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## Sino-Indian Border Disputes: A Case Study of June 2020 Clash

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### ABSTRACT

The clash between the China and India in June 2020 on the disputed Ladakh border area resulted from continuous and strategic enhancement of the powers of both the countries. Both the countries were very close to collide like two bubbles expand in a contained space, and cause friction. In this article the efforts have been made to explain how the incident takes place and is expected that it could be the reason to exacerbate border disputes in the near future. In pondering implications, it has been advised by different authors that Washington pursue a Eurasia-focused policy which embraces the disputed region.

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### Introduction

The Indian as well as chinese troops On June 15, 2020 engaged in a fight by using fists and clubs which were very adjacent to the Patrol Point 14 in the Gal wan Valley a place located very close to the disputed border area of Ladakh in the Himalayan region. This incident lead to a great causality in which lead to a loss of 20 Indian and 45 Chinese soldiers. According to the reports given by Indian agencies, the chinese armed forces crossed the Line of Actual control which separates India-administered Jammu and Kashmir from China administered Aksai Chin.

The analysis which had been made on the continuous enhancement of both the powers reveals the larger dynamics which made this incident to take place inevitably. A continuous enhancement involves the major policies and measures which will focus to extend a state's military, political as well as economic influence or control all over the borders which comes in between. Under these circumstances, it no way matters that what has happened was an accident or a deliberate attempt, as the geopolitical region of this misfortunate act rooted in the continuous enhancement which associates a degree of inevitability.

The notion of continuous enhancement actually arises in the context of the border dispute as both the countries India as well as China shares a common thought which says that both the countries are actually the victims and have been exploited by the foreign powers and also wish to overcome and wants the remedy for this legacy. Since there is no doubt that both India as well as China are the world's oldest as well as well civilized societies, thus it is being preferred and efforts are being made to regain a status which will help both the societies in befitting their heritage, size and population.

## **Political Expansion**

The continuous enhancement of political powers between India and the China on the disputed territory of Ladakh refers to an elevated focus on policy making in terms of the region at both national as well as local levels, in order to promote the nations capacities for local administrations which exists in the territories to control by the appointment and removal of the local officials and actions by the governments officials for the purpose of redefining or adjust the administrative as well as the political status of the territories which are being controlled in the disputed region.

In case of China the enhancement of political powers refers to the increase of political influence from the head office of the country to its periphery areas in service of the "Chinese dream."

Beijings biggest dream is to achieve a "great rejuvenation of Chinese nation" just by restoring its prominence and making it a "full-fledged developed great power by 2049." The expansion of Political power supports this "dream" by consolidating and advancing institutions of administrative and political control in culturally different areas by exhibiting the separatist tendencies. China exerts the control over economic, cultural as well as political development agendas in these areas, which in turn makes them aware of the party's policies, strategic vision, core values and the beliefs which has been set up.

This whole process is the result of the well maintained as well as secure national economic development by controlling the gap between the poor regions from western end towards the prosperous

eastern regions in order to build a full-fledged base to project the control and power on its western flank. For the security of the PRC this dual imperative is critical which perceives the well developed and sophisticated separatist forces along its entire frontier from Taiwan and Hong Kong in the southeast, inner Mongolia in the north and to Tibet and Xinjiang in the northwest.

The perceived efforts made by the US in order to foment separatism and the expansion of Chinese power in the Indo-Asia-Pacific has given more significance to the western flank in order to maintain the grand strategy to Beijing. This in turn makes China less restrained regarding its territorial as well as sovereignty claims. The actions made by China in the region which is disputed and aims to change India's strategic calculus by the involvement of Delhi's role which has not been fulfilled because of counterbalance, push for reinterpretation of LAC, and deter the India's enhancement of regions while securing its own. The territorial constitution of India has changed in August 2019 and the enhancement of military powers in the disputed regions had reinforced the negative perception towards India's territorial claims over Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh and Aksai Chin. The enhancement of the political powers of the country has aggravated the insecurity policy of India which prompts a race for the control of political issues in the region which leads to exacerbate the dispute and had culminated the incident. Similarly, the concerns about Chinese territorial claims and sovereignty of India drive its political enhancement. Tibet is considered as a contested buffer state by Delhi with geopolitical advantages. The region possesses around 40% of the Chinese mineral resources along with a total of the world's third-largest freshwater repository. Nations are also being controlled by it with major advantages to project power towards the border with India or the remaining part of China.

The tension which gets erupted in border areas arises mainly because of the construction of dams on rivers which mainly originates in Tibet as well as the enhancement of regions of both the powers. Another reason of border dispute was the resistance of Beijing to Delhi's interpretation of McMahon Line on India's northeastern border with Tibet. Exactly as PRC in the Xinjiang and Tibet, Jammu and Kashmir is under the control of India which is a Muslim-dominated region by resorting to nationalism, which under the Bharatiya Janta Party has become a more potent force since it gained control of the administration in the year of 2014. In 2019, the state of Jammu and Kashmir has been ended up as its status as an Indian state, and has been divided into two union territories which are being directly governed by New Delhi. The Eastern Ladakh region has also been divided into a separate union territory. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of India then reaffirmed claim to Aksai Chin by stating that "we are ready to give our lives for

Aksai Chin. Beijing in turn almost certainly factored this statement in any decision to initiate or respond to the actions along the LAC.

