

Unveiling Mao's Legacy: The Influence of Palm and Five Finger Policy on the India-China Border Conflict

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Abstract

The protracted and intricate border dispute that exists between India and China has been characterised by sporadic tensions and military violent confrontations. Understanding the fundamental factors and incentives that guide these disputes is essential to fostering peaceful settlements and promoting stability within the boundaries of the region. The paper aims to explore the correlation between China's attempt to execute its former leader Mao Zedong's vision of Palm and the Five Finger Policy, and the border dispute with India. The paper has undertaken a comprehensive literature review to assess existing perspectives on the border dispute and Mao's influence. Primary sources, historical records, and relevant data are also analyzed to provide a nuanced understanding of the issue. The objective of this research paper is to enhance the academic understanding of the India-China border conflict and elucidate the influence of Mao Zedong's ambitions and strategies on China's stance.

Keywords:- Border Dispute, India-China Relations, Mao Zedong, Palm and the Five Finger Policy

Introduction

The protracted border conflict between India and China is a convoluted and intricate matter that has its roots in the past few decades. The matter encompasses assertions of territorial ownership, historical grievances, strategic considerations, and geopolitical complexities. The origins of the India-China border conflict can be traced to the colonial period, during which both nations were subject to foreign governance. The British Empire exercised dominion over India, while the Qing Dynasty held sway over China, with each entity maintaining its distinct territorial boundaries. Following the decline of the Qing Dynasty and the formation of the Republic of China, the division of the border became ambiguous (Benton, 2003).

The initial significant territorial dispute between India and China surfaced during the early 20th century concerning the territory of Tibet. China claimed its sovereignty over Tibet, regarding it as an inseparable constituent of its territory, whereas India acknowledged Tibet as an independent entity with sovereign authority (Feer, 1953). The 1914 Shimla Convention was a bilateral accord between British India, Tibet, and China that aimed to settle the conflict by demarcating the boundary separating Tibet and British India (Kellam, 2018). However, China did not ratify the agreement, resulting in persistent ambiguity and divergent interpretations. In the wake of India's independence and the Chinese Civil War, the People's Republic of China was established in 1949 (Klass, 2023). The newly established Chinese administration expressed its dedication to re-establishing the authority over areas it regards historically to be a part of China, which includes the disputed territories with India. The escalation of the India-China border dispute can be traced back to the early 1950s when China's annexation of Tibet resulted in its direct control over the region. The first military dispute between India and China occurred in 1962 within the north-eastern Indian province of Arunachal Pradesh, which was formerly referred to as the North-East Frontier Agency (Aiyadurai & Lee, 2017). The outcome of the conflict was a conclusive triumph for China, which brought the vulnerability of India's border security measures. The disputed border areas in this region came to be known as the Eastern Sector of the India-China border dispute.

Apart from the Eastern Sector, the Western Sector, which includes the territory of Aksai Chin and the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, is also a significant source of dispute. During the

1950s, China acquired control over Aksai Chin and solidified its influence by constructing the strategically important Aksai Chin Road, which links Tibet to the Xinjiang province (Malik, 1994). India contests China's claim to sovereignty over Aksai Chin and regards it as an indivisible component of its national territory. In the following years, there were occasional instances of border skirmishes and standoffs between the two nations, notably during the decades of the 1980s and 1990s. Multiple diplomatic negotiation rounds have been undertaken to seek a peaceful resolution to the territorial dispute. Notable agreements include the 1993 Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the LAC and the 1996 Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field (Biringir, 2002). Despite these efforts, the India-China border dispute remains unresolved, and tensions occasionally flare up. The regions of the border that are in dispute are marked by a dearth of lucidity and varying interpretations of the Line of Actual Control. Additionally, the border issue intersects with broader geopolitical dynamics, including China's relations with other neighbouring countries, strategic considerations, and regional power dynamics. The border conflict has garnered heightened scrutiny in recent times, owing to several military confrontations and skirmishes, such as the Galwan Valley clash of 2020, which led to fatalities on either side. These occurrences have underscored the necessity for a thorough and enduring solution to the border conflict.

