

SINO-INDIAN MILITARY AND BORDER DISPUTES INCLUDING THE 1962 WAR: IMPLICATIONS AND LESSONS FOR PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The study aims to explore China-India disputes, their implications and lessons for Pakistan. Since 1960, China and India have border disputes that have led to several clashes. The genesis of border tensions can be attributed to India's aggressive posture through the Forward Policy. China does not accept the McMahon Line and claims Arunachal Pradesh. India does not accept the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Western Sector and claims the complete Aksai Chin as part of India. Unfavourable settlement of the dispute in the Eastern Sector has grave strategic implications. Aksai Chin in the West is at the crossroads of politically sensitive regions and holds military significance as a launch pad. Despite years of conflict and unsettled border issues, both countries have remained engaged in economic activities, with China being India's top trading partner since 2008. Border disputes based on competing claims, India's approach towards neighbours, and the nature of relations are likely to be competitive. Both countries have signed multiple agreements to manage their border disputes; however, implementation remains limited due to mistrust.

Keywords: China, India, Border Disputes, War, Trade, Bilateral Relations.

Introduction

"In an undeclared war (along LAC), where shots are not fired, Indian forces are being psychologically defeated by the Chinese Forces almost daily."

"Dragon on our Door Step"

China and India are two ancient civilisations with distinctive cultures derived from their traditions, history, and geography. Historically, the two nations remained at peace with each other, but in recent times the relationship has oscillated between engagement and occasional disengagement. After 1947, relations became strained and then followed a "boom and bust pattern" due to the unclear demarcation of the borders. Conflicting claims led to multiple skirmishes and heightened tensions, including the 1962 War and the months-long 2020 Standoff.

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The mistrust between the two states started in November 2019, when India published a new political map displaying Ladakh as part of the Indian Union after the abrogation of Article 370. Relations further worsened in the first week of May 2020, when the Chinese began dominating the Indian road Darbuk - Shayuk - Daulat Beg Oldi due to the construction of a feeder road in the Galwan Valley. Moreover, China views the Indo-US strengthening of strategic relations as part of the China Containment Strategy. To counter India's growing influence, China adopted an assertive approach, resulting in the 2020 Standoff, in which both countries incurred combat casualties after almost four decades.

Forces from both countries have been engaged since 2020, despite various high-level political and military talks. Although both countries recently reached an agreement on joint patrolling in a few areas, resolving the border conflict remains a distant dream. By contrast, the economies of both countries are intertwined; heavily engaged in bilateral trade, which has grown with each passing year. The border disputes between the two regional powers, which share borders with many regional countries, have implications for the region as a whole and for Pakistan in particular.

This study examines the border conflicts between China and India using a qualitative analytical method. To develop a theoretical framework, a thorough analysis of the recent literature is conducted. Both descriptive and exploratory methods are used in this study, which is grounded in the qualitative research approach. It entails putting forth a determined effort to understand the change and transition. Academic papers, online resources, and other pertinent studies that offer context for the research topic were among the primary and secondary sources of data used in this study. However, the findings are based on the data collected from the primary sources.

Historical Overview of China – India Border Disputes

The origin of the border disputes is a consequence of British imperial concerns about Russia's expansionist threat in the early 1900s. The British feared an incursion into their colonial claims in Central Asia and sought to limit Russian expansion, using Tibet as a buffer between the two superpowers, resulting in the Anglo-Russian treaty of 1907.² While Britain recognised Tibet as an autonomous state under China to appease Russian concerns, it also sought to limit Chinese influence in Tibet to maintain the security of its northern Indian frontier.

The southern boundary of China with South Asia is shared with India, Pakistan, Bhutan, and Nepal. A distinct glaciated mountainous barrier demarcates it (Great Himalayan Crest Line), with the 5000 m-high Tibetan Plateau to the North and the plains of the Indus, Ganges, and Brahmaputra to the South. The boundary gets complex towards the West at the confluence of the Himalayas, Ladakh, Karakoram and Kunlun Mountain ranges. India's shared boundary with China is 3,440 km, with unsettled sections that have overlapping claims. Both sides have contested up to 26 points along the boundary. The entire border region can be divided into Eastern, Central and Western sectors.

