

# CHINA MUST RECOGNISE THAT INDIA TOO HAS NON-NEGOTIABLE CORE CONCERNS, ASPIRATIONS, INTERESTS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

In one fell swoop, [China](#), with Xi Jinping in the core leadership position of the CPC and with ultimate responsibility as the Chairman of China's Central Military Commission, has effectively destroyed the edifice of bilateral relations so painstakingly built post the Chinese aggression of 1962. Hubris, internal insecurities in China, the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) and the complex and confused external environment have led to caution being thrown to the winds. Perhaps, the anticipated medium and long-term competition posed by India from the ideological, strategic and economic points of view began to loom larger and Beijing felt that this was a good opportunity to once again assert its self-proclaimed territorial claims in Ladakh. That may have been a grave error of judgement. Military adventures like the recent barbaric one unleashed by the Chinese in Galwan have a habit of ending up with nasty surprises.

Parallels are being drawn between what happened in 1962 with recent events in eastern Ladakh. These do not bear scrutiny. However, China's recent military actions in Ladakh clearly violate the signed agreements of 1993, 1996, 2005, etc on maintaining peace and tranquillity along the [Line of Actual Control](#). These actions are in violation also of other signed agreements, including at the highest level, and contradict positions taken by Xi himself at the informal Wuhan and Chennai summits in 2018 and 2019.

## Opinion | [Acknowledging Beijing's rise, scale of challenge it presents, are first steps in crafting a new China policy](#)

In June 2003, Prime Minister [Atal Bihari Vajpayee](#) and Premier Wen Jiabao signed a Declaration on Principles for Relations and Constructive Cooperation between our two countries. The third principle states: "The two countries are not a threat to each other. Neither side shall use or threaten to use force against the other." This was more than reiterated in the agreement signed in April 2005 on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for settlement of the India China boundary question. Article 1 states, inter alia: "Neither side shall use or threaten to use force against the other by any means."

In past years, Chinese intrusions along the LAC were sustained despite the agreements referred to earlier but peace and tranquillity was maintained. A qualitative change though occurred in Chinese perceptions after the Doklam face-off. That necessitated the first informal summit at Wuhan in April 2018. The underlying effort then was to ensure that peace and tranquillity in the border areas are maintained while placing serious difficulties on the back burner. One important outcome of that summit was the agreement to continue to meet at the highest level and to enhance trust and strengthen strategic communication.

The second informal summit between Xi and [Narendra Modi](#) in Chennai in October 2019 took place in the aftermath of the revocation of [Article 370](#) by India and China's unnecessary and unsuccessful attempt to raise the issue in the UN Security Council. By then, many other developments — both internal and external — had added pressure on China. The Chinese had said that the Chennai summit would enable a candid and in-depth exchange of views on bilateral relations and major international and regional issues of common concern. With hindsight, one can argue that the deception began there.

## Opinion | [The stand-off on the LAC and the doomsayers](#)

China's state-run news agency Xinhua, on October 12, 2019, provided the Chinese version of the outcome of the Chennai summit. It quoted Xi as having told Modi that "maintaining and developing good relations between the two countries is China's unwavering policy" and that "we must — inject a strong endogenous impetus to bilateral relations". Xi also made it clear that some of the problems between our two countries are serious and require both sides to "correctly view each other's development and enhance strategic mutual trust". He pointed to a lack of appreciation of each other's core interests and the need to "prudently deal with" such issues. He sought support for the BRI and CPEC.

At Chennai, the Chinese undoubtedly drew some red lines. Which of these does China feel India has crossed? Why does China fear India crossing these lines? And why did China not follow up on Xi's call for greater strategic communication and enhancing trust?

Ironically, the warning signals began during Xi's own visit to India in September 2014 when he publicly announced that China was a neighbour of South Asia and announced assistance packages for countries in the region. (CPEC became a part of BRI during Xi's subsequent visit to Pakistan in April 2015).

One fundamental red line is China's long-held and strategic interest in parts of Jammu and Kashmir that border Xinjiang and Tibet and allow connectivity between the two. We in India have wrongly argued that it is Pakistan that is the issue in J&K. China is as big an issue but has quietly hidden behind Pakistan's cover. That is no longer feasible as democratic India becomes economically and otherwise stronger.

The trust between our leaderships and nations has been seriously impaired by the events in Ladakh. The next casualty will be the effort to enhance strategic communication. The so-called Strategic and Cooperative partnership of 2005 and the Closer Development Partnership of 2014 can now be buried.

The Special Representatives process to address the boundary question seems stalemated and its usefulness needs review. The 2005 agreement contains the necessary parameters for a boundary settlement but there is obviously not adequate common ground. Some positivity can, however, be brought in if the LAC clarification process is revived and completed in a time-bound manner. But this is easier said than done in the prevailing circumstances. Patrolling procedures will need to be revised, preferably by mutual agreement.

## Opinion | [There is a pressing need for India to develop a comprehensive Underwater Domain Awareness strategy](#)

The current nature of the economic partnership between India and China is not sustainable. India's annual trade deficit with China in recent years virtually finances a CPEC a year! China has still not fulfilled all its commitments to India on joining the WTO in 2001. Indian business and industry must stop taking the easy option. Some costs will no doubt go up but there can be environmental advantages of switching to other sources of technology and equipment. There is more than one available source of financial investments in Indian ventures.

Bilateral dialogue mechanisms will continue their desultory course. On issues of interest to India such as terrorism, we get no support from China. Cooperation on river waters has not evolved. On the global agenda, on issues such as climate change, dialogue and cooperation will continue in multilateral fora depending on mutual interest.

The response of the government of India to China's recent actions in Ladakh must be an all-of-government one, indeed an all-India one — covering all sectors including heightened security and be coordinated, consistent and implemented with spine. This is not a question of nationalism or patriotism but of self-esteem and self-respect.

Bilateral relations between India and China cannot progress unless there is peace on the borders and China recognises that India too has non-negotiable core concerns, aspirations and interests. The principle of equal and mutual security is fundamental. No country can have a veto on India's relations with any other country or group of countries.

***This article first appeared in the print edition on June 24, 2020 under the title "India, China, the red lines". The writer is a former ambassador to China and is currently Distinguished Fellow at the Delhi Policy Group. Views are personal***

Opinion | [Chinese intrusion in Ladakh has created a challenge that must be met](#)

***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](http://crackIAS.com)

© **Zuccess App** by [crackIAS.com](http://crackIAS.com)

CrackIAS