Mao Zedong's Palm and the Five-Finger Policy

During Mao Zedong's tenure as the leader of the People's Republic of China, he implemented notable strategy known as the Palm and the Five Finger Policy. The policy was indicative of Mao's ideological and strategic aspirations for both the domestic and foreign affairs of China.

The Palm, which is short for Promotion of Land Redistribution and Anti-Indian Measures, was designed to tackle socioeconomic disparities in China and simultaneously counteract India's influence. Mao's vision was to establish a society that was more egalitarian in nature (Chan, 2001). To achieve this, he aimed to carry out land redistribution among rural peasants, thereby diminishing the influence of wealthy landowners and fostering a sense of equality. During the Palm era, there was a collectivization of land, whereby state or communal control was established over agricultural resources and production (Powell, 1968). This policy was by Mao's Marxist-Leninist ideology, which placed significant emphasis on the value of collective

ownership and state regulation of the means of production. Mao's objective through the implementation of land redistribution was to enhance the resilience of the people of the countryside, harness agricultural resources, and fortify the economic prowess of China. The Palm incorporated anti-Indian provisions that were motivated by Mao's view of India as a potential rival (Singh, 2011). He held the view that India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, adopted an autonomous foreign policy that was in line with the Western powers, thereby posing a potential challenge to China's interests. Mao's objective was to diminish India's regional influence by providing support and engaging factions and individuals who expressed dissent towards Nehru's policies (Spacek, 2017). These measures against India encompassed extending assistance to separatist movements in the north-eastern regions of the country, particularly in Assam and Nagaland. Mao aimed to diminish the prominence of India and exploit these uprisings as a means of exerting influence on the Indian administration. The anti-Indian measures undertaken by the Chinese government under the leadership of Mao were a component of a larger strategic plan aimed at countering India's perceived alignment with Western powers, while simultaneously positioning China as the preeminent power in the region. Mao conceptualised the Five Finger Policy as a territorial tactic that was closely associated with the Palm. The objective was to progressively incorporate five key regions adjacent to China, symbolically referred to as the "five fingers." These regions included Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, and the north-eastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh (Spacek, 2017).

The Five Finger Policy was implemented to bolster China's geopolitical position, fortifying its borders, and project influence within the surrounding region. This was consistent with Mao's overarching goals of repossessing regions that he deemed to be historically integral to China. Mao's strategy involved the encirclement of India and the exertion of pressure through territorial control, to weaken India's position and gain leverage in negotiations or conflicts. Mao Zedong's Palm and the Five Finger Policy provides an important historical context for analyzing China's approach to territorial disputes, including the India-China border dispute. These policies reflect Mao's ideological beliefs, his perception of China's national interests, and his strategic considerations (Spacek, 2017). These shed light on the factors that may have influenced China's territorial claims and actions in the disputed regions. Mao Zedong's Plan and the Five Finger Policy were implemented as a means to mitigate social and economic disparities in China and to

counteract the influence of India. The Palm Policy was designed to effectuate land redistribution and implement measures aimed at curtailing the influence of the Indian population, whereas the Five Finger Policy was intended to gradually annex neighbouring regions.

India-China Border Disputes and Influence of Palm & Five Finger Policy

China's continued implementation of the Palm and Five Fingers policy, a major cause of contention between China and India, is supported by a large body of data. Maintaining this stance has contributed to rising tensions and territorial disputes in the area. China's "Five Finger policy" is an attempt to dominate the area and needs to be examined in more detail and context. The "Five Finger Policy" describes China's approach to territorial claims and border conflicts. It refers to the five critical areas of Tibet, Xinjiang, Nepal, Bhutan, and Arunachal Pradesh that China is actively working to dominate or at least influence. Based on historical claims, Palm's policy upholds Chinese sovereignty over large swaths of land, including the South China Sea and a portion of the Indian border (Guruswamy & Singh, 2009). China wants to build strategic advantages, protect resources, and project its global might by exerting its authority in these regions. Conflicts over territorial claims and confrontations with neighbouring nations are common outcomes of this approach, which often involves the construction of military installations, the creation of man-made land masses, and the deployment of maritime fleets.