Eastern Sector (Arunachal Pradesh / Sikkim – 1346 Kms)

The Eastern sector includes Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. Arunachal Pradesh, the farthest North-Eastern State of India, has 78 % hilly terrain. Bum La Pass, in Tawang district, serves as the main connecting point between Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet. The McMahon Line marks the boundary between Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet. The McMahon Line was agreed upon between the British Raj, Tibet, and China during the Shimla Convention in 1914, but was not ratified by China. After the annexation of Tibet in 1950, China claims the entire Arunachal Pradesh as South Tibet. Tibetan Buddhists consider Tawang a holy site, and it is also a strategic entry point into India's sensitive North-Eastern region. The state of Arunachal Pradesh has psycho-socio-economic importance for India.

Within the Eastern Sector, India's border with China is settled in the State of Sikkim. Nathu La and Naku La mark the border as the two main passes. The disputed region within this area comprises 89 sq km of the Doklam plateau at the far end of the Chumbi Valley. The dispute is between Bhutan and China, but its settlement would define the tri-junction border point between India, Bhutan and China. An unfavourable settlement for India would mean easy access to its strategic vulnerability, the Siliguri Corridor, through the Doka La Pass. Holding Doklam means practical domination of the Brahmaputra Valley.

Central Sector (Himachal Pradesh/ Uttarakhand - Length 545 Kms)

The central sector comprises Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand on the Indian side and Tibet on the Chinese side. Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand were ceded by Nepal to the British under the Treaty of Sugauli, signed on 4 March 1816.³ China and India have agreed on mutually acceptable maps, thereby making this sector stable and dormant.

Western Sector (Ladakh/ Aksai Chin - Length 1597 Kms)

The western sector comprises two critical regions, Ladakh and Aksai Chin, and is the most troubled sector due to conflicting claims. Various lines, such as the Johnson Line, the Foreign Office Line, and the McCartney-McDonald Line, marked by the British in 1865, 1873, and 1895, respectively, define the border. India claims an area up to the Johnson Line, whereas China always maintains claims according to the LAC, 1960.

Within this sector, Ladakh lies within India and is characterised by high mountains and deep valleys, marked by the great Himalayan, Zaskar, and Karakoram ranges. The Leh-Srinagar and Leh-Manali roads on the Indian side are the primary lines of communication. Construction of the Zoji La tunnel on the Leh – Srinagar Road shall facilitate the movement of forces across the Pir Panjal Ranges. Strategically located Darbuk-Shyuk-Daulat Beg Oldi (DSDBO) Road in Ladakh closely follows the LAC while providing connectivity to the Siachen Glacier.

Aksai Chin is held mainly by China, and has an average elevation of 5,000 meters, comprising high, mostly uninhabitable plains bordered by the Karakoram Range and the Kunlun Mountains.⁴ The Aksai Chin plateau extends into the Depsang Plain near the LAC and then rapidly descends into the deep Himalayan River Valley on the Indian side. The central artery is the 2342 Km G-219 highway, connecting Xinjiang to Tibet.

Competing Perspectives

China and India are two of the oldest civilisations, each with distinct human and terrain characteristics. China's strategic culture is a complex interplay of historical, philosophical, and sociopolitical elements that shape its approach to security, diplomacy, and military strategy. The vision of national rejuvenation is central, driving policies aimed at restoring China to global prominence. Issues like Taiwan, Tibet, and the South China Sea are viewed as core national interests, tightly linked to national identity. Confucianism forms the core of Chinese society, emphasising the importance of personal ethics and morality.⁵ War, from a Confucian perspective, is viewed as an '*abnormal social phenomenon*'.

Daoism advocates flexibility and adaptability, which are evident in China's pragmatic foreign policy. Sun Tzu's strategic thought is a foundational element of Chinese military philosophy. The "Art of War" has influenced military strategy, diplomacy, and leadership. Sun Tzu's strategic thought remains a powerful influence on Chinese military and political culture.

The strategic culture of China is driven by its geography, history, and national culture, which includes patience, perseverance and pragmatism. Traditionally defensive in nature, with no compromise on national interests. Trade is a key component of Chinese traditional thought, connecting distant lands through the ancient Silk Road.

