

# Border Tensions between China and India

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(Translated)



On 4th July 2017, China accused the Indian army of provocatively violating the border with China. This follows the 29<sup>th</sup> June Chinese statement that the withdrawal of Indian troops, from what it said was its territory, was a "precondition" for a "meaningful dialogue" over the border stand-off. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said, "We urge the Indian side to withdraw troops back to the Indian side of the border," adding that, "This is the precondition for the settlement of the incident and also the basis for us to conduct a meaningful dialogue."

The Chinese-Indian border conflict is not a new conflict where both nations share almost 4000 km of borders and have had a long history of conflicts. The conflict between Beijing and New Delhi is centered around drawing their borders. It is mainly related to the future of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh which was annexed to the Indian territories during the British occupation of India. However, Beijing claimed sovereignty over it and this border conflict led to the first India-China (Sino-Indian) War of 1962 after tensions over Tibet. India suffered a round defeat during the short war despite that India maintained control over Arunachal Pradesh after the Chinese pulled their troops out at the end of the conflict due to international pressure. And in 1987, India declared Arunachal Pradesh as the 29<sup>th</sup> state of the Indian nation. China rejected this Indian decision which escalated the situation and led to media reports of the possibility of a war. However, both sides reached a diplomatic solution and a new plan to settle the border dispute between the two nations.

As for today, these powers are experiencing another standoff at the borders, in a continuation of the long standing regional conflict between the two giant powers of Asia. The dispute started after Chinese construction trucks, accompanied by soldiers, rolled south into the disputed region of Doklam to build a road. India and Bhutan consider the region to be Bhutanese territory whereas China claims the land as its own.

New Delhi says it intervened on behalf of Bhutan, whilst Beijing accuses India of violating its territory. Bhutan, for its part, says China's road-building is a violation of a 1998 agreement that calls on both sides to maintain the status quo in the disputed area.

From Beijing's perspective, its claim to the Doklam region is well supported by a series of documents which the Chinese foreign ministry has been citing in press conferences in the past few days.

The Chinese foreign ministry has referred to an 1890 border agreement between Britain and China for the first time to support its Doklam claim. Article I of the Sikkim-Tibet Convention was signed on March 17, 1890 by Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, then British Viceroy of India, and Sheng Tai, the Qing dynasty's "Imperial Associate Resident" in Tibet. In addition, the Chinese have also referred to documents from the Indian Embassy in China issued in 1960, accepting the boundary agreements.

From the Indian point of view, If the Chinese are allowed to construct the roads, it would make navigation to the Gamoche region easy and this would mean that the Chinese-Indian-Bhutanses "tri-junction" is shifted further south, making it dangerously close to the vital Siliguri Corridor.

The Chinese want to extend a rail link to Yatong in the Chumbi Valley, right next to the Doka La Pass which heads into Bhutan's Doklam Plateau. This is intended to reduce their vulnerability in the Chumbi Valley since Indian forces sit atop its eastern shoulders. The amount of importance China pays to the region can be established from the fact that China has been trying to acquire the Doklam Plateau from Bhutan by offering greater amounts of territory, elsewhere, in exchange.

The Chinese incursions will lead to the boundary envelope being pushed east with the following objectives:

1- Granting strategic depth to Chinese positions in the Chumbi Valley. As has been widely reported, the Chumbi Valley is extremely narrow with steep mountain sides on either side. This gives little foothold for China's People's Liberation Army to station troops and provisions. Further, this puts them at a disadvantage vis-à-vis India positions on ridges to the west along Sikkim-Tibet border.

2- The present main access route into the Chumbi Valley and Yadong County is S-204. Given the depth of Chumbi Valley and its alignment is susceptible to India interdiction. Chinese can consider developing a loop in S-204 which is further east and passes through the claimed area. This will give it relatively better protection against Indian fire assault.

The Indian forces started the standoff exactly around the time when Modi was meeting Trump for the first time during his visit to the US in June 2017. And the Chinese state newspaper 'Global Times' had published an editorial warning that the proximity between India and the US will lead to dangerous consequences. It also said that Washington and New Delhi share anxieties about China's rise. In recent years, to ratchet up geopolitical pressure on China, the US has cozied up to India. However, India is not a US ally like Japan or Australia. To assume a role as a front-line state in the US strategy to contain China is not in line with India's interests. It could even lead to catastrophic results. If India regresses from its non-alignment stance and becomes a pawn for the US in countering China, it will be caught up in a strategic dilemma and new geopolitical frictions will be triggered in South Asia. Yet, Trump and Modi agreed that a close partnership between the United States and India is central to peace and stability in the region as reported by the Indian news site "news18.com." The paper also mentioned that despite New Delhi's concerns about China's rise, maintaining a steady relation with China is very important for India's peace and development.

Thus, the current conflict hot spots between the major powers of the world, including the major powers in Asia, makes them scattered and not unified against any rise of the Islamic Ummah towards the establishment of the Islamic Khilafah on the Method of the Prophethood. In addition is the erosion of these countries through many internal social and demographic conflicts as well as economic and political failures. As for India, it is divided demographically between Hindus, Muslims and others as well as being stricken by separatist conflicts in many regions, such as the Seven Sister States. And China's plight is not much better, sharing similarities to India's reality. So, the timing of the Ummah's current revival for the establishment of the Khilafah (Caliphate) on the Method of the Prophethood is favorable, for none of the regional powers will stand in the face of Khilafah in an effective manner.