

# China-India Border Tensions

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POLICY BRIEF



**Source:** *Mining in the Himalayas? Insights*, Synergia Foundation Impact Beyond Borders, May 21, 2018, accessed May 24, 2021, <https://www.synergiafoundation.org/insights/analyses-assessments/mining-himalayas>.

### Executive Summary

The China-India border dispute and conflicting territorial claims over Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin is about geographic sensitivities and insecurities. The dispute started when after revocation of Article 370 and 35 A in the Constitution, the Indian Home Minister Amit Shah declared Aksai Chin as part of India and issued a new map to support his claim.<sup>1</sup> India's objection to China's building of a road in Donglang is to block China's access to Siliguri Corridor and NEFA region. Likewise, China's objection to India's road infrastructure in Galwan valley is to prevent New Delhi's access to Karakoram Pass. In the Sino-India border conflict, China will strongly stand to its territorial claims. Whilst, India is not likely to directly confront China as the former lacks in

<sup>1</sup> Alan Bloomfield, "The India-China Bilateral Relationship: A Serious and Enduring Rivalry," *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group 17, no. 1, 5-23, (March 2021): 15, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/19480881.2021.1878580?needAccess=true>.

military muscle. However, India will try to impede China's vision of regional connectivity, and CPEC being the flagship project of BRI will be the likely target.

### Issue to be analyzed

China and India's construction activities along the LAC can be termed as attempts to alter the LAC or to enhance access in border areas. These construction activities have led to border skirmishes. In this context, the policy brief looks at the various dimensions of China-India border dispute, the geographic sensitivities and the geopolitical factors at play.

### Analysis

China and India share a 3,500 kilometers long border along the Himalayas.<sup>2</sup> The Eastern Sector of Border constitutes the state of Arunachal Pradesh. The line demarcating the border area is the McMahon Line; the Line forms the border between the Tibetan region of China and the North East Frontier region (NEFA) of India.<sup>3</sup> The territory of Arunachal Pradesh is under India's control. The territory shares a 1,129 kilometers long border with China<sup>4</sup> (and also with Bhutan and Myanmar).<sup>5</sup> The territory is also home to natural resources including coal, oil, gas, dolomite, limestone, graphite, lead and zinc.<sup>6</sup> China views Arunachal Pradesh as part of South Tibet, and claims 90,000 square kilometers of land.<sup>7</sup> China has stationed two People's Liberation Army (PLA) infantry brigades in Nyingchi, near Arunachal Pradesh.<sup>8</sup> India has criticized China's stance on Arunachal Pradesh. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called it as an "Expansionist Attitude". Prime Minister Modi has also raised India's sensitivity on Arunachal Pradesh with Japan (September 2014), his remarks: "an 18th century expansionist mindset: encroaching on another country, intruding in

<sup>2</sup> Mapping India and China's Disputed Borders, *Al Jazeera*, September 10, 2020, accessed January 21, 2021, <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2020/mapping-india-and-china-disputed-borders/index.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Ikram Sehgal, "India's China War Circa 2017?" *London Institute of South Asia*, accessed March 21, 2021, <https://lisauk.org/articles/detail/india-s-china-war-circa-2017-written-by-ikram-sehgal>.

<sup>4</sup> Mapping India and China's Disputed Borders.

<sup>5</sup> Sudha Ramachandran, "Arunachal Pradesh: Cultural and Strategic Flashpoint for Sino-Indian Relations," *China Brief* 17, Issue 1, *Jamestown Foundation*, January 13, 2017, accessed May 24, 2021, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/587cc4224.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Mining in the Himalayas? Insights, *Synergia Foundation Impact Beyond Borders*, May 21, 2018, accessed May 24, 2021, <https://www.synergiafoundation.org/insights/analyses-assessments/mining-himalayas>.

<sup>7</sup> Mapping India and China's Disputed Borders.

<sup>8</sup> Ramachandran, "Arunachal Pradesh: Cultural and Strategic Flashpoint for Sino-Indian Relations."

others' waters, invading other countries and capturing territory.”<sup>9</sup> Arunachal Pradesh's significance for India lies in its geography. The territory is adjacent to the Siliguri Corridor.<sup>10</sup> The Corridor links the North-Eastern States (Assam, Meghalaya, Bodoland, Nagaland, Tripura, Manipur and Mizoram) to Indian mainland.<sup>11</sup> It extends a protective arm over India's Northeast. Tawang a corridor between Tibet and the Brahmaputra Valley, at Southwest edge of Arunachal Pradesh plays a key role in this defence.<sup>12</sup> During the 1962 Sino-India war, PLA troops invaded India through the Bum La pass, located North of Tawang town<sup>13</sup> (Map at Annexure-A).

