

---

## GROWING TENSIONS ON INDIA-CHINA BORDER: VIEW FROM INDIA

---

### Abstract

On June 15, 2020, China and India had a border clash in Galwan Valley. Galwan Valley is a disputed territory in the high mountain area of the Himalayas. Although no firearms were used and most fighting was carried out by using stones and sticks, the clash resulted in human casualties for the first time since 1975. Both countries accused each other's border patrolling military of transgressing the line of actual control (LAC). The line of actual control, 4057 km long, is the name of the de facto border between India and China: there was in fact never any official legal border between the two countries because "international borders" is not a concept that either Indian or Chinese civilizations developed but rather a result of Western colonization and decolonization of the area.

**Key words:** China-India border, LAC, China-India relations, Galwan valley.

**DOI:** 10.51180/RPS.2020.15.2.009.

---

### Author

#### Shivani Rai

PhD Scholar Department of African studies  
University of Delhi  
(Delhi, India)



---

**T**he military struggle between India and China on the border has once again led to create tension in the relations of the two countries. This time the border dispute is not limited to just minor skirmishes, in which 20 soldiers of the Indian Army were martyred and it is being claimed from various intelligence reports that 35 to 40 soldiers of PLA were also killed. The Chinese side did not officially confirm the Chinese casualties. This article is not only a matter of debate about how many soldiers of which country were killed, but about how and why such a situation arose?

#### **Formation of BRICS: a dream to challenge the economic domination of America and the West**

Before such a breaking point, at the surface level everything was going smoothly, be it diplomatic relations or

economic and trade ties. For example, trade relations between India and China were also doing well. Chinese companies were also doing good business in India, which was giving huge economic benefit to China, as India had not only got a good economic partner but also India has got a huge market too.

Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to India at the invitation of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in October 2019 also gave hope that relations between India and China would now enter a new phase and both neighbors would also write a new chapter of development and peace.

India and China were playing an important role not only in bilateral relations but also on the international arena, an example of which can be seen as formation of BRICS. This organization dreamed to challenge the economic domination of America and the West. India and China, together with Russia, Brazil, and South

Africa, are cooperatively trying to emerge as a strong and dependable alternative for developing nations to have economic perspective.

After all, what happened in 6 to 7 months that created a situation between India and China that brought them to the brink of war today? This is the first time since the 1962 war that such a number of Indian soldiers were killed on the Indo-Tibetan border (illegally occupied by China). In the last 45 years, perhaps for the first time when such a large number of soldiers were killed in a brutal attack. Earlier in 1975, 4 soldiers were martyred in an ambush of LAC by China. Why did this happen? This question is perplexing every mind of not only Indian citizens but others as well.

### **'Boycott of Chinese goods' as a result of the Galwan clash**

Let's talk sequentially about the occurrence that set the eyes of the whole world on India and China. Let's start with Ladakh. It is believed that China started writing the story of the incident that took place in Galwan on 15 June. Since the first week of April 2020, suddenly the patrolling and intervention of Chinese troops started increasing on the Indian border. This was objected by India sternly. But no one would have thought that such minor confrontations would suddenly take the form of violence.

What happened in Ladakh's Galwan was only a small form of war, where 20 soldiers of India died without firing of a single bullet. It was taken very seriously in India and overnight the anger against China came onto surface and the protest started throughout the whole country.

The slogan of 'boycott of Chinese goods' started trending on every social site. A barrage of questions raised against the government. How did it happen? India's main opposition raised against the government and asked "who sent our soldiers on the border without arms"? Now to know the reasons behind this, you

have to know the story of the agreements that were between India and China in 1993, 1996 and 2005. In 1993, peace was reconciled between India and China during the visit of the then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao to China, in which it was decided that the two armies would not use any weapons during the actual border line (LAC) patrol.

Seeing the growing controversy over the above question, Indian Foreign Minister S. Jayashankar said through a tweet that 'All troops on border duty always carry arms, especially when leaving post. Those at Galwan on 15 June did so. Long-standing practice (as per 1996 & 2005 agreements) not to use firearms during face-offs. India has always respected these treaties.

