

## **Arunachal Pradesh: A focal point of confrontation between India & China**

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### **Abstract**

The Sino-Indian border dispute has simmered for decades, with Arunachal Pradesh being a key source of tension in the eastern region. This paper delves deeper into the recent escalation in the eastern state. China's claim over the region is rooted in Mao Zedong's "five finger policy" which sought to annex territories including Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Arunachal Pradesh. This policy forms the basis of China's aggressive territorial claims and expansionist agenda. The historical backdrop of the dispute dates to the 1962 Sino-Indian War, where China launched a military offensive and occupied parts of Arunachal Pradesh, which it refers to as "South Tibet". The conflict resulted in a significant loss for India, further fuelling the territorial tensions between the two nations. On the other hand, India asserts its irrefutable claim over Arunachal Pradesh based on the McMahon Line, which was established as the legal boundary between Tibet and British India in the 1914 Shimla Convention. India maintains that Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of its territory and rejects China's claims as illegitimate and unsupported by historical or legal evidence. The confrontation over Arunachal Pradesh continues to simmer, with occasional incidents of border incursions and military standoffs. Objective: The objective of this paper is to provide an analysis the reason behind the escalating issues of the present-day situation regarding the territorial dispute between India and China over Arunachal Pradesh. It aims to highlight the historical context, China's claims, the 1962 conflict, India's counterclaims based on the Mac Donald Line, as well as discussing about the prospects of the conflict and ways to resolve those issues. Methodology: Researcher will employ a multi-pronged approach, including examining historical research, geopolitical analysis, and reference to international treaties and agreements to present a comprehensive understanding of the situation and explore possible solutions. The methodology involved a thorough review of scholarly articles, official documents, and reputable sources to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information presented.

**Keywords:** India, China, Arunachal Pradesh, Territorial Disputes, McMohan Line, Border Conflict

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## **Introduction**

India's historical and legal claims to Arunachal Pradesh are grounded in the administrative framework established during the British colonial era and the subsequent continuity of governance post-independence. The legal foundation for India's claim is the McMahon Line, which emerged from the 1914 Shimla Convention that delineated the boundary between the North East Frontier Agency present-day Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet (Gupta K. , 1982). Despite the Shimla Convention's contested status owing to Chinese non-recognition, India maintained the inherited boundary lines following its independence in 1947 (Kalha, 2014).

Administrative control, including governance, police, and economic development within Arunachal Pradesh, has been continuously exercised by Indian authorities. This *de facto* administration lends legitimacy to New Delhi's claim of sovereignty over the region. Moreover, the people of Arunachal Pradesh have participated in Indian democratic processes, further solidifying India's claim. At the heart of India's legal argument is the principle of *Uti possidetis juris*, a norm in international law that endorses existing boundaries at the time of independence (Carter & Goemans, 2011). India's stance has been that it possesses rights to the territory based on historical precedent and active, uninterrupted administration, an argument that is strengthened by the active participation of the Arunachal Pradesh population in India's national life, consistently affirming their identity as Indian citizens.

Due to varying interpretations of the true border, India and China have been engaged in a complicated and lengthy geopolitical conflict known as the Sino-Indian border dispute. This dispute envelops several regions, most notably Arunachal Pradesh in the east and Ladakh in the west. The crux of the dispute is the divergence between China's claim lines and India's administration as per the borders recognized by New Delhi (Joshi, 2024). In the eastern sector, Arunachal Pradesh emerges as a focal point due to its strategic location and rich resources. Spanning approximately 84,000 square kilo meters, this region is claimed by China as part of southern Tibet, while India considers it an integral state within its sovereign territory (Sarmah, 2024). The contested area has been under the administrative control of India since the end of British rule. The historical underpinning of the dispute in Arunachal Pradesh dates back to the early 20th century, relying heavily on the legitimacy of the McMahon Line, an ill-defined border delineated by the 1914 Shimla Convention between British India and Tibet. While India upholds this line as a legal boundary, China refutes the agreement, arguing it was not a party to the convention and does not recognize the McMahon Line as valid (Vora, 2021).

Fig 1: Disputed Borders



**Source:** [interactive.aljazeera.com](https://www.aljazeera.com)

**Note:** Picture highlights the disputed borders between India and China.

Arunachal Pradesh's significance in the dispute is multifaceted. Geographically, it commands a strategic position with proximity to Bhutan, Myanmar, and China. The region's rugged terrain and dense forests also make it a military challenge, serving as a potential buffer zone and playing a role in the larger power dynamics between the Asian giants. Furthermore, Arunachal's rivers, biodiversity, and possible mineral wealth add layers of economic interest. The intertwining of historical contentions, national pride, and strategic importance has rendered the Sino-Indian border dispute in Arunachal Pradesh a particularly sensitive and enduring issue. Periodic military standoffs and reports of incursions continue to exacerbate tensions, demonstrating the urgent need for a durable, peaceful resolution that acknowledges the interests and concerns of both nations.

### **Historical context:**

The relationship between China and India, two of the oldest and most influential civilizations in the world, has been shaped by a complex interplay of political, cultural, and economic factors

throughout history. During the Christian era, from the 1st to the 7th century, the two nations enjoyed relatively peaceful and prosperous interactions, characterized by flourishing trade, cultural exchanges, and the widespread propagation of Buddhism across their shared borders and beyond (Dalmia & Malome, 2012).

During the Christian era, India's position as a hub for international trade facilitated extensive commercial and cultural interactions with China (Dalmia & Malome, 2012). The discovery of the monsoon system, which allowed for predictable maritime trade routes, further strengthened these ties, leading to a significant influx of Indian cultural influences in Southeast Asia, including Java (Sinha & Tucunan, 2021). One of the most notable examples of this cultural exchange was the spread of Buddhism from India to China, a process that involved "multi-ethnic collaborations and the ingenuity of Chinese and foreign monks (Sen, 2012)."