Since China and Pakistan is being favoured by the regional balance of forces, India views the political influence extension in the north as necessary in order to secure its northern flank while also challenging the PRC's assertive engagement in Indo-Asia-Pacific. For that purpose, India has accelerated its engagement with Nepal, Afghanistan and Bhutan. This in turn has elevated Beijing's security concerns, making incidents such as the June 15 clash more likely. The border disputes of Sino-Indian and Pakistani-Indian border are very dangerous because their unstable interdependence, which lends itself to a possible armed confrontation which involves number of nuclear armed states.

## **Economic Expansion**

This refers to the promotion of economic and development policies in and beyond the disputed border region of the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir. The political expansion, focuses on the domestic development within a perceived geopolitical space while as the economic expansion has a pronounced trans regional component which supports the countries' internal as well as external expansion. It is noteworthy that the expansion in both the cases is meant to shore up states national rule, legitimacy or communist and the countries nationalist economic agendas. These agendas eventually collide in domestic as well as regional environments, accentuating the border disputes despite spike in the regional as well as economic infrastructure development.

In order to fuel the economic expansion at global level the PRC uses the Belt and Road Initiative, at an expenditure of more than \$1 trillion in infrastructure investments in more than 60 countries which includes the disputed regions with India. This initiative is linked by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, thereby facilitates the Beijing's Western Development Strategy. India avoids to join the Belt and Road Initiative, which in turn raised concerns about the agenda of Beijing in Myanmar, Nepal, and even Pakistan. India is not happy with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as it passes through the disputed area of west of Daulat Beg Oldie military base via Gil git Baluchistan region, and it legitimizes Pakistan and China's political and economic expansions. Delhi directed domestic companies prior to border incident, "to avoid using Chinese equipment for the upgradation of the 4G networks." After this clash and amid growing economic tensions in bilateral relationship, India banned use of the Chinese applications and may further restrict the use of Chinese telecommunications equipment which will be a big blow to the Chinese economy. The tensions arising against the backdrop of the political expansions

in the contested areas tend to raise the mis perceptions and prospects of border incidents. Since the economic policies of Beijing is very advanced in the southwest and northwest, Delhi leverages its Connect Central Asia policy in order to redefine the northern periphery and therefore to match these economic advances. However this policy is constrained by Several major factors. India is planning for developing and integrating the union territories with the remaining parts of India, but unfortunately the disputed region features mountainous terrain and high altitudes, thereby making economic activities difficult for sustenance and organization. India relies on Pakistan in terms of border with Afghanistan to unleash the full potential of its regional as well as trans regional economic policies. It has been seen that India's economy is \$10 trillion smaller than China's economy which may fall further behind absent major reforms. Delhi is making hectic efforts to press forward with economic expansion in the region by strengthening military, economic as well as political ties with countries in the Indo-Asia-Pacific, especially united states, Australia, Japan and Vietnam.

### **Military Expansion**

Both India and China is focusing up to a greater extend over there Military expansion regarding the disputed border area of Ladakh and competing territorial claims, by means of the development of military infrastructure, and the deployment of enhanced military capabilities in the region. These expansions are the result of comprehensive military buildups both powers are working on over the past decade. The aim of the China's military expansion is to help the country in order to become a world-class military by 2050, thereby enabling it to protect its expanding economic interests, including those in Central and South Asia. Ladakh is considered as a inalienable historical territory by Beijing thus are trying hard to protect its economic expansion while preventing India's expansion north and perceived US encroachment in the east. These results in an "Active Defense" approach, which seeks to preempt threats of attacks, not just attacks along its perimeter to deter opponents. The military planners of the region are also paying more attention to the southwest region and to India.

In the past short span of time, Beijing has significantly tried its level best to upgrade military infrastructure in the disputed region. Almost a total of 58,000 kilometers of railway and road systems have been built, five air bases, and supply hubs across Tibet in the past couple of years just to improve rapid reaction and counter terrorism capabilities. A few of the networks which are linked to major highways of the country include Yunnan-Tibet Highway, Central Highway, Eastern Highway, and Western Highway. Along with these heavy links it is further connected to the PRC Pakistan Karakorum

Highway and the disputed Aksai Chin region. Aksai Chin is under the control of China and separated from Indian-administered areas by the LAC. A number of networks are roads run very close to or beyond the LAC areas India considers its territory. In order to improve the military deployments, the Chinese have also extended rail lines in the near past close to the Indian border.