On the other hand, India is also one of the oldest civilisations, and being the birthplace of two major religions – Hinduism and Buddhism - shapes the overall societal outlook. The experience of British colonialism has fostered a strong emphasis on sovereignty and self-determination, shaping India's foreign policy and security strategies. The traumatic partition of 1947 and subsequent conflicts with Pakistan and China have deeply influenced national security perceptions and policies. A complex interplay of historical, geographical, cultural, and political factors shapes India's strategic culture. Philosophical and political influence is attributed to Kautilya, which focuses on statecraft and strategy predicated on '*shrewdness, the might-is-right doctrine, and forgery and deceit as a matter of policy*'. Mandala System is an Indian strategic thought which implicitly propagates a geopolitical principle akin to 'Your neighbour is your enemy and your neighbour's neighbour is your friend'. The principle arises from inherent historical competition between ancient Indianised Kingdoms. Hawks in Indian polity contemplate partition of the subcontinent as a scar on the great Indian civilisation and have not been able to reconcile with new realities.

China and India share a long and complex border. Over the years, they have engaged in several rounds of negotiations and agreements over the demarcation of their boundaries and have worked on a series of agreements to manage their border relations. In June 2020, clashes occurred in the Galwan Valley. Both sides engaged in several rounds of diplomatic and military talks to de-escalate the situation. In Oct 2024, both sides agreed to relocate troops and resume pre-2020 patrols in contested areas in Eastern Ladakh.

In competing perspectives, Chinese claims rest on the primacy of customary law, where Indian claims are based on succeeding rights from the British. China does not recognise the McMahon Line established by the 1914 Simla Agreement, arguing that it was drawn without Chinese consent and thus lacks legitimacy.⁶ China does not acknowledge the McMahon Line as the Line of Actual Control, contending that it violates the principle of 'historic rights' and constitutes an injustice committed by British Imperialism, as concerns the State of Arunachal Pradesh, British colonial powers negotiated with the Dalai Lama's regime, which China maintains did not have the status of de facto independence at the time, during China's Republican era. Britain had never recognised Tibet as a sovereign nation from 1911 to 1951. China considered Tibet a part of its territory. Therefore, from the Chinese international law perspective, the colonial treaties and their imposed boundaries are deemed illegal.

India supports the provisions of the Simla Convention of 1914. It does not share the same views on Tibet's belligerent status and accepts that Tibet inherited colonial boundaries from Britain. India does not grant legal recognition to either this version of the LAC or to China's claims over Aksai Chin.

Unclear demarcation of borders with economic and military significance shall continue to be an irritant in bilateral relations. Both countries have signed multiple agreements to manage their border disputes; however, implementation remains limited due to mistrust. The latest deal to ease border tensions represents a diplomatic success but does not fully address the deep-rooted strategic mistrust and competition, which may lead to standoffs and skirmishes in future.

Overview of Bilateral Relations and Border Disputes

Starting with a phase of brotherhood, India-China relations have since seen ups and downs over the decades, fueled by border disputes, the global geopolitical environment, and the strategic cultures of both states.

Period of Brotherhood 1951 till the Indo-China War 1962

India was the second non-communist country to recognise China and establish relations with it based on the aspirations of Asian solidarity because both had emerged from the same Western order.⁷ The border dynamics quickly evolved, starting with China's PLA marching into Tibet in 1950, and declaring sovereignty a year later.

India accepted Chinese sovereignty, thus acknowledging it as an immediate neighbour in the Eastern sector. 'Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai' became a catchphrase, and both countries signed an agreement based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence in 1954. While China and India were getting closer on the diplomatic front, latent conflicts were brewing. Under the 1954 agreement, India gave up its right to free trade and visa-free travel to Tibet. In the same year, it published maps showing Aksai Chin as its own territory, prompting China's counterclaims. Two minor border clashes and India's refuge to the Dalai Lama in 1959 after a Tibetan revolt further deteriorated relations. However, during the State visit to India in 1960, Premier Zhou-en-Lai offered India the option of keeping Arunachal Pradesh and asked that Aksai Chin remain with China to settle the border dispute.⁸ China also proposed demilitarised zones, but India did not accept either offer and instead pursued a 'Forward Policy' by establishing posts beyond the McMahon Line.