The Islamic era, however, brought about a significant shift in the dynamics of Sino-Indian relations. As Islam gained a stronger foothold in the Indian subcontinent, the nature of India's interactions with China became more complex, with occasional periods of conflict and tension as the two nations navigated their diverging religious and political ideologies (Dalmia & Malome, 2012). Despite these challenges, both nations have sought to maintain peace and tranquillity along their shared borders, with India's "Look East" policy and efforts to build comprehensive economic partnerships with China serving as examples of their ongoing attempts to navigate the evolving geopolitical landscape (Jayshwal, 2017) (Pardesi, 2021). This delicate balancing act has been crucial in ensuring regional stability as India and China continue to rise as major global powers.

In the modern era, Sino-Indian relations evolved with the political changes of the 20th century. After India gained independence in 1947 and the People's Republic of China was established in 1949 (Zedong, 1949), the two countries initially sought to maintain a friendly approach, encapsulated by the term "Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai" (Radchenko, 2014). However, the goodwill eroded due to border disputes, particularly over the Aksai Chin area in Ladakh and the Northeast Frontier Agency. Disagreements arose over the historical legitimacy and demarcation of borders. These tensions culminated in the military conflict of 1962 when Chinese forces launched significant attacks on Indian positions along the disputed frontier, overwhelming Indian military posts and capturing territory. This conflict was a pivotal moment in Sino-Indian relations, causing a long-standing rift and trust deficit between the two nations. Despite the cessation of hostilities and Chinese withdrawal following a unilateral ceasefire, the

border issues remained unresolved, casting a long shadow over bilateral relations, and leading to persistent strategic mistrust that affects regional dynamics to this day.

Mao Zedong's "five fingers policy" is a geostrategic concept attributed to him where he metaphorically referred to Tibet as the palm of China's hand, with Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and the North East Frontier Agency (present Arunachal Pradesh) as its five fingers. The policy highlights Mao's vision of incorporating these regions into China's sphere of influence or control (Dorji, 2020). The border disputes and military engagements between India and China have had profound ramifications for their ties. Additionally, China's ties with neighbouring nations such as Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan are affected by this, and it also adds to the wider strategic struggle in Asia.

The intricate tapestry of Sino-Indian border disputes is woven with threads of colonial cartographies and legacy border agreements, the most notable being the McMahon Line proposed in the 1914 Shimla Convention. Although accepted by British India and the Tibetan government, this demarcation was rejected by China, which did not consider Tibet a sovereign entity with the right to enter into international agreements. Consequently, China never recognized this boundary, which delineates the contentious eastern section of their shared border, particularly affecting Arunachal Pradesh (Banerjee, 2022). The 1962 Sino-Indian War marked a significant escalation in the bilateral dispute, resulting from China's military offensive in the areas of Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. A unilateral ceasefire by China ended active conflict but left a legacy of suspicion and unfinished border demarcation, delineating the LAC as an uneasy stand-in for a formal border. Skirmishes, such as those in Nathu La in 1967, and the Sumdorong Chu standoff in the late 1980s, have punctuated the long-standing dispute. Despite numerous rounds of bilateral talks and confidence-building measures, including agreements to maintain peace along the LAC, the exact demarcation of the border remains undefined, leading to periodic flare-ups in tensions, most recently in the 2020 Galwan Valley clash.

#### **1914 Shimla convention and the McMahon line:**

The McMahon Line was established during the colonial era in the early 20th century. It originated from the 1914 Shimla Convention, a conference involving representatives from British India, Tibet, and China. The primary goal of the British was to formalize Tibet's independence and create a buffer state between India and China by clarifying borders near British Indian frontiers. Although Tibet accepted these terms aligned with British interests,

China rejected them. Despite explicit directives against it from London, Sir Henry McMahon went on to sign a secret bilateral declaration with the Tibetans, which was later endorsed retrospectively by London. This led to the establishment of the McMahon Line redefining Indo-Tibetan boundaries including the Tawang tract region within Britain's territorial claims (Gupta K. , 1978).

The McMahon Line has been a longstanding point of contention in territorial disputes, especially between India and China. Since India's independence and the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the line has remained a significant source of tension. China's refusal to acknowledge the line has resulted in border conflicts, including the Sino-Indian War of 1962, and on-going tensions along the Line of Actual Control. The dispute primarily revolves around historical claims and differing interpretations of agreements from colonial times. The lasting impact of British colonial diplomacy is evident in present-day border disputes, reflecting an imperialist approach that often ignored cultural, ethnic, and historical factors in drawing boundaries. These arbitrary divisions have contributed to prolonged disputes and regional instability in post-colonial states. The continued disagreement over the McMahon Line underscores how colonial legacies continue to influence modern state borders particularly as it remains disputed territory between two nuclear-armed powers.

Tibet's historical status has been a key factor in the border dispute between India and China. Before Communist China, Tibet had some autonomy and was seen internationally as an independent entity regarding its interactions with British India. The 1914 Shimla Convention aimed to define Tibet's boundaries, drawing the McMahon Line to demarcate the border with British India. However, China disputed Tibet's ability to make international agreements independently and claimed sovereignty over the region. This laid the groundwork for modern border disputes with India. After India's independence in 1947, tensions increased following China's annexation of Tibet in 1950 (Sperling, 2004) and subsequent claims on areas historically linked with Tibet governed by India. The unresolved status of Tibet has fuelled recurring diplomatic and military confrontations along the Sino-Indian border.

