



India-China Military Standoff in Galwan Valley

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Abstract- India China relations refer to the relationship between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India. In 1949 the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established and India was among few non communist countries that recognized the PRC as the legitimate government of mainland China. Initially both had very good relation and signed the "panchasheel treaty" in 1954 but in the late 1950s their bilateral relation started worsening and turned into the 1962 Indo-China war. In the post war period relation between them was in halt for long time but since late 1970s both the nations have been trying to improve their relations. Recently, India China military standoff in Galwan Valley (June 2020) near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) has affected their bilateral relations negatively. The present paper deals with India China military standoff in Galwan Valley. The paper also wants to find out measures to reduce tension between India and China on border issue.

Keywords: India China relations, military standoff, Galwan Valley faceoff

I. INTRODUCTION:

India China relations refer to the relationship between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India which has been going through many ups and downs. Historically both had great civilizations and had good trade and cultural relations. Their modern relation began since 1950s. In 1949 the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established and India was among few non communist countries that recognized the PRC as the legitimate government of mainland China. Initially both had very good relation and signed the "panchasheel treaty" in 1954 but in the late 1950s their bilateral relation started worsening and turned into the 1962 Indo-China war. After that for long time bilateral relation was in halt but during late 1970s leaders of both the nations took steps for improving their ties. In the post cold war period both the Asian giants opened up their economy and have been maintaining a very good trade relation with each other. Besides both the counterparts have been paying regular formal and informal visits where they discuss various issues of cooperation and particularly the border issue.

Recently, India China military standoff in Galwan Valley (June 2020) near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) has affected their bilateral relations negatively. This fatal faceoff has created new tensions between these two Asian powers which have significant implications over contemporary regional and global politics. It is in this background, the present study is very much significant one. The present paper mainly wants to study the India China military standoff in Galwan valley and its consequences over their bilateral relationship. The paper also wants to find out solutions to reduce India China border dispute.

Objectives of the study

The present study is based on three important objectives. These are;

- 1) To discuss the military standoff between India and China in Galwan Valley.
- 2) To examine consequences of the India China military standoff in the Galwan river valley.
- 3) To find out solutions to abbreviate India and China border dispute.

II. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on secondary sources. For the purpose of the study data is collected from various secondary sources such as books, journals, newspaper reports, government websites, government records, and internet and so on. To meet the objectives a descriptive method of analysis is followed by the researcher.

India China Military standoff in Galwan valley

The Galwan river valley which is located near to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is a part of Ladakh region in Jammu and Kashmir. The Galwan River has its origin in Karakoram Range and passes through Aksai Chin and Eastern Ladakh to join the Shyok river. Galwan valley is located near the LAC and therefore the region is strategically very much significant for India as well as China. The valley was also a flashpoint during the 1962 Indo-China war. The Galwan Valley is named after Ghulam Rassul Galwan, a Ladakhi adventurer. In 1887 he travelled with Goodwin-Austen, an English geologist who had determined the height of K2 or Mount Godwin-Austin, the 2nd highest mountain in the world after the Mount Everest. Again in 1892 Galwan travelled with the 7th Earl of Dunmore to search for a possible route and found an easier way through the ravines that helped them to go forward during their expedition. Dunmore then decided to name the new path as Galwan Nullah. Recently Galwan river valley has become a flashpoint when on June 15, 2020 when Indian and Chinese soldiers were engaged in a bitter military standoff in this area.

The Galwan river is located in the west of China's 1956 claim line in the Aksai Chin region in Ladakh. For long time, China has its claim to the west of the river adjoining the Shyok river valley. On the other hand, India has claim over the entire Aksai Chin as a part of Ladakh. These claims and counterclaims resulted in a military standoff in 1962 between India and China at the Galwan river valley. In the early 1950s China first claimed the Aksai Chin region by constructing about 2300 km China National Highway 219 (the road connects its western province Xinjiang with Tibet). Refusing India's objection, China went ahead and established 1956 and 1960 claim lines.

