



CENTRE for AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES

SINO-INDIA BORDER CLASHES: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH ASIAN STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT



Dialogue Analysis

November 2020

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2020**

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Event Coordinator/Director

Syed Muhammad Ali

Senior Editor

Sarah Siddiq Aneel

Rapporteurs

Hananah Zarar & Itfa Khurshid Mirza

Composed by

Mariam Siddiqui

All correspondence pertaining to this report should be addressed to the CASS, through post or email at the following address:

CENTRE FOR AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES (CASS)

Air Cdre Tanveer Piracha, Director Coord & Admin

Old Airport Road,

Islamabad, Pakistan

Tel: +92 051 5405011; 03015758003

Institutional URL: <https://cassstt.com/>

Email: cass.thinkers@gmail.com



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INTRODUCTION

The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS) organized a webinar titled 'Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment' on 11 November 2020. The discussion focused on the following key areas:

- The threat perception of China and India towards each other after the border clashes.
- The impact of border conflict on future bilateral economic, geopolitical, military and strategic relations between India and China, India and the United States (US) as well as India and Pakistan.
- The role of regional and global powers in mediating the current and future crises.
- India's traditional notion of 'Strategic Autonomy' and whether it would become a real ally of the US.

Mr Syed Muhammad Ali, Director Nuclear and Strategic Affairs at CASS, moderated the webinar and provided a brief overview of the current situation between China and India and steered the discussion towards evaluating the future impact of the Sino-India clashes. The speakers included Mr Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, Dr Tong Zhao, Mr Michael Kugelman and Lt. Gen. (R) Ishfaq Nadeem Ahmad. President CASS Air Chief Marshal (R) Kaleem Saadat chaired the webinar and delivered the concluding remarks.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The border clashes between India and China have received significant global attention. However, the focus has largely been on their tactical, regional and immediate implications. The webinar offered diverse and future-oriented perspectives by leading experts from China, United States (US), United Kingdom (UK) and Pakistan on the ongoing crisis. The considered view was that while the recent Sino-India border clashes have significantly strained military relations between Beijing and New Delhi in the short-term, their long-term bilateral trade and diplomatic ties are not likely to deteriorate significantly due to deep and growing interdependence.

Nonetheless, an immediate resolution or either party retreating from its hardened stance was also unlikely due to a deep perception gap between China and India with both sides believing their policies to be defensive in nature. This suits the US as it is gradually nudging India into an alliance against China, despite the former's reluctance to fully commit itself to Washington against Beijing. Whether militarily or economically, India cannot afford to be an adversary of neighboring China.

In reality, India's main objective behind its military buildup is prestige, both for global and domestic political purposes. Moreover, China does not consider New Delhi a significant military threat.

However, India's worsening ties with all its neighbors and these border clashes are pushing New Delhi and Washington closer to each other and recent agreements like Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) could help improve its interoperability, targeting and navigational capabilities. This could lead China to put more geopolitical pressure on India to avoid a closer US-India military alliance in the future.

Although Washington and New Delhi are expected to come closer under the new US administration, President-elect Joe Biden is expected to be less hostile and more open to



cooperating with China on shared concerns such as climate change, health and non-proliferation.

Nevertheless, due to Washington's drift towards India and against Beijing, and growing Chinese pride and reluctance to play a subordinate role to Washington on any issue, it is increasingly unlikely that the US would be able to intervene directly in case of further escalation between China and India.

This also yielded an interesting discussion on the need to reconsider Chinese role in future crisis management between India and Pakistan. The experts were of the view that these border clashes have the potential to further strain Indo-Pak relations as both countries are anxious that the other side could potentially exploit the crisis to harm the other.

Pakistan's concern about India attempting to target the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has increased after the Sino-India crisis. Moreover, continued Pak-India hostility and US-Iran tensions could also keep Afghanistan unstable.

Despite potential risk of continued and heightened tensions, the speakers ruled out the possibility of escalation to the nuclear level. The dialogue concluded on a cautionary note that this crisis has hardened the positions of the two protagonists and their emerging allied blocs as well deepened the polarization process within the world order. The recent Chinese proposal of a trilateral arrangement between China-India-Pakistan to discuss immediate concerns, was reinforced, with a call for global leadership, consensus, and flexibility to address growing global uncertainty, unpredictability and instability.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

The recent violent border clashes between Indian and Chinese troops have resulted in deterioration of bilateral relations between the two countries that cannot be easily or quickly reversed. India's competition with China in the regions of South Asia and the Indian Ocean is likely to sharpen considerably.

There is a severe perception gap between China and India. Both sides believe that their policies are purely defensive. However, despite their self-perceived defensive purposes, the current conflict is not going to end anytime soon.

Sino-India nuclear relationship is not likely to be affected by these border clashes as India's dominant motive behind its strategic buildup is prestige rather than deterrence. Due to growing economic interdependence and significant power differential between New Delhi and Beijing, both sides believe that border dispute was unlikely to escalate into a nuclear conflict.

The US was gradually using the 'binding military strategy' to ally with India against China. Nevertheless, if India and US become true allies, then, there would be much greater American pressure on the Indians to engage in more operational cooperation, which the latter has long resisted.

Under the new US administration, revival of the Iran nuclear deal was a possibility and the US military drawdown from Afghanistan could slow down. These future possibilities could affect US-Israel relations and put new stresses on the Doha Agreement between the US and Afghan Taliban.

Without an improvement in Indo-Pak relations, and to some extent, US-Iran relations, an important reason for instability (though not the only one) in Afghanistan, would continue to fester.

There is growing Chinese thinking about how Beijing may play a mediating role between India and Pakistan to help stabilize the strategic balance in South Asia. However, its own border conflict with India this year has undermined Chinese leverage to mediate in the future.

China is concerned about the security of its personnel and investments in the region. If necessary, it has the adequate military means to interfere with American intelligence collection technology.

The longstanding Chinese policy of opposing India's membership to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) was unlikely to change.

There is a *de facto* mutual nuclear deterrence relationship between China and India, but neither side is very concerned about its future stability. However, the lack of effective dialogue was increasing the risk of misunderstanding between the two nations.

Both Pakistan and India are anxious that the other side could exploit the current border crisis to the detriment of the other. Pakistan is more concerned about India trying to target Chinese economic interests inside its territory to distract and appease Prime Minister Modi's domestic audience.



POLICY DIRECTIONS

- India will need to be sensitive to the concerns of regional states, especially when it strives to balance its security and economic interests with China during the current challenging COVID-dominant economic environment.
- There is need for back-channel dialogue between Pakistan and India to ensure that the growing bilateral hostility does not become unmanageable. This is particularly significant because unlike previous crises, US is heavily leaning towards India and may not act as an impartial mediator in future crises.
- A trilateral arrangement between Pakistan, China and India, as suggested by China recently, focusing on issues of immediate concern may be a useful first step to manage future crises.
- While the new US administration may offer new, but limited opportunities to better manage the Sino-US global competition, it should pursue multilateralism rather than unilateralism and consider an inclusive rather than exclusive approach towards global issues affecting both traditional and non-traditional security.
- The Biden Administration, needs to focus on working with China and Pakistan in areas of common concern such as climate change, health and non-proliferation.
- Improved US-China relations, including cooperation within the CPEC framework could positively affect South Asia's peace, progress and stability.
- In a world that increasingly faces uncertainty, unpredictability and instability, global leadership, consensus and flexibility are the need of the hour.



DIALOGUE ANALYSIS

**SYED MUHAMMAD ALI, DIRECTOR NUCLEAR AND STRATEGIC AFFAIRS,
CENTRE FOR AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES, ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN**

In his opening remarks, Mr Syed Muhammad Ali gave a brief overview of the current situation between China and India and urged the speakers to discuss the issue in a comprehensive, analytical and futuristic manner. He shared his concern that despite receiving global attention, the focus of the Sino-India border clashes had largely been on tactical, regional and immediate implications. He hoped that the discussion would dig deeper and provide a nuanced assessment of the long-term implications of the crisis.

**RAHUL ROY-CHAUDHURY, SENIOR FELLOW FOR SOUTH ASIA,
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES (IISS), LONDON, UK**

Mr Roy-Chaudhury's analysis largely focused on India's perceptions about China in South Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Asia-Pacific region. His four main arguments were that:

1. The recent violent border clashes between Indian and Chinese troops had resulted in deterioration of bilateral relations between the two countries that could not be easily or quickly reversed.
2. As a result of this, India's existing competition with China in South Asia and the broader Indian Ocean Region (IOR) was likely to sharpen to a possible contestation of defense and security ties between India and China with neighboring and littoral states.
3. India's participation in Quad would likely increase. However, its focus would be broader than just defense and security.
4. A potential defense and security-focused regional policy would not be risk-free for India. It would need to be imaginatively and sensitively applied by New Delhi if it was to result in political and diplomatic dividends for the South Block.



Background of June 2020 Sino-India Border Clashes

Giving a brief background of the recent Sino-India crisis, Mr Roy-Chaudhury outlined that this was essentially a clash on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh. The worst of which had taken place five months ago on 15 June 2020 in which 20 Indian soldiers, and officially unacknowledged number of Chinese soldiers had been killed. He was of the view that the reason this occurrence, in particular, was given considerable prominence by India, and became so significant for its foreign policy, despite there being many more (and frequent) casualties at the Line of Control (LoC) between India and Pakistan, was because:

Despite occasional border clashes - some violent between Indian and Chinese soldiers on the LAC - none had till then led to the loss of lives. This was the first time in 45 years that Indian soldiers died on the Sino-Indian border, and hence, the significance and impact of this clash. In effect, this also represented a robust policy by the Modi government to confront Chinese troops physically and assert India's physical presence over the disputed territorial areas

New Dynamics in Sino-India Relations Post-June 2020

According to Mr Roy-Chaudhury, this also represented a fundamental change in India's perception of China. Whereas, in the past, cooperative trade and commercial links had been satisfactorily compartmentalized, along with the competitive elements of the India-China relationship, he predicted that competitive 'border foreign policy' and security issues were now gaining priority.

