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India-China Face off: A Failure to Diplomacy

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ABSTRACT

The faceoff between India and China at the border raises the question about Chinese incursion and interest in the valley. Both countries have different perceptions owing to unresolved and undemarcated boundary, which lead to transgressions and face off along the line of actual control (LAC). As of June 2020, soldiers from both the armies have clashed on several occasions in Ladakh. The aim of this paper is to analyze in detail the history of border dispute to understand historical claims, PLA's incursion and interest over the Indian Territory and determine identification of territory. This paper also discusses in detail the India-China border dispute, the recent Doklam issue and initiatives and agreements to resolve Indo-China border issue. This paper concludes that although this is not a routine face to face conflict, however it is not gearing up to full scale war. It is the time to demonstrate strategic signaling and that can be achieved by having a robust presence at valleys. In the alternative, both the nations may constitute a panel of experts to determine the boundary line and based on the expert determination, a final decision by an agreement may be worked out.

I. INTRODUCTION

There are four Indian states and one Union Territory that shares border with China and they are- Union Territory of Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh. This is called the line of actual control (LAC). However, this LAC is a loose demarcation line. The total length of the Sino-Indian border is 4,056 Km. It is divided into 3 sectors:

- **Eastern Sector** - This includes the border of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim.
- **Middle Sector** - is Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.
- **Western sector** - is Ladakh

India is the only country in Asia because of its dominant power in the South Asian region which can challenge the supremacy of China. A spine-chilling tale played out in pitch darkness

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on jagged precipices at 14,000 feet above the Galwan River Valley between the foot soldiers of two Nuclear-Armed Regional superpowers i.e. India and China. Both the country's troops in the past have engaged in the border regions of Ladakh, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh, which has often triggered fear of war. But the standoff with China in Ladakh and AP is India's worst border tension.

II. EXPLANATION

Has China really intruded into the Indian Territory in Ladakh? There are conflicting reports by the various experts on this because the Indian government has not officially released any statement on it.

The current issue is happening at three different places

1. Pangong Lake in Ladakh
2. Galwan valley
3. Hot spring near Konga pass

It is a critical issue that has not been discussed or discussed in our TV news channels because it probably raises comfortable questions.

1. Has China invaded the Indian Territory?
2. If yes, then to what extent and how many intruders are there?
3. How much area has been occupied by them and what is the reason behind?

The Indian government has not yet provided answers to these questions, no clear-cut answers to these questions have been given by the Indian government. But there are some reports and some sources of retired Army officers on the basis of which I try to find the possible answers to these questions and try to find out the truth³.

III. SOME BASICS AND DIFFERENCE B/W LOC AND LAC LIKEWISE,

- The border b/w Pakistan occupied Kashmir and India (southern and eastern parts of the region) is called LOC (Line Of Control). Its length is around 776- kilometers. But the border b/w Chinese occupied Ladakh and India is called LAC (Line of Actual Control) like Aksai chin. Chinese considers its length around 2000 km, while India considers its length around 3488 km.

³ https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/india-china_conflicts.html last accessed on 11.08.2020

- LOC is clearly defined. Both India and Pakistan are aware of where the boundary line actually is but LAC is not clearly defined. The concept of LAC came through a bilateral agreement in 1993, although there was no concrete settlement on ground positions between these countries. So, LOC is "demarcated" while LAC is not.

- Both countries having different perceptions about where the LAC actually lies and due to the different claims by both the countries, there is an overlapping territory between them.

Johnson Line vs. McDonald Line

- Johnson Line – India's accepted demarcation – It marks Aksai Chin as an Indian territory

- McDonald Line – China's stance – It marks Aksai Chin as Chinese territory

IV. THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE BORDER TENSION

The border is absolutely enormous; it's almost entirely undefined, so patrols effectively overlap. The reason border tensions have been growing in the last few weeks isn't entirely clear but it's probably to do with the fact that India has been upgrading the infrastructure on its own side of the border in this area known as Ladakh over the past several years. Particularly, over the past years, they've completed a vital road that runs south to north. This is one of the reasons why the conflicts and confrontation with the Chinese army have also increased.



