

Boundary Standoff and China-India Relations

A Chinese Scholar's Perspective

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Abstract: The China-Indian boundary and territorial dispute is one of the major issues affecting Sino-Indian bilateral relations. This issue was a legacy of the British colonialists, but unfortunately, it has been fully inherited by the Indian ruling class. Over the past 60 years, China and India have missed three opportunities to resolve this issue. The Indian ruling class wanted to achieve “absolute security” and therefore introduced a “forward policy”, which led to the 1962 conflict. After the war, India occupied almost all of the strategic commanding heights in the border area between the two countries by continuously encroaching on Chinese territory and pushing the Line of Actual Control (LAC) toward the Chinese side. After Prime Minister Modi came to power in 2014, he adopted the Doval Doctrine and “offensive defense” policy in the border area, with a view to continuing the encroachment on Chinese territory and occupying the strategic commanding heights. The aim was to force China to resolve the border issue in accordance with India's intentions, so that India can then shift its strategic focus to the Indian Ocean. China-U.S.

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strategic rivalry and Hindu nationalism have fueled India's behavior in the border region, and the peaceful resolution of the 2017 Donglang/Doklam standoff has emboldened India, making the bloodshed in Galwan Valley an inevitable incident. That India's Home Minister Amit Shah categorically declared in August 2019 in Parliament that Aksai Chin was part of new Ladakh Union Territory shows that the Indian government has restored its position on the western sector boundary that the Vajpayee Administration had abandoned in 2003. India is using the Galwan conflict as an excuse to pursue its policy of economic de-Sinicization and strategic alliance with the U.S. and other Western countries. In the future, China-Indian border conflict is likely to become commonplace due to India's expansionism.

Keywords: China; India; border standoff; Ladakh; Aksai Chin.

Introduction

China and India are two emerging economies that have emerged almost simultaneously, and the relationship between the two countries is of great importance to peace, stability, development and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region, as well as the world at large. However, it must be acknowledged that the relationship between the two countries is extraordinarily complex, involving both cooperation and competition, with the latter being even greater than the former. There are some unresolved historical issues as well as many new practical divergences between China and India. Among the historical legacy issues, the border issue has the greatest impact on bilateral relations. Over the past decade, China-India border disputes have occurred from time to time. The Indian media has constantly hyped the border issue, which has caused serious damage to and become a barometer of bilateral relations. In addition to the border dispute, China-Pakistan relations, the Dalai Lama issue, India's trade deficit with China, and water sharing have also hindered the improvement of bilateral relations.

In addition to this, as the power gap between China and India widens and China's economic activities in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region increase—especially in recent years with the advancement of the “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI)—there is growing concern in the Indian strategic community about China. The Indian side perceives China's economic activities and the associated Chinese fleet escorts in the Indian Ocean region,

and even China's scientific expedition operations in the Indian Ocean high seas, as a threat to India. Several experts within the Indian strategic community,¹ believe that the deterioration of Sino-Indian relations over the past few years is purely a result of the so-called "expansionist" behavior of the Chinese side. They believe that conflict between China and India is a structural one.

History and current affairs are entwined. In 2017, relations between China and India hit a low point after the Donglang/Doklam standoff. Since then, President Xi and Prime Minister Modi have held two informal meetings in April 2018 and October 2019 respectively to improve bilateral ties. 2020 marked the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India, and President Xi and Prime Minister Modi had agreed during their informal meeting in Chennai in 2019 to hold 70 joint commemorative events to celebrate this landmark. But most of these commemorative events had to be scrapped due to the sudden outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic acted like a catalyst, providing an impetus to the Modi government's policy adjustment toward China, which had begun since Modi came to power in 2014.² The 70th anniversary of China-India diplomatic relations instead became an eventful year for the two countries, with the bloody clashes on June 15, 2020

¹Shyan Saran, "China wants everyone to accept this is an Asian order dominated by China," October 21, 2020, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/china-wants-everyone-to-accept-that-this-is-an-asian-order-dominated-by-china-6723981/>; C. Raja Mohan, "Indian resistance to China's expansionism would be a definitive moment in Asia's geopolitical evolution," June 30, 2020, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/galwan-encounter-india-china-border-dispute-russia-us-india-foreign-relations-c-rajamohan-6482305/>; Samir Saran & Akhil Deo, "Great wall for China? Shaping China's (mis) behaviour," June 30, 2020, <https://m.economictimes.com/news/economy/policy/great-wall-for-china-shaping-chinas-misbehaviour/articleshow/75239215.cms>.

²Prem Shankar Jha, "China-India Relations under Modi: Playing with Fire," *China Report*, Vol. 53, No. 2(2017), pp. 158–171; Surupa Gupta *et al.*, "Indian Foreign Policy under Modi: A New Brand or Just Repackaging?" *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (February 2019), pp. 1–45; and Lin Minwang, "Three Rounds of Chang in Indian Diplomacy Since Modi Took Office [莫迪执政以来印度外交的三次转变]," *World Affairs*, No. 21 (2020), pp. 20–22.

in the Galwan Valley further stalling Sino-Indian relations. Some observers³ have blamed China for the Galwan conflict, thinking the Galwan conflict has irreparably damaged Sino-Indian relations. This paper, however, argues that the Galwan conflict resulted from India's policy adjustment toward China. For China and India—especially India—the Sino-Indian border dispute after the Galwan conflict is no longer limited to the border itself but has become a serious issue involving the whole relationship between the two countries and their foreign strategies.

This paper will start from the historical roots of the Sino-Indian border dispute, show the current state of the border between the two countries, analyze the characteristics of the border confrontation between China and India in the past decade, reveal the strategic considerations of the Indian government behind the border confrontation, and discuss the prospects for the development of Sino-Indian relations.

The Origin of the Sino-Indian Border Dispute

The Sino-Indian border has never been formally demarcated, and this issue was originally created by the British colonialists. But on this most basic issue, there are differences between China and India.