This is not to imply that the cooperative elements of the relationship, both bilaterally and multilaterally, including China being India's largest trade partner are expected to be disrupted. But, they are likely to have lesser priority in the Modi government's decision-making process vis-à-vis China.



It was due to this change in policy that he said India's punitive response to the Galwan Valley clash had included political and diplomatic measures like banning social media apps, shutting down Chinese investment and infrastructure projects and the reported removal of Chinese technology company Huawei from the country's 5G competition.

Discussing India's new policy of competitive bilateral relations with China, Mr Roy-Chaudhury stated that the New Delhi's existing competition with Beijing would sharpen considerably, which he described as 'possible contestation in the defense and security domain.'

India's Anti-BRI and CPEC Stance

India stood out as the first major country to formally oppose the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and refused to officially attend both BRI forums held so far in China. He highlighted that India's public objection to BRI focuses on its flagship project - CPEC.

India perceives the CPEC project in Gilgit-Baltistan and Pak-administered Jammu and Kashmir as a violation of Indian sovereignty as Delhi claims this region as part of its own Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh territories. Clearly, this perspective is not shared and is challenged by Pakistan.

Indian Apprehensions about China and IOR

At the same time, according to Mr Roy, while India's security community remains concerned about the strategic impact of BRI, it was equally perturbed about China's expanding role and influence in the IOR - a perspective now widely shared by a number of countries, including the US. Sharing details about China's presence and influence in the Indian Ocean, the speaker reminded that it had led to the:

- Establishment of China's first overseas military base in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa three years ago;
- Multiple warship visits and deployments in the area, including four anti-piracy patrols;
- Supply of two submarines to Bangladesh;



- First joint military exercise with Nepal, and,
- Two visits by Chinese officials to Sri Lanka in 2014.

To counter China's influence, India had invested deeply in maritime security and defense cooperation in the IOR where, Mr Roy remarked, India clearly had considerable advantage vis-à-vis China. This included:

- Defense logistics sharing pact with several countries, including the US, France, Australia, Singapore in the Indian Ocean, and others in the broader Asia-Pacific region;
- Reactivation of its trilateral maritime security cooperation initiative with the Maldives and Sri Lanka, which had been lying dormant for the past six years; and inclusion of Mauritius as a full member of this trilateral group;
- Recent defense and security agreements between the Maldives and the US, symbolic of the growing US convergence with India in the Indian Ocean which builds on India-US defense cooperation after signing of BECA for geospatial intelligence.

US-India: Finding Ways & Means to Counter China through Quad

The new Biden presidency is likely to continue its defensive security focus and arms sale to India, although, there may be several irritants along the way.

While talking about India's participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, Mr Roy-Chaudhury clarified that the Quad and the Malabar naval exercises were often mixed up. For India, Quad was a group of like-minded countries that see the 'Indo-Pacific as a free and open region that supports the rules-based international system.' The Malabar series of exercises, he explained, were quite different. These began as a bilateral annual exercise between India and the US, which expanded to include Japan, and most recently, Australia.



A key indicator is that while there have been multiple Quad foreign ministerial and senior official meetings, there has not been a single Quad meeting of defense ministries. If this changes, and there is a Quad meeting led by Defense Ministry's senior officials or Defense Ministers, then, it will be a significant development.

India's Problematic Neighborhood Policy

Mr Roy-Chaudhury emphasized that New Delhi's possible contestation with Beijing on defense and security issues in South Asia and the Indian Ocean, was not risk-free for India. He predicted that this might lead to critical rhetoric, and likely other putative responses from China.

India's leverage with its immediate neighbors, except Pakistan, will also continue to be hampered by the neighborhood priorities of its domestic politics.

In May 2020, for example, Nepal's new map showed for the first time, its areas of dispute with India. Thus, in Mr Rahul's view India needed to be sensitive to the concerns of regional states, especially when it was striving to balance security, trade and credit ties with China during the ongoing challenging COVID-dominant economic environment. He reminded the participants that in August 2020, Sri Lanka had announced that it would maintain its 'India first approach' on security matters, but would pursue a neutral foreign policy.

When India seeks diplomatic dividends for a heightened security-led initiative in the region in relation to China, it will need to be imaginative in policy formulation, ensure implementation, and most important of all, it must be sensitive to the interests and concerns of its smaller neighbors.



DR TONG ZHAO, SENIOR FELLOW, CARNEGIE-TSINGHUA CENTER FOR GLOBAL POLICY, BEIJING, CHINA

Dr Tong Zhao initially offered his observations about the Sino-India border conflict, its regional implications, and subsequently, discussed its possible impact on their broader security and nuclear relationship.

Perception Gap Between China & India: Who's Changing the Status Quo and Why?

Dr Zhao highlighted that there was a serious perception gap between China and India as both considered the other state to be attempting a change in the *status quo*. Sharing his views on the Chinese position, he argued that Beijing thought that India was trying to change the *status quo* across the region. Chinese concern was prompted by two major events:

1. Revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir on 5 August 2019, and turning it into two union territories to be directly governed by the federal government of India.
2. Public statement by the Indian Home Minister Amit Shah in the Indian Parliament who had declared in 2019 that Aksai Chin was an integral and inseparable part of Jammu and Kashmir.

In addition, India was building roads and better infrastructure near the border, and the traditional Chinese view was that the Indian side was using the salami slicing tactic to gradually, and step-by-step, encroach on the disputed territory. Dr Zhao believed that such actions had triggered the Chinese military to show its resolve to protect the country's national security. Given China's rising power and greater capability, there was also internal impetus to make better use of its growing material power to push back against perceived Indian aggression.



In contrast, India perceives that China was changing the *status quo* across the region. While India was advancing and improving infrastructure across the border region, China was also building more roads on the eastern side of the border, and even conducted a major military exercise in early 2020, which later led to the deployment of more Chinese troops along the border region.

Both sides genuinely believe that their policies are purely self-defensive. However, the current confrontation despite their self-perceived defensive purposes is not going to end anytime soon... as long as both countries continue their current approach on the disputed territory issue, their confrontation is going to be a long-term phenomenon.

It was shared that the Chinese decision-making system had also become more centralized in recent years around the current Chinese President who held strong personal views on territorial issues. President Xi Jinping was of the view that China should fight and never give up any inch of its territory.

Chinese officials, as well as media, have also promoted the narrative that Beijing's actions are purely self-defensive and India is the aggressor. This has made the general public in China also unlikely to accept any concession by the government on this issue.

Dr Zhao pointed that many Chinese experts believe that India is deliberately seeking trouble with China for three reasons:

1. India is troubled by its domestic situation, including large numbers of COVID-19 infection cases. Indian politicians want to shift public attention away and towards external issues.
2. Indians think that China was vulnerable because of the origin of COVID-19 and international accusations against Beijing, and hence, this was a good time for them to make a move.
3. India's aggressive move was encouraged by the US.



Therefore, the Chinese view was that it needed to push back against such Indian aggression and to set the right precedent for other countries.

China needs to stand firm on the disputed territory issue with India so that it can send a strong message to other mid-powers in its neighborhood so that they do not try to exploit its vulnerabilities in the future or work with the US to hurt Chinese interests.

However, he also stressed that strategically doing so was not necessarily in China's national interests because it was not a good time to drive India-China bilateral relationship into a 'bad situation' over a disputed territory in remote regions since worsening the relationship was only going to push India closer to the American orbit at a time when Beijing needed political support from New Delhi on other international affairs. The confrontation with India had also added to China's multiple-front confrontations with other countries as well like Japan, Australia, US, Canada and other European countries. Dr Zhao observed that there was recognition of these risks within the Chinese policy community due to which the government tried to lower tensions by conducting several diplomatic meetings with Indian counterparts. There were also a series of Corps Commander-level meetings on the border.

Fundamentally, Chinese thinking is that this is a fight which is picked by India, and China has no choice but to stand its ground.

Dr Zhao shared that politically, China was not too concerned about the China-India bilateral relationship because it was very confident about the power gap between the two countries.

The thinking is that because of China's military superiority in this region, India won't be able to make any gain on the ground near the border. China has better logistical support, military equipment, even better technology in building barracks with heating facilities that would enable Chinese soldiers to stay deployed during winter. In the long-term, the power gap between the two countries will only widen.



It was pointed out that China had a relatively dismissive view about India's defense industrial complex since its defense scientists overestimated their capability to build indigenous military capabilities. On the financial front, both countries had very similar economic conditions at the end of the Cold War, but now, China's GDP was five times greater than that of India. Hence, there was no real concern about India's military and security policy in China.

India's Nuclear Calculus: About Prestige not Deterrence

According to Dr Zhao, Chinese analysts maintain a dismissive attitude about the relevance of nuclear weapons in China-India relations. The attitude stems from a widely held view that India's indigenous military technologies are significantly behind China's and would continue to widen.

Sustained superiority in military capability is the key contributor to China's sense of security vis-à-vis India. This enables its military to continue focusing its nuclear modernization and strategic planning on the US. Accordingly, China's nuclear weapons are primarily postured against the US.

Dr Zhao highlighted that his recent collaborative work with Toby Dalton had shown that India's nuclear weapons programme was primarily driven by prestige and the pursuit of international status, not by an offensive military agenda. China, according to him, maintained a relatively relaxed attitude toward India's growing nuclear capabilities even though New Delhi had deployed a nuclear-armed submarine, tested an anti-satellite missile, and reportedly begun developing multiple warhead capability for its ballistic missiles. Despite being able to reach Chinese territory, India's long-range nuclear missiles were not seen as an immediate threat, rather as weapons for general deterrence and not for actual employment. Dr Zhao termed this lack of Chinese sensitivity to Indian views of bilateral nuclear relations as 'decoupled deterrence.'



Unlike a security spiral based on successive actions and reactions between two adversaries, in ‘decoupled deterrence’ only the smaller or weaker power takes security-seeking steps in response to actions by the bigger power, which are motivated by a different threat. In this case, India may respond to Chinese developments, but not vice versa, as China was focused on the threat from the US. However, Beijing’s lack of understanding of New Delhi’s threat perception, disinterest in addressing India’s security concerns, and gradual effort to strengthen its own nuclear forces, could add fuel to India’s perceived need to boost its strategic capabilities and nuclear arsenal.