It is a wonderful diagram made in one of the articles of news laundry.

- The Indian Territory is represented by blue.
- The Undisputed territory which even the Chinese concede is Indian
- And the Undisputed Chinese territory is making red.
- The Indian claim line is the blue dotted line and the Chinese are dotted line.

These are the lines that China and India claim to be their borders. The area that lies in between

becomes the grey area.

The grey area is referred to as an area of different perception ADPA.

In reality, this grey area is not a large area, talking about the Pangong Lake in Ladakh, then the grey area covers only about 10 kilometers in length and no one resides there.

Before the development of the situation, there were not any posts of the Indian Army or the Chinese army. Both the Indian and Chinese army merely patrolled that area and this is why there were clashes and conflict between both the armies when they came patrolling.⁴

These clashes would recur between the two Armies every 2-3 years and they happened because of his grey areas. One army came patrolling whilst the Other was already patrolling then one Army wrote on banners to tell the other that they were trespassing upon their territory and would request them to go back.

Ever since the Indian Army has upgraded its equipment and improved its infrastructure over the past years, the Indian Army has increased the frequency of its patrols.

This is the reason why the conflict and the confrontations with the Chinese Army have also increased. Whenever this happened, the media on both sides report an Intrusion of the Indian Chinese army on their soul. Things like these Keep going on recurring but the situation today is more serious than these regular and minor skirmishes.⁵

V. HISTORY

- **Simla Accord, 1914-** This convention was among Great Britain, China, and Tibet. The main cause of this convention was China's dispute over Tibet. Sir Henry McMahon introduced the plan of dividing Tibet into two parts- Inner Tibet and Outer Tibet. A McMahon line was created as the new boundary between India and Tibet.

- **.1950:** Tibet is an autonomous region that is currently occupied by China. Mao described Tibet's right palm and Ladakh, Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal, and Arunachal Pradesh five fingers. On 24th October 1950, shortly after Mao communist revolution, China invaded Tibet. Since then Chinese politics have co-build up Tibet.

- **1957:** In 1957, China built a National Highway called G219, which passes right through the disputed area of Aksai Chin. It connects the regions of Xinjiang with Tibet. The construction of this road is also set to be the reason behind the 1962, India-China war because that road was built without India's consent.

⁴ <https://www.clearias.com/india-china-border-disputes/> last accessed on 13.08.2020

⁵ https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/india-china_conflicts.html last accessed on 14.08.2020

- **1962:** The Battle of Rezang La - The North-Eastern Part of Ladakh is under control of China, it's called Aksai Chin. Although it is part of Ladakh, India lost this part of Ladakh to China in the year 1962 Indo-China war. It's a high altitude isolated cold desert. Karakoram Range is in the west and south-western side and Kunlun Mountain is on the North and north-eastern side. Aksai Chin is a region that is currently administered by China as part of its Xinjiang and Tibet autonomous region at the same time, it is also claimed to be part of Ladakh by India.

The war took place from 28th October to 21st November 1962 which means in the month of September 1962, the Chinese army illegally occupied the Indian Territory along the Karakoram Range. By the end of the 1962 war that is, in the month of November, the Chinese Forces reached further insight and have since then claimed that Galwan Valley is part of China. In this war, India lost 14,500 square miles of territory.

- **The Chola incident in 1967:** The Nathu La (11-14th September 1967) and Cho La (1st October 1967) in Sikkim clashes also known as Second Sino-Indian War or Second Indo-China War, were a series of military clashes between India and China alongside the border of the Himalayan Kingdom of Sikkim. China claimed that the McMahon line was illegally created by Britain in NEFA. During the whole conflict, India lost 200 soldiers and China lost 300 soldiers. The question was raised regarding the fencing at Nathu La (the strategic pass in Sikkim). Indians wanted to construct an iron fencing to put an end to the borderline issue at Nathu La. But the Chinese seem like arrogant aggression.