Both China and India have legitimate claims to and historical grievances over the contested area of Ladakh, which is at the heart of the LAC issue. Although it is widely accepted that the LAC acts as a de facto boundary between the two nations, its precise location has never been established. China's involvement in the LAC issue is consistent with its larger geopolitical goals and its drive to establish hegemony in the area. Disputes over territory, strategic concerns, and shifts in regional dominance are all possible explanations for China's behaviour. China's aggressive "Five Figures" strategy involves challenging the status quo and defending Chinese interests via the use of persuasion, intimidation, coercion, and control. Concern has been raised by neighbouring nations like India due to China's actions including building military facilities near disputed territory and conducting military drills. After decades of relative calm, the border between China and India is now a potential hotspot on pace with the one between India and Pakistan. Along their roughly 2,200-mile border, both China and India lay claim to territories

now under the other's jurisdiction. The Line of Actual Control that separates the two nations has never been formally defined (the parties have never reached an agreement on a single map) or demarcated (the boundary has never been delineated on the ground). Each side defines the boundary as separating the western, central, and eastern halves of the country (Bedi, 2021). India claims 38,000 square kilometres of Chinese-held Aksai Chin territory in the western sector, where tensions have been highest since 2020. China claims an area of around 90,000 sq. km. in the east, an area nearly the size of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, which is administered by India. In the middle sector, around 2,000 square km are in dispute and are under shared authority (Sino-Indian War | Causes, Summary, & Casualties, 2023). Beginning in May 2020, the two superpowers engaged in a series of border skirmishes that resulted in the worst loss of human life since 1967. Previous standoffs in 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2017 were likewise risky but did not result in casualties.

Origin of the Sino-India Conflict: -India's the violent Tibetan rebellion in 1959 caused significant harm to ties between China and Tibet. The insurrection brought back into the spotlight the age-old question of Chinese control over Tibet. Unlike earlier revolutions, which were mostly unarmed and state-sponsored, this one was largely driven by armed militants and carried out by the people against the Chinese authorities. Signing the "Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" with the Tibetan government on May 23, 1951, the Chinese government effectively reincorporated Tibet into the Chinese Empire (Teng, 1995). Although Indian influence had been felt in the Himalayan kingdom since the time of the British, it was held at bay during the treaty-signing process. Later, in 1954, it signed the "Panchsheel Agreement," which defines "Tibet" as the "Tibet region of China," thereby convincing the Indian government of its authority over Tibet (Das, 2019). As part of the treaty, China pledged to uphold the Dalai Lama's position and Tibet's autonomy, both of which had been eroded as Chinese authorities sought to impose their policies on the Tibetan region. The Tibetan capital of Lhasa had an uprising against Chinese rule on March 10, 1959. Subsequent forces were employed by the People's Liberation Army to put an end to the revolt. The Dalai Lama, along with his mother, brother, and some 80,000 other Tibetans, fled to India on March 31, 1959, after the Chinese government ordered its army to crush the rebel and Tibetan authority and an attack on Norbulingka, the Dalai Lama's summer

residence (McCarthy, 1997). India eventually agreed to the Dalai Lama's request for political refuge after popular pressure.

The Indian government has shown little inclination to engage in the so-called "internal matters" of China since Tibet voluntarily gave up all of its traditional rights in the region and accepted Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. However, Chinese authorities were wary of India and frequently blamed it for the Tibetan revolt. The Chinese government has condemned India for providing refuge to the Dalai Lama and other Tibetans and has accused India of aiding the other side in the military conflict. India, meanwhile, has denied participation and clarified that it is providing shelter to the Tibetan spiritual leader for humanitarian reasons. "Government of India did not recognise any separate government of Tibet and hence there is no question of Tibetan government under the Dalai Lama functioning in India" (Sali, 1998, p.78) was a statement clarifying Chinese allegations regarding India's political interest and the function of the government in exile of Tibet. However, leader Mao Zedong instructed the People's Daily to criticise India despite this reassurance and assurances. He wrote the piece in which India is called an "expansionist" country that "wants ardently to grab Tibet" (Garver 2006, pp. 93-94). After India granted shelter to the Dalai Lama, Chinese authorities began criticising the country. They claimed that this action was in breach of the 1951 Panchsheel Accord. They also said that India was to blame for Dalai Lama's departure from Tibet due to pressure and motivation.