Dr Zhao conceded that with New Delhi building up its nuclear arsenal, it could further threaten the fragile stability between India and Pakistan. Resultantly, it could lead to a less stable strategic situation in South Asia. So, while the Chinese may downplay the risk of nuclear escalation in any conventional conflict with India, they are worried about an India-Pakistan nuclear conflict.

A more intensified nuclear competition in South Asia and greater risk of nuclear use would inevitably affect China’s geostrategic interests in this region, especially its plans to promote stability and greater economic integration through the Belt and Road Initiative, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, in particular.

China’s Role as a Mediator in Indo-Pak Rivalry: No Longer an Option

Dr Zhao stated that there was growing Chinese thinking about how Beijing could play a mediating role between India and Pakistan to help stabilize the strategic balance in South Asia. Due to China’s rising economic interests in this region, it had a stake in maintaining regional stability and show a stronger willingness to help prevent any future India-Pakistan military crises from escalating to the nuclear level. He said that it was unlikely that Chinese experts would ever come up with a concrete strategy for doing so. He felt that the hard questions pertaining to nuclear and military issues were missing in Beijing’s discourse on this issue. The border conflict with India had also undermined Chinese leverage to mediate between the two countries in the foreseeable future.



Future Prospects of Sino-India Ties

In his concluding remarks, Dr Zhao briefly reviewed prospects of the bilateral ties between Beijing and New Delhi. He said that several factors may add more uncertainty to this relationship:

Politically, both countries had very strong leaders. Prime Minister Modi and President Xi Jinping were strong leaders who would resort to tough measures to defend national security.

Economically after the border clash, there was a general recognition that the bilateral economic interdependence would be reduced. ‘Economic decoupling’ might become more serious in the long run, so the mitigating effect of economic interdependence was likely to be less effective.

Militarily, China was not worried about nuclear conflict with India partly because the treacherous, high-altitude mountainous terrain would make it hard for a border conflict to escalate even to a large-scale, high-tempo conventional war. However, this assumption was now being challenged by more advanced transportation infrastructure and advanced weaponry overcoming tough terrains and making short, high-intensity conventional conflict less unimaginable between the two countries.

Geopolitically, the US had become a more prominent factor in Chinese geostrategic thinking. While China was not really worried about American arms sales to India *per se*, it was cognizant of the geopolitical implications of any such military cooperation between the two countries, and how it would contribute to a stronger military relationship between India and US. On top of that, lack of effective dialogue on such issues between China and India may further increase chances of misunderstandings between the two nations. So, for all these reasons, Dr Zhao emphasized the need for more attention and careful analysis to help manage the escalating situation.



**MR MICHAEL KUGELMAN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR AND SENIOR ASSOCIATE,
WOODROW WILSON CENTER, WASHINGTON, D.C., USA**

Mr Michael Kugelman presented his analysis of the geopolitical implications of the Ladakh crisis and what lessons these implications could present or pose for the incoming Biden administration. In this context, he highlighted four key geopolitical implications emerging from the crisis:

Implications of Ladakh Crisis: From Doklam 2017 to Date

First, the Ladakh crisis underscored India's growing diplomatic problems in its own backyard, in recent months, with both its top rivals - Pakistan and China. He agreed with Dr Zhao that revocation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution contributed, at least in part, to China's actions in Ladakh earlier this year. In his view, these neighborhood challenges were problematic for India, both policy-wise and reputation-wise.

Second, the Ladakh crisis amplified China's rapidly deepening footprint in South Asia. The main accelerator of Beijing's growing regional reach was the Belt and Road Initiative with four South Asia-focused envisioned aspects of BRI: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Pakistan, Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (which India has not surprisingly rejected), Trans-Himalayan Corridor involving Nepal, and the Maritime Silk Road initiative enveloping Bangladesh, Maldives, and Sri Lanka.

The Ladakh crisis shows how Beijing doesn't only use the carrot of BRI to build out its presence in the region, but also the stick of military provocations.

First, there was Doklam, now there is Ladakh. This is problematic for New Delhi as well as Washington. US interests are not served by Washington's top strategic rival deepening its influence and presence in the backyard of one of its top regional partners.

According to Mr Kugelman, the Doklam crisis in 2017 was prophetic as it set the stage for the current crisis in Ladakh as that was 'in a highly strategic area very much within New Delhi's sphere of influence.' He was of the view that China had sought not only to



deepen its influence in areas of South Asia, where it already had deep footprints like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, but in more recent years, it had been trying to extend its influence to areas like Bhutan, and more recently in Ladakh broadly speaking, where India's influence had traditionally been much stronger and more defined than China's.

Third, the Ladakh crisis had heightened risk of regional conflict. He opined that neither side wants a war and neither side can afford a war, particularly due to post-pandemic economic stresses, especially India. However, the volatile environment raised the prospects of a miscalculation that could potentially lead to a dangerous escalation. He also pointed out that it was not only India-China relations, but also the India-Pakistan relations that were experiencing one of their worst lows in years:

Both states appear to worry that the other will take advantage of the Ladakh crisis to harm the other. Indian concern is that Pakistan will try to take advantage of Indo-China conflict, whereas, Pakistan appears to worry that India could take out its frustrations on Pakistan by staging attacks on CPEC or other Chinese interests in the country.

Fourth, US-India relations stand to further improve, but with a potential catch. According to Mr Kugelman, the Trump administration viewed India as a key partner in US efforts to build out its 'Indo-Pacific' strategy because it saw India as an emerging power, both economic and military, with the capacity to work with the Washington to counterbalance Beijing.

The administration also recognizes that India and the US are united in their intensifying concern about China's growing power, and the threat it poses to Indian and US interests. The Ladakh crisis, for Washington, underscores the harm that China can inflict on India.

He also pointed that it was notable that Washington took on an unusually public role in the Ladakh crisis. Usually, when there were India-China border standoffs, the US stayed silent publicly. But in this case, several senior US leaders - Alice Wells, until recently the



top South Asia official at the State Department; Elliot Engel, the chair of the House International Relations Committee; Mark Meadows, President Trump's Chief of Staff; and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, were critical of China for its moves in Ladakh.

Washington's more public response this time around is certainly a function of an increasingly toxic and hostile US-China relationship. The India-China border dispute stands to strengthen the US-India relationship because it crystallizes their mutual concern about the dangers of China's growing power - the main geopolitical pillar undergirding US-India partnership.

Limits of US-India Partnership

Mr Kugelman stressed that for all the talk of its potential benefits, the India-China crisis had exposed the limits of US-India partnership. The crisis had exposed the constraints that India confronts in pushing back against China - the very role Washington envisions New Delhi playing, in cooperation with America and other partners, as part of the 'Indo-Pacific' strategy. India was provoked by China, with Beijing staging incursions on multiple points along the LAC, and yet - short of fighting back hard against Chinese soldiers on 15 June - India did not engage in any military retaliation, in large measure because it lacked the capacity to do so against its more powerful rival. Mr Kugelman highlighted that India's retaliatory options had been relatively limited, aside from the economic retaliations, like banning 59 Chinese apps (really meant to appease the angry public) - but 'such moves won't impact China's force posture along the LAC. Indeed, Chinese forces continue to be hunkered down on territory that India considers its own, three months after the incursions were originally staged', he asserted.

Subsequently, if India formally were to move into the US camp, and if India and US were to become true allies, then there would be greater pressure on New Delhi to engage in more operational cooperation such as joint patrols in the Indo-Pacific, for example, something that India has long resisted. Referring to the Indian Foreign Minister Jaishankar's statement that India would never join the alliance system, Mr Kugelman stated that it was important to see how the US and India would strike a balance between



alliance and alignment. In his view, Quad had been revitalized but not exclusively due to the India-China spat - its resurgence could be a ‘force in numbers type message that targets Beijing,’ he said.

Quad may soon evolve from a mere dialogue, which it is now, to a construct that takes on some operational dimensions even if only in modest form.

US-India Cooperation: More Beneficial for New Delhi

Agreements like BECA would give India considerable strategic advantage over its rivals in the region through, Mr Kugelman shared, ‘its provision of sensitive US intelligence to India, it would better enable New Delhi to track the location and movements of its rivals, whether PLA forces across the border, or even Chinese submarines many miles away, or Pakistani forces or terrorists in the region across the border, India would be in a better position to have a better sense as to where these threats are and how they threatened India.’ Giving a background of BECA, he said that while this agreement had been in the pipeline for many years, it had ‘taken on added significance against the backdrop of the Ladakh crisis’ and its timing and implications for Pakistan was important.

There’s really no reason at all to believe that the US would be concluding a BECA-like agreement with Pakistan anytime soon.

On the New Biden Administration

About the incoming US administration, Mr Kugelman predicted that Biden would support US-India partnership, and so, US policy towards India would remain largely the same as it was during the Trump administration. In his analysis, Joe Biden was concerned about the threats posed by China, its aggressive policies towards the US, India, the Asia-Pacific region, Taiwan and Hong Kong, and would ‘not go easy on China.’ However, he predicted that Biden would be open to cooperation with China in areas like climate change, health and non-proliferation etc.



To be sure, I imagine that with Biden you will get a President who would be much less sharp around the edges when it comes to rhetoric and messaging on China, he will want to be more conciliatory... Biden probably would not view China as a threat in the same exact context as Trump. But certainly, he will see China as a threat to US economic primacy. He may not see it as an existential threat in the way that President Trump had laid out that threat, but President Biden will see China as a threat to US interests in the broader Indo-Pacific region.