In the 19th century, after India became a British colony, in order to protect the security of British India from Russia and the Qing Empire, the British put forward the so-called "scientific frontier" theory, and began to gradually and continuously expand to the north from India.⁴ In the northwest of British India, after the British controlled the traditional Tibetan

³Ashley J. Tellis, "Hustling in the Himalayas: the Sino-Indian border confrontation," June 04, 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/06/04/hustling-in-himalayas-sino-indian-border-confrontation-pub-81979>; Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, "The Galwan Valley India-China skirmish is a gamechanger for New Delhi," June 17, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/06/the-galwan-valley-india-china-skirmish-is-a-gamechanger-for-new-delhi/>; Jeff M. Smith, "The Galwan killings are the nail in the coffin for China and India's relationship," June 26, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/26/galwan-border-china-india-war-conflict/>; Tridivesh Singh Maini, "China, India and the Galwan Valley clashes: what can India do?" June 23, 2020, <https://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/china-india-and-the-galwan-valley-clashes-what-can-india-do/>.

⁴Yao Yuanmei, "India's boundary view and the practice of 'wolf grandmother'," October 7, 2020, https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_9458212?from=fenghuang.

settlement of Ladakh, the British surveyor William H. Johnson proposed "the Johnson Line" in 1865 which included Aksai Chin within the boundary of Ladakh. "The Johnson Line" is the origin of the ownership question of Aksai Chin.⁵ Aksai Chin, from the Uighur language meaning "White Rock Beach of China", is located in the northeast of the Karakoram mountains, and it was never part of Ladakh. China believes that the traditional customary boundary between China and India in the western sector runs along the Karakoram mountains. Based on "the Johnson Line", Major General John Ardagh, chief of military intelligence in London, proposed "the Ardagh-Johnson Line" to the British Indian government in 1897 in order to compete with Russia for Xinjiang. Later, Britain proposed "the Macartney-Macdonald Line" to the Qing government in 1899 to gain the support of the Qing Empire. The British Ambassador to the Qing dynasty, Macdonald, clearly acknowledged in a note presented to the Qing government that "the territory of China includes Aksai Chin"⁶ although the British placed the Lingzi Tang plains on the Indian side, which actually split Aksai Chin.⁷ These two lines only exist on the map of the British, which China has never acknowledged, and the British have never actually controlled Aksai Chin on the ground. But these two lines, especially the Johnson Line, which the government of India after its independence used as the basis for its official boundary with China, resulted in several salient areas such as the Depsang Plain, the Chang Chenmo Valley, the Pangong Tso, and the Galwan Valley, over which China and India disagreed.

In the eastern sector, to prevent the so called "Chinese forward policy in Tibet", conducted by Qing government in the early 20th century, from threatening the security of British India,⁸ the British Indian Army General

⁵Kang Minjun, "An attempt to analyze the origin of the 'Johnson Line' and its position in the Sino-Indian border dispute," *Journal of Beijing Normal University (Social Sciences Edition)*, No. 4, 2004, pp. 20–26.

⁶Wu Chi-na, "Review and prospects of the Sino-Indian Border Issue," September 7, 2020, <http://www.aisixiang.com/data/122794.html>.

⁷Kang Minjun, "Try to Analyze the Origin of 'the Johnson Line' and Its Position in Sino-Indian Border Dispute," *Journal of Capital Normal University (Social Sciences Edition)*, No. 4 (2004), pp. 20–26.

⁸Alastair Lamb, *The McMahon Line: A Study in the Relations between India, China and Tibet, 1904 to 1914* (Volume I: Morley, Minto and Non-Interference in Tibet), London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966, pp. 117–226.

Staff suggested the creation of a “scientific boundary” for the northeast like the Ardagh Line in the northwest in 1911. The so-called “scientific boundary” can be regarded as the embryonic form of the “McMahon line”, and the whole tribal area at the southern foot of the Himalayas and Tawang would be included in India.⁹ At the Simla Convention of 1913–1914, after the Xinhai Revolution, Britain used the conflict between the 13th Dalai Lama and Chinese central government and proposed breaking Tibet into an “inner” and “outer” Tibet to make Tibet a buffer zone. The British representative McMahon held secret talks with Tibetan representatives to reach a deal in which Britain promised to support Tibet’s independence and the establishment of a “Greater Tibetan State” that would include Tibet and the Tibetan areas of Yunnan, Sichuan and Qinghai provinces, in exchange for the transfer of Tawang and about 90,000 square kilometers of land east and south of Tawang to India, which was the origin of “the McMahon Line”. The Chinese representatives were not privy to this secret deal¹⁰ but refused to sign the official text since the Chinese government was against the proposal of an “inner” and “outer” Tibet. The Chinese representatives stated that “the Chinese Government cannot recognize any treaty or similar document signed between Britain and Tibet on this day or any other day”.¹¹ Because the Simla Convention failed, Britain remained secretive about “the McMahon Line” for a long time after that. Volume 14 of *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, and Sunnuds Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, more commonly known as *Aitchison’s Treaties* after its original compiler C. U. Aitchison, contains documents related to Tibet. It was published

⁹Li Changzhi, “Why does Dalai Lama refuse to recognize the deal behind the McMahon line?” October 2, 2020, <https://www.dwnews.com/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD/60213533/%E4%B8%AD%E5%8D%B0%E8%BE%B9%E7%95%8C%E4%BA%89%E8%AE%AE%E8%97%8F%E7%8B%AC%E4%BD%9C%E7%A5%9F%E5%9B%BD%E6%B0%91%E6%94%BF%E5%BA%9C%E7%97%9B%E5%A4%B1%E6%94%B6%E5%A4%8D%E8%97%8F%E5%8D%97%E6%9C%80%E4%BD%B3%E6%97%B6%E6%9C%BA>.

¹⁰Lv Zhaoyi, Wu Yunhong & Yang Xiaohui, “The ‘red line’ on the attached drawing to the Simla Treaty in doubt,” *South Asian Studies* No. 2, 2006, pp. 70–75, 91.