The growing scepticism between India and China over Tibet dealt a huge blow to the "Hindi-Chini-Bhai-Bhai" spirit in the latter half of the twentieth century. China has often taken a firm stance on several unresolved issues, including border conflicts, as a direct result of the Tibetan Crisis and India's provision of political refuge to the Dalai Lama. However, China did not bring up boundary concerns in the 1954 agreement and perhaps, as Nehru claimed, recognised the McMahon Line as the de facto border between India and China. However, during the Tibet conflict, China gradually denied to recognise the same. China issued a map declaring part of India's east to be Chinese territory, and then it increased its military presence there. Although both India and China had pledged to a peaceful settlement of the borderline, India boosted its patrolling measures to secure its border. Both nations' ground border forces worked to uphold what they believed to be the boundary between them. As a result, they frequently confronted one another during patrols, claiming the other was the one who had crossed the boundary. Pangong,
1884

Migyitum, and Longju are only a few examples of how military activity sparked low-intensity violent clashes between the troops.

On July 28, 1959, Chinese soldiers invaded Indian territory near Pangong Lake, capturing six Indian police officers and other members of the force. Shortly thereafter after the border infringement occurred, India demanded that its officers be sent home. But China rejected the claim, instead accusing Indian troops of invading Chinese territory(The White Papers, Volume I). On August 25, 1959, Chinese soldiers attacked an Indian army position in Migyitun, killing one Indian soldier and wounding three others. According to the government of India, the Chinese advanced farther into Indian territory on August 26, 1959, surrounding the tiny garrison of the Indian army at Longju(Wortzel, 2003). The Indian defending troops began to fire, but they were quickly overwhelmed by the superior numbers of the Chinese army. The Indian army withdrew after suffering massive casualties at the hands of the Chinese. However, the Chinese version placed responsibility for the exchange of fire with Chinese forces at the Indian border. As the conflict grew more heated, Nehru addressed a series of letters to his Chinese counterpart Zhou En-Lai, reiterating Indian claims based on numerous historical records, antique maps, and stipulations of agreements. Six months later, on September 8, 1959, Chinese premier En-Lai responded to Nehru's letter, citing many reasons to support China's claim to India's border areas. In his letter, En-Lai stated that China had neither signed nor approved the 1842 pact(Lüthi, 2012). He made it very obvious that the Chinese government does not recognise the McMahon and is occupying the Longju Yaxier Shatze, Khinzemane, and Tamaden provinces of China without permission.

Table 1: List of India-China Clashes on Borders Fronts

Name of Clash	Year	Border Area	State/Region
Sino-Indian War	1962	Aksai Chin, Arunachal Pradesh	Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh
Nathu La and Cho La clashes	1967	Nathu La, Cho La	Sikkim

Sumdorong Chu standoff	1987	Sumdorong Chu Valley	Arunachal Pradesh
Daulat Beg Oldi and Chumar	2013	Daulat Beg Oldi, Chumar	Ladakh
Demchok Clashes	2014	Demchok	Ladakh
Doklam standoff	2017	Doklam Plateau	Bhutan (near Sikkim border)
Galwan Valley clash	2020	Galwan Valley	Ladakh
Pangong Tso standoff	2020	Pangong Tso	Ladakh
Depsang Plains standoff	2020	Depsang Plains	Ladakh
Hot Springs skirmish	2020	Hot Springs	Ladakh
Yangtse clash	2022	Tawang Valley	Arunachal Pradesh

India-China War 1962:- The failure of diplomatic negotiations between the two nations to settle the border dispute has resulted in an escalation of military preparations and an increase in tensions. During the pre-war period, India and China undertook diplomatic initiatives alongside military preparations. During the tenure of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, India exhibited a strong inclination towards resolving the border dispute through nonviolent methods. The Indian Army, however, lacked enough infrastructure and logistical support in the challenging Himalayan terrain, making it unprepared for large-scale combat. India was taken aback by a significant military offensive launched by China on October 20, 1962. Simultaneous military offensives were initiated by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) in both the western and