Future Prospects of US-India Relationship

According to Mr Kugelman's assessment:

1. Expectations would need to be carefully calibrated and the two sides would need to explore ways to transform their relationship into a truly strategic one that goes beyond armed sales, intelligence sharing technology transfers and other largely transactional measures that have characterized deepening bilateral security ties.
2. The Biden administration would look to initiate sustained strategic dialogue with India which the Trump administration had not been interested in doing outside of the largely tactically focused 2+2 dialogue.
3. While there was little chance that America would intervene militarily on India's behalf, even in a hypothetical conflict, if there was to be any chance of any type of US military intervention in an India-China conflict, there would need to be notable changes in the US-India relationship. Such a hypothetical likelihood may increase if Washington viewed New Delhi as a true strategic partner, in the way that it does treaty allies such as Japan and South Korea. This would entail major changes in the relationship, including a series of security guarantees and other accords that would need to go well beyond the foundational agreements that bolster the US-India military partnership today. Given India's insistence on staying outside the alliance system, such changes did not appear to be on the cards.
4. The seriousness of the current border crisis, and the likelihood that the deadly clash of 15 June could mean more violence in future standoffs between the two nuclear-armed rivals, illustrates how the LAC is a new flashpoint in Asia. However, US



policymakers have traditionally viewed the 'Indo-Pacific' through a sea-based lens. In fact, American maritime cooperation with littoral states constitutes a core pillar of cooperation within the 'Indo-Pacific' policy. If Washington wants the 'Indo-Pacific' policy to focus on counterbalancing Chinese power, it would need to expand its geographic purview beyond the South China Sea, the Sankaku Islands, and other sea-based theaters for Chinese power projection and provocations, and situate it in land-based spaces such as the LAC as well.

This broader geographic scope would strengthen US-India relations, serve US interests more broadly by expanding the scope for cooperation with Indo-Pacific states within the ambit of America's core Asia policy.

**L T G E N (R) I SHFAQ NADEEM AHMAD, FORMER CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF,
PAKISTAN ARMY**

Lt. Gen. Ahmad framed his analysis within the context of three recent developments - Sino-Indian border dispute; revocation of Article 370 by India and changing the special status of Indian Occupied Kashmir; and Joe Biden's presidential victory in the US.

Significance of South Asia

Lt. Gen. Ahmad reminded the audience that South Asia was not only home to one-third or nearly half of the world's population, but was also on course to becoming the engine of economic growth for the entire world. The region and its future, therefore, had implications for the US, the Middle East, the Pacific - especially the South China Sea, Russia and even Africa, to name a few. However, he observed that the region's future would be largely driven by the US' approach towards it which was likely to remain significant for the next few years before gradually declining, and the region itself becoming a more influential and potent driver of its own future. He predicted that from being a vassal, it would become 'an increasingly transformative actor in its own right.' It was, therefore, important for all regional countries to cooperate by reducing impediments and



to engage cooperatively with the US without which regional progress may become elusive.

As long as the US looks at China as a competitor bordering on being an enemy, and therefore, props up India against China; and as long as China feels threatened by the US and its support to India, and thus, props up Pakistan against India, Iran against US; and as long as Pakistan and India do not resolve their differences primarily Kashmir, the region will remain at best, what I call ‘constructively constrained’, and at worst, irrevocably caged.

Crisis at Ladakh – Psychological Impacts & Economics of Defense

China has once again shown its ability to defeat India, albeit at a much lower and narrower scale compared to 1962.

Discussing the psychological impact of the recent Ladakh crisis on the Indian mind and Chinese psyche as well as on Pakistan, Lt. Gen. Ahmad highlighted that India's defeat at the hands of China, after unsuccessful air action against Pakistan would have had negative psychological impact on the Indian military. Failure would be attributed to the lack of suitable equipment, rather than on the lack of preparation. This, in turn, might spur the Indian military to make a pitch for more modern equipment even if such modernization may not be of great significance vis-à-vis China. This would give Pakistan's military a reason to ask for more defense spending – 'Continued budget freeze, accepted voluntarily by the Pakistan Army in 2019 ,may not remain possible anymore', he opined. At the same time, he stressed that the Sino-Indian differences and recent incidents were unlikely to have any impact on China-India trade worth approximately USD 90 billion.

He predicted that recent failures may lead to enhanced Indian violations along the LoC with Pakistan, and might take many forms since such actions could be useful diversions for the Indian public from the recent defeat against China.



Having seen the lack of professionalism and inadequacy of resources, the recent conflict would add to Pakistan's confidence vis-à-vis its ability to grapple with India, if things came to such a pass. Unfortunately, this has actually enhanced the chances of a limited Pakistan-India conflict across the LoC.

US Support to India: Regional Implications

Continuing US support to India, with the purpose of undermining China, and the recent border conflict would perhaps bring Pakistan and China even closer enhancing their strategic, political, diplomatic and economic relations.

The speaker remarked that India often cited that its real adversary was China, and its defense preparations were towards that end. Pakistan was often downplayed as an adversary in official Indian circles, just as China downplayed India as an adversary.

This Indian attitude vis-à-vis Pakistan gets enhanced due to US support and effort to build India as counterweight to China. While, all of this undermines Pakistan's anti-India rhetoric, it contrarily strengthens the Pakistan-China bond, as China looks at Pakistan as its own counterweight to India.

Nuclear Deterrence & Changing Dynamics of War

According to Lt. Gen. Ahmad, limited territorial disputes could lead to use of force even between two nuclear states. He pointed out that not once, during the two month-long Sino-India conflict was any mention made, by either side, about the dangers of military conflict, howsoever limited, leading to nuclear escalation. Whereas in case of Indo-Pak standoff, there was always excessive hype about nuclear escalation. He was also of the view that while Pakistan had always reiterated that there was no space for conventional war, Kargil proved otherwise. The speaker reflected that:



Wars should be avoided, but there is and always will be, space for a limited conflict between India and Pakistan. The Sino-Indian conflict proves this yet again. Presence of nuclear weapons, however, keeps conflict limited. Pakistan and India have to decide whether having nuclear weapons provides stability, considering there still remains space for war. If disarmament was to take place without improved relations, would it not lead to greater instability in the region - increasing chances of an all-out war? Considering, Indian conventional superiority vis-à-vis Pakistan, absence of nuclear weapons on Pakistan's side would be a sure recipe for an Indian-initiated conflict.

China's Strategic Calculations

The speaker was of the view that China chose an opportune time to escalate border tensions with India. India, under Prime Minister Modi, had already alienated itself in the region. Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and the revocation of Article 370 alienated Pakistan to the extreme, and provided space to China to take advantage of the situation offered. He observed that Chinese actions along the Indian border had emboldened the already marginalized smaller regional states against India.

With Chinese support, smaller states in South Asia may be more vociferous in their demands towards India. China has shown, yet again, it is the most powerful player in the region.

A Biden White House & View from Pakistan

It was pointed out that US-India *bon amie* might come under stress due to Prime Minister Modi's anti-democratic and anti-human rights actions, especially since during campaigns, Joe Biden stated repeatedly that if elected, he would raise the issue of Kashmir with India and also convey his concerns on the recent Indian law that discriminates against Muslims.

Talking about US-Iran, Lt. Gen. Ahmad said that the President-elect would likely support or consider reinforcement of the Iran nuclear deal, which could help Tehran come out of international isolation. However, this could also bring US-Israel relations under stress, he remarked.



On Afghanistan, the speaker analysed that the new administration might not opt for a total military drawdown, and this may lead to jeopardizing the peace process and increasing pressure on Pakistan regarding bringing the Taliban to a negotiated settlement.

Lt. Gen. Ahmad emphasized that India's revocation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir had spurred Pakistan to declare Gilgit-Baltistan a province, albeit a provisional one. He cautioned that this could:

1. Create difficulties with regard to Kashmiri populace on both sides of the border,
2. Demoralize the Muslim leadership in Jammu and Kashmir and deflate their spirits, and,
3. Harm Pakistan's long-standing stance on Kashmir.

Future Prospects

The speaker advocated that a trilateral engagement involving Pakistan, China and India could be useful in sustaining at least mutual co-existence, if not outright cooperation. He opined that during Sino-Indian conflict, a joint diplomatic effort to convince India to revisit its current Kashmir policy in coordination with China could have brought certain advantages to Beijing and Islamabad.

China-India relations would remain shadowed without improvement in Pakistan-India relations. China routinely supports Pakistan at international fora, often to the detriment of India, e.g. China's opposition of India's bid for a membership to the Nuclear Suppliers Group, China's blocking of Masood Azhar's name in the UN's black list and CPEC etc.

Lt. Gen. Ishfaq Nadeem Ahmad re-emphasized that:

1. South Asia's growth potential is dependent on reducing intra-regional disputes. It was also dependent on its relations with the US. While Pakistan remains a central part of China's transition from a regional power to a global one, India continues to provide a strategic glue that binds both countries together.



2. There was likely to be a more internationalist approach followed by the new Biden administration, rather than an isolationist one which bodes well for US-China relations.
3. Revival of the JCPOA nuclear deal with Iran may become possible. Although such an eventuality would stress US-Israel relations.
4. Without improvement in Pakistan-India relations, and to some extent US-Iran relations, an important reason of instability, though not the only one, in Afghanistan would continue to fester.
5. A trilateral dialogue between Pakistan, China and India (as suggested by the Chinese) focusing on issues of immediate concern may be a useful first step to enhance confidence if India agrees to become a part of it.
6. Due to fairly strained Pakistan-India relations, back-channel efforts were necessary to achieve a thaw between both countries.
7. The period since 9/11 saw China sitting on the sidelines of a war that it wanted neither the Taliban nor the US to win. As the US withdrawal looms closer, and the terrorist threat grows, China's view is likely to be in favor of stability, even if it involves cooperating with Washington. This provides a degree of positivity because whatever happens in the region may be dictated primarily by the US over the next few years.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL (R) KALEEM SAADAT, CENTRE FOR AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES, ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN

Providing a brief background of the need for a dialogue from an international perspective on the recent Sino-India border crisis, President CASS in his concluding remarks, shared that this was the second webinar on the China-India stand-off, hosted by the Centre. The first one, held on 2 June 2020, analyzed the genesis of the issue and discussed details of what transpired in May 2020 and thereafter. This second webinar was envisioned to focus on what the future holds for the region and beyond.

China-India's history of the past three decades is replete with border skirmishes, on the one hand, and a surfeit of agreements intended to reduce tensions and live in peace, on the other.



