seemed reluctant and that reluctance stemmed from the possibility of undue extension of power into an organisation seen primarily as India's domain,

In 2007 and 2008 tensions arose as China declared Arunachal Pradesh as a part of itself and refused the need for visas to be applied for natives of the region visiting China. In October 2009, Asian Development Bank formally acknowledged Arunachal Pradesh as part of India and approved a loan to India for a development project there.

Earlier China had exercised pressure on the bank to cease the loan, however, India succeeded in securing the loan with the help of the United States and Japan. Both the US and Japan are full member nations of the ADB and own the largest shares of the bank at 15%. Thus with the US and Japan backing India were able to secure a \$60 billion loan from the ADB. China denounced the move and released several statements showcasing their displeasure at the move.



Approach post 2010

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao paid an official visit to India from 15–17 December 2010 at the invitation of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. He was accompanied by 400 Chinese business leaders, who wished to sign business deals with Indian companies.¹⁸

In April 2011, during the BRICS summit in China the two countries agreed to restore defence co-operation and China had hinted that it may reverse its policy of administering stapled visas to residents of Jammu and Kashmir. This practice was later stopped, and as a result, defence ties were resumed between the two countries and joint military drills were expected.¹⁹



Credit: China Daily

BRICS Meet 2011 - A number of economic agreements were formulated

Gradual cooling of relations followed post the ADB loan and Arunachal Pradesh incidents with both nations utilizing cautious strengthening of borders and a race for the accruing of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in terms of (primarily) western factories and the like.

It was reported in February 2012 that India will reach US\$100 billion trade with China by 2015. Bilateral trade between the two countries reached US\$73 billion in 2011, making China India's largest trade partner, but slipped to US\$66 billion in 2012.

A three-week standoff between Indian and Chinese troops near each other and the Line of Actual Control between Jammu and Kashmir's Ladakh region and Aksai Chin (Aksai Chin is a disputed border area between China and India. It is administered by China as part of Hotan County, which lies in the southwestern part of Hotan Prefecture of Xinjiang Autonomous Region, but is also claimed by India as a part of the Ladakh region of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. In 1962, China and India fought a brief war in Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh, but in 1993 and 1996, the two countries signed agreements to respect the Line of Actual

¹⁸ "INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, Fifth Edition. Peu Ghosh

¹⁹ Tonder, Gerry Van. Sino-Indian War: Border Clash, October--November 1962. Pen and Sword Military, an Imprint of Pen and Sword Books Ltd, 2018.



Control.) was defused on 5 May 2013. The Chinese agreed to withdraw their troops in exchange for an Indian agreement to demolish several "live-in bunkers" 250 km to the south in the disputed Chumar sector.

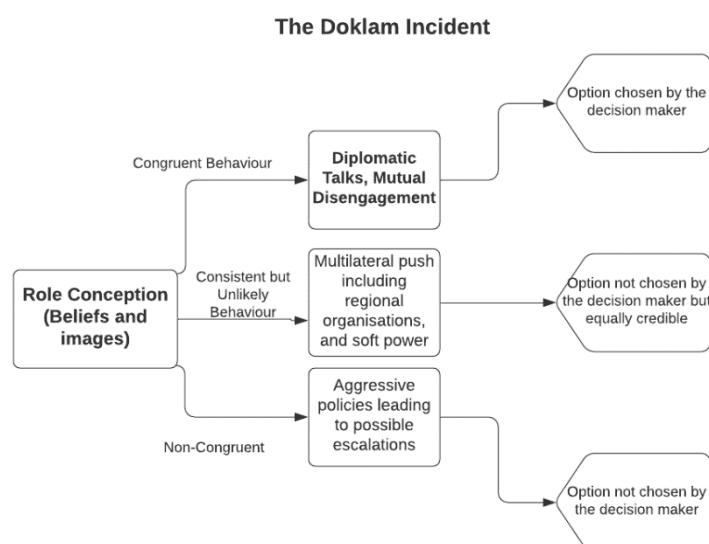
Doklam

The Issue

The agreement led to another duration of relative peace until on 16 June 2017 Chinese troops with construction vehicles and road-building equipment under the Belt and Road initiative began extending an existing road southward in Doklam, a territory which is claimed by both China as well as India's ally Bhutan. On June 18, 2017, around 270 Indian troops, with weapons and two bulldozers, entered Doklam to stop the Chinese troops from constructing the road assuming that the 2007 India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty was a enough of a reason for preventive action, to say nothing of their issues relating to national interests.²⁰

Among other charges, China accused India of illegal intrusion into its territory, across what is called the mutually agreed China-India boundary, and violation of its territorial sovereignty and UN Charter. India accused China of changing the status quo in violation of a 2012 understanding between the two governments regarding the tri-junction boundary points and causing "security concerns", which were widely understood as at its concerns with the strategic Siliguri Corridor. The main reason for Delhi's intervention was its fear that, if China controlled the Siliguri corridor "chicken's neck", a thin strip of land just south of Doklam, it would cut off India from its northeastern states, including Arunachal Pradesh – over which China claims sovereignty.