eastern regions of the contested border (Bhattacharya, 2022). Chinese military units in the Western sector rapidly progressed and seized territories located in Aksai Chin. In the eastern sector, they launched an offensive against Indian positions along the McMahon Line. In both the western and eastern sectors, Chinese troops successfully advanced and seized the entirety of the territory that had been claimed by Indian forces, including the Tawang Tract. The majority of the armed conflicts occurred in elevated terrains. The Aksai Chin region is characterised by arid salt flats situated at an altitude of approximately 5,000 metres (16,000 feet) above sea level (Pletcher, 2012). On the other hand, Arunachal Pradesh is a mountainous region that boasts several peaks that surpass 7,000 metres (23,000 feet) in height. One of the most elevated ridges in the area was under the control of the Chinese military. The combination of elevated altitude and sub-zero temperatures resulted in logistical and welfare challenges. The Indian Armed Forces encountered several challenges during the conflict, compounded by the difficult terrain of the region. The inadequate transportation network and infrastructure posed a significant obstacle in the transportation of military personnel and resources to the battlefield. Furthermore, the Indian troops were inadequately equipped, devoid of appropriate attire for cold temperatures, and unprepared to face the severe climatic conditions prevalent in the Himalayan region.

During the course of the conflict, Indian military personnel sustained significant losses and encountered multiple obstacles. The People's Liberation Army of China exhibited exceptional military tactics and synchronisation. The assailants executed synchronised offensives, circumventing the defensive measures of India and seizing pivotal locations. The Indian military personnel encountered challenges in maintaining their position due to inadequate air support and limited supply provisions. The challenges faced by the Indian Army were further exacerbated by the employment of outdated weaponry and communication systems. As of November 1962, the circumstances for India had grown increasingly dire. The Chinese military had achieved notable advancements in territorial expansion, while the Indian defensive capabilities had deteriorated in multiple regions. China unilaterally declared a ceasefire on November 21, 1962, asserting that its military objectives had been accomplished specifically the China-India border, commonly referred to as the "Line of Actual Control" (Frankel, 2020). The Chinese forces subsequently withdrew from most of the areas they had occupied, except for some strategic positions. China, on the other hand, emerged from the war with a strengthened position in the region. It gained

control over Aksai Chin, which allowed for improved connectivity between its western regions. China also retained control over some portions of the eastern sector, which further solidified its territorial claims. The war marked a turning point in China's approach to territorial disputes, with a more assertive posture in its regional ambitions.

Sikkim Clashes 1967: The Sikkim Clashes of 1967 denote a sequence of border skirmishes that occurred between India and China along the Sikkim-Tibet border. The conflicts took place amidst the persistent territorial disagreement between the two nations, exacerbating their already tenuous diplomatic ties. The incidents transpired in the isolated and elevated terrain of Nathu La and Cho La, situated in the eastern sector of the Sikkim province, which was under the guardianship of India during that period. The relentless border dispute between India and China, which dates to the 1962 Sino-Indian War, has been a source of a series of notable tension between the two nations. The year 1967 witnessed a significant escalation of the situation in Nathu La, as the Indian Army initiated the construction of a fortified post to enhance its military capabilities in the area. The Chinese government perceived this action as a provocative act and a breach of its territorial assertions. After the aforementioned event, the Chinese PLA initiated a military offensive against the Indian post situated at Nathu La on September 11, 1967 (Pathak, 2020). The clash at Nathu La was fierce and resulted in heavy casualties on both sides. The Indian Army, although outnumbered, displayed remarkable resilience and successfully repelled the Chinese attack. The Chinese forces suffered significant losses and were forced to retreat. The clash at Nathu La demonstrated the determination of the Indian Army to protect its territorial integrity and defend its positions.

After the altercation at Nathu La, emotions remained high, and only a few weeks later, another altercation took place at Cho La, a different mountain pass nearby Nathu La. On the first of October in 1967, the People's Liberation Army made an effort to establish its superiority by initiating an assault on the Indian positions located at Cho La. The Indian Army has once again exhibited its determination and effectively protected its positions from the Chinese attack. The altercation that occurred at Cho La, while comparatively less severe than the one that took place at Nathu La, contributed to the existing climate of animosity between the two countries. The Sikkim Clashes of 1967 had significant implications for India-China relations. They highlighted the unresolved border dispute and the volatile nature of the situation along the Sikkim-Tibet

border. These clashes further strained the already delicate relations between the two countries and made it evident that the border issue needed urgent attention.