- **1987 Sino-Indian skirmish:** the Nathu La (1967), Chola conflict (1967), and Sino-Indian skirmish 1987, These are three military conflicts when the Indian army gave a befitting reply to China. 20 years after the Nathu La and Chola incident, at the end of 1986, when India had granted statehood to Arunachal Pradesh, which was an area claimed by China but administered by India. The Chinese government proceeded to protest.

The incident of Sumdorong Chu is one such standoff, where India, China came close to war. And with the Indian army refusing to stand down, Western diplomats predicted war. Military movements in Tawang were seen as a provocation by the Chinese. The main cause of the 1987 standoff at Arunachal Pradesh, when the Chinese army crossed LAC and entered the Sumdorong Chu valley in Arunachal Pradesh and started building helipads and permanent structure. Then Indian army chief Gen K. Sundarji launched Operation Falcon, and several battalions were airlifted and dropped at the Sino-Indian border. Until the PLA agreed to back off, the Indian army stood eyeball to eyeball with Chinese troops at the border. After that meeting was conducted and both sides agreed to ensure peace along LAC.

- **2008-** The statement was issued that China has complete control and sovereignty over Tibet by Foreign government on its website.

- **Doklam issue in 2017:**

One of the longest and most serious standoffs was in 2017 in the summer of that year. The two sides confronted each other for 73 days after Indian troops blocked the construction of a road by China. The leaders of India and China discussed the problem meetings in 2018 and 2019. They promised to maintain peace and tranquility but they made no progress on settling the issue of who owns the land in the border area. Nevertheless, they put mechanisms in place to prevent lethal flare-ups between troops. It was stated when India objected to road construction by the PLA of China in Doklam, which was claimed by China to be a part of its Donglong region. However, doklam was recognized as Bhutan territory. India supported Bhutan in the Doklam issue because, in 2007, both India and Bhutan signed a friendship treaty, which committed India to protect Bhutan's interest and cordial relationship between two militaries.

VI. CONFLICT OF THREE DIFFERENT PARTS

It is believed that the conflict started on 5th May and it was reported that for the first time on the 12th May by the Economics Times. This entire situation was happening in the Pangong Lake which is a lake in Ladakh. It is a very long lake around 130 km in length and its breadth is around 5 km. But around 60% of the area on this Lake Falls within the Chinese occupied territory and the line of actual control pass-through this Lake. There are pointed edges protruding in the Northern side of Pangong Lake. These pointed edges are called 'fingers' of the lake.

These fingers have been mentioned as finger 1, finger2, and finger 3, and so on.

Indian claims that the line of actual control lies in the finger 8 Area. China claims that the line of actual control lies in the finger 2 area. The grey zone lies in between finger 2 and singer 8 on the map.

Talking about the ongoing problem, it was said on 4th or 5th may that the Chinese Troops reached till finger 5 while patrolling and this led to conflict.

Talking about the second conflict it was reported that between 10th and 11th of May, the Chinese troops reached finger 4 while patrolling and this led to stone-pelting.

A first fight broke out between Chinese and Indian troops in which the soldiers got injured but the talks about the tensions and Chinese intrusion is not just about one place, but three different places

- The first area is Pangong Lake
- Second is Galwan river valley in Ladakh
- The third area is the hot spring near Konga pass.

1. Pangong Lake-

The spurs that move downwards towards the Pangong Lake from the mountains. they have been numbered. The number 1 is on the one westernmost side on the left and lies on the side of India and then number 2, 3, 4 until number 8.

Number 8 is on the easternmost side on the side of China.

The land between fingers 2 to finger 8 had remained unoccupied until now and there had been no troops there. There were only patrols by both sides.