This attacked crookedly planned to show that, the deal was cleverly exploited by the PLA in Galwan. In the mid of the night, the Indian soldiers were attacked by non-conventional weapon such as chains made of iron wire, with hands, poles, stones, etc.

You cannot say such an incident as a normal incident; it was a very well planned attacked. After such a gruesome incident, an attempt was first made to reduce this tension through Commander Level talks, and it was decided that the Chinese troops should withdraw from PP-14 in Galwan Valley. But when the Indian officers arrived there, suddenly a large number of PLA, between 700 to 800 (whose numbers used to be generally 13 to 14), started attacking the Indian soldiers with stones, rod, sticks, etc. In retaliations, the Indian soldiers also attacked. This attacked was a kind of deceit in disguised.

### **Indian government severely criticized after the incident**

After this incident, the government of India was severely criticized and consequently it came into action mode. This is to be noted that as soon as the news of the martyrdom of 20 Indian soldiers was reported, there was a sudden outcry

against China. Since people could not protest on the streets due to Covid-19, the sentiments of people were displayed through social sites, through media, in which people gave slogans like 'complete boycott of Chinese goods', 'Hindi-Chinese bye-bye' and showed their feelings.

The Foreign Ministry of India was quoted as saying that it is wholly responsible for the whole incident; it has played a very irresponsible attitude. India tried to allay tension through talk but China's stance was not positive at all. On the other hand, China also talked about India with something similar.

According to various news agencies and its report, in April 2020, China started increasing its troops on the Ladakh border in large numbers, which India could not perceive in right perspective in terms of China hidden plan. From 20 May to 16 June, India resorted to talks to reduce the growing tension on the border. But all these attempts proved to be unsuccessful. On 15 June, there was a meeting at the level brigade commander and local commander level in Galwan Valley and Hot Spring area, and on the same night, soldiers from both countries had violent clashes at Patrolling Point 14 in Galwan Valley.

#### Historical causes and consequences of Indo-China border conflict

Ongoing tensions and conflicts between India and China have been cited by India's opposition parties, as a policy failure on behalf on government of India. In fact, it is not a policy failure but rather the genesis of it is deeply connected to the history of China.

China has always had a policy of harassing other countries, especially its neighboring nations, by which it will establish its dominance in South Asia and South-East Asia, and declare itself the leader of the region all over the world. In 2017 too, China tried to do the same in Doklam. The dispute, which lasted for 72 days, was resolved through negotiations.

Historically, China's policy, after the establishment of communist rule in 1949 in general and foreign policy in particular has been based on:

1. To establish China as a superpower.
2. To establish its authority in all over Asia.
3. To lead the communist world in Asia and Africa.
4. To Expand Chinese Borders.
5. To increase the military power.

According to Mao, who considered as a great leader and a maker of modern China, 'political power is produced by the barrel of the gun; any object can be produced from the gun'. China's foreign policy and Mao's statement are closely related, that is, China considers it necessary to use guns to achieve its goal. One of the main reasons for increasing China's influence in Asia is its military power, on which it keeps intimidating and threatening every country time and again.

From 1949 to 2019, China made changes in its foreign policy several times in favor of its national interest, including enmity with its friendly Soviet-Russia, as well as its fanatical counter-offensive to America.

China has always been manipulating its foreign policy very cleverly for the attainment of the goal, and has been changing itself all the time to achieve it. The friendship with America was a step towards the achievement of its larger economic-interest goal, which China has completed to a large extent today.

To a large extent, China achieved the task of increasing its military power to achieve economic goals, but most of the time, China has tried to destabilize nearby nations with its military power. Korea in 1950, India in 1962, Soviet Union in 1969, Vietnam in 1979, Thailand in 1963 also accused him of infiltration, Myanmar (Burma) in 1956, Japan in 1958 accused him of destabilizing the country, In 1960, Nepal also accused him of infiltration.