Sino-Indian Skirmish 1987: An important occurrence that took place amid the continuing border conflict between India and China was the Sino-Indian skirmish of 1987. The Sumdorong Chu Valley in the north-eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims as part of its sovereignty, is the scene of the incident. The incident threatened regional stability and increased tensions between the two nations. The building of an Indian Army station in the Sumdorong Chu Valley is thought to have caused the incident. To monitor Chinese military movements and assert its presence in the area, the Indian Army decided to create a forward station. China vigorously opposed this action, arguing that the region was inside its sovereign borders. When Chinese forces started constructing a helipad close to the Indian station in the Sumdorong Chu Valley, the situation escalated in September 1986. Indian and Chinese soldiers engaged in a standoff as a result, and both sides sent more troops and military equipment to the area.

The Chinese soldiers made a provocative move by moving closer to the Indian station in April 1987, the fighting grew more intense. In response, the Indian Army strengthened its fortifications and engaged the Chinese forces in combat. The potential of a major confrontation loomed despite efforts to settle the situation through diplomatic channels although the tensions remained high. However, in August 1987, discussions between Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang and Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi led to a breakthrough. The two leaders decided to take a mutual step back, with both sides pulling their forces back to where they were before the standoff began. This arrangement assisted in de-escalating the situation and stopped it from intensifying into a more serious confrontation (Sidhu & Yuan, 2001). Both China and India improved their communication links and border control systems after the incident. The Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquilly along the LAC in the India-China Border Areas was signed in 1993 by the two nations. With this agreement, border tensions were to be avoided, and the disputed areas were to remain peaceful. Since then, there have been multiple rounds of discussions and negotiations between China and India to settle the conflict peacefully, but no final agreement has been achieved.

Daulat Beg Oldi and Chumar 2013: Daulat Beg Oldi is a military outpost of significant strategic importance situated in the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir. It is located near the LAC, which functions as the effective boundary between the two nations. In April 2013, the Chinese PLA established temporary structures and tents in the Depsang Plains, which are situated about 19 kilometres away from the Daulat Beg Oldi post. The Chinese military's intrusion was perceived as a calculated act of provocation and a breach of the established border protocols (Singh, 2020). Upon detecting the Chinese military's presence, the Indian Army responded by augmenting its military deployment in the region. Multiple rounds of diplomatic negotiations were conducted between the two nations to achieve a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Nevertheless, the state of affairs persisted to be strained, as each faction fortified their stances. The event that occurred at Daulat Beg Oldi signified one of the lengthiest confrontations between the Indian and Chinese military forces in recent times. The duration of the event spanned approximately three weeks, during which diplomatic deliberations and military discourse were undertaken to arrive at a resolution. Eventually, a diplomatic breakthrough was achieved, and an agreement was reached for both sides to withdraw their troops from the area. The Chinese troops dismantled their temporary structures and moved back, followed by a withdrawal of Indian troops. Following the confrontation, India and China implemented measures to improve their border infrastructure and bolster their military capacities in the area. India has endeavoured to enhance its defensive capabilities along the LAC and augment connectivity to geographically isolated border regions.

Demchok Clashes 2014: There was another major incident in Demchok, which heightened tensions between India and China along their shared border. Demchok is a portion of Ladakh that is towards the east, close to the de facto boundary between India and China. In April 2014, the conflict began when Chinese forces marched into Indian-controlled territory along the LAC in the Charding-Ninglung Nallah region of Demchok. Tensions flared up as a result of this infiltration, which was perceived as a breach of established border regulations (Basu et al., 2020). When the Indian Army learned that the Chinese were in the region, it replied by sending in more troops and bolstering its defences. Diplomatic and military negotiations were held by both parties to examine the issue and work out a solution. Attempts to mitigate the situation were made through dialogues and discussions over the course of several weeks during the stalemate. A

compromise was struck, and the two sides agreed to pull their forces out of the region. After the Indian departure, the Chinese forces destroyed their camp and returned to their side of the LAC. Following the standoff, both India and China sought to enhance their border infrastructure and strengthen their military capabilities in the region. India focused on improving its border defences and enhancing connectivity to remote areas, including Demchok, to strengthen its presence along the LAC.