### **1962 Sino Indian War:**

The Sino-Indian Border War of 1962 resulted from longstanding territorial disputes and China's strategic interests. Prior to the conflict, unresolved issues regarding border demarcation in the Himalayan Mountain ranges led to escalating tensions as both China and India asserted claims over the Aksai Chin area. The war began with coordinated Chinese attacks on 20 October 1962

(Stauffer, 1967), taking Indian forces by surprise. Exploiting the absence of clear boundaries and difficult terrain advantage, China swiftly advanced into Indian-controlled areas, capturing territory and pushing back the Indian army. After a brief but intense battle, a ceasefire was declared in November 1962 (Stauffer, 1967) with lasting impacts on regional geopolitics and international perception of China's foreign policy.

The aftermath of the Sino-Indian Border War of 1962 ushered in decades of distrust and strained relations between India and China. The war left a lasting impact on India, leading to a complete overhaul of its military and defence strategies in response to the perceived humiliation and preparedness gaps. The defeat also sparked a significant shift in India's foreign policy, turning it closer to the Soviet Union during the Cold War era (Garver, 2003). On the diplomatic front, bilateral relations between India and China remained frosty, with both nations viewing each other with suspicion. The border remained heavily militarized, and numerous rounds of talks over the ensuing years did little to resolve the fundamental disagreements over territorial claims. The war's impact was long-lasting and set the tone for the complex relationship that persists today, with border disputes continuing to flare up periodically and ongoing efforts through diplomatic channels to manage and mitigate tensions. The legacy of 1962 also continues to influence public perception and policy decisions in both countries regarding national security and regional influence (Pandalai, 2012).

The 1962 Sino-Indian War highlighted a clear disparity in military strategies and outcomes between the two nations. China's military strategy was characterised by careful preparation and surprise, exploiting both the element of timing and the challenging Himalayan terrain. Well-coordinated attacks on several fronts overwhelmed the unprepared and under-equipped Indian Army (Cholley & Suhas, 2021). The Chinese forces also benefited from superior logistics and infrastructure, which aided their rapid mobilisation and sustainment of forces in the harsh conditions. India, on the other hand, had not anticipated the scale or intent of China's military actions. The Indian military was caught off-guard, lacking acclimatisation to high-altitude warfare, proper equipment, and adequate reinforcements. India's defence strategy had not envisioned a full-scale conflict, and as such, its border defences were neither sufficiently fortified nor manned to resist the sudden and well-executed Chinese incursions. The outcome of the war was decisively in China's favour, resulting in territorial gains, particularly in the Aksai Chin region which remains under Chinese control. The war also prompted India to re-evaluate its military posture, leading to significant investments in defence, the restructuring of the armed forces, and an increased focus on developing border infrastructure. Strategically,

India began to forge closer ties with other nations to counterbalance China's regional power, while China demonstrated its capability and resolve in border disputes, setting a precedent for its approach to territorial issues. The conflict ultimately served as a wake-up call for India, profoundly shaping its strategic priorities and defence policies for years to come.

### **China's claim over "South Tibet":**

China's claim over "South Tibet" refers to the area largely corresponding to the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh (The Hindu, 2024). From Beijing's perspective, this territory has always been considered as a part of Tibet historically, and so, it is under Chinese control (Jaiswal, 2024). China bases its claims on historical maps and treaties, asserting that "South Tibet" was wrongfully incorporated into Indian Territory post-independence, without acknowledging the region's historical ties to Tibet. Tibetan culture plays a prominent role in reinforcing China's claims. The region in question shares linguistic, religious, and cultural affinities with the Tibet Autonomous Region. China sees the preservation of Tibetan culture within its borders as inherent to its sovereignty claims, framing the issue as one of territorial integrity and national unity. Moreover, by depicting the area as an inseparable part of Tibet, China leverages cultural continuity to substantiate its historical territorial claims, even though the local population in the contested region primarily identifies with India and has been under Indian administration since the mid-20th century (The Hindu, 2024). Regional developments have also influenced China's stance on "South Tibet." The rising strategic importance of the border areas, given their proximity to what China perceives to be geopolitical competitors and rivals has made the assertion of territorial claims more pronounced. The development of infrastructure and military capabilities in these borderlands is seen as part of a broader strategy by Beijing to assert its presence and claim in the area, named in Chinese discourse as "Zangnan" (Rahman, 2021). Additionally, the modern dynamics of resource access and strategic dominance in Asia have heightened the significance of border areas. Arunachal Pradesh's hydroelectric potential, natural resources, and role as a buffer have driven China's insistence on claiming the region.

**Fig 2: Five Fingers Policy**

**Source:** southasiajournal.net

**Note:** Picture highlights the countries that are part of China's Five finger policy

### **India's claim and contemporary stance:**

India's historical and legal claims to Arunachal Pradesh are rooted in the administrative framework established during the British colonial era and continued after independence. The McMahon Line, which originated from the 1914 Shimla Convention, forms the legal basis of India's claim over the region. Despite challenges regarding its status, India has maintained control and governance within Arunachal Pradesh since gaining independence in 1947. This sustained administration supports New Delhi's sovereignty claim, reinforced by the participation of Arunachal Pradesh residents in Indian democratic processes. India asserts rights to the territory based on historical precedent and uninterrupted governance a position further strengthened by active involvement of local population in national affairs affirming their identity as Indian citizens (Garver, 2003).