Deteriorating relations and India's aggressive policy prompted China to retaliate by applying force in Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin on 20 October 1962. This major engagement defined the boundaries of the Line of Actual Control between the two countries.

Diplomatic relations were marred by the post-war tensions, further exacerbated by China's alignment with Pakistan during the 1965 Indo-Pak war. In the same year, border tensions began to build in the Nathu La region of Sikkim over boundary demarcation, ultimately leading to a five-day engagement in September 1967. Within a month, another minor clash took place at the Cho La Pass in the Sikkim region.⁹ After a few years of peace, the next engagement involved an ambush of an Assam Rifles patrol by the PLA in Tulung La in 1975.¹⁰

The Sino-Indian relationship began to improve in the late 1970s, with Foreign Minister-level exchanges of visits. However, multiple rounds of border negotiations did not yield positive results.¹¹ Meanwhile, India undertook infrastructure improvements and additional deployments under Prime Minister Indra Gandhi. This time, tensions were mounting in the Sumdorong Chu Valley of Tawang District in Arunachal Pradesh. A brief standoff followed India's grant of statehood to Arunachal Pradesh in 1987; however, no active engagements took place.

By 1988, both countries had agreed to look forward to and develop bilateral relations while seeking a mutually acceptable solution to border disputes. Most of the 1990s saw landmark agreements to reduce border tensions, define rules of engagement, and cooperate in other domains.¹² However, the dynamics of the bilateral relationship started changing with the conduct of nuclear tests by India and Pakistan in 1998 and China's gradual rise as an economic power.

By the early 2000s, economic relations between both countries were flourishing, and China had accepted India's sovereignty over Sikkim. Meanwhile, India's insistence on including Azad Jammu and Kashmir in the dispute and its growing closeness with the United States (US) further complicated matters.

By 2007, as an established economic power, China hardened its stance on Arunachal Pradesh through aggressive patrolling.¹³

2013 onwards, border standoffs re-emerged, with the first one in Depsang in the Western Sector, where India had erected a new post.¹⁴ In the following years, there were incursions into Chumar and Demchok in the Western Sectors as President XI and newly elected Modi engaged in diplomatic exchanges; thereafter, a standoff at Doka La Pass in Sikkim in 2017 took place. A major shift occurred with India's revocation of Article 370, changing the special status of occupied Kashmir, paving the way to more significant engagement in the Western Sector. In 2020, there were skirmishes at four locations in the Western Sector, including Depsang, Galwan, Hot Spring / Gogra and Pangong Tso. After the clashes, the diplomatic relations remained cold for a very long time. Recently, during the BRICS summit at Kazan (Russia) in October 2024, heads of state of both countries met and agreed to find a reasonable solution to the boundary question to bring relations back to normal.¹⁵

Overview of Economic Relations

Despite years of conflict and unsettled border issues, both countries have remained engaged in economic activities, with China being India's top trading partner since 2008. India's vision to establish itself as a developed country by 2047, while seeking the immediate goal of 'Made in India' by 2025, relies heavily on importing machinery, technology, and expertise from China.¹⁶

Year	Exports to China (Bn \$US)	Imports from China (Bn \$US)	Total Trade (Bn \$US)
2011	17.44	41.25	58.69
2012	16.72	55.48	72.2
2013	14.73	54.14	68.87
2014	16.42	51.64	68.06
2015	13.4	58.26	71.66
2016	11.75	59.43	71.18
2017	16.34	68.1	84.44
2018	18.83	76.87	95.7
2019	17.97	74.92	92.9
2020	20.87	66.78	87.65
2021	28.03	97.58	125.62
2022	17.49	118.77	136.26
2023	16.23	99.59	115.82

Analysis of Military Strategy / Operational Art – 1962 War and 2020 Standoff

The Sino-Indian War of 1962 was fought between India and China in both Eastern and Western sectors from 20 October to 20 November 1962. Before moving on to the analysis of the military strategy, it is worth noting that, due to the unavailability of official details on the politico-military aims and objectives of both belligerents, the authors' understanding of the subject has been used to derive perceived aims and objectives. The perceived Indian aim was to assert territorial control over the disputed areas along the LAC. The Indian 'Forward Policy' is widely considered a military strategy, whereas establishing physical control over disputed areas was the perceived objective of the war.