¹¹Tibet Academy of Social Sciences (TASS). *Tibet is an integral part of China* (selected historical materials), Lhasa: Tibet People’s Publishing House, 1986.

by the British Indian government in 1929 and contains no mention of the "McMahon Line".¹²

In 1937, with the approval of the British Minister for Indian Affairs, the secret agreement between Britain and Tibet was made public. As Volume 14 of the *Aitchison's Treaties* had been published as early as 1929, the Britain government ordered the destruction of all old editions and substituted a new edition containing the secret agreement between Britain and Tibet. However, Britain failed to destroy all copies of the 1929 edition of Volume 14, and a copy remains in the Harvard University Library in the United States as evidence of British perjury.¹³ In the same year, the Survey and Mapping Bureau of India began marking "the McMahon Line" as the northeastern boundary on maps but indicated it as "undefined boundary". Subsequently, the British gradually advanced toward the McMahon Line, but until the British withdrawal from India in 1947, apart for a few areas such as Tawang, the British had limited physical control over the area south of the McMahon Line. A dominant strand in British policy in the last decades of the empire seems to have been "cartographic aggression". Without a signed formal treaty that specifically dealt with delimiting borders, the British increasingly attempted to impose their desired India-Tibet border on a weak Tibet and troubled China.¹⁴

According to the Indian side, the border between China and India is about 3,000–4,000 kilometers long. However, neither the Ardagh-Johnson line, the Macartney-MacDonald line nor the McMahon line were ever recognized by the Qing government, the Kuomintang government, or the Communist Party government. This is because there is a traditional customary line between Tibet and India in history, which is about 2,000 kilometers long in the eastern, middle, and western sections. The formation of

¹²Kang Minjun, "An attempt to analyze the ins and outs of the question of the 'McMahon Line'," *Journal of Beijing Normal University (Social Sciences Edition)*, No. 6, 2002, pp. 24–29.

¹³C.U. Aitchison, "Collection of treaties, engagements and sanads relating to India and neighbouring countries," provided by: University of Washington Law Library, content downloaded/printed from HeinOnline, Feb 18, 2019, 15:42:56.

¹⁴Ipsita Chakravarty, "How British ambiguity about frontier between India and China paved way for a post-colonial conflict," 2020, <https://scroll.in/article/965502/how-british-ambiguity-about-frontier-between-india-and-china-paved-way-for-a-post-colonial-conflict>.

the traditional boundary between Tibet and India is causally related to the formation of local human ecology. Different human life circles naturally divide into different political circles. The life circle between Tibet and India is mainly divided according to the method of obtaining "salt": the salt in the Indian subcontinent comes from the Indian Ocean, while the salt in Tibet is extracted from salt lakes on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. The living range of Tibetan people who take salt lakes as the source of salt extends to the southern foot of the Himalayas. The "salt line" really constitutes the "traditional customary line" between Tibet and India, rather than mountain ridge.¹⁵ This is not an abstract line; it is concrete and has been observed for centuries. Neither in Mughal India nor later in British India did political power in India have access to Tibetan cultural areas. During the same period, however, the local authorities in Tibet and the Qing government had jurisdiction over the entire "salt line" of Tibet, and collected taxes from the Tibetans, Monpas and Lhobas who lived there as part farmers and part herders. Tibet came under traditional Chinese jurisdiction after the Yuan Dynasty and was inherited by the governments of the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China. This was the formation of the traditional Sino-Indian border.¹⁶

After India's independence, the Indian government, while taking over state power from the British colonial rulers peacefully, naturally inherited the legacy of past British colonial regimes, including the India-centric ideology, the illegitimate McMahon Line and the concept of security strategy. Nehru and his colleagues envisioned Kashmir, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Assam as India's internal defense line, China-Tibet as a "buffer state" between India and China, and the McMahon Line as the ideal border line in its northeast. The Indian government maintained that there is no border dispute between China and India, and that the McMahon Line in the east and the Johnson Line in the west are the "demarcated" boundary between China and India. Since independence in 1947, India has been seizing disputed areas of the Sino-Indian border to create a *fait accompli*. In the western sector, India occupied the Parigas and Chumar Chepzi to the south of Aksai Chin. In the middle sector, India occupied Gue and Kaulrik areas,

¹⁵Wu Chi-na, "Review and prospects of the Sino-Indian Border Issue, September 7, 2020, <http://www.aisixiang.com/data/122794.html>.

¹⁶Ibid.

Shipki La area, Jadhong Sang, Nelang and Pulam Sumda areas, and Barahoti, Silakang and Lapthal areas, with a total area of about 2,000 square kilometers. In the middle section, except Jadhong Sang and Nelang, which had been occupied before by British colonialists, the rest were occupied by India from 1954 to 1958. In 1954, the Indian government completely revised the official map, changing the term “undefined border” to “defined border”. After this period, the border conflicts between China and India came to the surface.

In 1959, Premier Zhou Enlai flew to New Delhi in person, hoping to negotiate with the Indian side on the “East for West” plan to demarcate the border, but India flatly refused on the grounds that the boundary between China and India had been delimited. The first chance for China and India to solve the border issue was thus lost. Neville Maxwell, a former journalist of *The Times*, wrote in his book *India's China War* that India's basic method of dealing with the border dispute was to insist that “there was no boundary dispute with China, that is, there could be no question about the alignment of India's boundaries. These were where the Indian Government said they were—therefore there could be no negotiation. And where the Chinese were on territory claimed by India, they [had to] withdraw”.¹⁷ The Nehru government therefore refused to negotiate and continued to implement the “forward policy” in the Sino-Indian border area, which eventually led to the Sino-Indian border conflict in 1962.

Line of Actual Control and Confidence Building Measures in Border Areas

The “Line of Actual Control” (LAC) was a concept put forward by Premier Zhou Enlai in 1959, that is, the McMahon Line in the eastern sector and the traditional customary line in the middle and western sectors.¹⁸ Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai had hoped to resolve the Sino-Indian border issue largely

¹⁷Neville Maxwell, *India's China War*, Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1970, p. 102.

¹⁸People's Daily (PD). “Letter from Zhou Enlai to Nehru (September 8, 1959),” *People's Daily*, No. 2, September 10, 1959, <http://data.people.com.cn/rmrb/19590910/2>; Liao Xinwen, “The countermeasures of the older generation of revolutionaries in dealing with the border issue between China and India,” 2013, <http://dangshi.people.com.cn/n/2013/1128/c85037-23682790-2.html>.

along the Line of Actual Control, but they were rejected by the Indian side. The purpose of China's self-defense counterattack in 1962 was to force India to the negotiating table. Therefore, after taking the initiative of cease-fire, China retreated to the north of the McMahon line in the eastern front, and further retreated 20 kilometers backward to show its goodwill to conduct peace talks with India. However, the Indian army returned after the withdrawal of the Chinese army. Officials from the Foreign Affairs Office of the Tibetan Autonomous Region told this author that now in some places in the eastern sector of the Sino-Indian border the actual control area of India lies farther north than that in 1962. As for the western sector, the LAC did not change much because China recaptured part of the territory occupied by India in the 1962 war. However, in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, India did not give up the "forward policy". Through encroachment and aggression, India edged over the LAC to the Chinese side to occupy the strategic commanding heights of the border area. The Nathu La and Cho La clashes in 1967, the Tulung La skirmish in 1975, and the Sumdorong Chu confrontation in 1986 were all related to India's policy of encroachment.