After Effects and Analysis



²⁰ Panda, Ankit. "What's Driving the India-China Standoff at Doklam?" – The Diplomat, For The Diplomat, 18 July 2017, thediplomat.com/2017/07/whats-driving-the-india-china-standoff-at-doklam/.



Contrary to how Indian media described the standoff, the Doklam incident was by no means a tactical victory for India.²¹ Indian soldiers were the first to withdraw, as China insisted. China made it very clear in the wake of disengagement that its troops would continue to patrol its territory and road construction would have to be completed. Fresh Chinese road construction activity, although not at the exact location of the face-off, began shortly after.

One huge cost of the Doklam crisis was that the Sino-Indian border would probably never be the same again, to India's disadvantage. For years, the disputed border has not been on China's strategic radar, in part because of its emphatic victory against India in the 1962 border war, and part because China's major strategic concerns lay elsewhere.

The Doklam stand-off provided China with a lesson on reconsidering its security concerns. As a result, China engaged in enhancing infrastructure and construction along the border. India has followed suit, but it is in no way comparable in either speed or scale – given China's more robust economy and infrastructure development capabilities and focus on the region.

Another cost was that peace and stability along the Line of Actual Control became less predictable. Cautious optimism prevailed before the stand-off. Although accusations of intrusions into each other's territories were common, violence was rarely seen. Doklam proved to be a turning point. During the stand-off, palpable animosity grew to the extent that border troops threw stones at each other in Ladakh. There was genuine concern at the highest of echelons that should another showdown occur, India's military resources would not be able to sustain it. The Indian army's ammunition reserves during the Doklam stand-off were reportedly only capable of lasting 10 days in a war.

Indian security experts mention three strategic benefits to China from the control of the Doklam plateau.

- I. It gives it a commanding view of the Chumbi valley itself.
- II. It outflanks the Indian defences in Sikkim which are currently oriented northeast towards the Dongkya range.
- III. It overlooks the strategic Siliguri Corridor to the south.

A claim to the Mount Gipmochi and the Zompelri ridge would bring the Chinese to the very edge of the Himalayas, from where the slopes descend into the southern foothills of Bhutan and India. From here, the Chinese would be able to monitor the Indian troop movements in the plains or launch an attack on the vital Siliguri corridor in the event of a war. To New Delhi, this represents a "strategic redline" and Indian efforts at strengthening this sector continued.

The Cooldown

On August 2, 2017, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China published a document claiming that Indian border forces had illegally crossed the border between China and India and detailed China's position on the matter. The document said that China notified India regarding its plan to construct a road in advance "in full reflection of China's goodwill". The Ministry of External Affairs of India did not confirm or deny the statement when asked if India had received the notification resulting in several Chinese diplomats claiming the matter as an attempt at escalation by India.

²¹ Katzenstein, Peter J. *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*. Beijing Da Xue Chu Ban She, 2009.

On 28 August 2017, China and India reached a consensus to put an end to the border stand-off. Both of them agreed to disengage from the standoff in Doklam.²²

Normalisation

In May 2018, the two countries agreed to coordinate their development programmes in Afghanistan in the areas of health, education and food security. The optimism was back amongst policy analysts as relations seemed to take a turn for the better with Modi and Xi Jin Ping having a seemingly exceptional rapport.

The shadow of 2017 when the bilateral ties were marred by rancour and bitterness over the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) - a pet project of President Xi Jinping to consolidate China's influence abroad - followed by the 73-day standoff at Doklam lingered. The deadlock over the CPEC and the Doklam standoff prompted Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi to explore peaceful development of ties with an informal summit at Wuhan.

Under the strategic guidance of the two leaders, the two countries resumed joint military drill in 2018 - the first exercise of its kind since they were locked in the standoff at Doklam 18 months ago.