Defending territorial claims over disputed areas along the LAC appeared to be the perceived Chinese aim of the war. Chinese military strategy was based on Active Defence, whereas securing disputed territories remained the objective of war. The triggers of wars are India's forward policy and meddling in the internal issues of Tibet by India, including providing asylum to the Dalai Lama and the provision of arms to the Tibetan insurgents for armed struggle against China.

China had an overall numerical superiority of 3:1 over India. On 20 October, the PLA launched attacks in 2 x sectors, with its main attack in the Eastern Sector and an auxiliary attack in the Western Sector. The war was fought in three phases. Chinese forces remained victorious in the war and declared a unilateral ceasefire on 20 November, after which they withdrew north of the McMahon Line in the Eastern Sector. In contrast, they retained the captured area towards the West (Aksai Chin).

Indian senior Political leadership enjoyed absolute authority and made critical decisions without regard to ground realities. The resignation of the Indian COAS, Gen Thimayya, exposed a significant difference of opinion between political and military leadership. While in China, Political leadership under Chairman Mao, along with his senior political and military hierarchy, remained intimately involved throughout the planning and conduct of the war. An experienced military leader, such as Gen Zhang Guohua, an expert on Tibet, was appointed to lead the operations. Indian decision-makers showed a fundamental misreading of the strategic environment by underestimating China's strength and assuming that war would not erupt. In contrast, China accurately assessed the situation and adopted a course of action informed by input from various stakeholders, timing her actions during the Cuban Missile Crisis to isolate India from potential external support.

Despite logistical challenges, the Indian Army, under the Forward Policy, established over 50 posts across 2,000 square miles due to political motives. This policy sought to assert territorial claims, but establishing posts under political pressure lacked tactical logic and did not align with the resources available. In contrast, China followed a focused strategy, projected power and retained only key areas like Aksai Chin post-war.

Mao clearly showed Chinese intent on 7 October during a military meeting in Peking, in which he specifically mentioned, "If we do get into the war, we will fight to project our might. We will have secured 30 years of peace".

Post-independence, India's defence lacked a proper decision-making system, making the DCC ineffective due to political rivalries. Indian Chief of General Staff (CGS), Lieutenant General (Lt Gen) Kaul, observed that, without a defence policy, India approached the war haphazardly. Meanwhile, the Chinese Communist Party closely monitored Tibet after the Dalai Lama's escape. Moreover, war directives were issued before the war began.

While drawing wrong inferences from the Goa invasion, the Indian political leadership assumed that the Indian Military was strong enough and prepared for any kinetic application against China. On the contrary, the Indian Army had been a story of prolonged neglect and budgetary constraints. In contrast, PLA was given the right priority as an important element of national power. Hovering around three million in total, well-equipped, well-trained and well-led, the PLA had approximately 100,000 troops in Tibet alone.

Analysis of Operational Art

IV Corps was raised just two weeks before the commencement of the war, somewhat haphazardly, to deal with the Chinese threat in North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA). Indian CGS, Lt Gen Kaul, was appointed as Corps Commander; however, various implications which had hit hard were not contemplated. The PLA deployed a strong force, concentrating its strength at critical points, with the ultimate objective of encirclement. While India, with the intention to evict the Chinese from its territory, initially could muster only one partially equipped and logistically poorly supported Brigade for the task. On the other hand, the Chinese accumulated more than two Division Forces right from the beginning; all fully equipped and supported by sound logistics.

The Indian Army's weak intelligence system lacked technology, skills and insight into China's strategy. General Henderson, in 'Henderson Brooks - Bhagat Report', mentioned the poor Indian Intelligence capability during the war. Whereas China made effective use of human intelligence by employing similar-looking Tibetan locals, infiltrated as road construction labourers and porters to gather information, it also had a sound technical intelligence system.