In the Indian legal framework, the McMahon Line is recognized as the official and legitimate eastern boundary of the nation, particularly with respect to the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. India upholds this boundary based on a 1914 convention between British India and Tibet. This convention's boundary line is accepted by India under a principle that maintains colonial-established boundaries post-independence. Although not clearly demarcated in some

places, India has continuously administered the area as part of its sovereign territory, underlining its legal stance. The status of the McMahon Line has been affirmed through measures such as inclusion in electoral processes, development programs, and infrastructure projects within Indian administration systems (Garver, 2003). Despite consistent challenges from China which does not recognise it, India's strong adherence to this border is reflected in domestic legislation, official maps, and administrative practice while treating it as non-negotiable in international diplomacy and negotiations.

Arunachal Pradesh is strategically important for India, serving as a buffer against geopolitical tensions in the north-eastern region. Its representation in the national parliament and participation in democratic processes reinforce national sovereignty. The state is rich in natural resources such as forests, minerals, and potential for hydropower, contributing to India's energy security. Its biodiversity and cultural heritage support local economies through tourism. Arunachal Pradesh also plays a key role in India's Act East Policy by fostering economic ties with Southeast Asia due to its geographical location (Kundu, 2023). The state's diverse ethnic composition enhances the heterogeneous nature of Indian society and contributes to regional development and integration.

### **Recent escalations and incidents:**

The recent history of the India-China border has been marked by a series of incursions and standoffs, underlining the volatile nature of the bilateral relationship. In 2013, there was a significant three-week confrontation when Chinese forces reportedly encroached into Indian Territory in the Daulat Beg Oldi area, near the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh (Pabby, 2020). This incident prompted diplomatic efforts to resolve the tension, resulting in the mutual withdrawal of troops. In 2017, the tensions escalated during the Doklam standoff, which lasted over two months. The dispute began when China attempted to extend a road in the Doklam plateau, an area claimed by both China and Bhutan, an Indian ally (Dutta, 2017). India, perceiving a threat to its strategic interests, especially to the 'Chicken's Neck' Siliguri Corridor, intervened on Bhutan's behalf, leading to a face-off and the mobilization of troops from both sides. Eventually, following sustained diplomatic engagements, both countries agreed to disengage. The situation along the LAC worsened in 2020 in the Galwan Valley region of Eastern Ladakh, leading to a violent hand-to-hand clash between the troops on June 15, 2020 (Subramanian, 2023). This incident, the deadliest in decades, resulted in casualties on both sides. The Galwan clash marked a significant low in relations and triggered a large-scale

military standoff, with both nations deploying tens of thousands of troops along the LAC, coupled with heavy military equipment and infrastructure development. Subsequently, multiple rounds of military and diplomatic talks were held to de-escalate the situation. Partial disengagement occurred in some sectors, such as Pangong Tso, but tensions remained high in other areas. The border issue continues to loom over Sino-Indian relations, with frequent reports of further minor incursions, as both countries grapple with the complex process of negotiating peace and restoring status quo ante while asserting their respective territorial claims.

**Fig 3: DBO**



**Source:** [www.business-standard.com](http://www.business-standard.com)

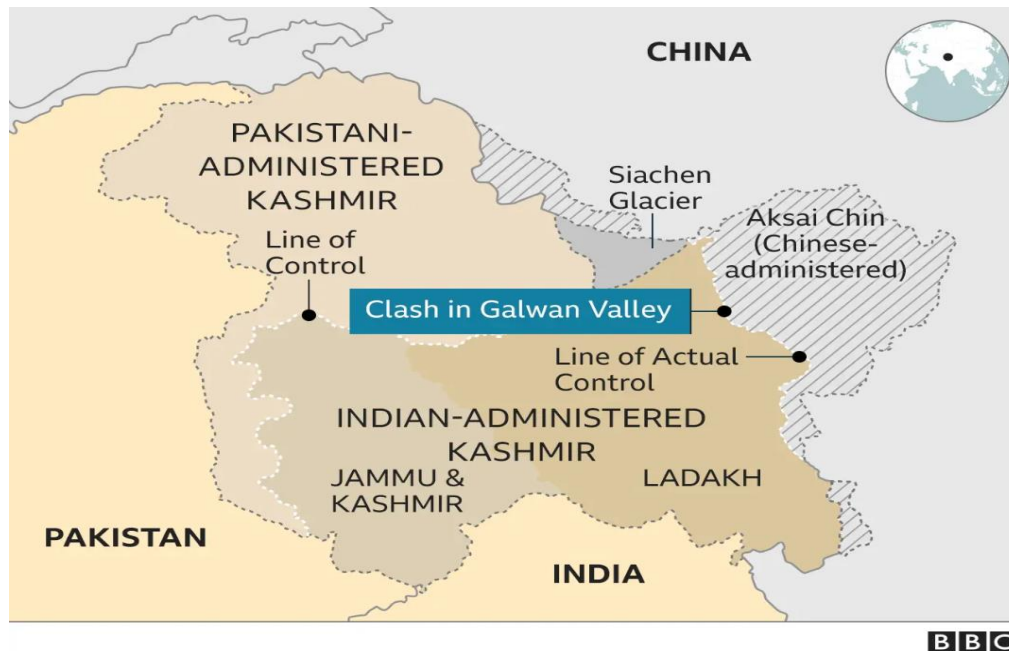
**Note:** Picture highlights the location of 2013 Daulat Beg Oldi clash

