

OUT OF MY MIND: CHINA'S WAR ON INDIA

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What is Xi Jinping up to? While the world is still coping with the [pandemic](#), he has begun a strife on three fronts. He has effectively abrogated the treaty with the United Kingdom wherein [China](#) had promised to maintain a special status for Hong Kong under the 'one country, two systems' principle. Xi has got the National Assembly of China to agree to his plan. How the UK reacts remains to be seen. He has also, without provocation, called for incorporation of Taiwan back into mainland China after 71 years. Last, and not at all the least, he has hotted up the border war with India.

Why, and why now? The question of Why is relatively easy to answer. All three demands relate to the core programme of Chinese nationalism. Hong Kong was part of China till the British seized it. In 1997, when the time came to give up the long lease on Hong Kong, the British realised that they were now much weaker compared to China than in the past. The UK cannot single-handedly stop Xi from taking over Hong Kong.

The Americans are, however, coming to Hong Kong's help. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has asked the US Congress to place sanctions on Hong Kong regarding travel and financial transactions with the US. If the Congress agrees, Hong Kong is finished as a global financial centre.

Taiwan was where the defeated regime of Chiang Kai-Shek, China's last non-communist president, retired when the Communist Party captured Beijing. In the Chinese Constitution there is a pledge to regain Taiwan. Here again, if China makes a decisive move, the US will send its navy to defend Taiwan.

Thus, the two moves are part of the agenda of Chinese nationalism, a desire for Akhand China as it were. But the border war with India which Xi seems to have revived is also a part of the same drive. China takes the view that when it was weak in the last two centuries, Britain took advantage, seized Chinese (or Tibetan) territory and incorporated it in British India. China began to ask for it from independent India in [Jawaharlal Nehru](#)'s days. Nehru took the view that territory of British India (Partition apart) was Indian territory.

Xi is playing for high stakes for another major plank in Chinese nationalism. This is the idea that China has to regain its pole position in the world — Middle Earth — as it was till the 17th century. This requires China to be the top economic and military power. In technology, China has already outstripped US as the [Huawei](#) controversy shows. US wants to fight China on that front through sanctions in cooperation with Europe.

Hence, this time the China-India confrontation will not be an isolated affair with India friendless as in 1962. It will be part of a global (hopefully) Cold War. [Manmohan Singh](#) and George Bush had arrived at a tacit understanding to help each other out if a war with China was to break out for either country. So the US will help India. Donald Trump's offer to mediate is just his usual Twitter reaction.

But in a land war along the border, the US is not much help. The US has been twice repulsed by China in land wars, in Korea and then Vietnam.

So India on land and US in the seas, hopefully with US air support for India.

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