Recently again Galwan Valley incident took attention since May 05, 2020 which includes military standoffs between India and Chinese soldiers near Pangong Tso lake in the Galwan river valley in eastern Ladakh. Mainly the tension was started as a result of Chinese objection to Indian road construction in the valley. India has recently built a new road along the Shyok river to Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO). This development has made China unhappy as the Chinese media often mentions the Galwan valley as Chinese territory. The tension reached its peak in mid June 2020 and on 15 June 2020 a fatal standoff took place between both the armies which resulted in the death of twenty (20) Indian soldiers including an commanding officer of an infantry battalion and forty three (43) casualties in the Chinese side. This standoff is the most deadly clash between Indian and Chinese soldiers in the past four decades. Immediately after this incident both sides have tried hard to deescalate the situation. Both the nations continued several talks at military and political level but the result became unsatisfactory. Before the Galwan valley incident (June 2020) another 73 days standoff occurred between Indian Army and the PLA in Doklam Plateau in 2017 and since then China has been increasing its military presence in Indo-Tibet border and has installed fighter jets at the Ngari Gunsai Airport that is only 200 km away from Pangong Tso Lake in Ladakh region. All these together created huge implications over India China bilateral relations.

Opinions about the causes of dispute

About the recent Galwan valley incident both the counterparts have different opinions. In view of some Indian experts this face off was a Chinese response to India's construction of Darbuk-Shyok-DBO Road Infrastructure Project in Ladakh region. This road is an all weather road in eastern Ladakh (India) and close to the LAC. This road links Ladakh's capital city Leh with the Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO) post near India China border. This road construction was done by India's Border Roads Organization (BRO) between 2000-2019. This road has reduced the travel time between Leh to DBO from two days to six hours. To cross the Shyok River a 430 meter long bridge was built whose name is given as "Colonel Chewang Rinchen Setu" or "Shyok Bridge" which was inaugurated by the then Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh on October 2019. Before that in September 2017 the then Indian Defense Minister Nirmala Sitaraman inaugurated "Prathan Shyok " bridge that connects Leh to Karakoram & provides linkage to Darbuk-Shyok-DBO road. It is a great strategic asset for India in its Ladakh region. According to them this road can help largely to provide logistics and other support to the Indian army during any conflict in the region. This road has economic significance too and it would play a significant role in the development of this region. Experts also believe that Galwan valley clash is a part of China's "nibble and negotiate policy". China also wants to ensure that India should not build infrastructure close to the LAC. This will help China

strategically. Along with this China has also ambition to gain control of more territory and to dominate the Pangong Tso lake which is a resource rich area.

Others are of the view that during Covid-19 pandemic China has been trying to divert the attention of the international community because this pandemic has negatively affected Chinese economy and her reputation at international level. China also wants to show its strength to its neighbors and countries around the world in order to resist them from China's opposition regarding the birth of the virus that causes COVID 19.

Interestingly Chinese are accusing Indian army for this standoff. In the words of Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijan, Galwan valley which is a part of the disputed Ladakh region is located on the Chinese side of the LAC (Line of Actual Control). For them India violated agreement between two countries and since April 2020 unilaterally involved in constructing roads, bridges near the LAC in the Galwan valley. Chinese military officials says that the construction of Darbuk-Shyok-DBO Road along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) has made China unhappy due to India's effort to change the status quo of the LAC and this has forced China to encroach in the disputed Galwan valley.

Furthermore, local people have different opinion on this issue. In a statement (June 2020), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Councilor Urgain Chodoan from Nyoma, Ladakh stated that till now all the central governments in India including the present NDA government have failed to protect its borders because they have neglected the border areas in this region for a long time. Study reveals that until the late 1950s the Indian government did not even know about the Chinese road construction near the LAC in the Aksai Chin region. This reflects Indian governments' negligence towards its sensitive border areas.

Galwan standoff and its implications over bilateral relations

The Galwan valley incident affected the India China relationship negatively. In response to the face off people from different parts of India started protest for boycotting Chinese goods. Likewise Indian traders have boycotted a large number of Chinese products. A number of Indian businessmen have stopped placing orders for toys and decorative lights from china. For instance, Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) (represents seven (07) crore traders and forty thousand (40,000) trade associations in India) has called for boycott of importing around 450 Chinese products including electronics goods. According to a report, a trade of Rs 6000 crore takes place in India every year on Raksha Bandhan and within this about products of Rs 4000 crore are imported from China. CAIT also appealed Indian traders to boycott Chinese rakhis and asked Indian small industries to prepare rakhis using Indian goods. This year CAIT appealed "purely Hindustani Rakhi".

On the other hand Toy Association of India's president Ajoy Agarwal told that,China meets 75% demand of toys in India. He also told that in February 2020 "toy quality control order" has been issued by the government of India which would come into force from 1 September 2020 and this order would impose restriction over import of toys from China. For him this would play important role in promotion of domestic toy industries in India.