**Fig 4: Doklam**



**Source:** [warontherocks.com](http://warontherocks.com)

**Note:** Picture highlights the location of 2017 Doklam standoffs

**Fig 5: Galwan Stand Off**

**Source:** [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com)

**Note:** Picture highlights the location of 2020 Galwan standoff

Recent standoffs between India and China along their contested border have exhibited discernible patterns of escalation, often triggered by infrastructure developments, patrolling activities, and strategic manoeuvres by either side. The underlying trigger is the lack of consensus on the Line of Actual Control, leading to competing claims and overlapping perceptions of the de facto border. The 2013 Daulat Beg Oldi and 2017 Doklam standoffs were chiefly precipitated by construction activities perceived as altering the status quo. In the first, China's encroachment into territory India regarded as its own led to a military face-off. In Doklam, the extension of a Chinese road was seen by India as a threat to its strategic interests and its ally Bhutan, resulting in a direct but non-lethal military confrontation. The 2020 Galwan Valley clash represented a significant escalation in the pattern, as decades of relative peace were broken by physical combat leading to fatalities. The triggers for this deadly confrontation were multifaceted, including road construction by India aimed at improving connectivity in Ladakh and the Chinese military build-up and obstruction of normal patrolling patterns by Indian troops. These developments were compounded by broader geopolitical tensions, including India's abrogation of Article 370 concerning Kashmir and Ladakh, and China's regional assertiveness. Each standoff was characterized by initial military build-ups followed by prolonged negotiations diplomatic and military to de-escalate. The escalations have also exhibited cyclical patterns, where periods of apparent disengagement are followed by renewed

tensions, often due to disagreements on disengagement terms, patrolling rights, and further infrastructure development. These patterns underscore deep-rooted strategic mistrust and competitive strategic objective striving, with both countries seeking to reinforce their claims and maintain tactical advantages along the LAC.

### **Strategic importance of Arunachal Pradesh:**

Geopolitically, Arunachal Pradesh serves as a crucial buffer zone between India and China, two major Asian powers with intricate historical ties. The state acts as a physical barrier against potential northern threats and is essential to India's concept of national sovereignty. Its proximity to China's sensitive Tibetan Autonomous Region adds further strategic significance, making it a focal point in the relations between China and India. For China, gaining control over Arunachal Pradesh would represent a significant strategic advantage and strengthen its hold on the disputed border region with India. In military terms, the rugged terrain and challenging climate of Arunachal Pradesh provide natural defensive advantages but also pose logistical challenges for military operations. Control over this area ensures an advantageous position for military observation and monitoring while providing the capacity to fortify frontiers against any encroachments (ET online, 2022). Recognising its importance, India has been enhancing its military infrastructure, improving road connectivity, deploying advanced weaponry and troops in the region alongside maintaining vigilant outposts along the border ready to counter any security threats.

From a security standpoint, the vast and uninhabited areas in the state serve as both a defence barrier and a potential route for unauthorized movements, making it necessary to carefully manage the borders. The presence of insurgent groups adds complexity to the local geopolitical situation, with India claiming that these groups receive support from external actors aiming to destabilize the region. Therefore, maintaining internal security within Arunachal Pradesh is just as important as protecting its borders (Haokio, 2003). In addition to being a point of military contention and strategic discussions, Arunachal Pradesh also holds significant value in terms of resources and biodiversity. It contains extensive forest cover and is believed to have rich mineral deposits along with substantial hydroelectric power generation potential crucial for current and future economic development efforts (Taro, 2021). Finally, given its geographical location bordering Southeast Asian countries such as Myanmar's Chin State further emphasises its importance in advancing India's 'Act East' policy by strengthening economic and strategic ties with neighbouring regions overall.

**International relations and diplomacy:**

The conflict regarding Arunachal Pradesh holds great importance for the international relations of India and China, influencing their diplomatic activities and strategic positions. This contentious border situation reflects larger geopolitical developments and is a measure of the vibrancy of Asian politics. The disagreement heightens tensions between the two countries and impacts their interactions with other nations and global institutions.

**Impact on India and China's international relations**

India's assertion of control over Arunachal Pradesh is based on historical grounds, specifically the McMahon Line from the colonial era. China does not acknowledge this claim and instead asserts ownership of a significant portion of the region as part of Tibet. This fundamental disagreement has resulted in repeated clashes, increased military preparedness, and an overall atmosphere of distrust. Both countries are compelled to pursue conflicting foreign policy approaches as they seek allies and strategic partnerships while maintaining their respective territorial claims. India has responded to the dispute by shifting towards developing diverse relationships with other major powers, including establishing the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue along with the United States, Japan, and Australia. Through these alliances, India aims to strengthen connections that can serve as strategic counterbalances and provide security assurances against perceived Chinese threats. The protection of Arunachal Pradesh's sovereignty is closely tied to national pride within Indian domestic politics thereby shaping India's foreign policy priorities. China faces complexity in its foreign policy efforts due to its aspirations for being seen as a responsible global leader conflicting with assertive territorial ambitions which unsettle neighbouring nations; the confrontation concerning Arunachal Pradesh undermines China's efforts to project itself as a non-threatening rising power thus influencing its international relations (Pandalai, 2012). Furthermore, the rivalry between both nations impacts their involvement in multilateral forums such as G20, BRICS, and climate change negotiations where they showcase cooperation on worldwide issues. However, the border conflict brings underlying tension creating potential obstacles for collective action on common concerns

**Role of other countries**

The Sino-Indian rivalry has significant implications for global powers, attracting their attention. The United States aims to use its relationship with India as part of its broader strategy to uphold an international order based on rules, often in conflict with China's objectives.