President CASS highlighted that the events of the past three decades had shown that the attempts to iron out differences had not been entirely successful. The reasons for failure were multiple, but the primary one had been the changing balance of power between China and the US, and the consequent geostrategic realignments. Convergence of regional and global interests of India and the US changed Indian stance vis-à-vis China. Whereas earlier, India tried to be friendly with China and emphasized broadening of trade and bilateral relations, under the Quadrilateral arrangement with the US, Japan, and Australia becoming more active, the relationship with China deteriorated.

The Sino-India relations became worse after the unilateral action concerning Indian-occupied Kashmir on 5 August 2019. China rejected and condemned Indian actions at that time.

Air Chief Marshal Saadat lamented that the prognosis for the future was pessimistic because of hardening positions of the two protagonists and their allied blocs. The economic and military rise of China was unwelcomed by Quad, as well as South Korea, and some ASEAN countries.

A cold war prevails in real earnest and there's a chance of a clash both in the Himalayas and the South China Sea.

He outlined that militarily, India was weaker than China, but the former was using this opportunity to shore up its capabilities by military purchases from Russia, Israel, France, and the US. However, the President pointed out that while India was counting on the US support to stand up to China, the US would only sell military hardware/weapons and offer political support. The skirmishes and battles, would have to be fought by the Indians themselves. He predicted that it was unlikely that China would withdraw from the territory it had taken since they were planning to stay there for the long-haul. In fact, according to him, the more India tilts toward the US, the more pressure China would bring to bear on New Delhi in Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing called 'South Tibet'. The President also



agreed with the speakers that China was also provoked by Indian Home Minister Amit Shah's statement in Parliament after the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A.

According to Air Chief Marshal Saadat, while India may feel justified in what it had done in IOK, it was problematic on many levels:

- It violated UN Resolutions on Kashmir.
- It was opposed to the will of the Kashmiri majority - the Muslims.
- The pretext was development, but it had resulted in the cessation of normal economic activity which existed before August 2019.
- Human rights of the Kashmiris were being violated by extended curfews, unlawful detentions, and separation of young boys from their families, custodial killings, and blinding of people using pellet guns.
- Oppression and suppression of people for an extended period was neither sustainable nor tenable.
- Relocation of Hindus, into the disputed territory of IOJ&K, was a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

India has put itself in a cul de sac. It can neither rollback the revocation of Article 370, nor is it succeeding in controlling law and order in IOK. It is looking towards the Quad and other allies to pull its chestnuts out of the fire. There's little chance of making China return from the territory that is in Chinese control. Thus, this stand-off is likely to persist. With the proliferation of emerging disruptive technologies, one side, more likely India, could mistakenly, come to think that it has a decisive silver bullet and use autonomous and hypersonic weapons to attack the other side's positions or assets even for tactical gains or political effect.

President CASS predicted that in parallel, political jostling would be a constant, the trade war would continue, and cyber warfare would be used to hide behind the fog of anonymity and lack of identification. The skirmishes in the Himalayas would be overshadowed by larger military competition and challenges to sovereignty in the Asia-Pacific region. He



remarked that even though the US and India had signed important agreements like LEMOA, COMCASA and most recently, BECA, the questions were:

- Would India become a proxy of the US in its competition with China?
- Would India abandon its notion of 'Strategic Autonomy' and become a real ally of the US?
- Would India become a superpower or seek an alliance with the US?

In conclusion, he reflected that while common sense might dictate that the parties involved should sit around the table and work out a *modus vivendi*, history of the rise and fall of empires showed that there was little chance of that happening.

The world faces a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability. What is needed, instead is global leadership, consensus, and flexibility.



Annexures



Participants' Profiles

Chair: Air Chief Marshal Kaleem Saadat (R), NI (M), Former Chief of Air Staff, President Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies

Air Chief Marshal Kaleem Saadat (R), NI (M) is President Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS) and former Chief of Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force. During his service of 38 years, he has held operational, command and staff appointments. He has a Master's degree in defence and strategic studies and is also a graduate of the Ecole Superiore de Guerre Inter Armee (ESGI) and Cours Superieur Inter Armee(CSI) at the Ecole Militaire at Paris, France. He was the member of directing staff at Air War College, Pakistan Air Force and Chief Instructor of National Defence Wing of the then National Defence College, now called the NDU, Islamabad. He is now Patron-in-Chief of Thinkers Forum Pakistan, of which he had been President and contributing writer for six years. He has also been the Patron of Pakistan Ex- Servicemen Association.



Moderator: Syed Muhammad Ali, Director, Nuclear and Strategic Affairs, Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies



Syed Muhammad Ali is Director Nuclear and Strategic Affairs at the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies. He is an international policy analyst. He has rich experience of high-level multilateral and bilateral negotiations on strategic and security issues with the US, China and India. His work on foreign, security, nuclear and energy policies has been published and quoted in leading think tanks such as the Brookings Institute, CSIS and RUSI and prestigious publications including Brookings Arms Control & Non-Proliferation Series, Non-Proliferation Review and the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists. He has lectured at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University; Brookings Institution, Washington; Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra; Pugwash Conferences, Italy, IISS, London and Tsinghua University, Beijing. He presented Pakistan's perspective on energy security before DG IAEA during his Pakistan visit. He has authored, edited and co-authored several policy papers, books on foreign, security, energy and nuclear policy, strategy and doctrines. He has led, advised and served on the board of several think tanks. He also teaches at the National Defence University, Foreign Service Academy, Air War College and Pakistan Institute of Applied Sciences. He is a frequent analyst on major global and regional affairs on international media including BBC, Voice of America, TRT, Al-Jazeera, Arab News, Press TV, PTV World and several others. Earlier, he has served at PwC, a world's leading consultancy firm and managed Cross Media Ltd, a London-based international media company. He has also served at VOA, Washington and PTV World, Islamabad.

Speakers

Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, Senior Fellow for South Asia, International Institute of Strategic Studies, United Kingdom



Rahul Roy-Chaudhury is an expert on India's domestic politics, elections, and foreign and security policy, its new maritime security strategy in the Indian Ocean, armed forces and civil-military relations, India-Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, security and counterterrorism and India-UK relations. He leads the South Asia research programme for the International Institute of



Strategic Studies, London. He publishes on India's neighbourhood foreign and security policies; Pakistan, Afghanistan and regional security; counter-extremism and terrorism; regional nuclear matters; and the Indian navy and the Indian Ocean. He gives select policy-relevant talks and briefings and has organised several 'track 1.5' meetings. These involved top South Asian government and intelligence officials, and focus on regional stability, nuclear doctrines and India's foreign policy, and take place annually in Muscat, Bahrain, New Delhi, Islamabad and London. Mr Roy-Chaudhury also lectures at Oxford University and has worked as a Senior Research Fellow at the International Policy Institute, King's College, London. He has also served in the National Security Council Secretariat in the Prime Minister's Office, India; worked at the Institute for Defence Studies in New Delhi.

Dr Tong Zhao, Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, China

Dr Tong Zhao is a Senior Fellow in the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, based at the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy in Beijing. His research focuses on strategic security issues, including nuclear weapons policy, deterrence, arms control, non-proliferation, missile defense, hypersonic weapons, and regional nuclear crises. He is on the Board of Directors of the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, an Associate Editor of the journal Science & Global Security, and a member of the International Panel on Fissile Materials (IPFM). He was previously a Stanton Nuclear Security Fellow with Managing the Atom Project and the International Security Program at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University. He has held a number of other positions, including as a non-resident WSD-Handa Fellow at Pacific Forum CSIS and has worked for the Office of Foreign Affairs of the People's Government of Beijing Municipality. He holds a PhD in science, technology, and international affairs from Georgia Institute of Technology, and Masters in international relations from Tsinghua University.



Michael Kugelman, Woodrow Wilson Center, United States of America

Michael Kugelman is the Asia Program Deputy Director and Senior Associate for South Asia at the Woodrow Wilson Center, where he is responsible for research, programming, and publications on the region. His main focus of interest is Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan and U.S. relations with each of them. He has published policy briefs, journal articles, and book chapters on issues ranging from Pakistani youth and social media to India's energy security strategy and transboundary water management in South Asia. Mr. Kugelman received his Masters in law and diplomacy from the Fletcher School at Tufts University.





Lt Gen Ishfaq Nadeem Ahmed (R), HI (M), Former Chief of General Staff, Pakistan Army

Lt Gen Ishfaq Nadeem Ahmed is a former Chief of General Staff of Pakistan Army. Earlier, he commanded the II Corps of Pakistan Army. He also served as the Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) and Chief of Staff of I Corps. He was responsible for planning Pakistan Army's Operation Zarb-e-Azb during his tenure as DGMO. He has commanded a strike Infantry Division and led successful military operations in Swat. He was awarded *Hilal-i-Imtiaz* (Military) in August 2011.





Press Release

The world as a whole faces a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability.

What is needed is global leadership, consensus, and flexibility.



At the International Webinar on "**Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment**" organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies, here in the capital, an international panel of experts from China, Pakistan, United Kingdom, and the United States were of the view that:

- There is a severe perception gap between China and India. Both sides believe that their policies are purely defensive. However, despite their self-perceived defensive purposes, the current conflict is not going to end anytime soon.
- The United States is using a binding military strategy to ally with India against China gradually.
- Interdependence means China and India cannot afford to be enemies.
- India is only concerned with prestige, not with deterrence.
- Border disputes are unlikely to escalate to nuclear conflicts.
- Without an improvement in Indo-Pak relations, and to some extent, US-Iran relations, an important reason for instability though not the only one in Afghanistan, will continue to fester.

Mr Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, Senior Fellow for South Asia at the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), London, believed that the recent violent border clashes between Indian and Chinese troops had resulted in a deterioration of bilateral relations between the two countries. This bad relationship could not be easily and nor quickly reversed. As a result of this, India's existing competition with China in South Asia and the broader Indian Ocean Region was likely to sharpen into what he described as possible contestation in the defense and security domain. However, he opined that while India's engagement in the QUAD was also going to increase, its focus would be broader than just defense and security. Mr Roy-Chaudhury noted that the increasing emphasis on defense policy was not risk-free for India. Therefore, it would 'need to be



imaginatively and sensitively applied by New Delhi, if it was to result in political and diplomatic dividends for the South Block', he concluded.