The Western Sector of Border constitutes the territory of Aksai Chin (Himalayan region of Ladakh), and the border regions of Himachal Pradesh. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) separates Aksai Chin and Ladakh between China and India respectively. India claims 38,000 square kilometres of Aksai Chin.<sup>14</sup> From China's perspective, Aksai Chin is vital as it provides the road link between Tibet's capital Lhasa and Xinjiang province.<sup>15</sup>

The Middle Sector of Sino-India Border comprise of the Donglang Plateau. The plateau is at the confluence of India, China and Bhutan.<sup>16</sup> On the Donglang plateau, China's stance is that the 'China-Britain Treaty-1890' declares the area as part of China. China also has Peace and Harmony Agreements (1988 and 1998) with Bhutan over Donglang. For India, Donglang's significance stems from Sikkim.<sup>17</sup> Sikkim became part of India in April 1975.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Danielle Rajendram, "India's New Asia Pacific Strategy: Modi Acts East," *Lowy Institute for International Policy* (Sydney: December 2014): 5, 6, accessed April 24, 2021, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/indias-new-asia-pacific-strategy-modi-acts-east.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Bloomfield, "The India-China Bilateral Relationship," 9.

<sup>11</sup> Sehgal, "India's China War Circa 2017?"

<sup>12</sup> Ramachandran, "Arunachal Pradesh: Cultural and Strategic Flashpoint for Sino-Indian Relations."

<sup>13</sup> Ramachandran, "Arunachal Pradesh: Flashpoint for Sino-Indian Relations."

<sup>14</sup> Mapping India and China's Disputed Borders.

<sup>15</sup> Bloomfield, "The India-China Bilateral Relationship," 10.

<sup>16</sup> Asif Durrani, "Indo-China Military Standoff and Pakistan's Concerns," *Daily Times*, June 5, 2020, accessed January 15, 2021, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/621971/indo-china-military-standoff-and-pakistans-concerns/>.

<sup>17</sup> Maria Qaddos, "Sino-Indian Border Conflict and Implications for Bilateral Relations," *Policy Perspectives* 15, no. 2, (2018): 62-63, accessed May 12, 2021, doi:10.13169/polipers.15.2.0057.

<sup>18</sup> Shantanu Nandan Sharma, "Why Arunachal Pradesh Matters to India," *The Economic Times*, January 31, 2016, accessed March 21, 2021, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/why-arunachal-pradesh-matters-to-india/articleshow/50786663.cms>.

### **Eastern Sector of China-India Border and 1962 War**

The Eastern Sector of China-India Border has been the centre stage of conflict since the early years of independence. In August 1959, Chinese troops captured an Indian military outpost at Longju, North of the McMahon Line. Later, in November 1961, Nehru government announced a “Forward Policy” and planned 43 military posts along the frontier, North of the LAC. These provocations resulted in 1962 (October-November) Sino-India border war.<sup>19</sup> During the war, the Chinese Army crossed the McMahon Line<sup>20</sup> and occupied NEFA and Ladakh.<sup>21</sup> The war lasted for one month.<sup>22</sup> Chinese and Indian militaries, both suffered casualties in war. 800 Chinese soldiers were killed<sup>23</sup> whereas, from the Indian side 1,383 soldiers were killed<sup>24</sup> and 3,000 were taken as prisoners.<sup>25</sup> Hundreds of Indian soldiers also took refuge in Sylhet, in camps by East Pakistan Rifles (EPR). The war ended by Chinese unilateral withdrawal.<sup>26</sup> The war disqualified the “Panchsheel Agreement” (signed between China and India in 1954); the agreement identified “territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference, equality and benefit” as principles of ‘peaceful coexistence’.<sup>27</sup>

### **Border Clashes and Military Standoffs along Eastern, Western and Middle Sectors**

Nathu La and Cho La Passes. In September-October 1967, the border area along the Nathu La and Cho La passes’ witnessed unrest. Indian troops laid barbed wire along the border and Chinese side responded by artillery shells. India destroyed the Chinese fortifications in Nathu La pass. The fighting resulted in deaths of 340 Chinese soldiers and 150 Indian soldiers. The fighting also led to a change in border positions, the Chinese troops were pushed back farther into their territory, near the Cho La pass<sup>28</sup> (Map at Annexure-B).

