

Doklam standoff ends: What it means for India, China relations — Editorial

The Doklam border crisis has ended as suddenly as it began. India announced both countries had agreed to mutually disengage their troops from the plateau along the Sino-Bhutan border. Beijing, in keeping with its recent tendency to speak in nationalistic hyperbole, said Indian troops were “retreating” and that it would continue to patrol the area. The two statements are not contradictory. China does not speak of what its troops will do. Patrolling upto a country’s claims area is allowed under the various Sino-Indian border management agreements and will now de facto be applied to the Sino-Bhutanese border as well. In effect, both governments seem to have agreed to go back to a status quo that existed before crisis began.

China’s original sin was the decision to extend a road up to the Doklam plateau in violation of the 2012 trilateral agreement on the border. The proof of the pudding, however, will be in the eating. In other words, whether Beijing will seek to change the Doklam status quo in a substantial way over the coming months remains to be seen. One will expect aggressive patrolling in the immediate future by both sides. There may even be verbal brickbats from Beijing, in keeping with the unusually harsh language that has come from the Chinese foreign ministry and media over the past few months. Sound and fury signify nothing. Keeping its troops and workers indoors is what will be the real measure of China’s intentions.

Doklam deserves some introspection on the part of India. Beijing seems to have assumed a passive Indian response to its initial construction efforts. Possibly New Delhi’s failure to respond to the initial Chinese action of demolishing two vacant Indian bunkers was misread. Or Beijing concluded that India would feel constrained about interceding on behalf of the territorial claims of a third country. Either way, there was a miscalculation that was potentially dangerous. The announcement of a withdrawal indicates neither side is interested in a wider conflict. But there needs to be some thought about the growing regional footprints of both countries and that their spheres of influence will brush against each other in third countries with increasing frequency. India and China should not see Doklam in terms of point-scoring but rather as a warning of the need for extending their border management framework across other borders as well.

ENDDownloaded from **crackIAS.com**© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com