On 15<sup>th</sup> of June when the border conflict gets erupted between India and China the PRC likely occupied multiple new geographical positions in order to ensure the greater protection of China's National Highway 219 (G219) which connects Xinjiang and Tibet and the China National Highway 314 (G314) to Pakistan. The aim behind its construction was to prevent India from building its own infrastructure and using "the 255 km Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldie road." which has been completed in the year of 2019, this road allows for rapid military deployment to the LAC. The construction of India's offshoot roads may have aggravated Beijing's concerns, which triggers the alleged incursions. Territorial gains were used by the as "a form of coercive issue linkage," with which India gets pressurized on the "disputed territories in order to secure concessions" on border-related or non-border-related issues in the remaining geographical areas. On the other hand china is making efforts to pressure India to stay away from Nepal and road building in the eastern sector so that Delhi could be prevented from expanding its influence there. Since June 15 the disengagement, which has involved only select positions abandoned by the Chinese lends credence to this argument. The regional military expansion of India has proceeded more slowly than China's, many projects and have been made online over the past few years, unnerving Beijing. Almost a total of 73 roads have been completed by India under the "India-China Border Roads initiative." The military force of India has focused on "insurgency in Kashmir" since long and the Naxalite uprising," which has lead to constant military threats from China. With the chines recent enhancement of military powers in Xinjiang, Tibet, and the south made India to think to increase "manpower for the Indo-Tibetan Border Police," for the purpose of enhancing the capabilities of its "Eastern Air Command," along with the expansion of its air bases in the region. For the upgradation of the military strength, India has enhanced the potentialities of its "air mobile Mountain Strike Corps." as the modernization of military powers has been completed, the deployment of increased number of personals will be conducted near its border with China, the forces of which are positioned mostly deeper inland. The enhancement of military powers of India in Ladakh may help it to sustain forward deployment which is close to Chinese borders, which in turn will help it to erode some of the chinese advantages. Colonel Zhang Shuili, who is a spokesperson for the Chinese military's Western Theater Command, had pointed out that PRC always maintained sovereignty over the Gal wan Valley after a war

with India in 1962 despite retreating from the area. The attempts made by India to match PRC in military building and its regional military enhancement are predicated on a need just for the purpose of protection in a two-front war. This will result in an unstable “arms race” dynamic prone to miscalculations of intent and potentialities for security dilemma. Since there is no doubt that both the countries possess the capacity to wage large-scale war in the region which is disputed, this dynamic is even more dangerous having risks and implications.

## Implications

The western frontiers as well as the northern frontiers of the PRC as well as India were out of reach for decades and presently ongoing expansions are threatening the status quo for both the countries. Now it has become more apparent for both the countries than in the disputed Ladakh, where both nations are expected to act more assertively since their strategic enhancement keeps less space in order to maneuver. The terrain of both the regions will influence decisions to end, initiate, sustain or freeze a confrontation. Both the countries involved should signal clear intentions and avoid misperception traps which invites further provocations and land grabbing. It seems that the actions made by both these powers are critical because both the regions possess absolutely different ideology and also differ in their abilities which avoids the control for preserving the sentiment during the oncoming conflict. The incidents which takes place on the border places will prompt both the china and India to balance and maintain the regional military forces and relations with the with the rest of the nations in response to each other’s regional advances. Both the powers will prefer to increase the expenditure on it defence sector particularly in the Ladakh region as well as in the surrounding places where there is the threat of conflict, partially for the enhancement of growing military spending trends. Both the countries will also prefer to make their relation better off with neighbors along the shared perimeter so that both the countries could be able to improve their military, political and economic advantages. Finally, both the powers will work on to reconsider their jobs as well as roles in multilateral institutions and efforts will be make tirelessly in order to adjust their relationships with the remaining nations so that the strategic expansions could be balanced. The United States will try its level best for the purpose of border conflict which could draw India into a strategic which will oppose the Republic of India. Instead of positioning itself India will try its level best for the purpose to become an self-sufficient and independent power, with the help of its growing capabilities as well as the historical legacy of the nation as a nonaligned movement leader during the Cold War. It was the choice in the hands of Delhi of aligning with either the United States or the Soviet Union at that time, but since India being very sensitive in the matter so prefers to chart its

own path as like Beijing, has treated the dispute on a bilateral basis. The foreign policy approach of India set up in a strategic autonomy, is paving the way of “more flexible, adaptable and nuanced, since it has continuously increased under strain “because of the rise of a realist strand of thinking” driven by the rise of the China. Pushes the United States in order to maintain a well-developed relationship with India and provides a counterbalance to the advancement of China in the Indo-Asia-Pacific and beyond. The United States should finally take drastic steps and initiatives in order to develop a concrete policy on Ladakh involving a series of military, political and economic initiatives in Central as well as South Asia. It is expected that this approach will certainly help the Washington to influence the strategic enhancement of both the nations or powers in order to provide guarantee for security as well as integrator in the increasingly changing world order.

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