<sup>19</sup> Sehgal, “India’s China War Circa 2017?”

<sup>20</sup> Russell Goldman, “India-China Border Dispute: A Conflict Explained,” *The New York Times*, June 17, 2020, accessed March 9, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/17/world/asia/india-china-border-clashes.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Sehgal, “India’s China War Circa 2017?”

<sup>22</sup> Goldman, “India-China Border Dispute.”

<sup>23</sup> Goldman, “India-China Border Dispute.”

<sup>24</sup> Sehgal, “India’s China War Circa 2017?”

<sup>25</sup> Goldman, “India-China Border Dispute.”

<sup>26</sup> Sehgal, “India’s China War Circa 2017?”

<sup>27</sup> “Panchsheel,” External Publicity Division, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (June 2004): 1, accessed March 24, 2021, [http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/191\\_panchsheel.pdf](http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/191_panchsheel.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> Goldman, “India-China Border Dispute.”

Daulat Beg Oldi Sector. In April 2013, Chinese and Indian militaries faced each other along the LAC.<sup>29</sup> PLA troops intruded the Daulat Beg Oldi sector and set up camp.<sup>30</sup> The intrusion was followed by a three weeks military standoff.<sup>31</sup> The Daulat Beg Oldi sector is 19 kilometres across the LAC.<sup>32</sup> The sector is an important military base of Indian Army.<sup>33</sup> The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) soldiers during the standoff set up tents 300 metres from Chinese troops.<sup>34</sup> After the PLA troops' withdrawal from Daulat Beg Oldi sector, they stopped at Chumar area in Ladakh. PLA troops dismantled the tents of Indian soldiers in Chumar (Chumar borders Himachal Pradesh). The Chumar standoff lasted for 21 days<sup>35</sup> (Map at Annexure-C).

In September 2014, Chinese and Indian militaries came face-to-face at LAC. The stand-off was in response to India's building of canal in the border village of Demchok.<sup>36</sup> Demchok is located in the Chumar area. China claims Demchok to be part of Autonomous Tibet region.<sup>37</sup>

Donglang Plateau. In 2017, military encounter at Donglang plateau (near the Doka La pass) heightened tension along the border. This time the military standoff lasted for 73 days.<sup>38</sup> The conflict was in backdrop of China building a high mountain road in Donglang. India's concern is that the road connectivity will cut off the 20 kilometers "Siliguri Corridor" (known as the "Chicken's Neck"), linking the North-Eastern States (Assam, Meghalaya, Bodoland, Nagaland, Tripura, Manipur and Mizoram) to Indian mainland<sup>39</sup> (Map at Annexure-D). India is also

<sup>29</sup> Ikram Sehgal and Dr. Bettina Robotka, "India's China History" *Daily Times*, June 12, 2020, accessed January 15, 2021, <https://theazb.com/indias-china-history/>.

<sup>30</sup> Raviprasad Narayanan, "China and India: A Sisyphian Bilateral," Policy Brief, *S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies* (December 2013): 1, accessed January 24, 2021, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/175742/Policy%20Brief%20-%202013-12-31%20-%20China%20and%20India%20-%20A%20Sisyphian%20Bilateral.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> Narayanan, "China and India: A Sisyphian Bilateral."

<sup>32</sup> Narayanan, "China and India: A Sisyphian Bilateral."

<sup>33</sup> Prabhaskar K Dutta, "How India, China Compromise: A Look at How Standoffs Before Doklam were Resolved," *India Today*, August 31, 2017, accessed March 20, 2021, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/doklam-standoff-india-china-compromise-demchok-chumar-daulat-beg-oldi-1034861-2017-08-31>.

<sup>34</sup> Dutta, "India, China: A Look at How Standoffs Before Doklam were Resolved."

<sup>35</sup> Dutta, "India, China: A Look at How Standoffs Before Doklam were Resolved."

<sup>36</sup> Ikram Sehgal, "India's (Possible) China War?" *Daily Times*, June 5, 2020, accessed January 15, 2021, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/621974/indias-possible-china-war/>.

<sup>37</sup> Dutta, "How India, China Compromise: A Look at How Standoffs Before Doklam were Resolved."

<sup>38</sup> Sehgal and Robotka, "India's China History".