In 1953, even Pakistan's then Foreign Minister Zafarullah Khan alleged in

Parliament that China had encroached parts of its border and seized parts of it. However, China put so much pressure on Pakistan that during the China-Pakistan agreement, Pakistan gave the area of 2000 sq. m. to China, which was the area of free Kashmir, and through this area, the Karakoram road was built which actually works to directly connect China with Pakistan. China has also invested a lot there, which is also a way to fulfill its economic interest. This is the place where India legally asserts its rights, and which China has seized through Pakistan for its own benefit.

### **Indian view on China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**

The reason for India's saying no to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was that it did not want to get trapped into China's move. China always tries to destabilize the sovereign nation to assert its dominance and to play with the integrity of the country. At the same time, it also wants that other countries respect China, which China does not give to others.

If we consider history as a witness, China has never been a credible nation; it does everything including economic development to the weak countries only for its own benefit.

This dream of intimidating every country of China to grab land and establish its dominance could not be fulfilled as India as proved as a hindrance. Since India is a strong nation having second largest population and the emerging economic power of the world which have always been perceived as a threat by China.

India is proving to be the biggest rival in China's dream of establishing its dominance in Asia. Deceitfully China committed bloodshed on the border to grab India's land which could not be succeeded. China knew that not only India, but all the countries of the world are suffering from economic loss in the Corona era, even America, which is considered as the

world's economic superpower, is facing the biggest economic recession so far.

China took it as an apt time to invade India and occupied its part. It was under the misapprehension that India may not face China during this period of economic instability. Because of which it planned and plotted the Galwan incident. In 1962, China also attacked India in a planned manner; despite there was a Panchsheel agreement between the two countries.

History of India indicates that it has always tried to maintain brotherhood and cordial relations with its neighboring nations. There is a slight border dispute with Pakistan, in which China also tried to break the leg. The reasons for the recent Indo-China conflict have been the hand of China's foreign policy to develop and dominate in a planned manner, which India has been a victim.

The way India solved the Kashmir problem in 2019, China along with Pakistan kept watching and also with the announcement of Indian Home Minister, Mr. Amit Shah, that the POK and Aksai China (illegally occupied by China since 1962 war with India), is also an integral part of India and India will take it. This statement definitely created uproar in China. China began to anticipate this statement a threat to itself as China has invested heavily in PoK. On the other hand, its policy of forcibly taking Ladakh also started failing.

The second big reason was the close proximity of India and America due to which China began to panic. Does China know what it means to be close to India and America? Because in the 70s, by taking advantage of these close proximity, China established itself as an economic power, now India is in the same position, which is definitely going to benefit India, which is a big threat to China, Because China never wants to see any nation stronger than itself, at least in Asia.

Third and the biggest reason of this time is Covid-19 due to which the world is seeing a new scene of destruction, and whose culprit is China, this virus originated from Wuhan of China has brought the

whole world into an era of uncertainty and ruin, Here too, China is not ready to admit its fault that it has a hand in spreading the Corona virus to hide it from the whole world.

Today China is completely alone after facing criticism on the global stage in the Corona case. China now thought of doing something that could distract the attention of the whole world, and for this its chose to have conflict with India. The US has already been annoyed by China due to the huge damage caused by the Corona virus which America considers actually China virus, the tension between the two countries is also increasing, every day, both countries are engaged in looking down on each other.

*“Age of Expansionism is Over”*

Now in such a situation, the question arises that what will result in war? However, it is less likely from the Indian side, because India always tries to resolve all the problems through dialogue, which India started after 16 June 2020. After several rounds of talks, it was commonly agreed that armies of both countries would retreat from the present position to earlier position, so that the tension could be reduced.

But China has once again started mobilizing large amounts of troops on the border, which is a sign of increasing tension.