Dr Tong Zhao, Senior Fellow, Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, Beijing, highlighted that there was a serious perception gap between China and India. From the Chinese perspective, India was trying to change the status quo across the region, especially given the 5 August 2019 revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and the public statement by Indian Home Minister Amit Shah who had declared in Lok Sabha last year that Aksai Chin was an integral and inseparable part of Jammu and Kashmir. Dr Zhao said such actions had triggered the Chinese military to show its resolve to protect the country's national security. In contrast, India perceives that China has been changing the status quo across the border region. Both parties believe that their policies are purely defensive. Dr Zhao also predicted that the current conflict, despite both countries' self-perceived defensive purposes, was not going to end anytime soon. According to Dr Zhao, President Xi Jinping has strong views on territorial issues and under his leadership, China would fight and not give up an inch of territory. He remarked that India's aggressive move was encouraged by the US, but was not a major concern for China politically nor militarily. 'Beijing is confident about the power gap between the two countries. Because of its military superiority, India won't be able to make any gains on the ground.' On the issue of nuclear deterrence, the Chinese analyst held that Indian nuclear modernization is driven more by the desire for prestige and domestic factors rather than because of China. As to why nuclear weapons had not played an important role in the Galwan Valley clash, Dr Zhao shared that China has a dismissive attitude about the relevance of nuclear weapons in China-India relations, which stems from the view that New Delhi's indigenous military technologies are significantly behind theirs. However, he stressed that India might feel pressure to build up its nuclear arsenal, which could further threaten India and Pakistan's fragile stability.

While evaluating the US' role and stance on the Sino-India border clashes, **Mr Michael Kugelman, Deputy Director and Senior Associate, Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC**, was of the view that the Ladakh crisis underscored growing Indian diplomatic problems in its backyard, putting New Delhi in hot water with both its top rivals - Pakistan and China. He warned that the South Asian environment was increasingly volatile, raising the prospects of miscalculation that could lead to a dangerous escalation. Mr Kugelman also pointed out that the Galwan crisis was not only impacting India and China; India-Pakistan relations would also be affected. 'New Delhi and Islamabad are both worried that the other side could take advantage of the Ladakh crisis to harm the other.' He also agreed with other speakers that US-India relations would further improve, given the Sino-India crisis. However, he shared that while many US leaders remain critical of Chinese actions in the Ladakh crisis, under a new US Administration, Joe Biden may be more open-minded towards the idea of cooperation with China and a revision in the Indo-Pacific strategy. On the issue of mediation or actual involvement in case of any conflicting future situation between China and India, US intervention was not likely to happen unless India gave it security guarantees, he remarked.

Discussing the significance of the South Asian region, **Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Ishfaq Nadeem Ahmad, former Chief of General Staff**, outlined that the region's growth potential depended on reducing intra-regional disputes and its relations with the US. He said the latter looked at China as an emerging competitor, while China also sees US as a threat. 'As long as China feels threatened by US, the region would remain constructively constrained.' On the Sino-India border clashes, he shared that besides other implications, the psychological impact of the Ladakh conflict on all major regional states could not be ignored. The conflict proved that China had the ability to defeat India



at a much lower scale. However, he also pointed out that both countries were unlikely to escalate to a broader level in Ladakh, in order to save their 90-billion dollar bilateral trade. Lt. Gen. Ahmad predicted that there was likely to be an 'internationalist approach' adopted by the new Biden administration, rather than an 'isolationist one' of Mr Trump. China's view would also likely be in favor of regional stability given its economic activities in the region, even if it involved cooperation with Washington. On South Asia's future and the road ahead, he recommended that a trilateral arrangement between China-India-Pakistan to discuss immediate concerns, as suggested by China recently, would be a useful step if India agreed to it. Because of the fairly strained Pak-India relations, backchannel efforts were also necessary to achieve a thaw between both countries, he concluded.

Moderated by **Mr Syed Muhammad Ali**, Director Nuclear Policy and Strategy at CASS, the discussion was followed by a candid Question/Answer session. In response to a question, the Chinese analyst stressed that Beijing was acutely aware of how New Delhi's defense technology cooperation with Washington may bring it closer to the US orbit and change the geopolitical landscape in the Indo-Pacific region. Due to the widely expressed Chinese concern that India's membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) would further enhance its importance in the US' Asia strategy, there was little support for changing China's long-standing opposition to India's admission into the group, he said.

Delivering his **Concluding Remarks and Vote of Thanks**, **President of CASS Air Chief Marshal (Retd.) Kaleem Saadat** observed that given the discussions, the prognosis for the future appeared to be pessimistic because of the hardening positions of the two protagonists and their allied blocs. He was of the view that it was unlikely that China would withdraw from the territory it had taken, especially since it was making arrangements to stay there for the long-haul. A cold war prevails in real earnest and, he predicted that there was a chance of a clash both India and China in the Himalayas and the South China Sea. He pointed out that the past three decades' events had shown that the attempts to iron out their differences had not been entirely successful. 'The reasons for this failure have been multiple, but the primary one is the changing balance of power between China and the US and the consequent geostrategic realignments', he remarked. President Saadat warned that the world was facing a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability. 'What is needed, instead is global leadership, consensus, and flexibility', he hoped.



Media Coverage

Electronic Media





Web/Online Media



November 13, 2020

Experts for global leadership, consensus, flexibility

ISLAMABAD - Experts at a seminar here on Thursday stressed the need for global leadership, consensus, and flexibility as they believed that the world as a whole had been facing a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability.

Speaking at an International Webinar on 'Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment,' organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), here, an international panel of experts from China, Pakistan, United Kingdom, and the United States said as the world as a whole faced a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability, there was need for global leadership, consensus, and flexibility. They were of the view that there was a severe perception gap between China and India. Both sides believe that their policies are purely defensive. However, despite their self-perceived defensive purposes, the current conflict is not going to end anytime soon.

They said United States was using a binding military strategy to ally with India against China gradually. Interdependence means China and India cannot afford to be enemies. "India is only concerned with prestige, not with deterrence," they believed. The experts were of the view that border disputes were unlikely to escalate to nuclear conflicts. They said without an improvement in Indo-Pak relations, and to some extent, US-Iran relations, an important reason for instability though not the only one in Afghanistan, would continue to fester.

Rahul Roy Chaudhury, Senior Fellow for South Asia at the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), London, believed that the recent violent border clashes between Indian and Chinese troops had resulted in a deterioration of bilateral relations between the two countries. This bad relationship could neither be easily nor quickly reversed.

Discussing the significance of the South Asian region, Lt. Gen. (Retd) Ishfaq Nadeem Ahmad, former Chief of General Staff, outlined that the region's growth potential depended on reducing intra-regional disputes and its relations with the US. He said the latter looked at China as an emerging competitor, while China also sees US as a threat. 'As long as China feels threatened by US, the region would remain constructively constrained,' he opined. On the Sino-India border clashes, he said that besides other implications, the psychological impact of the Ladakh conflict on all major regional states could not be ignored. "The conflict proved that China had the ability to defeat India at a much lower scale. However, he also pointed out that both countries were unlikely to escalate to a broader level in Ladakh, in order to save their 90-billion dollar bilateral trade.

<https://nation.com.pk/13-Nov-2020/experts-for-global-leadership-consensus-flexibility>



Daily Times

Your right to know A new voice for a new Pakistan

NOVEMBER 12, 2020

Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment

The world as a whole faces a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability. What is needed is global leadership, consensus, and flexibility. At the International Webinar on “Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment” organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies, here in the capital, an international panel of experts from China, Pakistan, United Kingdom, and the United States were of the view that:

- (a) There is a severe perception gap between China and India. Both sides believe that their policies are purely defensive. However, despite their self-perceived defensive purposes, the current conflict is not going to end anytime soon.
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Mr Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, Senior Fellow for South Asia at the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), London, believed that the recent violent border clashes between Indian and Chinese troops had resulted in a deterioration of bilateral relations between the two countries. This bad relationship could not be easily and nor quickly reversed. As a result of this, India's existing competition with China in South Asia and the broader Indian Ocean Region was likely to sharpen into what he described as possible contestation in the defense and security domain. However, he opined that while India's engagement in the QUAD was also going to increase, its focus would be broader than just defense and security. Mr Roy- Chaudhury noted that the increasing emphasis on defense policy was not risk-free for India. Therefore, it would 'need to be imaginatively and sensitively applied by New Delhi, if it was to result in political and diplomatic dividends for the South Block', he concluded.

Dr Tong Zhao, Senior Fellow, Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, Beijing, highlighted that there was a serious perception gap between China and India. From the Chinese perspective, India was trying to change the status quo across the region, especially given the 5 August 2019 revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and the public statement by Indian Home Minister Amit Shah who had declared in Lok Sabha last year that Aksai Chin was an integral and inseparable part of Jammu and Kashmir. Dr Zhao said such actions had triggered the Chinese military to show its resolve to protect the country's national security. In contrast, India perceives that China has been changing the status quo across the border region. Both parties believe that their policies are purely defensive. Dr Zhao also predicted that the current conflict, despite both countries' self-perceived defensive purposes, was not going to end anytime soon. According to Dr Zhao, President Xi Jinping has strong views on territorial issues and under his leadership, China would fight and not give up an inch of territory. He remarked that India's aggressive move



was encouraged by the US, but was not a major concern for China politically nor militarily. ‘Beijing is confident about the power gap between the two countries. Because of its military superiority, India won’t be able to make any gains on the ground.’ On the issue of nuclear deterrence, the Chinese analyst held that Indian nuclear modernization is driven more by the desire for prestige and domestic factors rather than because of China. As to why nuclear weapons had not played an important role in the Galwan Valley clash, Dr Zhao shared that China has a dismissive attitude about the relevance of nuclear weapons in China-India relations, which stems from the view that New Delhi’s indigenous military technologies are significantly behind theirs. However, he stressed that India might feel pressure to build up its nuclear arsenal, which could further threaten India and Pakistan’s fragile stability.