<sup>39</sup> Sehgal, "India's China War Circa 2017?"

concerned about China's role in Northeast. China supported the Naga rebels after the 1962 war on the Tibetan border.<sup>40</sup>

In May 2020, Chinese and Indian soldiers fought at the Nathu La Pass in Sikkim.<sup>41</sup> The clash was in response to China's building of a border road through Donglang plateau.<sup>42</sup>

### Galwan Valley Clash

Galwan valley is located between Ladakh region (West) and Aksai Chin (East).<sup>43</sup> The valley is one of the key sites of Sino-India war 1962.<sup>44</sup> The clash along the Galwan valley in June 2020 resulted in deaths of 20 Indian soldiers<sup>45</sup> and five Chinese soldiers.<sup>46</sup> In the aftermath of Galwan episode, Chinese Foreign Ministry gave the statement: "Galwan valley is located on the Chinese side of the LAC." The PLA stated: "China owns sovereignty over the entire Galwan valley."<sup>47</sup> China accused India of "illegal construction of defence facilities across the border into Chinese territory in the Galwan valley."<sup>48</sup> China also objected to India's construction of road between the Galwan-Shyok confluence and the LAC (Western end of Galwan valley),<sup>49</sup> Map at Annexure-E. India has constructed the Darbuk-Shyok-Daulet Beg Oldie (DS-DBO) road, along the Western end of Galwan valley.<sup>50</sup> DS-DBO road is a 158-mile structure featuring forty bridges, links Leh, the capital of Ladakh with Karakoram Pass. This road bolsters India's ability to project power near the LAC, including in the vicinity of Aksai Chin (part of Ladakh).<sup>51</sup> At the Eastern mouth of

<sup>40</sup> Darshana M. Baruah, "India's Answer to the Belt and Road: A Roadmap for South Asia," Working Paper, *Carnegie India* (August 2018): 18, accessed May 24, 2021, [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/WP\\_Darshana\\_Baruah\\_Belt\\_Road\\_FINAL.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/WP_Darshana_Baruah_Belt_Road_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> Mapping India and China's Disputed Borders.

<sup>42</sup> Sehgal, "India's China War Circa 2017?"

<sup>43</sup> Ananth Krishnan, "The Hindu Explains Who Does Galwan Valley Belong To?" *The Hindu*, June 21, 2020, accessed February 12, 2021, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/the-hindu-explains-who-does-galwan-valley-belong-to/article31879418.ece>.

<sup>44</sup> Huseyin Korkmaz, "Analysis – China-India Border Clashes and US Strategy in Indo-Pacific," Analysis, *Asia Pacific*, June 26, 2020, accessed February 21, 2021, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/analysis-china-india-border-clashes-and-us-strategy-in-indo-pacific/1891028>.

<sup>45</sup> Krishnan, "The Hindu Explains Who Does Galwan Valley Belong To?"

<sup>46</sup> Ashok K. Mehta, "Where Does the India-China Border Dispute Stand Now, and What Can We Expect," *The Wire*, October 10, 2020, accessed January 5, 2021, <https://thewire.in/security/india-china-lac-border-dispute>.

<sup>47</sup> Krishnan, "The Hindu Explains Who Does Galwan Valley Belong To?"

<sup>48</sup> Sehgal, "India's (Possible) China War?"

<sup>49</sup> Krishnan, "The Hindu Explains Who Does Galwan Valley Belong To?"

<sup>50</sup> Krishnan, "The Hindu Explains Who Does Galwan Valley Belong To?"

<sup>51</sup> Michael Kugelman, "The Pakistan Factor in the India-China Standoff," *The National Interest*, June 6, 2020, accessed February 5, 2021, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/pakistan-factor-india-china-standoff-161021>.

Galwan valley lies the G219 highway,<sup>52</sup> where China has constructed a highway from Kashgar (Western Xinjiang) to Lhasa (Tibet).<sup>53</sup> Galwan valley's location carries strategic significance for China. One of the corridors of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) runs through the Karakoram.<sup>54</sup>