Recently, China has physically occupied it and has stationed itself there. They had brought in arms and were preparing trenches and their stations and have occupied this area completely.

There were around 4000- 5000 Chinese soldiers in the area between finger 4 and finger 8 and is a distance of 8 kilometers. This is the Indian Territory that they have occupied. The area between finger 4 and finger 8 has been occupied by China which came under the grey area even though India's claim was up till finger 8. so China has moved into the area claimed by India. After the Galwan valley, the bone of contention between India and China. the objections raised by India on china's occupation from finger 8 to finger 4 in the Pangong lake. The scuffle between China and India was first started on May 05. LAC passes through water in Pangong lake. The nearly 3500-kilometer long border between India and China passes through plains and mountains. Since Pangong Lake passes through mountains, lower parts of these mountains are called fingers because of their finger-like shape. Finger 4 is occupied by India which also has a post between Finger 3 and 4. Indian Army patrols from west to east till Finger 8 considering its claims till this region.

2. Galwan Valley in Ladakh-

The area between finger 4 and finger 8 is a tiny area that does not dominate any area further and occupation of which does not yield a lot of benefit to the Chinese soldier on their military front. Galwan was an area where both the Indian and Chinese soldiers didn't get into the conflicts. The claim line of both of them was approximately the same. The Chinese claim in Ladakh was separated from Galwan. so by coming in this, the Chinese soldiers have violated their own claim line. The actual place where both the military standoffs took place was near the Galwan valley. It lies in the Karakoram Range. In Fact, the name of the valley came from

the Galwan river which flows from Aksai chin and passes between the Karakorum range and then enters Ladakh. Galwan valley area comes in the sub-sector north, which is a military forward area that provides direct access to Aksai Chin from India. For the Indian army, this point is crucial for the defense of Siachen and Leh. The Chinese army is going to reap a huge benefit on the military front in Galwan. There is a 255km road that has been laid until Daulat Beg Oldi from Shyok and Darbuk which travels north towards Daulat Beg Oldi. By coming into the Galwan Valley and stationing themselves on the Galwan heights, the Chinese soldiers are in a strategically beneficial position as they can overlook that road. They can use artillery and cannons to fire on it. And If they want to stop India from making use of this road, then they can easily do so because the intrusion in Galwan is the most dangerous. Around two Chinese Battalion are present at a height, which is a huge disadvantage for India. Chinese Forces have a high ground advantage because it becomes easier to attack lower terrain if one is situated at a height.

3. Hot Spring near Kongka Pass:

Hot springs (kyam) is an area of an Indian border check post which is specifically operated by Indo - Tibetan border police(ITBP). The LOC near the kongka pass is only three kilometers to the east. China is only pressing for the third region i.e. Hot Spring, in order to divert the focus of the Indian Soldiers and to disturb them but they will get no strategic benefit by encroaching Hot Spring. Neither have they captured much land, nor there a military benefit as in the case of Galwan.

Is there any military benefit behind the intrusion?

The Galwan River is the only way that provides direct access to Aksai Chin from Ladakh. The Chinese Army wants to control this area as they fear that the Indian side could end up threatening their position on the Aksai Chin Plateau by using the Galwan River Valley.⁶

India is trying to construct a feeder road from Darbuk-Shyok Village to Daulat Beg Oldi road. It is a 255-kilometer long road that runs along the Shyok River and is the most critical line of communication close to LAC. This road basically connects Leh to Daulat Beg Oldi road. The abbreviation used for this road is DBO.

DBO is the northernmost corner of the Indian Territory, Ladakh which is occupied by the Indian Army. The road runs almost parallel to the LAC at Aksai Chin. The Chinese army poses a direct threat to the DSDBO road; the road is right in front of them. The area around the

⁶ <https://theleaflet.in/resolution-of-india-china-border-dispute-over-ladakh-is-the-need-of-the-hour/> last accessed on 14.08.2020

embankment in Goulburn valley is called petrol point 14 or PP14

How much area Chinese forces had been occupied and what is the reason behind this?