At the end of the 1980s, the international situation underwent major changes. As the Cold War drew to a close, Sino-Soviet relations eased, and Sino-Indian relations were normalized. In 1988, when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China, Deng Xiaoping once again proposed a "package deal" solution to the border dispute. Deng said, "We do some compromise on the West wing, you do some on the East wing, then we can have a new border." However, there was no positive response from the Indian side.¹⁹ Deng Xiaoping had first mentioned a "package deal" solution to Indian Foreign Minister Vajpayee who visited China in 1979, just before China initiated a self-defense counterattack against Vietnam. China opened talks with India in 1981 at the ministerial level focusing on a "package deal", but it was rejected by India which was more in favor of a "sector-by-sector" approach.²⁰ It is worth noting that in the mid-1980s, China began to adjust

¹⁹Mohan Guruswamy, "China's outrageous offer to India for settling the border dispute," March 21, 2017, <https://qz.com/india/934720/chinas-outrageous-offer-to-india-for-settling-the-border-dispute-give-us-all-the-territory/>.

²⁰Arabinda Acharya, "India-China border dispute: failure of the deal, mask diplomacy and politics of boycott. 70 years of India-China diplomatic relations," *FPRC Journal*, 44, 2020, pp. 135–150.

its policies on border negotiation. Since 1985, China has stressed that "there are disputes in the eastern, middle and western sectors of the Sino-Indian border, and the eastern section is the most controversial. . . only when India makes adjustments in the eastern border area will China make corresponding concessions in the western section".²¹ China and India thus lost a second chance to resolve the border issue.

After the normalization of Sino-Indian relations, the two sides set up a joint working group and began discussing the border issue; they also started negotiating on the demarcation of the Line of Actual Control. In order to maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas, the two countries signed the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas and the Agreement between India and China on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas respectively in September 1993 and November 1996. They also decided to establish a mechanism for regular meetings at the border to avoid conflicts, stipulating that both sides would not use force and the threat of force to resolve the border issue, indulge in shooting near the border, and make use of explosive devices, etc.

In 2003, Prime Minister Vajpayee visited China. On this visit, Vajpayee was determined to settle the border issue between the two countries once and for all. India abandoned its traditional position of insisting on the Kunlun Range as the India-China border in the western sector and indicated that the border dispute could be negotiated. The two Prime Ministers appointed Special Representatives to explore a framework for resolving the border issue, and the mechanism of Special Representatives became the highest level of talks on the Sino-Indian border issue. At the first meeting of the Special Representatives held in New Delhi on 23–24 October 2003, the two countries established a three-step strategy for resolving the border issue: first, to establish guiding principles for resolving the border issue; second, then to establish a framework agreement for implementing the guiding principles; and finally, to demarcate and stake the border on the

²¹Wang Hongwei, *The Himalayan Sentiment: A Study of Sino-Indian Relations*, Beijing: China's Tibetology Publications, 1998; Sumit Ganguly, "The Sino-Indian border talks 1981–1989: a view from New Delhi," *Asian Survey*, No. 12, 1989, pp. 1123–1135.

ground.²² However, Vajpayee's original plan to resolve the border issue in 2005 was thwarted when he lost the 2004 elections and stepped down. A third opportunity for China and India to resolve the border issue was thus lost.

In April 2005, during Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to India, the two countries signed the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question. In this treaty, both sides agreed they should, in the spirit of mutual respect and mutual understanding, make meaningful and mutually acceptable adjustments to their respective positions on the boundary question so as to arrive at a package settlement. That boundary settlement must be final, covering all sectors of the India-China boundary. The signing of this agreement boosted the confidence of the Indian side, which was keen to "accomplish the whole task [with] one stroke".²³ In 2006, during President Hu Jintao's visit to India, both sides agreed to complete the process of exchanging maps indicating their respective perceptions of the entire alignment of the LAC on the basis of already agreed parameters. However, China and India faced practical difficulties in exchanging maps of the LAC. In 2000, the two sides had exchanged maps of the middle sector of the border; but in 2002, when exchanging maps of the western sector, they found that the cognitive gap was too large and the map exchange was interrupted; by 2005, the verification process was completely suspended.²⁴ The reasons for the stagnation of the verification process of the LAC are complex. The Chinese side had hoped to shelve the border dispute by verifying the LAC and resolving it when conditions became ripe.²⁵

²²MEA, Joint Declaration by the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China, November 21, 2006, <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/6363/Joint+Declaration+by+the+Republic+of+India+an>.

²³Mao Siwei, "It is inevitable that China and India will deal with the border issue according to the status quo," December 19, 2014, <http://www.aisixiang.com/data/81549.html>.

²⁴Ranjit Singh Kalha, *India-China Boundary Issues: Quest for Settlement*, Pentagon Press, 2001.

²⁵Mao Siwei, "It Is Inevitable that China and India will Deal with the Border Issue According to the Status Quo [中印按现状处理边界问题在所难免]," Aisixiang, December 19, 2014, <http://www.aisixiang.com/data/81549/html>.

However, the Chinese side did not expect that in the process of verifying the LAC, the originally vague border dispute would turn into territorial disputes of specific locations. The “pockets” of dispute along the LAC have more than doubled, from 8 to 20, since 1995. As these disagreements have come to the fore, China has soured on the LAC’s clarification via the exchange of maps and now prefers a more limited “code of conduct”, which the Indian side has rejected.²⁶

In 2006, India and China held the seventh round of negotiations. In the negotiations, China put forward a “package” proposal to jointly resolve the boundary disputes in three sections; that is, China was willing to give up its claim on Southern Tibet in the eastern section, in exchange for India’s recognition of China’s control over Aksai Chin in the western section. However, due to India’s inability to reach a domestic political consensus on the settlement of the Sino-Indian border issue, the ruling Congress Party and its coalition partners had no ability to make any major decisions on the thorny issue. India has always insisted on its vested interests in the eastern section of the border, especially Tawang, and is not willing to give up its (unreasonable) requirements in the western section, unrealistically hoping to make China unilaterally concede. This made the “package” resolution impossible.²⁷

The confidence-building measures in the border areas that China and India have been exploring since 1993, in particular the two agreements signed in 1996 and 2005 stipulating that neither army can use weapons in border conflicts, have brought a period of relative tranquility to the Sino-Indian border region. Although this regulation limits the scale of conflict in the border area, it creates a disadvantageous situation for the Chinese side. Since the Nathu La and Cho La clashes in 1967, the Indian army has summed up the lessons of border conflicts between China and India. They know that the Chinese army will adhere to the principle of “no first shot”. They believe that as long as they do not shoot first, they will not be attacked by the Chinese army. Therefore, Indian army patrols have been crossing the

²⁶Travis Wheeler, “Clarify and respect the line of actual control,” May 10, 2019, <https://www.stimson.org/2019/clarify-and-respect-line-actual-control/>.