### **Border Skirmishes' and Bilateral Border Agreements'**

Except the 1962 Sino-India war, the border skirmishes along the Eastern, Western and Middle sectors' have not escalated into an all-out war. This could be termed as a positive development and a successful diplomatic maneuvering by both countries leadership. China and India have also concluded border agreements' to prevent war like situation and to establish peace along the bordering areas. The border agreements' include the 'Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement-BPTA (1993)'; BPTA agrees over the LAC demarcation, 'Confidence Building Measures-1996'<sup>55</sup> ("avoid violence during face-offs, any instrument used by armed forces must be avoided during confrontation"),<sup>56</sup> 'Special Representatives Mechanism for Resolution (2003)', 'Political Parameters for Settlement (2005)', 'Protocol of 2005' ("neither side shall use force or threaten to use force and refrain from any provocative actions"), "Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (2012)' and 'Border Defence Cooperation (2013)'.<sup>57</sup> In addition to the border agreements', China and India have also 'Informal Summits' like the "Wuhan Spirit" and "Astana Consensus". These summit level arrangements focus on establishing 'an understanding of the border dispute based on loose adherence to the strict rules of legal formality.'<sup>58</sup>

The China-India border agreements show an inclination towards peaceful resolution of disputed border territories. However, China and India's building of infrastructures in disputed border territories and the border skirmishes prove the ineffectiveness of these border agreements.<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, certain constraining factors are also at par, inhibiting the "armed assertiveness"

<sup>52</sup> Krishnan, "The Hindu Explains Who Does Galwan Valley Belong To?"

<sup>53</sup> Sehgal, "India's (Possible) China War?"

<sup>54</sup> Korkmaz, "Analysis – China-India Border Clashes and US Strategy in Indo-Pacific."

<sup>55</sup> Utkarsh Pandey, "The India-China Border Question: An Analysis of International Law and State Practices," Occasional Paper, *Observer Research Foundation* (December 16, 2020): 8, accessed January 20, 2021, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-india-china-border-question/>.

<sup>56</sup> Pandey, "The India-China Border Question: An Analysis of International Law and State Practices," 8.

<sup>57</sup> Pandey, "The India-China Border Question," 8.

<sup>58</sup> Pandey, "The India-China Border Question," 9.

<sup>59</sup> Pandey, "The India-China Border Question," 9.



towards war.<sup>60</sup> These constraining factors are the bilateral trade (US\$ 92 billion)<sup>61</sup> and the geopolitical realities, wherein both China and India are trans-regional players. China has access to Gwadar and Chittagong (South Asia) while India as part of Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has politico-economic outreach to Asia Pacific. In a situation, where China and India are widening their geopolitical horizons', both countries need a peaceful regional environment. Other constraining factors in prohibiting the war could be the military disparity between China and India, the latter lacking in military muscle to challenge China. Seeing the war option from a Chinese lens, the former already has footprints in South Asia (seaports and economic corridors) then why China will opt for a direct military confrontation with India. China has access to India's strategic backyard, which places Beijing in a position of strength. It is pertinent to mention that in 2010-14, almost 70 percent of China's arms exports went to Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar, countries along India's periphery.<sup>62</sup>

### **China-India Competition:**

Another angle to China and India's trans-regional aspirations' is that of competition. India's political outreach to East Asia is more or less reflective of pivoting<sup>63</sup> / balancing against China. Meanwhile, China's economic growth in South Asia has heightened the insecurity for India.<sup>64</sup> India, in order to counterbalance the "sense of encirclement"<sup>65</sup> might further strengthen the partnership with the US. In this backdrop, it can be argued that the China and India trans-regional growths, in particular China's led BRI,<sup>66</sup> access to Bay of Bengal<sup>67</sup> and India's Act East policy (relations with countries of Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia and Oceania)<sup>68</sup> are likely to engender

<sup>60</sup> Qaddos, "Sino-Indian Border Conflict and Implications for Bilateral Relations," 60.

<sup>61</sup> Korkmaz, "Analysis – China-India Border Clashes and US Strategy in Indo-Pacific."

<sup>62</sup> Chietigj Bajpae, "China full-circle in the Sino-Indian Relationship," *Lowy Institute for International Policy*, September 12, 2017, accessed January 25, 2021, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/coming-full-circle-sino-indian-relationship-0>.

<sup>63</sup> Korkmaz, "Analysis – China-India Border Clashes and US Strategy in Indo-Pacific."

<sup>64</sup> Qaddos, "Sino-Indian Border Conflict and Implications for Bilateral Relations," 60.

<sup>65</sup> Chietigj Bajpae, "China-India: Regional Dimensions of the Bilateral Relationship," *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Winter 2015, 117, accessed March 24, 2021, [https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/SSQ/documents/Volume-09\\_Issue-4/Bajpae.pdf](https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/SSQ/documents/Volume-09_Issue-4/Bajpae.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> Anita Inder Singh, "Chinese Game in Bay of Bengal," *Sri Lanka Guardian*, accessed May 5, 2021, <http://www.sguardian.org/2020/10/chinese-game-in-bay-of-bengal.html>.