Along with the above immediately after the Galwan valley clash in June 2020 the government of India banned 59 Chinese apps in India under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act 2000. Following that the Indian government again imposed ban on 47 light versions of earlier banned 59 Chinese apps. Recently the government of India banned the popular Chinese mobile gaming app PUBG Mobile along with 117 other mobile apps for security reasons. So far in 2020, India has imposed ban on a total of 224 apps for having china links. According to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Indian government has banned those apps which had connection with elements hostile to national security and defense of India and required immediate measures. Some are of the view that these decisions would help in the growth of domestic industries in India and would largely contribute to the "Make in India" and 'Self Reliant India" campaigns as well.

On the other hand China has different view on the above issue and they criticized calls for boycott of Chinese goods in India. For Chinese experts such decisions for boycott of Chinese goods were only to fulfill "personal vendettas" of few politicians in India. Shen Danyang, the spokesperson of China's Ministry of Commerce stated that Chinese products that are exported to India satisfy the need of the Indian local market and such decisions would fulfill only some Indian politician's personal political interest at the cost

of close ties between India and China. For him, India should take measures to reduce any repercussions of such decisions.

Further, according to a report published in the Indian Express on 17 July, 2020, after the Galwan valley clash India has terminated Chinese firm's contracts into India. For example, after this faceoff the Indian Railway's Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL) has decided to terminate a contract of worth Rs 471 crore which was given to a Chinese company in 2016. Again in June 2020, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) minister in Maharashtra Jitendra Awhad asked New Delhi to wind up the Delhi-Merut metro work contract which was given to "Shanghai Tunnel Engineering Company" on June 12 by sidelining the Indian company "L & T".

According to a report published in "The Hindustan Times" recently, the BSNL 4G upgradation tender was cancelled by the Department of Telecommunication (DoT). For the DoT officials, a new tender would be issued to boost the Indian manufacturing sector to promote the Central government's "Make in India" initiative. New Delhi had instructed BSNL not to use any kind of Chinese equipment for the upgrade. This instruction came after 20 Indian soldiers were killed in a violent clash with Chinese troops along the LAC. This up gradation program is having cost of Rs 7000-8000 crore. Indian experts state that, nearly 75% of the telecom equipment is imported from China. Two major Chinese industries in the Indian telecom market are ZTE and Huawei. According to RK Bhatnagar, former DoT technology advisor, in February 2020 the DoT had issued a memorandum that said India can take reciprocal action against any country that does not provide market access. He added that the Federal Communications Commission, US, has marked Huawei and ZTE as a "national security risk". For him at present the situation with China is tense but if the situation escalates they could use the equipment and sabotage us.

Towards solution

India and China were in a fatal standoff along the LAC in eastern Ladakh during April-May 2020 that was started after the June 15-16 Galwan Valley clash. After that clash both sides had held several rounds of talks at military and diplomatic levels to deescalate the deadlock. The first round of commander level talks was organised on June 6, 2020 in which both sides signed an agreement to keep soldiers away from all the standoff points including Galwan Valley. But the situation along the LAC deteriorated and severe clashes took place in Galwan river valley on 15 June, 2020. The fifth round of talks between senior commanders of both sides was held nearly for 11 hours on August 2, 2020 at Moldo on the Chinese side of LAC. In this talk the Indian delegation was led by Lt. General Harindar Sing (Commander of Leh based 14 Corps) and from Chinese side Major General Liu Lin (Commander of South Xinjiang military region) took part in the discussion. In that talk India stated that no compromise would be made on its territorial integrity. India also appealed restoration of status quo ante. After this talk Indian media reported that Chinese army pulled back from Galwan Valley and some other areas but they still presented in Finger Four and Eight near the Pangong Tso. On September 21, 2020 the both sides held the sixth round of talks which became inconclusive as Indian side demanded disengagement at all standoff points and restoration of status quo ante as the only way towards de-escalation. Further Beijing asked New Delhi to withdraw its soldiers from the strategically important heights in the south of Pangong Tso to reduce tension. On 22nd September New Delhi and Beijing released a joint statement in which both sides decided not to send more troops to the frontline areas and to avoid taking any further actions that may deteriorate the situation. In that joint statement both sides also decided to hold a fresh round of Commander Level talks to take practical measures to stop tensions on the ground and to maintain peace and tranquility in the border area. Further 7th round of India China Corps Commander talks held at Chushul (Indian side) on 12 October 2020. These are the first senior military level talks after Beijing's comment that it has not recognized the Union Territory of Ladakh. The 7th round of talk was ended without any agreement to disengage or de-escalate. Diplomatically both sides insisted upon respecting the LAC and agreements on border peace and tranquility. According to a report published in the Times of India, Naveen Srivastava, Joint Secretary in MEA, India and Hong Liang, Director General in the Chinese Foreign Ministry held discussions as part of the WMCC (Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs). According to the MEA the Indian side conveyed the Galwan issue of June 15. On the other hand China openly blamed India for all the incidents along the LAC.