American backing for India through defence sales, joint exercises, and political support reflects how the dispute indirectly influences U.S policy in the Indo-Pacific region. Similarly, Russia is a key defence partner for India while also maintaining ties with China, displaying a complex balancing act. European powers are increasingly involved in the dynamics of the region by advocating for maritime freedoms and providing support for infrastructural development that resists excessive dependence on China's Belt and Road Initiative. Additionally, they stress their commitment to promoting stability in this area through multilateral cooperation initiatives. China's increasing influence in the region has also drawn the attention of other neighbouring countries. Japan, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia are engaged in territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea. These countries also have shared worries over China's coercive behaviour and territorial ambitions. This has led to closer cooperation and alignment with India in order to balance China's influence in the region (Moore, 2010).

### **International organizations**

The Sino-Indian relationship has long been characterized by a complex and asymmetric rivalry, with both nations vying for regional influence and seeking to assert their respective positions in the international order (Pardesi , 2021). The Indian Ocean has emerged as a key arena for this competition, with both China and India actively expanding their naval capabilities in the region (Bastos, 2014). China's growing maritime power in the Indian Ocean poses a significant challenge to India's long-standing geostrategic advantage in the region (Upadhyaya, 2017). India's traditional role as the "net security provider" for the Indian Ocean is increasingly under threat as China's economic and diplomatic influence in the region continues to expand (Upadhyaya, 2017).

- **United Nations Organization** - The role of the United Nations Organization (UNO) has been critical in mediating the complexities of the Sino-Indian relationship. The UNO has provided a neutral platform for dialogue and negotiation, allowing both countries to address their concerns and grievances (Hayat, Sajjad, & Shahzad, 2020) (Ji, 2016) (Upadhyaya, 2017). For example, the UN has played a crucial role in facilitating discussions on maritime resource exploitation and the management of shared waterways in the Indian Ocean (Hayat, Sajjad, & Shahzad, 2020). Additionally, the UN's peacekeeping missions in the region have helped to maintain stability and prevent the escalation of tensions between China and India (Hayat, Sajjad, & Shahzad, 2020) (Ji, 2016). However, the UN's efforts have not been without challenges

(Bouchard & Crumplin, 2010). Tensions between the two countries have remained high, and the UN's ability to broker lasting solutions has been limited (Hayat, Sajjad, & Shahzad, 2020). Moreover, the growing influence of other global powers, such as the United States, in the Indian Ocean region has added an additional layer of complexity to the Sino-Indian relationship, further complicating the UN's role as a mediator (Hayat, Sajjad, & Shahzad, 2020) (Bouchard & Crumplin, 2010). Despite these challenges, the United Nations Organization remains a critical institution in the management of the Sino-Indian complexities. Its continued engagement and efforts to promote dialogue and cooperation between the two countries will be essential in shaping the future of the Indian Ocean region and the broader global order.

- **Shanghai Cooperation Organization** - The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has emerged as a significant multilateral body in China's foreign policy calculus, particularly in the context of its relationship with India. The organization, initially established as the "Shanghai Five" to address security confidence-building measures and military force reductions in border areas, has evolved to encompass a broader agenda of regional cooperation on security and peace-building. The "Shanghai Spirit," which embodies the group's core value of mutually beneficial cooperation, has been instrumental in shaping China's approach to the region. India's "Look East" policy, which aimed to reconnect and reach out to its civilizational neighbours in Southeast Asia, has also been a crucial factor in its engagement with the SCO. India has sought to build strong bilateral ties, expand its role in regional organizations, and forge comprehensive economic partnerships, all while maintaining a delicate balance in its relationship with China (Naidu, 2004) (Jayshwal, 2017). The SCO has provided a platform for China and India to engage on regional security and economic integration, even as the two countries navigate the complexities of their longstanding border disputes and strategic competition. The SCO's evolution from the "Shanghai Five" to include Uzbekistan in 2001 marked a significant moment, as it was the first time China had been involved in a multilateral military organization outside the auspices of the United Nations (Pantucci & Lain, 2017). This development underscores the organization's growing importance in China's regional security architecture, as well as its potential implications for the Sino-Indian relationship. As India and China continue to manage their asymmetric rivalry, the SCO offers a venue for dialogue, confidence-building, and the pursuit of mutually beneficial cooperation. The organization's role in

the region's strategic landscape will likely continue to evolve, with implications for the Sino-Indian complexities that have shaped the geopolitics of the broader Asian continent.

- **Association of Southeast Asian Nations** - The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has played a unique and pivotal role in navigating the intricate dynamics between China and India, two of the most influential powers in the Asia-Pacific region (Egberink & Putten, 2010). ASEAN's position as a central hub for regional cooperation has become increasingly significant as the Sino-Indian relationship has grown more complex and multifaceted (Hiep & Tram, 2021). One of the key aspects of ASEAN's role in this context is its ability to serve as a neutral platform for dialogue and negotiation. While individual ASEAN member states may have varying degrees of alignment with China or India, the collective organization has maintained a delicate balance, providing a space for the two giants to engage and address their concerns (Egberink & Putten, 2010). This neutrality has been crucial in mitigating the potential for escalation of tensions between the two countries, which could have far-reaching implications for the regional security landscape (Hiep & Tram, 2021). Furthermore, ASEAN's emphasis on multilateralism and its participation in various regional forums, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asia Summit, have provided opportunities for India and China to engage in a broader, more inclusive dialogue (Naidu, 2004). Beyond its role as a diplomatic facilitator, ASEAN has also been active in promoting economic integration and cooperation among its member states, as well as with its external partners, including both China and India. This economic engagement has the potential to foster greater interdependence and reduce the risk of conflict, as countries become more invested in maintaining stable and mutually beneficial relationships (Naidu, 2004). However, it is important to acknowledge that ASEAN's influence is not without its limitations (Jaishankar, 2020). As the strategic rivalry between the great powers in Asia, particularly China and the United States, has intensified, ASEAN's ability to maintain unity and cohesion has been challenged (Egberink & Putten, 2010). The Association has had to navigate a delicate balancing act, ensuring that it does not become a battleground for the competing interests of the major powers. Despite these challenges, ASEAN's role in the Sino-Indian complexities remains crucial. As the region continues to evolve, ASEAN's capacity to promote

dialogue, facilitate cooperation, and maintain regional stability will be essential in shaping the future of the Asia-Pacific.