"In the current profound dynamic international situation, the sound development of China-India relations conforms to the fundamental interests of both countries," the Chinese foreign ministry said, summing up the Sino-India ties in the year 2018. Bilateral exercises were followed by 4 meetings of the respective heads of states, 3 defence minister meetings and several diplomatic summits. Key to this was the continuous exchange of political and official visits from both sides. However, these exchanges might not be sufficient to remove uncertainty and suspicion from their relations. As long as China's relationship with the United States remains adversarial, China will embrace India—without guaranteeing that it will not adopt a confrontational posture in the future. Their shifting relations, although suggesting an official longing for an upward trajectory, were based on a compromised context.²³ External circumstances pushed them towards rapprochement, but could also drive them apart as eventually occurred.



PM Modi and President Xi Jin Ping at a summit- Credits: MEA India

²² Kazmin, Amy. "India and China Agree to Disengage Troops after Border Stand-Off." *Subscribe to Read | Financial Times*, Financial Times, 28 Aug. 2017, www.ft.com/content/b4723abd-ed74-3f6f-8bf8-672739b30f4f.

²³ Panda, Jagannath P., and Atmaja Gohain Baruah. *Foreseeing India-China relations: the compromised context of rapprochement*. East-West Center., 2019.



Sino-Indian relations are primarily a reflection of their foreign policy trajectories and domestic developments. Chinese foreign policy is geared toward reestablishing China at the centre of the global economic and political system, and India, like other major powers, faces the dilemma of accepting or resisting it.²⁴ It is important to tackle the zones of contestation, given that energy and maritime security are at risk owing to the growing turmoil in West Asia.

Given the current geopolitical landscape, which might be heading toward greater polarization, India is most likely to benefit by not explicitly aligning with either China or the United States.²⁵ India needs the Quadrilateral consultative forum as much as it needs a peaceful border with China.

For China, too, a stable neighbourhood is crucial as it navigates its relationship with an openly adversarial United States under President Donald Trump. Both countries, therefore, have a tactical opening for improving their relations, but within limitations.

The Wuhan spirit provided temporary solace but was perhaps not entirely successful in overcoming the points of contention in their asymmetrical relationship. The Doklam border stand-off was no ordinary episode in India-China relations—with its potential to escalate into a small-scale war, it tested their diplomatic nerve and skills. Diplomacy was at its core and both sides successfully averted further escalation. India stood proud that the Indian Army successfully faced the People's Liberation Army (PLA) for 73 days, something that few Asian militaries perhaps could do. For New Delhi, it was crucial to stop the PLA from constructing roads in the Doklam trijunction area, in what it terms a disputed region, without triggering a war. For Beijing, its attempt to inject an element of strategic complexity into a politically stable India-Bhutan relationship was successful, as evidenced by China's ongoing attempts to create divisions between India and its neighbours. Moreover, Beijing sought to test India's diplomatic character and military preparedness in the face of a territorial threat. The resolution of this incident thus illuminated the complexity of India-China relations and how small-scale incidents can spiral without political will.

The commitment to improved relations was embodied in the informal Mamallapuram summit, a follow-up to the Wuhan summit, which demonstrated that the informal summit mechanism between the countries' leaders and their relationship will play a central role in managing relations. China and India have also sought to build confidence and expand cooperation by joint international projects. For instance, in June China and India made a tentative attempt to revive the long-planned Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) corridor, while in November they presided over the second edition of a joint training program for Afghan diplomats agreed during the Wuhan summit.

The two sides also made concessions to each other in 2019 to keep the upward trajectory of relations. China took a relatively balanced position during the Indo-Pakistan military crisis

²⁴ John Hurley et al, "Examining the Debt Implications of the Belt and Road Initiative from a Policy Perspective," CGD Policy Paper, March 2018 <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/examiningdebt-implications-belt-and-road-initiative-policy-perspective.pdf>

²⁵ T.V. Paul, "How India will React to the Rise of China: the Soft Balancing Strategy Reconsidered," War on the Rocks, September 17, 2018 <https://warontherocks.com/2018/09/india-and-the-rise-of-china-soft-balancing-strategy-reconsidered/>



that followed the Pulwama attack and might have even mediated to de-escalate tensions. Beijing also agreed to stop blocking the UN from listing Masood Azhar as a terrorist, a long time Indian complaint, after some hard bargaining and international pressure. For his part, Modi bowed to Chinese sensitivities when he did not invite the political head of the Tibetan government-in-exile and a Taiwan representative to his second inauguration in 2019 as he did to the first one in 2014. Moreover, the Indian government consistently sought to sideline the “Tibet issue” in the past year and remained completely silent on the 60th anniversary of the Dalai Lama’s flight to India.²⁶

Current Status

The 1988 compromise between India and China, helped in part by New Delhi’s studious silence on developments within Tibet, was driven by the fact that the two countries were near equals on the world stage. According to the World Bank, India’s gross domestic product was \$297 billion compared with China’s \$312 billion that year, while India’s defence spending, at \$10.6 billion, was also close to the Chinese allocation of \$11.4 billion.