<sup>67</sup> Abdul Hannan, "Too Woo and Entice," *Dhaka Tribune*, October 21, 2020, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/2020/10/19/op-ed-to-woo-and-entice>.

<sup>68</sup> Rup Narayan Das, "America's Pivot to Asia and India's Nuanced Approach," in *Asian Strategic Review 2014 US Pivot and Asian Security* eds. S. D. Muni and Vivek Chadha (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2014), 220, accessed May 20, 2021, [https://idsa.in/system/files/book/book\\_ASR2013\\_0.pdf](https://idsa.in/system/files/book/book_ASR2013_0.pdf).

competitive tendencies in larger Indo-Pacific.<sup>69</sup> In case of heightened tension along the LAC, the involvement of regional countries and the US cannot be ruled out altogether.

### Major Conclusions

- An established parameter of China's foreign policy has been a "peaceful neighbourhood". China does not wish to squander its economic gains of last four decades by engaging in military conflicts or wars. However, commensurate with its rising stature in international politics and global economy, its foreign policy of late has become more assertive not necessarily aggressive. That implies that China will strengthen its defence capability, achieve technological excellence in both military and civilian domains and strongly defend its territorial claims along the border regions with India. China's uncompromising stance on territorial claims was manifest in Donglang and Ladakh. Basically, it is a war of attrition to bring home the point that it is China not India which is the dominant power in the region. China feels that if India is not stopped now, it will pose a bigger threat to its strategic and security interests in South Asia, which will jeopardize China's own efforts to cultivate other South Asian neighbours. In this war of attrition, it will be very difficult for India to sustain the heavy financial burden of its deployment on LAC and India is in any way no match to China in military terms.
- India's 2019 action of annexing Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh,<sup>70</sup> and construction of infrastructure close to LAC and Karakoram Highway, its opposition to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and active involvement in Quad have infuriated China.
- **India-US Nexus.** US support to India is now a given in South Asian calculus. India has been given the role of a net security provider to counter China's influence in South Asia and beyond. A strategic nexus has developed which will work both to the detriment of China and Pakistan. A series of policy steps taken by US have forged a military and security alliance between the two. Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) is a major step, which

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<sup>69</sup> Qaddos, "Sino-Indian Border Conflict and Implications for Bilateral Relations," 61.

<sup>70</sup> Bloomfield, "The India-China Bilateral Relationship: A Serious and Enduring Rivalry," 15.

will give India a distinct advantage to gather spatial information on both China and Pakistan.<sup>71</sup> India also has a Communication Compliance and Security Agreement (COMCASA) with the US to facilitate the exchange of communications and equipment.<sup>72</sup>

- **Pakistan-China Ties.** Pakistan and China have cooperative ties in military and security areas. Both countries have the convergence that their long-term interests in South Asia can be undermined if India is allowed to continue its hegemonistic approach. More coordination between the two to protect their common interests especially to protect CPEC, and multilateral cooperation can result in actions and initiatives in tandem to expose India. India will not take any military action against China but it can attempt an adventure against Pakistan or CPEC. With American technology, India will be well equipped to pose even a bigger challenge.