Owing to long distances and inadequate road infrastructure, ammunition and supply stocks in Indian forward areas were often deficient. In contrast, by May 1962, China had prepared extensively with forward supply dumps, labour Battalions, and well-equipped roads close to the front. China took India by surprise by mounting calibrated, well-prepared, large-scale attacks on two fronts, almost 2500 km apart, and caught India off guard.

Sino-India Border Skirmishes 2020

The 2020 Standoff took place in both the Eastern and Western sectors; however, the main activities occurred in the Western sector. Before moving further, it is important to note that, as a mere border clash, most aspects of military strategy do not apply to this event. Moreover, the non-availability of official data has posed another limitation in working out the details. However, available relevant data has been considered to analyse various factors.

The perceived Indian political aim was to defend territorial control over disputed areas. The Indian strategy was defensive, aimed at preventing the loss of claimed territory to the Chinese. The perceived Chinese aim was to assert territorial control over the claimed territory along the LAC. China effectively deters India from developing infrastructure in the claimed land.

The conflict in the Western Sector began with India's construction of a link road and Advance Landing Grounds (ALG) at Daulat Beg Oldi and Fukche, threatening the Chinese G-219 highway. This led to Chinese interruptions and clashes at Depsang, Pangong Tso Lake, Galwan, and Hot Spring. On 21 May, Chinese troops entered the Galwan River valley, setting up camps that overlooked the DSDBO road. On 15 June, India's attempt to remove the Chinese camp at Galwan Valley led to the deaths of 20 soldiers. During the entire Standoff, no firearms were used due to the 1993 Agreement.

Since 2014, Indian leaders under PM Modi, with strong popular support, have pursued an assertive stance on the border dispute with China to align with the nationalist agenda of the 2019 election manifesto. The Chinese political leadership gave due importance to "safeguarding national sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and security" as stated in China's defence policy 2019. Statement of Chinese Defence Minister Gen Wei Fenghe, "Will not attack unless we are attacked but will surely counterattack, if attacked", best describes the Chinese mindset.

Despite the presence of Indian troops and self-claimed robust intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, India was unable to detect Chinese troop movements in the area until shortly before the clash. By exploiting these gaps through effective Electronic Warfare, China advanced its troops already present in the area for military drills to the LAC without being detected, achieving tactical surprise.

India's infrastructure improvements, such as the DSDBO Road, enhanced connectivity along the LAC but remained limited compared to China's extensive network. China's robust infrastructure, including the G-219 Highway and branch roads to key areas, provided a strategic edge by enabling rapid troop mobilisation and logistical superiority, thereby efficiently securing contested zones.

By 2020, India lacked the requisite technical prowess in various domains, forcing it to rely more on conventional responses. In contrast, China demonstrated significant technological superiority and advanced military capabilities.

Sino-India border disputes involved skirmishes at tactical and sub-tactical levels, but they escalated into an all-out war in the media domain. Both countries had played out through propaganda and aggressive media posturing. During the conflict, both countries used various Strategic Communication and Information Operations (SC&IO) measures to project a better image at the international and regional levels, in addition to garnering domestic support.

Implications and Lessons Learnt

Border disputes between China and India have various implications for their neighbours in general and Pakistan in particular. Authors have endeavoured to draw implications and lessons from two major disputes of the 1962 war and the 2020 Standoff. The 1962 China-India War was a major conflict in South Asia after World War II. The War had significant implications for reshaping the global and regional environment in the realms of geopolitics, international alliances, and military arms race in South Asia.

The US and Western nations, already suspicious of Chinese motives, declared China an aggressor. China had easily won a military victory on the ground but lost its image internationally. The already isolated China from world affairs was further distressed by the international community.

Soon after the 1962 India-China war, Pakistan concluded a mutual border settlement treaty with China, the beginning of a strategic partnership between both countries. Later, Pakistan also paved the way for China's opening to the world.

India requested and received military aid from several countries, with major assistance from the Soviet Union and some assistance from the US. A major multiyear deal was struck with the USSR in 1964 to provide various military hardware and establish multiple manufacturing facilities in India.