- **World Trade Organization and Economic entities** - The relationship between India and China has been marked by a delicate balance, where both countries have sought to manage their asymmetric rivalry in a way that avoids overt conflict while pursuing their respective national interests (Pardesi , 2021). This complex dynamic has been shaped by various factors, including the role of international economic institutions and the broader geopolitical landscape. The World Trade Organization (WTO) has been a significant player in the economic relationship between India and China. As the largest trading partners, the two countries have a vested interest in maintaining a stable and predictable trade environment (Jayshwal, 2017). However, the WTO has also been a forum for the two countries to navigate their differences, particularly on issues such as market access and tariffs (Pardesi , 2021). China's growing economic influence has also been a source of concern for India, which has sought to counter Beijing's regional and global ambitions. India's "Look East" policy, for example, has been an attempt to strengthen its economic and strategic ties with countries in Southeast Asia, in part as a counterbalance to China's growing presence in the region (Jayshwal, 2017). At the same time, India has sought to leverage its own economic clout and its position as a rising power to shape the international order in a way that is more favourable to its interests. The country has worked to build strong bilateral ties with major powers, including the United States, while also playing a more active role in regional and global economic institutions (Jayshwal, 2017). The complexities of the Sino-Indian relationship are further compounded by the geopolitical dynamics of the broader region. The Tibet factor, for instance, has been a persistent source of tension between the two countries, with India's support for the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile seen as a thorn in China's side (Pardesi , 2021). Overall, the role of the World Trade Organization and other economic entities in the Sino-Indian relationship is a complex and multifaceted one. While these institutions have provided a framework for economic cooperation, they have also been an arena for the two countries to navigate their strategic and political differences (Li, Lewin, Witt, & Välikangas, 2021).
- **World Bank and International Monetary Fund** - In the post-World War II era, the Bretton Woods institutions, namely the World Bank and the International Monetary

Fund (IMF), were established with the intention of promoting global economic stability and development (Mikesell, 2000). However, as the world economy has evolved over the past several decades, the original roles and functions of these institutions have undergone significant changes (Bird & Joyce, 2001). The World Bank, initially envisioned as a key player in post-war reconstruction, found its role diminished as the Marshall Plan took over the reconstruction efforts in Europe (Mikesell, 2000). Similarly, the IMF's initial mandate of promoting the convertibility of major currencies was largely supplanted by the European Payments Union, which facilitated the interconvertibility of European currencies, though not their convertibility into the US dollar (Mikesell, 2000). As a result, both the World Bank and IMF shifted their focus towards providing financial assistance and advice to developing countries, rather than to the developed economies. These institutional adaptations have had significant implications for the Sino-Indian complexities, as the two emerging economic giants have navigated their own development trajectories amidst the changing global economic landscape. The growing influence of China and India, coupled with the evolving role of the Bretton Woods institutions, has created new challenges and opportunities for the management of economic relations between the two countries. For instance, the World Bank and IMF have played a crucial role in providing financial support and policy guidance to both China and India, particularly during periods of economic reforms and transitions (Fioretos & Heldt, 2019). However, the differing development models and priorities of the two countries have at times led to tensions and diverging interests with respect to the policies and practices of these institutions. Moreover, the rise of alternative multilateral institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank, can be seen as a reflection of the growing desire among emerging economies, including China and India, to have a greater voice and influence in global economic governance. As the world economy continues to evolve, the role of the World Bank and IMF in navigating the Sino-Indian complexities will likely become increasingly nuanced and complex. Balancing the competing interests and development priorities of the two countries, while adapting to the changing global economic landscape, will be a significant challenge for these institutions in the years to come.

- **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation** – The intricate relationship between China and India, two of the most influential nations in the Asia-Pacific region,

has long been a subject of intense scrutiny and analysis. As the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) continues to evolve, its role in shaping the dynamics between these two giants has become increasingly crucial. Bilateral trade agreements and connectivity initiatives have emerged as a prominent feature of China's engagement with South Asia. The Belt and Road Initiative, which includes the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, has been a key driver of this trend, as China seeks to expand its economic and strategic influence in the region (Anwar & Aivi, 2021). Simultaneously, India's "Look East" policy has aimed to strengthen ties with its neighbours in Southeast Asia, building on the shared cultural and historical linkages (Jayshwal, 2017). However, India's participation in initiatives like the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) has been marked by hesitation, stemming from concerns over trade deficits, overlapping regional cooperation mechanisms, security issues, and territorial disputes (Marchang, 2021). Despite these challenges, the potential benefits of regional integration through the SAARC platform are significant (Sawhney & Kumar, 2008). India as largest member country, it faces a critical window of opportunity to rejuvenate cooperation and address long-standing constraints. Doing so could not only strengthen India's strategic position in the region but also contribute to the broader goal of promoting peace, stability, and economic development in South Asia.