While evaluating the US’ role and stance on the Sino-India border clashes, Mr Michael Kugelman, Deputy Director and Senior Associate, Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC, was of the view that the Ladakh crisis underscored growing Indian diplomatic problems in its backyard, putting New Delhi in hot water with both its top rivals – Pakistan and China. He warned that the South Asian environment was increasingly volatile, raising the prospects of miscalculation that could lead to a dangerous escalation. Mr Kugelman also pointed out that the Galwan crisis was not only impacting India and China; India-Pakistan relations would also be affected. ‘New Delhi and Islamabad are both worried that the other side could take advantage of the Ladakh crisis to harm the other.’ He also agreed with other speakers that US-India relations would further improve, given the Sino-India crisis. However, he shared that while many US leaders remain critical of Chinese actions in the Ladakh crisis, under a new US Administration, Joe Biden may be more open-minded towards the idea of cooperation with China and a revision in the Indo-Pacific strategy.

On the issue of mediation or actual involvement in case of any conflicting future situation between China and India, US intervention was not likely to happen unless India gave it security guarantees, he remarked. Discussing the significance of the South Asian region, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Ishfaq Nadeem Ahmad, former Chief of General Staff, outlined that the region’s growth potential depended on reducing intra-regional disputes and its relations with the US. He said the latter looked at China as an emerging competitor, while China also sees US as a threat. ‘As long as China feels threatened by US, the region would remain constructively constrained.’ On the Sino-India border clashes, he shared that besides other implications, the psychological impact of the Ladakh conflict on all major regional states could not be ignored. The conflict proved that China had the ability to defeat India at a much lower scale. However, he also pointed out that both countries were unlikely to escalate to a broader level in Ladakh, in order to save their 90-billion dollar bilateral trade. Lt. Gen. Ahmad predicted that there was likely to be an ‘internationalist approach’ adopted by the new Biden administration, rather than an ‘isolationist one’ of Mr Trump. China’s view would also likely be in favor of regional stability given its economic activities in the region, even if it involved cooperation with Washington. On South Asia’s future and the road ahead, he recommended that a trilateral arrangement between China-India-Pakistan to discuss immediate concerns, as suggested by China recently, would be a useful step if India agreed to it. Because of the fairly strained Pak-India relations, backchannel efforts were also necessary to achieve a thaw between both countries, he concluded.

Moderated by Mr Syed Muhammad Ali, Director Nuclear Policy and Strategy at CASS, the discussion was followed by a candid Question/Answer session. In response to a question, the Chinese analyst stressed that Beijing was acutely aware of how New Delhi’s defense technology cooperation with Washington may bring it closer to the US orbit and change the geopolitical landscape in the Indo-Pacific region. Due to the widely expressed Chinese concern that India’s



membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) would further enhance its importance in the US' Asia strategy, there was little support for changing China's long-standing opposition to India's admission into the group, he said. Delivering his concluding remarks and Vote of Thanks, President of CASS Air Chief Marshal (Retd.) Kaleem Saadat observed that given the discussions, the prognosis for the future appeared to be pessimistic because of the hardening positions of the two protagonists and their allied blocs. He was of the view that it was unlikely that China would withdraw from the territory it had taken, especially since it was making arrangements to stay there for the long-haul. A cold war prevails in real earnest and, he predicted that there was a chance of a clash both India and China in the Himalayas and the South China Sea. He pointed out that the past three decades' events had shown that the attempts to iron out their differences had not been entirely successful. 'The reasons for this failure have been multiple, but the primary one is the changing balance of power between China and the US and the consequent geostrategic realignments', he remarked. President Saadat warned that the world was facing a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability. 'What is needed, instead is global leadership, consensus, and flexibility', he hoped

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/688453/sino-india-border-clashes-implications-for-south-asian-strategic-environment/>

Pakistan OBSERVER

World faces uncertainty, instability; needs global leadership, consensus, and flexibility

An International Webinar on "Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment" was organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies, in the capital. The international panel of experts from China, Pakistan, United Kingdom, and the United States were of the view at the Webinar, that: There is a severe perception gap between China and India. Both sides believe that their policies are purely defensive. However, despite their self-perceived defensive purposes, the current conflict is not going to end anytime soon. The United States is using a binding military strategy to ally with India against China gradually. Interdependence means China and India cannot afford to be enemies. India is only concerned with prestige, not with deterrence. Border disputes are unlikely to escalate to nuclear conflicts.

Without an improvement in Indo-Pak relations, and to some extent, US-Iran relations, an important reason for instability though not the only one in Afghanistan, will continue to fester. Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, Senior Fellow for South Asia at the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), London, believed that the recent violent border clashes between Indian and Chinese troops had resulted in a deterioration of bilateral relations between the two countries. This bad relationship could not be easily and nor quickly reversed. As a result of this, India's existing competition with China in South Asia and the broader Indian Ocean Region was likely to sharpen into what he described as possible contestation in the defense and security domain. However, he opined that while India's engagement in the QUAD was also going to increase, its focus would be broader than just defense and security. Mr Roy-Chaudhury noted that the increasing emphasis on defense policy was not risk-free for India. Therefore, it would 'need to be imaginatively and sensitively applied by New Delhi, if it was to result in political and diplomatic



dividends for the South Block', he concluded. Dr Tong Zhao, Senior Fellow, Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, Beijing, highlighted that there was a serious perception gap between China and India.

<https://pakobserver.net/world-faces-uncertainty-instability-needs-global-leadership-consensus-and-flexibility/>



12 November 2020

Sino-India Border Clashes to Escalate Nuclear Conflicts: Speakers

ISLAMABAD, (UrduPoint / Pakistan Point News - APP - 12th Nov, 2020): The speakers at the International Webinar on "Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment" Thursday said that border disputes were unlikely to escalate nuclear conflicts in the region.

The webinar was organised by the Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), here. An international panel of experts from China, Pakistan, United Kingdom, and the United States were of the view that the world as a whole was facing a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability where it was needed that global leadership, consensus, and flexibility should prevail.

They added that there was a severe perception gap between China and India. Both sides believed that their policies were purely defensive. However, despite their self-perceived defensive purposes, the current conflict was not going to end anytime soon.

"The United States is using a binding military strategy to ally with India against China gradually. Interdependence means China and India cannot afford to be enemies. India is only concerned with prestige, not with deterrence. Without an improvement in Indo-Pak relations, and to some extent, US-Iran relations, an important reason for instability though not the only one in Afghanistan, will continue to fester." Senior Fellow for South Asia at the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), London Rahul Roy-Chaudhury believed that the recent violent border clashes between Indian and Chinese troops had resulted in a deterioration of bilateral relations between the two countries. This bad relationship could not be easily and nor quickly reversed.

Senior Fellow, Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, Beijing Dr Tong Zhao highlighted that there was a serious perception gap between China and India. From the Chinese perspective, India was trying to change the status quo across the region, especially given the 5th August 2019 revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and the public statement by Indian Home Minister Amit Shah who had declared in Lok Sabha last year that Aksai Chin was an integral and inseparable part of Jammu and Kashmir.

Dr Zhao also predicted that the current conflict, despite both countries' self-perceived defensive purposes, was not going to end anytime soon. On the issue of nuclear deterrence, the Chinese analyst held that Indian nuclear modernization was driven more by the desire for prestige and domestic factors rather than because of China.



While evaluating the US' role and stance on the Sino-India border clashes, Michael Kugelman, Deputy Director and Senior Associate, Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC, was of the view that the Ladakh crisis underscored growing Indian diplomatic problems in its backyard, putting New Delhi in hot water with both its top rivals - Pakistan and China.

In response to a question, the Chinese analyst stressed that Beijing was acutely aware of how New Delhi's defense technology cooperation with Washington might bring it closer to the US orbit and change the geopolitical landscape in the Indo-Pacific region.

Delivering his concluding remarks and Vote of Thanks, President of CASS Air Chief Marshal (R) Kaleem Saadat observed that given the discussions, the prognosis for the future appeared to be pessimistic because of the hardening positions of the two protagonists and their allied blocs.

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/amp/pakistan/sino-india-border-clashes-to-escalate-nuclear-1084320.html>



November 12, 2020

Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for region

ISLAMABAD: The world as a whole faces a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability. What is needed is global leadership, consensus, and flexibility. At the International Webinar on "Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment" organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies, here in the capital, an international panel of experts from China, Pakistan, United Kingdom, and the United States were of the view that:

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focus would be broader than just defense and security. Mr Roy-Chaudhury noted that the increasing emphasis on defense policy was not risk-free for India. Therefore, it would 'need to be imaginatively and sensitively applied by New Delhi, if it was to result in political and diplomatic dividends for the South Block', he concluded.

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On the issue of mediation or actual involvement in case of any conflicting future situation between China and India, US intervention was not likely to happen unless India gave it security guarantees, he remarked. Discussing the significance of the South Asian region, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Ishfaq Nadeem Ahmad, former Chief of General Staff, outlined that the region's growth potential depended on reducing intra-regional disputes and its relations with the US. He said the latter looked at China as an emerging competitor, while China also sees US as a threat. 'As long as China feels threatened by US, the region would remain constructively constrained.' On the Sino-India border clashes, he shared that besides other implications, the psychological impact of the Ladakh conflict on all major regional states could not be ignored. The conflict proved that China had the ability to defeat India at a much lower scale. However, he also pointed out that both countries were unlikely to escalate to a broader level in Ladakh, in order to save their 90-billion



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<https://dnanews.com.pk/sino-india-border-clashes-implications-region/>

Daily Islamabad POST

November 12, 2020

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<https://islamabadpost.com.pk/sino-india-border-clashes-implications-for-region/>



Regional Telegraph

Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment

12 November 2020

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Delivering his concluding remarks and Vote of Thanks, President of CASS Air Chief Marshal (Retd.) Kaleem Saadat observed that given the discussions, the prognosis for the future appeared to be pessimistic because of the hardening positions of the two protagonists and their allied blocs. He was of the view that it was unlikely that China would withdraw from the territory it had taken, especially since it was making arrangements to stay there for the long-haul. A cold war prevails in real earnest and, he predicted that there was a chance of a clash both India and China in the Himalayas and the South China Sea. He pointed out that the past three decades' events had shown that the attempts to iron out their differences had not been entirely successful. 'The reasons for this failure have been multiple, but the primary one is the changing balance of power between China and the US and the consequent geostrategic realignments', he remarked. President Saadat warned that the world was facing a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability. 'What is needed, instead is global leadership, consensus, and flexibility', he hoped.