After the 1962 War, Pakistan, having assessed that the situation wherein the Indian Army was militarily weak with low morale, decided to push for a military cum political solution to resolve the lingering dispute of Kashmir. Moreover, the more time India had to absorb the new military equipment coming from the US, USSR and UK, the more difficult it would be for Pakistan to match and force the resolution of the Kashmir issue. This assessment, along with a few assumptions made by Pakistan, led to the 1965 War between Pakistan and India.

India's defeat in the 1962 War raised Indian awareness about the imperatives of safeguarding national security and modernising its Armed Forces. As a result, she more than doubled the military's manpower by 1964/65 and improved its training and logistics systems. Having learnt the lesson from the 1962 War, India adopted an assertive and proactive approach towards its territorial claims. As a result, Sikkim was annexed to India in 1975, followed by the Indian occupation of Siachin Glacier in 1984 and of Arunachal Pradesh in 1987.

Impacts on Pakistan

The incident has led to deteriorating Chinese diplomatic relations with India, prompting India to deepen its engagement with US-led alliances. Likewise, the member states of these alliances have felt the need to strengthen ties with India to counter China.

The Chinese assertive approach in 2020 has conveyed a strategic signal to the world that, although China is a peace-promoting country, when its vital national interests are threatened, it will not hesitate to use hard power to protect them. China remains a dominating regional power, which has seriously dented Indian hegemonic aspirations.

Both conflicts have served as an effective deterrent against New Delhi's hawkish moves in the region. Moreover, China has refuted India's abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A.

Nepal has border disputes with India and was unhappy with India after India included the disputed territories of Nepal in the Indian Union Maps in 2019. On the other hand, Bhutan is the only neighbouring country having good relations with India, but it also has diplomatic and trade ties with China. The standoff has created space for China in Nepal and Bhutan, wherein various border and trade agreements are being concluded.

India formulated and propagated the two-front war bogey to amass high-tech weapons and assistance from the US and the West. The most significant advantage for Pakistan out of the Ladakh faceoff is the internationalisation of the Kashmir dispute. With a new wave of claims and counterclaims over Kashmir territory along the LAC, the Kashmir issue has come into the limelight against India's wishes.

The redeployment and relocation of Indian forces towards the north, along with the rapid modernisation of Indian troops, have disturbed the military balance against Pakistani forces in Siachen and Gilgit-Baltistan, and have created a perpetual threat to Gilgit and the ongoing CPEC projects in Gilgit-Baltistan. However, it has afforded some respite to Pakistan on the Eastern front.

As a result of the recent border agreement between China and India, there is a possibility of disengagement and troop withdrawal from the LAC. The availability of such a vast force and equipment, along with well-developed infrastructure, may pose a threat to Pakistani forces in the region.

The Himalayan Plateau generates seasonal ice melt that feeds rivers in Pakistan, India, and Kashmir. Increased military activities, including the construction of roads/airfields, and the presence of troops and military equipment, have profound implications for the environmental ecosystem.

Political aims grounded in the correct strategic assumptions led to China's victory, while those grounded in the wrong strategic assumptions led to India's defeat in both conflicts. Still having the scars of humiliating defeat in 1962, muted response from India due to initial denial of incursions and subsequent claims of evicting the Chinese from Indian territory has not only embarrassed India but has also seriously affected its credibility at home and abroad alike. In addition, her status as a Net Security provider in the Indian Ocean Region has also been questioned.

The issue of Indian Maps in 1962 showing Aksai Chin as part of India and in 2019 showing Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Aksai Chin as part of India has resulted in further complications in bilateral relations. Where the policy looks at the ends, the strategy must be developed to achieve those ends through innovative ways and available means. To this end, both ways and means are to be balanced to meet set objectives, or the ends need to be altered accordingly. An imbalance in any one of the three will prove disastrous, as happened with the Indian Forward Policy.

The study of the Sino-Indian War of 1962 has also revealed specific lessons about the Indian mindset. These include interpretations of agreements that are made to suit their convenience and are deeply embedded in the Indian mindset.

During elections, aggression against neighbours is used to display assertiveness, create war hysteria, and juggle public sentiment to score political points. The strong military power remains one of the most important pillars of national security, especially when a neighbouring country has aggressive designs. The military's advice in political decisions is also important for comprehensive national security.