Dhoklam Standoff 2017: In 2017, India, China, and Bhutan were involved in an intense and highly significant confrontation at Dhoklam. Dhoklam is a disputed region that straddles the boundary between India, China, and Bhutan. The situation began when Chinese soldiers tried to construct a road on the Dhoklam plateau, which is claimed by both China and Bhutan. The Indian Army intervened to stop Chinese road work in Dhoklam in June 2017, which sparked the start of the standoff. The building would have altered the regional status quo and harmed Indian security interests, thus India justified its move by invoking the security concerns of its ally, Bhutan as the edifice would have altered the existing state of affairs in the area and posed a threat to Indian security interests. The scenario rapidly intensified as both factions dispatched supplementary troops and military apparatus to the vicinity. The failure of diplomatic negotiations gave rise to heightened tensions, with apprehensions that the standoff could potentially escalate into a more extensive conflict between the two nations with nuclear capabilities. Over the course of the roughly 73-day Dhoklam standoff, India and China had several diplomatic discussions and dialogues. Both nations actively pursued diplomatic measures to de-escalate the situation and achieve a peaceful conclusion. In August 2017, a significant development occurred as India and China arrived at a mutual consensus to withdraw their respective military forces from the region. A mutual agreement was reached by both parties to withdraw their respective forces from the contested location, resulting in the suspension of Chinese road construction operations. The Dhoklam standoff had significant implications for the regional dynamics and bilateral relations between India and China. The Dhoklam plateau's strategic significance and the conflicting territorial assertions in the area were emphasised. The Dhoklam Standoff had broader geopolitical ramifications. It strained the relations between India and China, which had already been affected by various issues, including the border dispute and China's growing influence in South Asia. The Dhoklam standoff had wider geopolitical

implications as well. The standoff also had implications for the broader regional dynamics, particularly the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region(Mundhe, 2019).

Galwan Clash 2020: Commencing on May 5th, 2020, there were instances of confrontations, physical altercations, and minor battles between Chinese and Indian military forces at various points along the Sino-Indian border. These incidents occurred near the contested Pangong Lake in Ladakh and the Tibet Autonomous Region, as well as near the border of Sikkim. Further confrontations occurred at various sites in eastern Ladakh situated along the LAC. In the latter part of May, the Chinese military expressed opposition to the construction of a road by Indian forces in the Galwan River valley. As per sources from India, a physical altercation between soldiers on the 15th and 16th of June in 2020 led to fatalities among both Chinese and Indian military personnel. According to media accounts, soldiers from both factions were reportedly taken prisoner and subsequently released within a few days, although official sources from both sides have refuted these claims. On September 7th, a significant event occurred along the LAC as gunfire was exchanged between the involved parties. This marks the first instance of such an occurrence in a span of 45 years. Each side has attributed responsibility for the firing to the other. According to reports from Indian media, it was stated that on the 30th of August, Indian troops discharged cautionary shots towards the PLA(Ahmed et al., 2020).

In June-July 2020, there was a partial disengagement from Galwan, Hot Springs, and Gogra, while a complete disengagement from Pangong Lake's north and south banks occurred in February 2021. Indian analysts have observed a westward shift of the LAC at patrol point 17A (PP 17A) after the disengagement at Gogra in August 2021. During the period of tension, India reinforced the area with roughly 12,000 supplementary labourers, who were tasked with aiding India's Border Roads Organisation to complete the construction of Indian infrastructure along the Sino-Indian border. Scholars have put forward the hypothesis that the recent standoffs were interpreted as proactive actions taken by China in response to the Darbuk-Shyok-DBO Road infrastructure initiative in the Ladakh region. China has made significant investments in the infrastructure of the contested border areas and is currently engaged in ongoing development efforts. The Indian government's decision to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019 has also caused concern for China. Notwithstanding, India and China have asserted that ample bilateral mechanisms exist to address the current state of affairs. The aforementioned

process entails a series of discussions among officials holding the ranks of colonel, brigadier, and major general, as well as meetings involving special representatives. Additionally, the 'Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on China-India Border Affairs' (WMCC) is convened, and communication is established between the foreign and defence ministers of both nations. The 14th meeting at the Chushul-Moldo Border Personnel Meeting (BPM) point was held on January 12th, 2022, at the corps commander level.