²⁷Zhang Xudong, “The dream of rejuvenation tied up in the Himalayas,” October 11, 2014, http://www.chinatoday.com.cn/ctchinese/chinaworld/article/2014-10/11/content_643802.htm.

LAC confidently and continuously and setting up outposts under the eyes of the Chinese army to create a new line of actual control. This author recently visited the Sino-Indian border area and found that almost all strategic commanding heights in the eastern sector of the Sino-Indian border are being controlled by the Indian army. Mount Gipmochi is full of Indian army bunkers. In the western sector, India is also constantly encroaching on China's territory, trying to occupy the strategic commanding heights of the border areas. Not only is the hill opposite Dêmqog full of Indian army bunkers, but the hot spring near Dêmqog, which was located on the Chinese side, is also being controlled by India. Because India already has a dominant position in the eastern sector, most border confrontations in recent years have taken place in the western sector.

Causes and Characteristics of the Frequent Border Confrontations Between China and India in the Past Decade

From 2020, there has been an increasing trend of border confrontations between China and India. The frequent occurrence of border confrontations is mainly due to two factors, one international and one domestic.

Firstly, the balance of major powers has changed considerably, "China's rise" has become a popular discourse. China's surrounding environment began to change, and India's strategic value in the eyes of the United States and the West increased. As early as 2006, the United States began to substantially adjust its hub-spoke alliance system in Asia, and India became an important new partner in this arrangement. In May 2007, under the proposal of U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, officials from the United States, Japan, Australia and India held their first meeting, and in September of that year, they held a large-scale joint maritime exercise in the Bay of Bengal together with Singapore. Since Obama came to power in 2009, the United States has been stirring up territorial disputes in Asia, such as in the Diaoyu Islands and the South China Sea, creating regional tensions. Obama put forward the "Pivot to Asia-Pacific" and "Rebalance toward Asia-Pacific" strategy, and India has become the "linchpin" of the new Asian strategy of the United States. In August 2012, Stephen Smith, Australia's then Defense Minister, put forward the concept of the "Indo-Pacific", arguing that the security and stability of the "Indo-Pacific" region depended on the relations between Washington and Beijing, Washington and

New Delhi, and New Delhi and Beijing.²⁸ The following year, the commander of U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) ADM Samuel Locklear began referring to this region as the “Indo-Asia-Pacific” to characterize the expanse of U.S. interests in his area of responsibility.²⁹

The rise in India’s strategic value has led Indian policymakers to believe that they can take advantage of the fact that China is facing pressure from the United States and the West to also put pressure on China for practical benefits. This is one of the most important reasons that the Indian government has adopted an “issue by issue diplomacy” strategy toward China in recent years.³⁰

Secondly, the Qinghai-Tibet Railway, which was inaugurated in 2006, is perceived as a threat by the Indian side. As a result of the increased mobility of Chinese troops, India has deployed more troops to the border, strengthened its infrastructure and increased its air force in the area. With improved infrastructure in the Sino-Indian border region, the border defense forces of both sides can patrol the areas that could not be reached before. The fact that the LAC between the two countries has never been formally demarcated and that there are differing perceptions as to its direction, has led to some so-called “transgressions” or “incursions”. This has gone largely unreported in the Chinese media, but not on the Indian side. Within India, some of the military and strategic circles that have long benefited from Sino-Indian tensions have become a special interest group, hoping to reap tangible benefits by creating border tensions. After India proposed to shift its strategic focus to the sea in the 1990s, the Indian army and border police forces felt that their own interests were compromised. They thus colluded with the media to hype the border dispute to secure more financial allocations. According to Indian government data, the

²⁸Liu Zongyi, “The building of the U.S. global strategic pivot and its influence,” *International Outlook*, 2020, No. 4, pp. 1–23; Liu, Zongyi, “Not joining the RCEP is a strategic blunder that will lead to India’s isolation in globalization”, (November 13, 2020), <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1206765.shtml>.

²⁹Donna Miles, “US commander Locklear Calls for Indo-Asia-Pacific Cooperation,” February 8, 2013, <https://www.indiaamericatoday.com/article/us-commander-locklear-calls-for-indo-asia-pacific-cooperation/>.

³⁰Ye Hailin, “The Modi administration’s ‘issue by issue diplomacy’ strategy towards China and related attitudes towards the belt and road initiative,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies*, 2017, No. 6, pp. 24–47.

Chinese Army transgressed into Indian territory 1025 times between 2016 and 2018.³¹ The Indian government has allowed the media to hype up the border issue, both with the intention of using the international community, especially countries in the West, to put pressure on China, and with the intention of using the Sino-Indian border dispute to extract benefits from the United States and the West. Moreover, border hype is sometimes an effective means of diverting domestic conflict.

Since 2006, the border negotiations between China and India have been at a stalemate. From the perspective of India, “temporary settlement and long-term shelving” is not an ideal choice. Many Indian strategic elites believe that the gap between the two countries’ comprehensive strengths will further widen over time, and that the further the final resolution of the border issue is postponed, the worse it will be for India.³² The Indian side believes that Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao’s statement that the border issue needs to be resolved over a longer period of time is a clear deviation from the original position that the border issue should be resolved politically as soon as possible. But the problem is that the Indian side does not want to try to make any concession to solve the border issue as soon as possible. For any settlement to be politically acceptable in India, it must be ‘LAC plus’—meaning that India retains what it has in the east, and China concedes some territory to India in the west.³³ At the same time, India complains that China has made concessions to other neighboring countries to resolve border issues, but not with India, making the border issue a prominent source of conflict between the two countries.³⁴ The Dalai Lama declared in 2008 that Tawang was an “integral part of India”,

³¹PTI, “1025 Chinese transgressions reported from 2016 to 2018: Government data”, November 28, 2019, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/1025-chinese-transgressions-reported-from-2016-to-2018-government-data/articleshow/72262114.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst.

