

India's Assertiveness In Countering Chinese Threat

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With the World's largest standing military, advanced naval power and upgraded defence equipment including nuclear weapons and missiles, China's ever-increasing military assertiveness and expansion of territory in particular its neighbours has become a flashpoint for conflict across the world. Reports suggested China always try to display its supremacy over weak neighbours like Bhutan, Tibet or other South East Asian nations such as Brunei, the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Taiwan. China's escalating confrontational approach or bullying behaviour in neighbouring states is visible in the disputed South China Sea or in Eastern Ladakh along the LAC (Line of Actual Control) with India. All these occurrences have severely undermined the rule-based international order.

India has been constantly seeking to resolve the border conflicts in Eastern Ladakh. However, China always remained numb in acknowledging boundary deadlock, even blamed India for not abiding border management agreement. According to various reports, by and large China is not interested in deciding a resolution to the unsettled 3488 km long boundary between two nations. China always wants to keep boundary question alive, attempting various efforts to alter the status quo at the LAC. In recent turn of events, misadventure of Chinese troops in parts of Eastern Ladakh in India particular Pangong North, Galwan, Gogra post, Depsang and Demchok areas called for an urgent resolution. In the summer of 2020, People Liberation Army of China breached border agreements and occupied Hot Springs point, Depsang and Demchok areas. The Galwan incident resulted in military standoff between both sides. Multiple rounds of talks through military and diplomatic dialogues were held to find solution in ending bitter tensions in both sides, no progress has been achieved so far yet.

In the meantime, India's External Affairs Minister S. Jayshankar at various international and national podium raised the issue of border conflict between India and China in-front of international community. On February 11, 2022, S. Jaishankar, during the Fourth QUAD Foreign Ministers' meeting held in Melbourne, Australia precisely sought to blame China for prolonging the border dispute arose in May 2020. The recent meeting between Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on July 7, on the sidelines of G-20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia did not yield any result in resolving border issues between two nations. Both world leaders met for an hour and addressed a range of issues, in

particular LAC matters, Exile of Tibetan Spiritual leader Dalai Lama, and Indian official's scrutiny of multiple locations of leading Chinese mobile phone manufacturer Vivo. During the meeting, Mr. S. Jaishankar expressed his earnest intention of deciding important issues along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh. Nonetheless, Chinese side preferred to bring insignificant issue like Indian leaders wishing exiled Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader Dalai Lama. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's greetings for 14th Dalai Lama's 87th birthday on July 6 produced aversion on Chinese side. Due to its hyper-nationalist perspective, China endorse Tibet issue as its indigenous occurrence, and any intrusion by other country in Tibetan affairs whether acknowledging Tibet's spiritual leader Dalai Lama whom they consider as separatist leader or calling for Tibet's autonomy as a threat to its sovereignty. India's Ministry of External Affairs disproved Chinese allegation.

On account of India's serious deliberation to find a resolution for longstanding standoff between India and China on Eastern Ladakh, the 16th round of military talks took place on July 17, 2022 at the Chushul-Moldo border point. Both sides had an open and comprehensive discussions to work together thorough advice offered by state leader in settling relevant issues along the LAC in Western sector. They would also comply to work closely on resolving remaining issues in prompt manner, enabling bilateral progress between India and China.

While, the 16th round meeting brought certain willingness from Chinese side to resolve border standoff in Western Sector, it seems only momentary optimism. A number of news channels, on the other hand updated China's construction of a new village titled as Pangda on the Doklam plateau lying near Bhutanese territory¹. Building a village near Amo Chu river in Bhutanese territory has strategic implication for India. This could gave China an edge to directly access India's Siliguri corridor, bordering Bhutan and entry point towards North-East India. China's land grabbing activities through building villages and roads along Amo Chu river in Bhutanese territory is a matter of grave concern for not just Bhutan but also for India as Bhutan is India's closest neighbour.

China's assertion in almost all arenas made India to restructure the military system and take feasible action plan against China. India's Army Chief Monoj Pande emphasized on restructuring defence forces stationed in eastern Ladakh by incorporating advanced technology intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, thereby providing a breakthrough to military services. Apart from this, an Indian start-up Cogknit, from Bangalore

created an Artificial Intelligence based machine that would assist Indian army, stationed on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) to discern Mandarin languageⁱⁱ.

Poor diplomatic relationship between India and China often culminates into several military clashes and stationing of troops along the LAC between both countries. China's increasingly aggressive approach in the border areas of its neighbours especially India have provoked the country to take equally strong measures in reducing tensions.

End Notes

ⁱ Som, Vishnu, "Pics Expose China's Inroads Near Doklam - Bid To Bypass Indian Defences?", *NDTV*, 19 July 2022, https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/in-pics-chinas-bhutan-landgrab-in-bid-to-bypass-indian-defences-3173358#pfrom=home-ndtv_topscroll

ⁱⁱ Peri, Dinakar, "Soon AI-based mandarin translation devices for troops on LAC", *Hindu*, 12 July 2022, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/soon-ai-based-mandarin-translation-devices-for-troops-on-lac/article65628104.ece>