

AN INFLECTION POINT

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

The brutal killing of 20 Indian soldiers by the Chinese Army in the deadliest escalation of violence between India and [China](#) on the LAC in nearly four and half decades puts a heavy question mark on an already fraught process. It has the potential to vitiate and undermine the disengagement agreed upon only a few days ago between senior military officers on both sides and harden the standoff between the two countries. The provocation is grave — this is not the toll taken by an act of terror by a non-state actor, but a clash between two armies. Yet India must keep a clear and determined head. It needs to respond with calm deliberation and steely resolve. It must be fully prepared to escalate but it must not embark on such a course without a full assessment of what transpired on the ground, or without hearing out what the Chinese leadership has to say — and being mindful of what lies ahead.

When two armies are fully mobilised and standing eyeball to eyeball, there is always the possibility of an accident that triggers an escalation that neither side wants. Monday night's clashes came after both sides had publicly stated that the situation was under control and that disengagement had begun in the Galwan area. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has accused the Indian Army of violating the consensus that the two sides arrived at, and New Delhi has accused Beijing of doing the same. Clearly, much is being lost in translation even as Chinese adventurism breaches the understanding underlined in several meetings between Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) and Chinese President Xi Jinping. New Delhi should activate all political lines of communication with Beijing, including the ones between the special representatives to the border negotiations and the foreign ministers, to make this point and take it forward.

Many in Delhi have been lulled into complacency by previous diplomatic successes in defusing military crises in Depsang (2013), Chumar (2014) and Doklam (2017). But Delhi can't ignore the profound change in Beijing's worldview and the new sense in Beijing that it can afford to take on all comers. Nor can Delhi turn a blind eye to President Xi Jinping's political swagger, China's growing assertiveness in the territorial disputes with its neighbours, its simmering Cold War with the [United States](#), and the PLA's aggressive postures on the ground. In other words, India's political illusions about China are becoming increasingly unsustainable and Delhi has arrived at an inflection point in its policies toward Beijing. China, on its part, would be unwise to underestimate India's political resolve, its capacity to come together amid a national crisis and the international coalition in its favour. If Beijing refuses to restore the status quo ante on the frontiers, it will push India irrevocably towards a comprehensive and long-term political, diplomatic and military strategy of responding purposefully.

The Indian Express is now on Telegram. Click [here to join our channel \(@indianexpress\)](#) and stay updated with the latest headlines

END

Downloaded from [crackIAS.com](#)

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com