Tawang Dispute 2022: The December 2022 altercation between Chinese and Indian military personnel along the 2,100-mile-long disputed border, commonly referred to as the LAC, underscores a concerning pattern of progress followed by setbacks. This clash was the bloodiest since combat in the Galwan Valley in 2020, which claimed the lives of 20 Indian and at least four Chinese soldiers. Despite attempts at dialogue and de-escalation measures, both parties have intensified their border policies with a lack of willingness to compromise. The current state of affairs at the border is characterised by heightened tension, as both Beijing and New Delhi have adopted increasingly rigid stances on either side of the LAC. This has created the possibility of a potential escalation between the two nations, both of which possess nuclear capabilities. The Tawang sector altercation represents a significant event in the ongoing geopolitical tensions between India and China and is the most consequential occurrence since the Galwan clash of 2020 (Ethirajan, 2023). The Indian government has levelled allegations of "provocative" conduct against China and has advocated for a nonviolent resolution to the matter. In contrast, China has refuted any allegations of misconduct and has levelled accusations against India for purportedly breaching the LAC. The current state of affairs along the India-China border is characterised by a palpable sense of unease, with no clear indication as to how the situation will ultimately be resolved. The recent clash in the Tawang sector serves as an urgent warning of the potential for conflict between the two nations and highlights the necessity of engaging in constructive dialogue and diplomacy to avert a more severe escalation.

Conclusion

As a classic illustration of the complications that emerge from having different interpretations of national interests and territorial borders, consider the territorial disputes between India and China, particularly those along the LAC. There have been periodic deadlocks, territorial

violations, and isolated military conflicts as a result of tensions between states. This precarious situation and the potential for escalation have been brought to light by the Doklam standoff in 2017 and the Galwan Valley conflict in 2020. Notably, diplomatic efforts to end the LAC dispute have been continuing, with the two nations occasionally signing disengagement agreements and engaging in dialogues. However, a comprehensive solution is still out of reach, and border tensions remain a threat to regional peace and security. China's persistent occupation of territory along the LAC has sparked widespread alarm and attracted a lot of media attention. The implementation of the Five-Finger Policy by the Chinese government to assert authority in the area has only served to heighten tensions.

China's effort to exert supremacy and spread its influence along the LAC is known as the "Five-Finger Policy." Fingers represent five critical places that must be captured and consolidated throughout time. Some of these include Aksai Chin, Demchok, Pangong Tso, Depsang, and Chumar. China hopes that by establishing its dominance in these regions, it can influence future discussions from a position of strength. China have been using a wide range of strategies to achieve its objectives. As a result of these activities, tensions have risen between Chinese and Indian soldiers, leading to minor clashes and periodic standoffs.

These measures endanger regional peace and security and heighten the potential for armed confrontation. There is a risk that the Chinese and Indian forces will engage in more serious fighting as a result of their regular invasions and standoffs. Many of China's neighbours, most notably India and the countries of South Asia, are worried about the country's growing aggressiveness. They are worried about China's rising might and the risks it poses to their safety.

The acts of China have not been ignored by the rest of the world. India is just one of several nations that have reached out for diplomatic help and developed alliances to fight China's expansionist policies. Regional security considerations have mostly centred on the situation along the LAC. The Five-Finger Policy and China's aspirations to seize territory along the LAC pose a serious threat to peace and safety in the area. These measures have caused international alarm and heightened tensions with neighbouring countries. Maintaining peace and stability in the region is dependent on the border issues being settled amicably. The best hope for resolving these issues peacefully is still diplomatic initiatives and open conversation. Peaceful negotiations

must be prioritised, international norms must be upheld, and an environment must be created that encourages mutual understanding and cooperation if these issues are to be resolved and stability is to be maintained. Only through such joint efforts peace and stability in the area will be attained.

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