³²Mao Siwei, “It Is Inevitable that China and India will Deal with the Border Issue According to the Status Quo [中印按现状处理边界问题在所难免],” Aisixiang, December 19, 2014, <http://www.aisixiang.com/data/81549/html..>

³³Manoj Joshi, “Sino-Indian border deadlock: time to rewrite India playbook,” August 31, 2020, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/sino-indian-border-deadlock-time-to-rewrite-india-playbook-72495/?amp>.

³⁴Sunil Khilnani, Rajiv Kumar *et al.*, *Nonalignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century*, 2012.

and New Delhi facilitated his visit to the Buddhist enclave in Arunachal Pradesh the following year.³⁵ In “A Shared Vision for the 21st Century of the Republic of India and the People’s Republic of China” released in January 2008 and the “Joint Communiqué of the Republic of India and the People’s Republic of China” released in December 2010, “India recognize[d] that the Tibet Autonomous Region is part of the territory of the People’s Republic of China”, and that “Tibetans are not allowed to carry out political activities against China in India”, and the “One China” policy disappeared one after another.³⁶ In 2011, the Dalai Lama renounced political leadership of the Tibetan government-in-exile and Lobsang Sangay became the so called Sikyong (President) of the Tibetan-government-in-exile. The Dalai Lama has announced he will choose his successor via “emanation,” which means the next Tibetan spiritual leader will be found outside China.³⁷ India has also been keenly aware of the changes in the international situation. In India’s view, the territorial disputes between China and other countries, as well as the contradictions between China and the United States and the West, are all chips that can be used to put pressure on China, so as to achieve an early settlement of the border issue in accordance with the way India envisions. At the same time, the Indian government is also ready for long-term competition with China in the border areas. India announced in 2005 that 61 highways with a total length of 3,400 km will be built near the LAC, which would undermine China’s traditional advantage once completed.³⁸ In the “Non-alignment 2.0” released by India’s strategic community in 2012, India explicitly mentioned “holding the line” in the border areas, and making use of its comparative advantages to expand toward the South Ocean, as well as implementing multifaceted

³⁵Travis Wheeler, “Clarify and Respect the Line of Actual Control,” Stimson Center, May 10, 2019, <https://www.stimson.org/2019/clarify-and-respect-line-actual-control/>.

³⁶Wu Zhaoli, “The China-India border dispute: roots of the problem, progress in negotiations and a path forward, *South Asia Studies*, 2013, No. 4, pp. 47–62.

³⁷Wheeler (2019).

³⁸Deep Pal, “India-China relations after clashes in Ladakh: looking for a new modus vivendi,” July 10, 2020, <https://www.nbr.org/publication/india-china-relations-after-clashes-in-ladakh-looking-for-a-new-modus-vivendi/>.

checks and balances to China.³⁹ At the same time, in order to prevent the escalation of the situation in the border areas, the two countries signed the India-China Agreement on the Establishment of a Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs in 2012.

After the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Chinese leaders attached more importance to Sino-Indian relations. In April 2013, China's new Premier Li Keqiang chose India as the first stop of his foreign visit. Chinese diplomats found that the Indian side was greatly surprised by this decision, believing that Sino-Indian relations had not reached such a high level and that China surely had something it wanted from India. On the eve of Li's visit to India, a "tent confrontation" took place between the two countries in the western border region. Although the confrontation was resolved before Li Keqiang's visit to India, and the two countries signed a Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA) that year, but the confrontation can be seen as a test of the Indian side toward the new Chinese government's attitude on the border issue. The strategy of choosing important timings in bilateral relations to pressure China on border issues was revealed.

After Prime Minister Modi came to power, the border confrontation between China and India became more frequent and violent. In the early years of the Modi government, there was a great deal of optimism that India could come to a resolution of its border disputes with China.⁴⁰ At that time, many elites in India's strategic circles leaked information that Modi's coming to power was a good time to solve the border problem. Firstly, the international environment was favorable to India. Due to maritime territorial disputes, China was under pressure from the United States, Japan and Southeast Asian countries. Some politicians in the United States, Japan and other countries were trying to encourage India to implement a tough

³⁹Sunil Khilnani *et al.*, "Nonalignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century," Center for Policy Research, February 29, 2012, <https://cprindia.org/research/reports/nonalignment-20-foreign-and-strategic-policy-india-twenty-first-century>.

⁴⁰Manoj Joshi, "Sino-Indian" Border Deadlock: Time to Rewrite India Playbook," Occasional Paper, Observer Research Foundation, August 2020, https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ORF_OccasionalPaper_269_Sino-Indian-Deadlock_FinalForUpload.pdf.

China policy, so as to reap the benefits from their tussle. Therefore, China needed to have a good relationship with India. Secondly, the Indian side believed that the leaders of China and India were strong political figures who were able to make political decisions. They would want to seize the opportunity to solve the border issue. Indian scholars believed that the solution to the border problem should still be a case of “exchanging the East for the West”, as it was during the period of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. However, they refused to adjust the eastern section and insisted on taking possession of Tawang. To date, the Indian side believes that all the technical problems in the border talks have been resolved, and it is up to the political will of both sides.⁴¹

There are two key reasons why India is so eager to solve the border problem. First, with the growing gap between China and India, the protracted border issue is not conducive to India. The perspective from the Indian side is that this is an opportunity that cannot be missed because the border situation is now developing in a negative direction, with the two armies actually in a state of confrontation. This situation is not conducive to bilateral relations. Second, after Modi came to power, India made great efforts to become a global power, hoping that after solving the border issue with China, India would be able to concentrate on getting rid of the fetters of Pakistan in South Asia, so as to eventually shift its strategic focus to the Indian Ocean—“the global strategic pivot of the 21st century”. Hundreds of thousands of troops stationed on the Sino-Indian border currently consume a lot of resources every year. The Modi government has adopted the “Doval Doctrine” by accelerating infrastructure construction in the border areas and implementing an “offensive defense” policy in dealing with China. One of India’s aim is to seize the strategic commanding heights in the border area, creating military posture favorable to India, and at the same time move the Line of Actual Control as far as possible toward the Chinese side in order to gain an advantage in the possible negotiation of resolving the border issue in the future. Because once the line of actual control is approved, the border will basically be determined. Another aim is to pressure China to verify the Line of Actual Control according to the wishes of the Indian side by keeping up pressure.