Frequent grouping and regrouping of forces, and changing their affiliations during a war, disrupts their cohesion, and they fight as strangers, which must be avoided unless forced by extreme operational compulsions. Logistic buildup is vital to any military operation, particularly in mountainous terrain; a fact and an experience that needs no further elaboration.

At the beginning of the conflict, the US offered mediation, which was rejected by both China and India, resulting in escalating the conflict. Keeping one's own national interests in view, the role of a mediator may be considered to resolve disputes. Russian mediation in the recent China-India rapprochement is a case in point. Indian behaviour towards a strong neighbour vis-à-vis a relatively weaker neighbour is shaped by its strategic culture and the international community's response. Pakistan needs to become economically and militarily stronger to change India's arrogant attitude towards it.

The conflict clearly demonstrates that while the territory is important to both sides, neither is willing to go all out; instead, both rely heavily on strategic communications and Information Operations (IO). The role of media in future conflicts remains pivotal to achieving national objectives. Tactical actions, supported by proper strategic communication and an effective IO campaign, have strategic-level impacts.

The development of communication infrastructure along borders, improving logistics, techniques, and the use of modern surveillance means, and training in mountain warfare need special emphasis to enhance the operational readiness of troops employed in border areas, especially in the mountains. The disputes between the two countries should not hamper their economic activity. Despite the ongoing war, trade between India and China has increased by 43% compared to the pre-war period, surpassing trade with the US. However, it should be done on the basis of mutual equality.

Chinese proactively asserted in both conflicts while realising Indian intent, which deterred the Indians from achieving their objectives. A myopic and reactive approach needs to be curbed, and a proactive, foresighted approach is required at all levels.

Both disputes show that once Chinese Vital National Interests are threatened, China intervenes. Pakistan needs to convince China about Indian involvement in sabotaging CPEC and killings of Chinese to formulate a calibrated response, both in the defensive and offensive domains. Intelligence failure remained a significant cause of Indian defeat in 1962 and passive response in the 2020 Standoff. A robust, integrated, and well-coordinated mechanism at all levels is needed to gather, analyse, and timely disseminate intelligence. Due emphasis should be laid on Human Intelligence (HUMINT) and Technical Intelligence (TECHINT). The Chinese took the Indians by surprise in both conflicts. Despite the induction of the latest surveillance means, surprises remain applicable in the mountains at tactical and sub-tactical levels.

Future Outlook of the Ongoing Border Dispute

The outlook of the ongoing China-India border dispute is likely to be disengagement followed by de-escalation. The final settlement of the disputes remains elusive due to the competing geopolitical interests of China, India and the US. In case of ease of tensions between both, Pakistan will continue to face a perpetual threat due to the development of large-scale military infrastructure and the presence of large-scale Indian military in the region. However, Pakistan may capitalise on China's position of strength in the rapprochement by asking China to use its leverage to reverse Article 370 and 35A in India. Protection and progression of CPEC either by including Indian stakes in it or by deterring Indian interference through reciprocal action. To normalise Pakistan-India relations based on diplomatic accommodation between the two sides.

To conclude, the significance of studying Sino-Indian border disputes lies in two domains: understanding the genesis and causes of these disputes and drawing implications and pertinent lessons for Pakistan. Any escalated dispute between two countries having nuclear weapons has profound implications not only for the region but for the whole world as well.

During 2020, India lagged in putting an integrated response across various domains, underscoring the need to develop a cohesive, multi-domain strategy to match China's coordinated approach. China demonstrated its growing capability to combine technological and military assets in a coordinated manner to project strength while avoiding full-scale war.

During the conflict, China demonstrated superior logistical capabilities and tactical execution, leveraging well-coordinated offensives to gain an advantage. China employed psychological operations and information campaigns to undermine morale and shape narratives, creating confusion in its opponents' responses.

On the other hand, Indian leadership often misjudges China's military intent and strategic capabilities, leading to flawed policies and underestimations of threats. China employs surprise and deception to catch adversaries off guard, undermining their preparedness and response strategies.

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