Soon after the June 15 Galwan Valley clash S Jaishankar (Indian External Affairs Minister) in a telephonic conversation with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi claimed the clashes a "premeditated" action by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and stated that the PLA is responsible for the situation directly. Further in

July 2020, Foreign Secretary of India Harsh Vardhan Shringla while speaking on the Galwan issue held that both the countries need to communicate otherwise the other options are greater frictions, tensions, problems and probably conflict too. In September 2020 Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi prepared a five point consensus to reduce border tensions between India and China. These include quick disengagement of troops near the LAC, avoiding actions that could escalate the situation, respecting all the agreements related to the restoration of “peace & tranquility” along the LAC.

Measures to abbreviate India-China border tension

To alleviate the problem of border tension between both the Asian giants the following measures can bring positive results.

1. To resolve the border dispute between India and China effective talks in a more pragmatic approach are essential. If the border dispute is not resolved, a suspicion will continue over each other and they never become good friends which are very much needed for the development of India China relations.
2. Besides military level talks, focus should be given more on political and diplomatic level talks that may bring more positive results. After several military level talks the situation did not improve.
3. As we know that in international relations no country is a permanent enemy or friend. Economic interest plays the most significant role in improving relations between nations. Therefore China and India should focus on promoting trade and economic activities among them and along with this India must focus on reducing trade deficit to China.
4. Bandwagon strategy can be useful for India. According to this strategy instead of opposing India should take advantage of opportunities created by the powerful nation (People’s Republic of China). Increase in trade, technology transfer, people to people contact will help India in its development and this would also pave the way towards improving their bilateral relations. It will also help them in resolving their longstanding border dispute.
5. India also have to keep the fact in its mind that historically China is an aggressor country and therefore making alliance with its rivals such as the USA, Japan etc can help India to contain China. Therefore India should maintain good relation with ‘Quadrilateral group’ or ‘Quad’ in the Indian Ocean region which includes India, US, Japan and Australia.
6. Along with all the above measures, India also need to focus on promotion of its domestic industries, technological advancement etc to make India self reliant. These are important for India to reduce its problem of trade deficit to China. Only through boycotting Chinese goods and ban on Chinese apps cannot benefit us in the long run. In this case PM Modi’s “Self Reliant India” campaign have significant role to play.

III. CONCLUSION

The above discussion shows India China relations has been going through many ups and downs since independence. The recent Galwan valley incident has created new tensions over their bilateral relationship. The recent Galwan incident started in May 2020 and after the June 15 clash between both the two armies has made the situation more formidable. In the post-faceoff period both sides have held several military level talks but, the situation has not been improved. Since India and China are two great Asian giants, their bilateral relation has huge implications over the regional and global politics. A good relationship between these two countries is necessary for the development and peace in the region as well in the world. Besides military level talks, effective political and diplomatic level talks are urgently needed to reduce tension between India and China because these can resolve the issue in a better way. Further India also needs to realize the fact that only imposition of a ban on Chinese goods cannot solve the border issue. In the long run it may negatively impact the local markets in India because Chinese goods are comparatively lower in price and India’s majority population have been living below the poverty line, therefore they would often buy Chinese products for meeting their needs. So India must focus on promotion of its domestic industries, technological advancement and through technology transfer from

the West as well as China. Thus Indian industries can improve their capability and also can produce quality goods at lower cost. In this way India can become self-reliant and can reduce trade deficit to China.

Further India also should maintain good political, diplomatic, economic and strategic relation with the Quad countries (USA, Japan and Australia) to counter China in the region. India also has to raise the border issue in the United Nations and other regional organizations to show the real image of China. Already during the COVID-19 pandemic China is worried about its degraded image in front of the world community about the origin of the COVID-19 virus. Lastly when the Indian government would prepare a policy about improving India-China relation and to resolve the border issue, Indian policymakers must consider the fact that China is always an aggressor country and it sees India as the only challenge before its ambition to become a regional power. So to interact with China India should step forward very sophisticatedly. Thus India must follow a pragmatic approach while deal with China.

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