The Galwan River Valley has been breached by China and they have occupied around 2-3 kilometers of the area at a height. China always has an intention to occupy the areas near Galwan valley and Pangong Lake which are already part of India or subject to dispute between India and China. It can be China's reason for not settling the border dispute with India because after that they will be unable to make a trespass in India boundaries.

Grey area which is AKA Area of Differing Perception or ADPA? The Grey Area or the area that lies between "non-disputed areas of both the sides" sandwiched between fingers 5 to finger 8 of the Pangong Tso Lake, Ladakh.

The present situation or conflict is more serious than regular clashes- India and China are massive nuclear-armed nations but in India, there is a difference between what happens when the Indians are in conflict with Pakistan versus when India sees a conflict with China.

Impact on trade and commerce-

- Physical inspection of all the consignments imported from china
- Effect on the telecom sector
- Increase of supply chain risk
- China is superior in the case of conventional warfare military but Indians coming together to try to clamp down on trade ties with China.
- For e.g., A removed Chinese app became very popular in India, in fact, the Government of India (GOI) has banned 59 Chinese apps that it found to be prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity in India.

VII. INITIATIVES AND AGREEMENTS TO RESOLVE THE INDO-CHINA BORDER ISSUES⁷

1. Shimla agreement of 1914

This convention was held at Shimla in 1914, among representatives of three states-i.e. Great Britain, China, and India. The main cause of the convention was China's dispute over Tibet. Sir Henry McMahon introduced the plan of dividing Tibet into parts. However, China rejected that Shimla agreement and McMahon line and contended that Tibet did not have the power to

⁷ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/view-trilateral-solution-for-resolving-indias-border-issues/articleshow/69003551.cms?from=mdr> last accessed on 15.08.2020

conclude treaties because it's not a sovereign state.

2. Panchsheel agreement of 1954

This agreement was created between India and China to build economic and security cooperation between India and Tibet (the territory of China) during Zhou En Lai's (China's first premier) visit to India and the panchsheel (5 principles of peaceful coexistence) was signed between Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and China's first premier. There were five prohibitions that determined the behavior of Buddhist monks and were prohibited from doing their work.

The main points of the Panchsheel agreement were-

- peaceful coexistence
- mutual respect for Each Other's territorial integrity and sovereignty
- mutual non-interference
- mutual non-aggression
- Equality and mutual benefit.

3. 1989 CBM (confidence-building measures policy)

India and China found the joint working group for confidence-building measures (CBMs) and agreed to mutually settle all the border disputes with the aim to settle disputes mutually and peacefully. The two sides agreed that military experts would work at measures to ensure "peace and tranquility" along the line of actual control.

4. India China agreement of LAC

LAC is an effective military boundary. It also separates Aksai chin from Indian controlled areas of Jammu and Kashmir. This border is not recognized as an international boundary. Ironically, India considered the Johnson line 1865 which was marked by a Civil Servant of British India, and China also considered McCartney McDonald line as the actual boundary which puts Aksai chin in the Xinjiang region of China.

In 1993 (agreement for maintenance of peace and tranquility) and in 1996 (agreement on confidence-building measures in the military field) along the LAC was signed between India and China.

5. 2003 principal for relation and Comprehensive Corporation

It was a three-step process where both nations prepared their maps and mutually decided to appoint special representatives to settle border disputes. China also recognized India's

sovereignty over the Sikkim.

Three-step process

- a) A bilateral agreement on the laid down principles.
- b) An exchange of maps between two countries.
- c) After marketing certification, the final demarcation of the border.

6. **2005 (confidence-building measures)**

A protocol was agreed for the implementation of confidence-building measures in the military field along the line of actual control. Both Nations Agreed to safeguard and respect the interest of the border people.

7. **2012 (coordination along the border)**

Both nations agreed to establish a working mechanism for consultation and coordination regarding the India China border.