The material balance of power between China and India has dramatically changed since then. At \$13.6 trillion in 2018, China’s GDP is now more than five times India’s \$2.7 trillion. Similarly, China spent \$261.1 billion on defence expenditure in 2019, almost four times India’s total of \$71.1 billion. While India has risen as an economy and a global power in the past three decades, its relative strength to China has greatly declined.

A new economic dynamic means that the underlying bedrock of the Gandhi-Deng bargain—of similar means and goals—is fizzling out. Although it remains unclear when exactly the understanding between New Delhi and Beijing began to fade—most likely after the 2008 global financial crisis—China has become far more assertive in its foreign affairs in recent years, from artificial-island-building activities in the South China Sea to its muscular diplomacy amid the coronavirus pandemic. Indeed, some scholars have argued that an impending power transition is underway between China and the United States, the current global hegemon. While New Delhi has also become a more assertive player in global politics its rise has not been of much concern to the United States.²⁷

China and India find themselves in an “extraordinarily complex relationship”,²⁸ according to Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, India’s foreign minister. In addition to the border dispute, some of the core issues in the Sino-Indian rivalry include Tibet (the presence of the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan government-in-exile, and tens of thousands of Tibetan exiles in India), the burgeoning China-Pakistan partnership, and the two countries’ overlapping spheres of influence in Asia. These issues have become more salient in the context of the two countries’ simultaneous but asymmetric rising power.²⁹

²⁶ Diplomat, Ivan Lidarev for The. “2019: Reviewing a Passable Year in China-India Relations.” – The Diplomat, For The Diplomat, 4 Jan. 2020, thediplomat.com/2020/01/2019-reviewing-a-passable-year-in-china-india-relations/

²⁷ Diplomat, Ivan Lidarev for The. “2019: Reviewing a Passable Year in China-India Relations.” – The Diplomat, For The Diplomat, 4 Jan. 2020, thediplomat.com/2020/01/2019-reviewing-a-passable-year-in-china-india-relations/.

²⁸ Chengappa, Raj. “This Is a Government with a Very Strong Determination to Protect National Interest: Jaishankar.” India Today, 6 Mar. 2020, www.indiatoday.in/magazine/interview/story/20200309-this-is-a-government-with-a-very-strong-determination-to-protect-national-interest-jaishankar-1650478-2020-02-28.

²⁹ Paul, T. V. The China-India Rivalry in the Globalization Era. Georgetown University Press, 2018.



The Galwan Valley Incident

Weeks of tension at several points along the Sino-Indian border broke into deadly clashes this week in Eastern Ladakh's Galwan Valley area. Alongside an unknown number of Chinese casualties, at least 20 Indian troops were killed in a major brawl between the two sides. Although details of the incident, which took place on Monday night, remain closely guarded, the deaths mark the first along this border in at least 45 years.

The violent clash, which early Indian reports suggested did not involve the use of any firearms, took place just days after reports in the Indian media suggested that the two sides had come to an agreement on a partial disengagement and had moved their armed forces back at several points along the border. According to the Indian Army, the clash took place during what was described as a "de-escalation process" in the Galwan Valley area.

"During the de-escalation process underway in Galwan Valley, a violent face-off took place yesterday night with casualties,"³⁰ the Indian Army noted in an initial statement. "The loss of lives on the Indian side includes an officer and two soldiers. Senior military officials of the two sides are currently meeting," the statement continued. The statement was later amended to note casualties on "both sides."

Later reports confirmed that casualties sustained were about 20 soldiers on the Indian side with Indian media claiming an equivalent loss on the Chinese side as well while extremely outnumbered and unprepared for such an escalation.