⁴¹Ibid.

In September 2014, on the eve of President Xi Jinping's visit to India, there was a sudden standoff in the border area. Prime Minister Modi asked President Xi to resume and verify the Line of Actual Control.⁴² In May 2015, during PM Modi's visit to China, the border dispute, especially the LAC issue, became the focus of major media reports in India. The Indian diplomats expressed hope that China would resolve the border issue with India in an "out of the box" way. In addition to the border and the LAC issues, India has also continued to put forward other tough issues to China, such as NSG, Massod Azhar issue, etc. When their demands were not satisfied, they would put bilateral relations on hold. As a result, bilateral relations deteriorated seriously from 2015 to 2016. In June 2017, the Donglang/Doklam standoff brought China-India relations to a low ebb. Since China did not take a tougher approach toward India at that time, taking into account the major events such as the BRICS Xiamen Summit and the 19th CPC National Congress, India was emboldened and since then, it no longer recognizes the defined boundary of the Sikkim section.⁴³ The Indian side may well be thinking that it has grasped the Chinese "game plan" and outplayed China. Perhaps India now sees China as a "paper tiger" that will not dare retaliate or fight back because it has been "outsmarted". Especially as China is entangled in strategic competition with the U.S., it is a godsent opportunity for India to take on China. Both the Wuhan informal meeting in 2018 and Chennai informal meeting in 2019 were preceded by boundary standoffs.

In August 2019, after India unilaterally revoked the autonomous status of Indian-occupied Kashmir, it carved out Ladakh from India-occupied Kashmir to form a separate Union Territory. This included China's Aksai Chin in its territory, violating China's territorial sovereignty and integrity, which prompted China to lodge a solemn protest. India's Home Minister Amit Shah categorically declared in Parliament that Aksai Chin was part of the new Ladakh Territory, and he was ready to give his life for this.⁴⁴ His

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Shishir Gupta, "India links China's Sikkim offer with middle sector map," December 31, 2019, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-links-china-s-sikkim-offer-with-middle-sector-map/story-yZE2yhv7oEdnkf9oBXJZuL.html>.

⁴⁴J.P. Yadav, "When Shah thundered on Aksai Chin: 'Iske liye jaan de denge'," June 18, 2020. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/india-china-clash-when-amit-shah-thundered-on-aksai-chin-iske-liye-jaan-de-denge/cid/1781717#>.

speech implied that the Indian government had restored its position on the western sector boundary that the Vajpayee Administration had abandoned. In the same month, India opened the Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldie highway in the western sector of the Sino-Indian border. This is an important highway parallel to the LAC, but close to Galwan Valley, the PLA garrison in the area can directly threaten the security of the highway.⁴⁵ In January 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic broke out in China. The Indian government, believing that China had no time to deal with other affairs given the raging pandemic and huge pressure from the U.S. Trump Administration, became more aggressive in the border area. In order to secure the Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldie highway, Indian troops crossed the Line of Actual Control with China in the Galwan Valley and elsewhere, building bridges and fortifications, leading to a standoff between the two armies. On the evening of June 15, the Indian army, in violation of the agreement reached at the military commander level meeting between the two countries on June 6, crossed the LAC and killed and injured Chinese soldiers first, thus triggering a bloody conflict in the Galwan Valley.

Prospects for China-India Relations after the Galwan Conflict

Judging from India's consistent behavior in the border areas, conflicts such as Galwan are inevitable, but it is important to note here that the casualties of Indian soldiers are indeed accidental. Most of the Indian soldiers were not killed by PLA soldiers but fell into the river and drowned or froze to death. The responsibility for the bloodshed in Galwan is entirely on the Indian side, prompting China's demands that India carry out a thorough investigation into the incident and severely punish those who should be held accountable.⁴⁶ Prime Minister Narendra Modi also denied that Indian territory had been invaded at an all-party meeting to discuss the situation along the India-China border on June 19, 2020. He said "[there was] nobody inside our

⁴⁵Deep Pal, "India-China Relations after Clashes in Ladakh: Looking for a New Modus Vivendi," National Bureau of Asian Research, July 10, 2020, <https://www.nbr.org/publication/india-china-relations-after-clashes-in-ladakh-looking-for-a-new-modus-vivendi/>.

⁴⁶Yang Sheng and Liu Xuanzun, "China urges India to investigate border incident," June 17, 2020, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1191969.shtml>.

borders, our posts have not been occupied".⁴⁷ However, India's partisan system, the rise of Hindu nationalist sentiment in the country and the large number of casualties put the Modi Government in a policy dilemma.

After the bloodshed in Galwan, the Indian strategic community argued that India was no longer able to deter China effectively and its deterrence policy toward China had come to an end, calling on the Modi government to adjust its strategy toward China.⁴⁸ But in reality, the adjustment of India's policy toward China began after Modi came to power in 2014, when he invited Lobsang Sangay to attend his inauguration, adopted the "issue by issue diplomacy" strategy toward China, and enhanced strategic cooperation and coordination with the U.S. on "Indo-Pacific" strategy. The adjustment became clearer after his re-election in 2019 when India unilaterally abolished the special status of Indian controlled Kashmir, designated Ladakh as a Union Territory and included China's Aksai Chin in it. The outbreak of Covid-19 in early 2020 accelerated the process. After the Covid-19 epidemic broke out in China, many Indians thought India had an opportunity to develop their manufacturing industry and overtake China. The Indian government introduced preferential measures in terms of land and taxation, lobbying multinational companies in China to transfer their production chains to India. At the same time, the Indian government also adopted policies of boycotting Chinese goods and investment. The bloodshed in Galwan provided India with a much cleverer excuse. Indian strategic elites argue that at the beginning of the 21st century, China-India cooperation was based on the hegemonic dominance of the United States, but now China has emerged as India's biggest threat. In fact, it is not like

⁴⁷"1025 Chinese Transgressions Reported from 2016 to 2018: Government Data," *Economic Times*, November 28, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/1025-chinese-transgressions-reported-from-2016-to-2018-government-data/articleshow/72262114.cms>.