8. **2018**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Jinping decided to issue “strategic guidance” to their Army for building trust and strengthening Communications in their summit because it is necessary to maintain peace and tranquility in the border area.

VIII. RESPONSE OF GOVERNMENT

The Indian government has made no clear-cut communication with its citizens during the entire situation. Earlier in one interview Rajnath Singh (Defence Minister) said that Chinese have come into the Indian Territory in sizable numbers.

So then PIB brought out a ‘fact check’ and the government denied it and said that Rajnath Singh meant something else. He merely means that the Chinese troops have reached the LAC.

Some experts believe that not telling everything to the citizens is a good strategy by the government, otherwise, it would lead to a lot of pressure and being mounted on the government from the opposition and people to take action in One Direction. if the government does not divulge a lot of information to the people then it would have more available options of how to address the situation.

Maybe they would want to let go of an area but if they let the public know, there is so much Nationalist sentiment within the people that they would force the government to take the action it would then mount pressures on the Government of India to retaliate against China in the

same manner that it adopts.

Negotiation

The Third round of Corps Commander-level-talk. The meeting took place at the Indian Meeting Point in Chushal, Ladakh near the Line of Actual Control. The Indian Army represented at that military meeting by Lieutenant General Harinder Singh who is the Commander of the Leh-based 14 Corps.

The Chinese sent Major General Liu Lin, who is the Commander of South Xinjiang Military Region of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), to address the ongoing dispute along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh.

The meeting was held around a month after a physical standoff between India and China and their troops on the banks of Pangong Tso in Ladakh. PLA proposed that Indian forces move back to finger 2 as a precondition to Chinese troops withdrawing to finger 6. At Present, both sides are in a standoff at finger 4. Moving back to finger 2 would involve the dismantling of two Indian Military camps on the banks of the lake.

Destroying china's Arunachal Pradesh plan

In the discussion, India also stated that India will build a strategic tunnel below the Brahmaputra River near the China border to help for the rapid military movement.

This 4-lane underwater tunnel will give all-weather connectivity between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh this four-lane underwater tunnel connecting Gogpur and Numaligarh towns in Assam would be situated near the China border and will help in rapid movement of military transport and supplies. The transport vehicles would be able to cruise at a speed of 80 Km/h while using this tunnel. The construction of the 14.85 km long tunnel is expected to begin by December of this year and will be executed by the National highways and infrastructure development corporation limited (NHAI DCL) along with Louis Berger which will be built in three phases.

The Indian army has suggested the construction of a tunnel to hedge against bridges being targeted by enemy forces. This development comes amid the ongoing tensions between India and China along the line of actual control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

IX. WHY IS CHINA DOING THIS?

Some said that China is inculcating national sentiment with its own country in order to avoid the attention of the people from the state of the economy which has crashed due to COVID-19. Others denied this and said that the reason is that China is threatened by the road. India is

constructing and China wants the construction of the road to stop and Indian is denied the strategic advantage that it would get.

One reason is stated to be the DSDBO road; China is doing this to stop the construction of this road. Impeding road construction is an instrument, an advantage, and a military tool that China has got. But why China wants to stop the construction of the road is extremely important.

Chinese basically try to show that they are having a global power and that they will Resort to arbitrariness if they wish to and so they can do so on many fronts.

X. CONCLUSION

From the recent incidents, although the possibility of an India-China armed conflict cannot be ruled out, any kind of military conflict is not in the interest of any country. The need for the hour is realizing that our 'strategic partnership' could serve us both and help see Asia emerge as the core of the world economy. The present border dispute cannot hang on endlessly. If 174 years have passed after the Amritsar Treaty in 1846, that doesn't mean both India and China which are considered as Asian, giants, and nuclear-powered States should take the necessity of boundary resolution lightly. A border mechanism has been prepared by both sides to resolve any border disputes that arise .the government attempts to keep the spotlight on the military to military talks so that they foist the blame on the military later.