However, on 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2020, the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi, who arrived suddenly on the Ladakh visit, while addressing the soldiers from the forward post of the army, said that India will not bow down, neither will it sink. India will not even rebuffer, but if India is attacked, it will not back down from retaliating ‘.

At the same time, without naming China, Modi gave a clear message to China that

*“Age of expansionism is over; this is the age of development. History is witness that expansionist forces have either lost or were forced to turn back”.*

India has always extended friendship towards China, but unfortunately China has not reciprocated the same. Since Chinese statement and its action both vary in huge manner, which result non-reliability as a neighbor. Thus, it can say that China can be a good economic partner but not a reliable neighbor. The chances of war between the two countries are thin, but if China takes a step in this direction, then it will also have to be ready for the counter attack of India.

### Comment by Larisa Smirnova



Although the author of the article, Shivani Rai, might be to some extent influenced by her emotions of patriotism, she pertinently points out the recent rise of popularity of Maoism in China, as well as the legitimate caution expressed by India with regard to China’s “One Belt One Road” that many countries perceived as expansionist in nature<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> On the perception of China’s One Belt One Road initiative in Russia, please see several of my articles, including Smirnova L. (2018) Ambivalent Perception of China’s “One Belt One Road” in Russia: “United Eurasia” Dream or “Metallic Band” of Containment?. In: Pamment J., Wilkins K. (eds) Communicating National Image through Development and Diplomacy. Palgrave Studies in Communication for Social Change. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76759-8\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76759-8_11).

Regarding the recent border clash in Galwan Valley, which is a scarcely populated high mountain area, the official Indian position can be read on the website of the Indian Foreign Ministry<sup>1</sup>. While putting the responsibility for the clash on the Chinese side, the Indian MFA essentially said that China's recent actions are not in accordance with China's own position in the past. The position of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be read on the website of the Chinese embassy to India<sup>2</sup>. The Galwan incident gave floor to multiple comments from the worldwide expert community, however, we could not identify any official remarks on the websites of the Chinese Foreign Ministry. The Russian Foreign Ministry and the United Nations Security Council published, to the best of our knowledge, no remarks.

Going back to the history of the bilateral relations between India and China, in the post-colonial age, they were based on the principle of "Pancha shila" mentioned by Shivani Rai, which means "principles of peaceful coexistence". This term, coming from Buddhism and pointing to the commonality of the two countries' cultural legacies, is radically different from the so-called doctrine of "realism" that is recently popular in the study of international relations. Pancha Shila was also the basis of the Non-alignment movement (NAM), of which India and its then leader Jawaharlal Nehru, was a proponent. The movement was undoubtedly one of the most romantic pages of the history of international relations. It was launched in 1961 by twenty-five countries, who were not part of any military bloc during the Cold War and advocated for peace, notably by India and Yugoslavia.

China joined NAM as an observer in 1992. China arguably displayed most support to the non-alignment movement in late 2000s, when China's position was that it would not join any military alliances but that, being one of the developing countries, it would consistently support the united action of the developing countries on core issues of international relations. Russia's policies after the USSR disintegration throughout 1990s, as it carried out the disarmament and retreat of its military bases, were consistently close to the non-alignment principles. After USSR breakup, Non-alignment, in its turn, displayed support to Russia's post-Cold war positions, including to its membership in G8, as the movement viewed Russia as one of the cornerstones of the diverse world.

---

<sup>1</sup> Official Spokesperson's response to media queries seeking comments on the statement issued on 19 June by the Chinese Spokesperson on the events in the Galwan valley area <https://www.mea.gov.in/response-to-queries.htm?dtl/32770/official-spokespersons+response+to+media+queries+seeking+comments+on+the+statement+issued+on+19+june+by+the+chinese+spokesperson+on+the+events+in+the+galwan+valley+area>

<sup>2</sup> Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Gave a Step-by-Step Account of the Galwan Valley Incident [http://in.china-embassy.org/eng/embassy\\_news/t1790579.htm](http://in.china-embassy.org/eng/embassy_news/t1790579.htm)