Supplementing the Indian Army's statement, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs also put out a statement commenting on the sources of the clash. The statement, while confirming ongoing talks between the two sides to de-escalate the standoff that has been ongoing since early May in the area, suggested that the violent clash was a result of "an attempt by the Chinese side to unilaterally change the status quo." The statement said that India supports the "resolution of differences through dialogue."

On the Chinese side, the most detailed official reaction comes from the Western Theater Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army.³¹ The Chinese statement accused India "of going back on its word" and "violating commitments." The commitments were the ones made earlier this month at high-level military talks at the corps commanders' level. Zhang Shuili, a spokesperson for the PLA's Western Theater Command added that the Indian Army "violated its commitment and crossed the Line of Actual Control (LAC) again, illegally and deliberately launched provocative attacks, triggered a fierce physical confrontation between the two sides, resulting in casualties."

A policy of assuagement and diplomatic function has long been India's go-to response in the face of Chinese aggression, many policy analysts claim that the same can no longer occur in the status quo. India's Modi government may also find itself with few credible — or desirable — options to retaliate against China. Despite having established a reputation for resolve vis-a-vis its other major rival, Pakistan, where the Indian government authorized a

³⁰ Bhalla, Abhishek. "Army Colonel, 2 Jawans Killed in Violent Face-off with Chinese Troops in Ladakh's Galwan Valley." India Today, 16 June 2020, www.indiatoday.in/india/story/ladakh-standoff-india-china-indian-army-officer-jawan-killed-lac-1689544-2020-06-16.

³¹ "西部战区发言人就中印边防人员加勒万河谷地区冲突发表声明"《财经》客户端." 首页 - 《财经》客户端, news.caijingmobile.com/article/detail/417966?source_id=40.

prominent cross-border strike in 2016 and airstrikes last year, the potential for costly inadvertent escalation is much greater with China. At the very least given that the primary response was one of diplomacy via military channels, it seems that the respective countries aren't willing to repeat previous mistakes and lean into undue escalations.

Analysis and Way forward

China and India's material capabilities remain in flux; China generally outstrips India along most axes of power even as India continues efforts to boost its capabilities. According to the World Bank, India recorded higher growth rates than China every year between 2014 and 2018.

While the long-term economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic remains unclear, India's relatively smaller economy and marginally faster growth rates mean that it has the potential to narrow its power gap with China—at least in the long term. Therefore, India is the only major power that is rising with respect to China—even as China grows faster than other major powers such as Japan in the east and the United States, France or assorted western powers.

In addition to accruing power domestically, India is also building strong strategic partnerships with China's other rivals, especially the United States and Japan while already retaining strong ties with other powers such as Russia. Meanwhile, a rising China has stabilized its northern borders with Russia and is working to undermine the United States' primacy in the East Asian maritime commons through the modernization of its military and its push to build islands in a concerted effort to extend its sovereignty across the South-China sea. As a whole, this leaves only one border issue with a rival be it regional or otherwise unresolved: namely, the Sino-Indian border. It is hardly surprising that it is exerting periodic pressure on India along this front—a trend that is only likely to escalate.



Areas in contention - Source: Graphic News

Several different explanations have been proffered for the sudden recent escalation of tensions. Some observers both in China and India have suggested that the clashes stem from the latter's pursuit of a strategic partnership with the United States. Chinese commentator Mu Lu writing in the Global Times in late May, for example, argued that "China should not blithely