<https://regionaltelegraph.com/?p=9556>



12 November 2020

Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment

The world as a whole faces a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability. What is needed is global leadership, consensus, and flexibility. At the International Webinar on "Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment" organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies, here in the capital, an international panel of experts from China, Pakistan, United Kingdom, and the United States were of the view that:

- a) There is a severe perception gap between China and India. Both sides believe that their policies are purely defensive. However, despite their self-perceived defensive purposes, the current conflict is not going to end anytime soon.
- b) The United States is using a binding military strategy to ally with India against China gradually.
- c) Interdependence means China and India cannot afford to be enemies.
- d) India is only concerned with prestige, not with deterrence.
- e) Border disputes are unlikely to escalate to nuclear conflicts.
- f) Without an improvement in Indo-Pak relations, and to some extent, US-Iran relations, an important reason for instability though not the only one in Afghanistan, will continue to fester.



Mr Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, Senior Fellow for South Asia at the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), London, believed that the recent violent border clashes between Indian and Chinese troops had resulted in a deterioration of bilateral relations between the two countries. This bad relationship could not be easily and nor quickly reversed. As a result of this, India's existing competition with China in South Asia and the broader Indian Ocean Region was likely to sharpen into what he described as possible contestation in the defense and security domain. However, he opined that while India's engagement in the QUAD was also going to increase, its focus would be broader than just defense and security. Mr Roy- Chaudhury noted that the increasing emphasis on defense policy was not risk-free for India. Therefore, it would 'need to be imaginatively and sensitively applied by New Delhi, if it was to result in political and diplomatic dividends for the South Block', he concluded.

Dr Tong Zhao, Senior Fellow, Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, Beijing, highlighted that there was a serious perception gap between China and India. From the Chinese perspective, India was trying to change the status quo across the region, especially given the 5 August 2019 revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and the public statement by Indian Home Minister Amit Shah who had declared in Lok Sabha last year that Aksai Chin was an integral and inseparable part of Jammu and Kashmir. Dr Zhao said such actions had triggered the Chinese military to show its resolve to protect the country's national security. In contrast, India perceives that China has been changing the status quo across the border region. Both parties believe that their policies are purely defensive. Dr Zhao also predicted that the current conflict, despite both countries' self-perceived defensive purposes, was not going to end anytime soon. According to Dr Zhao, President Xi Jinping has strong views on territorial issues and under his leadership, China would fight and not give up an inch of territory. He remarked that India's aggressive move was encouraged by the US, but was not a major concern for China politically nor militarily. 'Beijing is confident about the power gap between the two countries. Because of its military superiority, India won't be able to make any gains on the ground.' On the issue of nuclear deterrence, the Chinese analyst held that Indian nuclear modernization is driven more by the desire for prestige and domestic factors rather than because of China. As to why nuclear weapons had not played an important role in the Galwan Valley clash, Dr Zhao shared that China has a dismissive attitude about the relevance of nuclear weapons in China-India relations, which stems from the view that New Delhi's indigenous military technologies are significantly behind theirs. However, he stressed that India might feel pressure to build up its nuclear arsenal, which could further threaten India and Pakistan's fragile stability.

While evaluating the US' role and stance on the Sino-India border clashes, Mr Michael Kugelman, Deputy Director and Senior Associate, Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC, was of the view that the Ladakh crisis underscored growing Indian diplomatic problems in its backyard, putting New Delhi in hot water with both its top rivals – Pakistan and China. He warned that the South Asian environment was increasingly volatile, raising the prospects of miscalculation that could lead to a dangerous escalation. Mr Kugelman also pointed out that the Galwan crisis was not only impacting India and China; India-Pakistan relations would also be affected. 'New Delhi and Islamabad are both worried that the other side could take advantage of the Ladakh crisis to harm the other.' He also agreed with other speakers that US-India relations would further improve, given the Sino-India crisis. However, he shared that while many US leaders remain critical of Chinese actions in the Ladakh crisis, under a new US Administration, Joe Biden may be more open-minded towards the idea of cooperation with China and a revision in the Indo-Pacific strategy.



On the issue of mediation or actual involvement in case of any conflicting future situation between China and India, US intervention was not likely to happen unless India gave it security guarantees, he remarked. Discussing the significance of the South Asian region, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Ishfaq Nadeem Ahmad, former Chief of General Staff, outlined that the region's growth potential depended on reducing intra-regional disputes and its relations with the US. He said the latter looked at China as an emerging competitor, while China also sees US as a threat. 'As long as China feels threatened by US, the region would remain constructively constrained.' On the Sino-India border clashes, he shared that besides other implications, the psychological impact of the Ladakh conflict on all major regional states could not be ignored. The conflict proved that China had the ability to defeat India at a much lower scale. However, he also pointed out that both countries were unlikely to escalate to a broader level in Ladakh, in order to save their 90-billion dollar bilateral trade. Lt. Gen. Ahmad predicted that there was likely to be an 'internationalist approach' adopted by the new Biden administration, rather than an 'isolationist one' of Mr Trump. China's view would also likely be in favor of regional stability given its economic activities in the region, even if it involved cooperation with Washington. On South Asia's future and the road ahead, he recommended that a trilateral arrangement between China-India-Pakistan to discuss immediate concerns, as suggested by China recently, would be a useful step if India agreed to it. Because of the fairly strained Pak-India relations, backchannel efforts were also necessary to achieve a thaw between both countries, he concluded.

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<https://theworldnews.net/pk-news/sino-india-border-clashes-implications-for-south-asian-strategic-environment>



November 12, 2020

Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment

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<http://www.mediaonlinetoday.com/sino-india-border-clashes-implications-for-south-asian-strategic-environment/>

Print Media Highlights



13 November 2020

Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment

ISLAMABAD, November 12: The world as a whole faces a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability. What is needed is global leadership, consensus, and flexibility. At the International Webinar on "Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment" organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies, here in the capital, an international panel of experts from China, Pakistan, United Kingdom, and the United States were of the view that:

a) There is a severe perception gap between China and India. Both sides believe that their policies are purely defensive. However, despite their self-perceived defensive purposes, the current conflict is not going to end anytime soon.

b) The United States is using a binding military strategy to ally with India against China gradually.

c) Interdependence means China and India cannot afford to be enemies.

d) India is only concerned with prestige, not with deter-

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Experts for global
leadership, consensus,
flexibility

**OUR STAFF REPORTER
ISLAMABAD**

me for Pakistan given here are 19.1 million out-of-school children in the country overall budget this year is \$1 billion," she said.

Experts at a seminar here on Thursday stressed the need for global leadership, consensus, and flexibility as

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Experts at a seminar here on Thursday stressed the need for global leadership, consensus, and flexibility as they believed that the world as a whole had been facing a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability.

Speaking at an International Webinar on 'Sino-India Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment', organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), here, an international panel of experts from China, Pakistan, United Kingdom, and the United States said as the world as a whole faced a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability, there was need for global leadership, consensus, and flexibility. They were of the view that there was a severe perception gap between China and India. Both sides believe that their policies are purely defensive. However, despite their self-perceived defensive purposes, the current conflict is not going to end anytime soon.

They said United States was using a binding military strategy to ally with India against China gradually. Interdependence means China and India cannot afford to be enemies. "India is only concerned with prestige, not with deterrence," they believed. The experts were of the view that border disputes were unlikely to escalate to nuclear conflicts. They said without an improvement in Indo-Pak relations, and to some extent, US-Iran relations, an important reason for instability though not the only one in Afghanistan, would continue to fester.

Minister fines petrol pump

PESHAWAR (Our Staff Reporter): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Labour and Culture Shaikhul Yousafzai paid surprise visits to various petrol pumps and CNG stations in Peshawar to inspect weight and measurement standards. During inspection the team of the Labour Department fined a petrol pump at Peshawar's Arbab Road for not complying as per Standard Weights and Measures Rules of the province.

der clashes between Indian and Chinese troops had resulted in a deterioration of bilateral relations between the two countries. This bad relationship could neither be easily nor quickly reversed.

Discussing the significance of the South Asian region, Lt. Gen. (Retd) Ishfaq Nadeem Ahmad, former Chief of General Staff, outlined that the region's growth potential depended on reducing intra-regional disputes and its relations with the US. He said the latter looked at China as an emerging competitor; while China also sees US as a threat. 'As long as China feels threatened by US, the region would remain constructively constrained,' he opined. On the Sino-India border clashes, he said that besides other implications, the psychological impact of the Ladakh conflict on all major regional states could not be ignored.

Pakistan
OBSERVER

World faces uncertainty, instability; needs global leadership, consensus, and flexibility

STAFF REPORTED

An International Webinar on "Sino-Indian Border Clashes: Implications for South Asian Strategic Environment" was organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies, in the capital. The international panel of experts from China, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and the United States were of the view at the Webinar that:

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محمد على فاروق . November 13, 2020, 3:38 AM





Social Media Highlights

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Michael Kugelman

@MichaelKugelman

I was fortunate to be a part of this great discussion on the geopolitical impacts of the Ladakh crisis, featuring perspectives from China, India, Pakistan & the US. It was hosted by [@CassThinkers](#) and nicely chaired by [@SyedAli78304182](#). Well worth a watch.

YouTube



Sino-India Border Clashes, Implications for the South Asian Strategic...

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carin jodha fischer

@carin_fischer

Replying to [@MichaelKugelman](#)
[@SyedAli78304182](#) and [@CassThinkers](#)

The best speaker by far was the Pakistani Lt General Ahmad.
Best grasp of the big picture....
[@SyedAli78304182](#)

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