### Recommendations

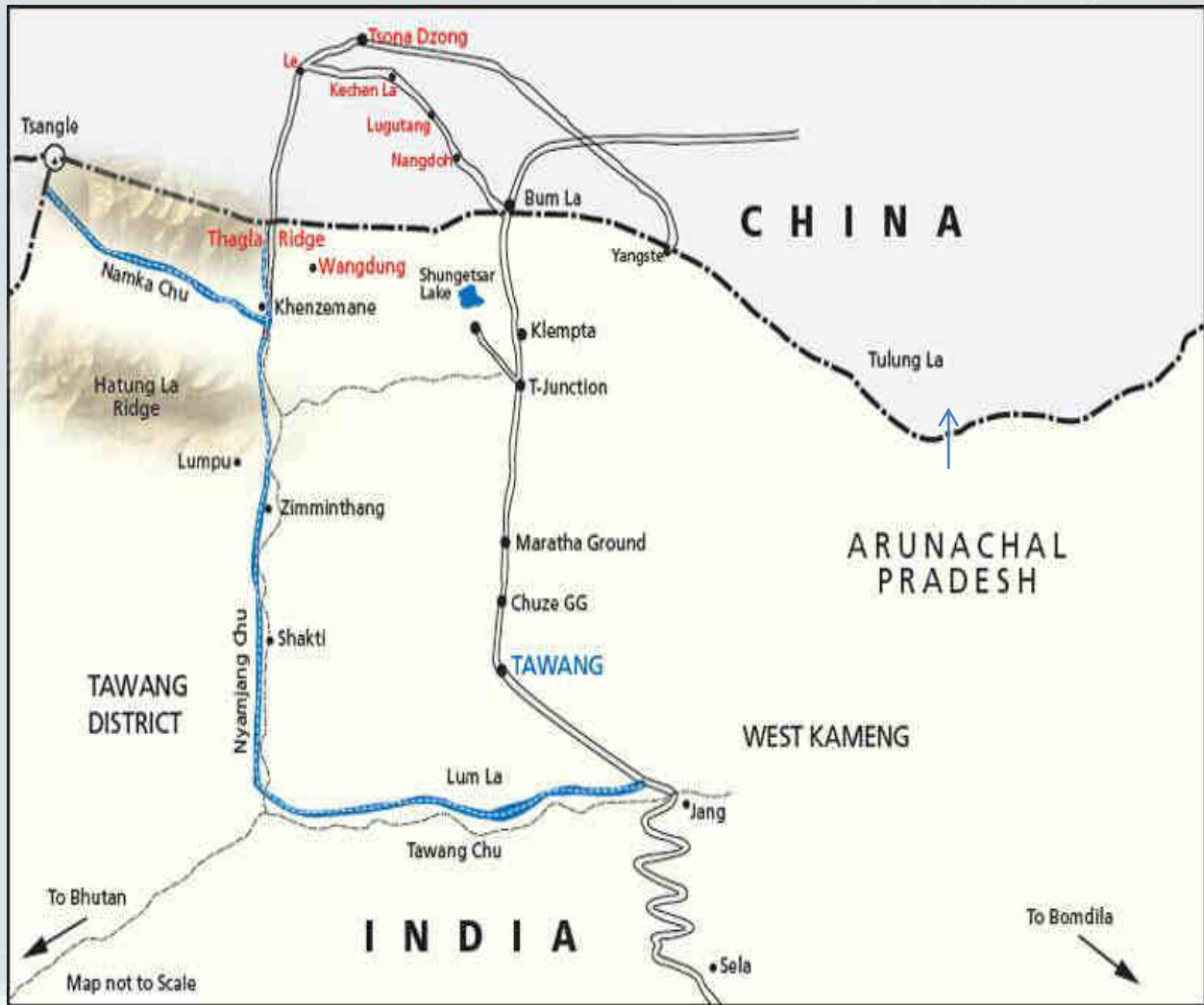
- There is a need for greater coordination between China and Pakistan to exploit Indian vulnerabilities along the LAC and LOC to build pressure on India to resolve bilateral issues through peaceful means.
- In order to frustrate Indian designs against CPEC, Pakistan and China need to strengthen their strategic communications as well as synchronize their actions in political, diplomatic and military domains. A joint strategy by PLA and Pakistan Army is recommended to pressurize India along LAC and LOC.

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<sup>71</sup> S.M. Hali, “BECA – A New Indo-US Bilateral Agreement,” *The News*, November 2, 2020, accessed on March 20, 2021, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/737917-beca-a-new-indo-us-bilateral-agreement>.

<sup>72</sup> Korkmaz, “Analysis – China-India Border Clashes and US Strategy in Indo-Pacific.”