⁴⁸Manoj Joshi, "Sino-Indian" Border Deadlock: Time to Rewrite India Playbook," *Occasional Paper*, Observer Research Foundation, August 2020, https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ORF_OccasionalPaper_269_Sino-Indian-Deadlock_FinalForUpload.pdf; C. Raja Mohan, C. Raja, "Today, India's strategic autonomy is about coping with Beijing's challenge to its territorial integrity, sovereignty," August 25, 2020, <https://india-nexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/reinventing-india-strategic-autonomy-china-us-6568347/>.

some Indian strategist said that China does not want to cooperate with India to achieve the Asian century but the pre-conditions for peaceful coexistence between the two countries proposed by the Indian side are unsustainable for China, a situation that has emerged since Modi's first term.⁴⁹

The Indian government not only believes that the basis for China-India cooperation has been lost, but also believes that the strategic competition between China and the United States and the "de-Sinicization" of the U.S. economy provide a rare opportunity for its rise, which India must take advantage of. India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said he hoped to reach a "new balance" with China. However, this new balance cannot be achieved unless India and the United States and Japan, and some other countries form an alliance to contain China.⁵⁰ In 2019, India voluntarily withdrew from the RCEP negotiations. After the outbreak of Covid-19 in China, India strengthened cooperation with the United States, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Vietnam and other countries, held frequent "Quad +" vice foreign ministers' meetings, in an attempt to further materialize the "Indo-Pacific" strategy, and conspired with the United States, Japan, Australia and other countries to transfer the global industrial chain and supply chain from China to India. After the Galwan conflict, India's strategic elites raised the current border standoff between China and India to the height of the future development direction of Asian geopolitics.⁵¹ India took the opportunity to vigorously promote "de-Sinicization". By taking the Sino-Indian border conflict and economic sanctions against China as a pledge, India has taken the initiative to side with the

⁴⁹C. Raja Mohan, "China's hegemonic ambitions mean that Beijing's focus is now on building Chinese century," August 25, 2020, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/china-nationalism-xi-jinping-beijing-foreign-policy-india-china-lac-row-c-rajamohan-6493168/>.

⁵⁰Dhruva Jaishankar, "For India, economic growth is no substitute for grand strategy," June 26, 2020, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/for-india-economic-growth-is-no-substitute-for-grand-strategy-68584/?amp>.

⁵¹C. Raja Mohan, "Indian Resistance to China's Expansionism Would Be a Definitive Moment in Asia's Geopolitical Evolution," Indian Express, June 30, 2020, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/galwan-encounter-india-china-border-dispute-russia-us-india-foreign-relations-c-rajamohan-6482305/>.

United States and has become the anti-China vanguard of the U.S. camp. The United States and India have signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), and India has formally invited Australia to participate in the Malabar naval exercise. India and the United States have established a de facto military alliance, or a “coalition of the willing” against China.

Judging from the current situation, even if the top leaders of China and India hold another informal meeting, the relations between the two countries will hardly return to normal. At the time of this writing, the Trump Administration of the United States was provoking a cold war against China, and a series of recent actions of the Modi government showed that it was closely following and cooperating with the United States to encircle and contain China. Although Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had said previously that “India will never be part of any alliance”, India has now formed a de facto alliance with the United States.

The relationship between China and India has deteriorated to such a point that the Indian government, political parties, mass media and members of Indian strategic circles almost unanimously put the responsibility for the deterioration of bilateral relations on China, with little reflection on India's own problems. Because of the BJP's dominant position in Indian politics and the growth of Hindu nationalism, Indian politics has become so right-wing that the center-left has been marginalized. In addition, the anti-China propaganda and education carried out by the Indian government for decades after 1962 have brought about profound changes in the public opinion toward China. The propaganda about Covid-19, courtesy of the Indian government and elites has exacerbated the situation. Now, some senior officials of the Congress party are also competing to attack and slander China in order to win votes. Animosity against China in India's strategic circles and among the general public has reached irreversible levels. There is almost no way for China to change the hostile attitude of Indian society, especially its elites, toward China.

On September 24, 2020, during an online meeting at the World Economic Forum, India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said that India and China were experiencing an “unprecedented” situation, the two sides need to sit down to find a solution. In his remarks, Mr. Jaishankar

mentioned that India and China need to adjust to each other's rise which has been the dominating factor in "diplomacy of both countries".⁵² However, judging from India's "issue by issue diplomacy"⁵³ with China in the past few years, Mr. Jaishankar's so-called adjustment may just mean that India expects China to unilaterally recognize India's territorial claims or line of actual control claims, recognize India's sphere of influence in South Asia, and recognize India's sphere of influence in Asia and the Indian Ocean. China should not infringe on these spheres of influence, and China should recognize India's status as a global power.

Mr. Jaishankar once expressed his hope that China's policy toward India will not change when he met with Chinese State Councilor Wang Yi, but the key problem is that India's China policy has changed significantly after the Galwan conflict; India's sanction measures in the fields of politics, economy and culture against China have broken consensus and tacit understanding between the two countries, and the confidence building mechanisms established by China and India in the border areas have become ineffective. The conflict of the Galwan Valley and Pangong Tso may only mean that the border area between China and India will usher in a more turbulent period, and border conflicts between China and India are likely to become commonplace.

In April 2019, the Indian government even applied to UNESCO to include the so-called Indian part of the Gang Rinpoche and Mapam Yumtso Sacred Landscape (Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar) into the list of world cultural heritage. This may mean that the Indian government, encouraged by Hindu nationalism, will not only "expand national boundaries by map" but also "expand national boundaries by myth". If that is the case, the Sino-Indian territorial disputes will intensify, and the resolution of the

⁵²Siddhant Sibbal, "India and China need to adjust to each other's rise, says EAM S Jaishankar in first comment since Moscow pact," September 24, 2020, <https://zeenews.india.com/india/india-and-china-need-to-adjust-to-each-others-rise-says-eam-s-jaishankar-in-first-comment-since-moscow-pact-2312168.html>.

⁵³Ye Hailin, "The Modi Administration's 'Issue-by-Issue' Diplomacy Strategy towards China, and Related Attitudes towards the Belt and Road Initiative" *Journal of Contemporary Asia-Pacific*, No. 6 (2017), pp. 24–47.

Sino-Indian border issue will become more difficult. This is by no means what China wants, but it is not up to China.

Sruthijith, KK. (Jun 20, 2020). *Chinese aggression not a coincidence: Shyam Saran*. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/chinese-aggression-not-a-coincidence-shyam-saran/articleshow/76484615.cms?from=mdr;>