- **BRICS** – The relationship between China and India, the two most populous nations in the world, has long been marked by a complex web of geopolitical, economic, and cultural dynamics that have profoundly shaped the broader geopolitical landscape of the Asia-Pacific region (Garcia, 2013). As the two countries have sought to navigate their asymmetric rivalry and assert their regional and global influence, the role of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) grouping has become increasingly significant. The BRICS, an acronym for the nations of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, emerged in the early 21st century as a collaborative platform for these major developing economies to challenge the dominance of the traditional Western-led global governance structures (Li & Pogodin, 2020). From an Indian perspective, the BRICS has provided a valuable counterweight to the perceived hegemony of the United States and its allies (Iqbal, Yadav, & Rahman, 2023). India's engagement with the BRICS has been driven by its desire to diversify its diplomatic and economic partnerships, reduce its reliance on Western powers, and assert its own

regional and global influence (Iqbal, Yadav, & Rahman, 2023). However, the BRICS' ability to function as a cohesive and effective coalition has been complicated by the underlying tensions and rivalries between its member states, particularly the Sino-Indian dynamic. China, as the most powerful and assertive member of the BRICS, has sought to leverage the grouping to advance its own geostrategic interests, which at times have clashed with India's regional ambitions. This complex interplay between the Sino-Indian relationship and the BRICS framework has raised important questions about the future of the BRICS and its ability to navigate the shifting geopolitical landscape of the 21st century. As the BRICS continues to evolve, the extent to which it can serve as a platform for meaningful cooperation and collective action among its diverse members, particularly in the face of the Sino-Indian complexities, will be a crucial determinant of its long-term relevance and impact.

### **Prospects and proposals for resolution:**

The Arunachal Pradesh dispute remains a significant point of contention between India and China. Despite numerous rounds of bilateral talks and various confidence-building measures initiated over the years, a long-term solution has remained elusive. To foster peace and stability, it is imperative to examine prospective diplomatic solutions, confidence-building measures, and the role of international law in resolving this border dispute.

### **Examination of possible diplomatic solutions**

Diplomatic solutions to the Arunachal Pradesh dispute have typically involved bilateral dialogue, with each side presenting historical claims and contemporary strategic interests. The Special Representatives mechanism, instituted by both countries, has become a primary forum for engaging in such dialogues; however, there is potential for more creative diplomatic channels and proposals to be explored:

- **Mutual concession and the 'Package Deal':** Both India and China could consider revisiting the 'Package Deal' concept initially proposed by China in the 1980s. This approach involves conceding to each other's claims in different sectors - India accepting China's claims in Aksai Chin in return for China recognizing Indian sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh, with mutually agreed modifications (Singh, 2021).
- **Framework based on the 'One Belt One Road' initiative:** China and India could explore an agreement that integrates Arunachal Pradesh into China's Belt and Road

Initiative, with an understanding that this does not imply a change in sovereignty but rather opens the region for bilateral economic development.

- **Long-term lease arrangement:** India and China could negotiate a long-term lease agreement that acknowledges India's administration of Arunachal Pradesh while accommodating China's symbolic claims. This would be a pragmatic compromise focusing on maintaining peace and developing the region economically.

### **Confidence-building measures**

Confidence-building measures are essential components in diffusing tension, especially along disputed borders. Without prejudice to their respective positions on sovereignty, both countries could implement a range of CBMs:

- **Border Personnel Meeting Points:** Increasing the number and frequency of meetings at designated border personnel meeting points can help in the immediate management of border incidents and foster a sense of camaraderie among troops on the ground.
- **Joint Development Projects:** Engaging in joint development efforts in Arunachal Pradesh could encourage a shift from a purely security-centric view of the region to one based on mutual economic gain.
- **Cultural Exchanges:** Promoting civil society interactions and cultural exchange programs can foster people-to-people ties and reduce.

### **Role of International law in resolving border disputes**

International law creates a framework for peacefully settling territorial disputes, emphasizing the importance of respecting established borders and state sovereignty. The UN Charter and conventions like the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties outline mechanisms for conflict resolution without resorting to force. In addressing the Arunachal Pradesh situation, India and China could explore international legal precedents and frameworks to reach a mutually agreeable solution through third-party mediation or arbitration by an impartial panel applying international law principles including historical treaties, customary laws, and past judgments. The Permanent Court of Arbitration offers a platform for states to resolve disputes through arbitration and conciliation with both parties consenting to arbitration proceedings while abiding by the court's decision as per international law. Additionally, the International Court of Justice provides advisory opinions and binding judgments on international legal issues referred by the UN; however, its involvement in boundary disputes between India and China

would necessitate consent from both countries. It is crucial to recognize that although international law offers paths towards peaceful resolutions; its effectiveness relies on India's and China's willingness to cooperate within this context considering their respective sovereignties and political stances.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the border conflict between Arunachal Pradesh presents an intricate problem in India-China relations, carrying significant implications for regional security and international diplomacy. While numerous negotiation rounds and confidence-building measures have been implemented, finding a lasting solution necessitates new diplomatic approaches and openness to exploring unconventional resolution methods. The utilization of international law and third-party arbitration offers a structured but challenging path towards achieving a peaceful settlement, underscoring the importance of respecting sovereignty and international norms. Confidence-building measures can notably reduce tensions, creating an atmosphere conducive to productive dialogue and collaboration. Going forward, it is essential for both countries to actively cultivate cooperative relationships not only bilaterally but also within broader multilateral forums. International organizations and global powers should endorse a balanced approach that acknowledges the geopolitical sensitivities of the dispute while promoting conflict resolution strategies rooted in diplomacy and legal principles. Recommendations for the future encompass sustained diplomatic endeavours, increased engagement in regional frameworks, and greater focus on economic cooperation that could facilitate comprehensive resolution efforts. As India's stature continues to rise globally alongside China's ascent as well-recognized actors on the world stage; their ability to amiably resolve this dispute will attest to their maturity as global entities committed to upholding regional peace and stability.

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