## Annexure-A



TAWANG AND SURROUNDING AREAS

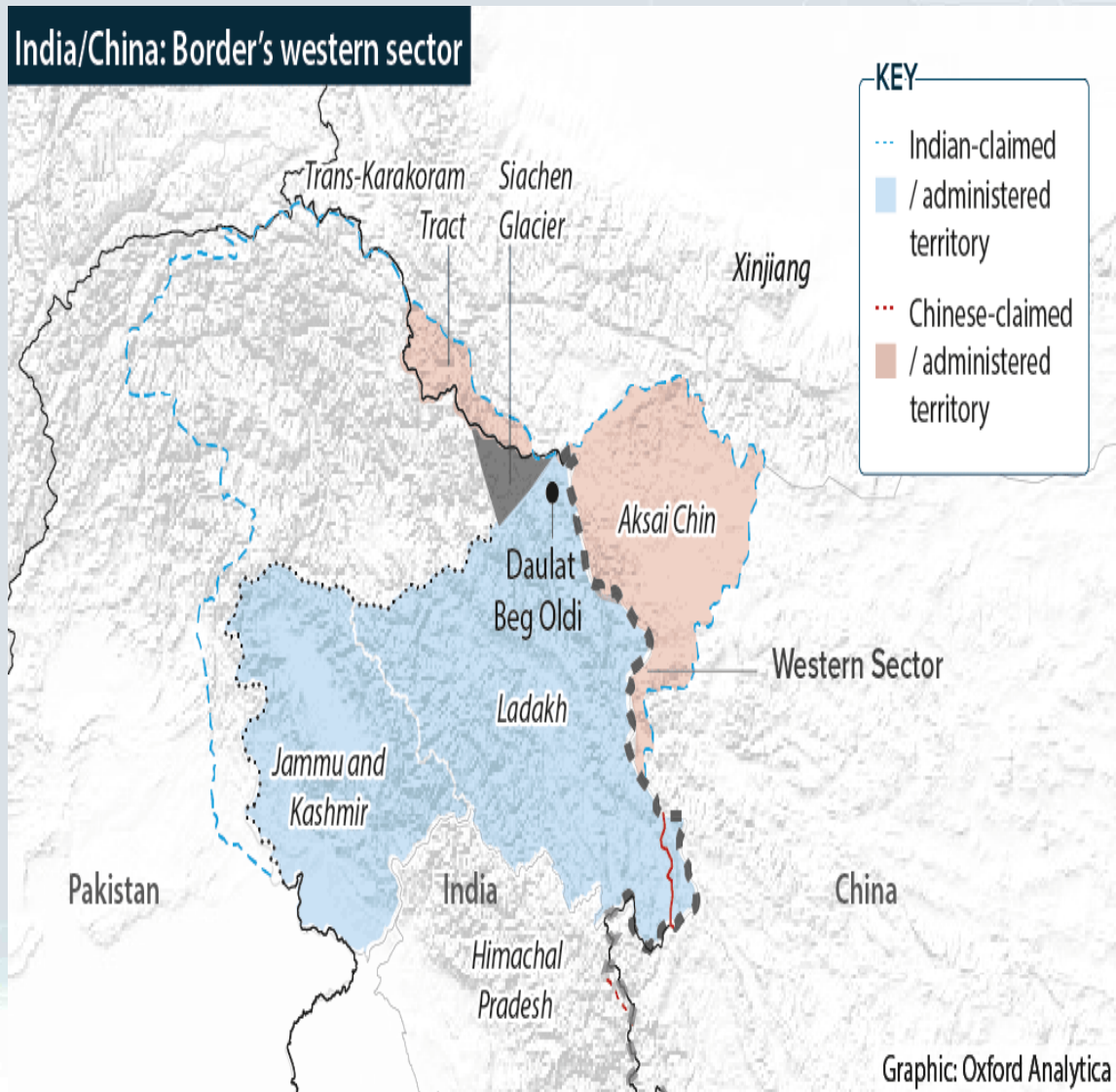
**Source:** Pravin Sawhney and Ghazala Wahab, "Defending Tawang a Limited war will not be to China's Advantage," *Force Magazine*, July 6, 2021, accessed May 24, 2021, <https://forceindia.net/cover-story/defending-tawang/>.

## Annexure-B



**Source:** *Doklam is our area, Says China, October 30, 2018, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://blog.forumias.com/doklam-is-in-our-area-says-china/>.*

## Annexure-C



**Source:** India and China Will Avoid War but Grow further Apart,” *Daily Brief*, Oxford Analytica, June 23, 2020, accessed May 23, 2021, [https://dailybrief.oxan.com/g/oxweb/GI253474/2020-06-23-INDIA-CHINA-western-border-map\\_1000.png](https://dailybrief.oxan.com/g/oxweb/GI253474/2020-06-23-INDIA-CHINA-western-border-map_1000.png).

## Annexure-D



**Source:** Uddipta Gosh, *The Corridor that Poses a Grave Security Threat to the Nation*, *Opinion*, March 10, 2017, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://fipost.com/2017/03/siliguri-corridor-north-east-vulnerable/>.

## Annexure-E



**Source:** Arzan Tarapore, "The Crisis After the Crisis: How Ladakh Will Shape India's Competition with China," Lowy Institute, May 6, 2021, accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/crisis-after-crisis-how-ladakh-will-shape-india-s-competition-china>.