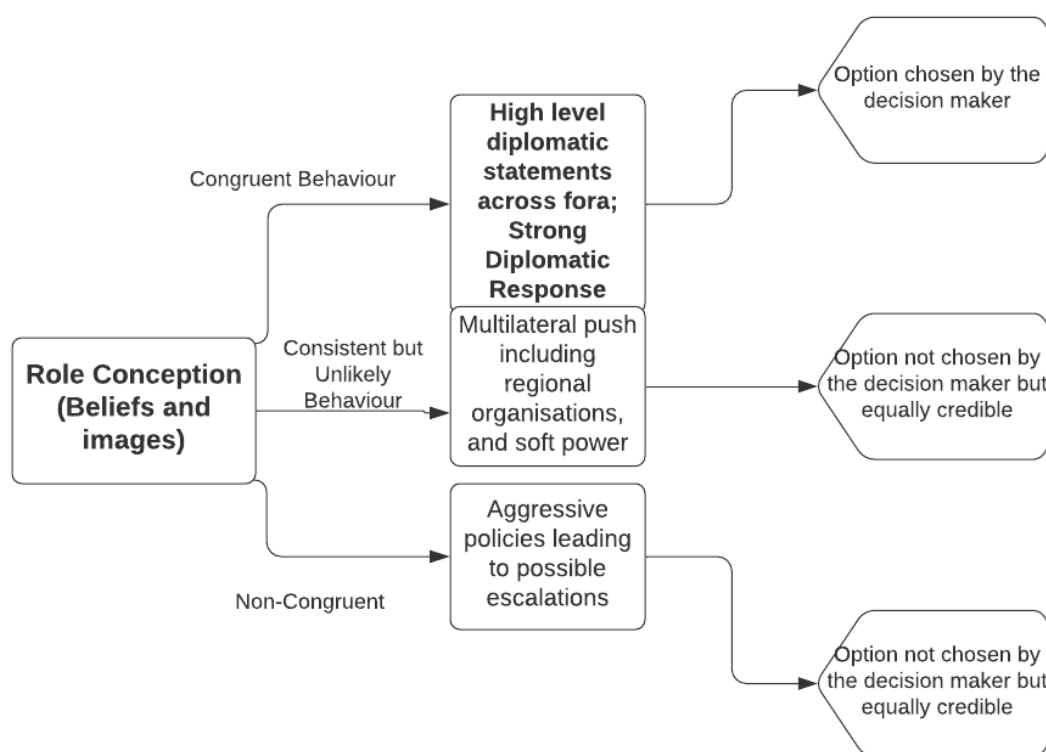


ignore US overtures to India ". Indian analysts such as Kanti Bajpai, at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore,³² have expressed similar views in The Times of India. What remains consistent is that this stems as an extension of unresolved issues from the Doklam crisis as well as other accrued factors.

Why is limited scope confrontation a cost-effective and preferable option to China?

China's limited scope military expeditions on the long-contested border are cost-effective for the PLA. This is due to the ever-growing conventional military superiority that it enjoys with India. Moreover, because limited fights or smaller land grabs may not provoke an all-out confrontation or nuclear use. The side with conventional superiority and more border infrastructure would likely carry the day.

The Galwan Valley Incident



There is reason to believe that China is responding as a result of internal pressures due to economic pressure as well as International corralling in terms of what we see in Taiwan, Hong Kong or its tariff war with Australia. Other experts believe that Indian delayed exercises in Ladakh in March, as well as road building, might have been construed as aggression and given existent factors, China would have taken it as the best way forward. There seem to be three possible issues, all or some of which have resulted in this escalation:

I. First, is India's decision to revoke the formerly held "Special Status" of Jammu and Kashmir. Regardless of claims by the Indian government about it being a strictly internal matter and there being no overarching motive, China's assets, especially in the minds of the upper echelon, were under threat.

³² Gilboy, George J., and Eric Heginbotham. Chinese and Indian strategic behavior: Growing power and alarm. Cambridge University Press, 2012.



- II. Second is the building of the incredibly strategic road that links Leh (The capital of Ladakh) to a point near the Chinese Karakoram highway, another factor that optically at least seemed directed as a response to Chinese infrastructure development near the Line of Actual Control.
- III. Bolstering of military infrastructure and addition of personnel in sensitive areas close to the border.

India's entire China policy was based on the assumption that New Delhi could continue with their broader engagement and keep the border issue in abeyance. That assumption has been altered with this, India now has to reconsider its geopolitical alignment and the possible ramifications of a change in the same. Amid rising tensions between the US and China, Trump has indicated that the US plans to build a global coalition to tackle China in the post-COVID-19 era by expanding the Group of Seven (G7) nations to include India, Australia, Russia and South Korea.

This incident might push India closer to embracing these efforts. It could also encourage India's participation in the US-led Indo-Pacific strategy, which is aimed at containing China's expansion and military activity in the South China Sea.

The face-off will just give a tremendous boost to India adopting more robust posturing. Something likely to gradually occur anyway – from its participation in the Indo-Pacific strategy as well as its role in reviving the Quad (A strategic security grouping of the United States, Japan, Australia and India). India also has the option of targeting maritime and commerce functions of China, a confrontation that is far more likely to fall in favour of India, than an extended period of border escalations.

This incident also serves as a reminder for the Indian Government to get more serious about finalising a border agreement with China. The bigger the power differential between India and China, the more concessions Beijing would demand from New Delhi to settle the dispute and at the current rate of relative expansion, there are very real fears that India might be left behind.



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9. See the NCNA commentaries in Ibid., 1 and 6 December 1971
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