

China's aggressive tactics: A comparative analysis of the South China Sea Conflict and the Sino-India Border Dispute in Eastern Ladakh

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Abstract

Conflicts, confrontations, and disputes have long been a part of international relations which often includes skirmishes and their consequences being the reality of states unable to find peaceful resolutions to their disputes to which the entire world pays attention. The complex nature of international relations lies more in the differences and contradictions in foreign policy. These materialize as security dilemmas, which arise due to high stakes, mutual distrust, and policy overreactions. Such a security dilemma persists between China and its neighboring states and the rest of the world due to its aggressive, coercive, and adversarial tactics and ambitions. This paper assesses the situation in the South China Sea and Eastern Ladakh following the Chinese occupation of several areas across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in 2020 and China's muscle stretching in South China's Sea. The expansionist policy of China led to an incident in Galwan River Valley and the South China Sea, resulting in the deaths of both sides. This study outlines the course of events and do a comparative analysis of conflict occurred in Eastern Ladakh and South China Sea and its impact, where negotiations were partially successful and seemed deadlocked in achieving the status quo. This paper seeks to examine the larger border game, challenges for future political diplomacy, and recommendations for the future course of action.

Key words: Border dispute, South China Sea, China, Expansionist policy, Eastern Ladakh, LAC

Introduction

China's aggressive tactics in territorial disputes have been a common occurrence across multiple geopolitical regions. What is puzzling is that whenever China faces an unfavorable situation on its various frontiers, there appears to be a synchrony of action. China has been flexing its muscles in the South China Sea while also involving itself in a military confrontation with India at the LAC in Eastern Ladakh. These nations have conflicts involving disputes over

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land, sea, and resources. China claims almost the entire South China Sea with its so-called ‘nine-dash line’, which overlaps the economic zones of other claimants, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam (BBC, 2023). The clashes have occurred in Eastern Ladakh since 2019, ranging from the northmost area of Ladakh to the south, where India has clearly shown its LAC and taken steps to define it. China’s assertiveness in the South China Sea has steadily increased, resulting in heightened tensions with Southeast Asian claimant states, particularly the Philippines, at the Second Thomas Shoal in the Spratly Islands. China’s sweeping claims of sovereignty over the sea and the sea’s estimated 11 billion barrels of untapped oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas have antagonized competing claimants, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam (Ebrahimkhani, 2021). At the same time, the expansionist policy of China in eastern Ladakh led to an incident in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that resulted in the deaths of both India and China, which is recorded as the first causality since 1975.

Geopolitical Context:

The South China Sea

The South China Sea is a marginal sea in the Pacific Ocean that spans 3.5 million square kilometers, making it one of the world’s largest seas situated in the south of China. For a long time, the South China Sea has been an “apple of discord” in China’s ties with the United States and other countries, including Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan for many years (Womack, 2011). In the South China Sea, each of these nations has conflicting territorial claims. Under the nationalist Kuomintang party (KMT), China uses an eleven-dash line on a map to demarcate its territorial claims in the South China Sea (Ghosh, 2024). Most of the region is covered by the claim, which includes the Pratas Islands, the Macclesfield Bank, and the Paracel and Spratly Islands, which China regained from Japan after World War II. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), led by Mao Zedong, removed the portion encompassing the Gulf of Tonkin in 1953, marking the boundary to nine dashes (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024). Till this day, China continues to use the nine-dash line as the historical basis for its territorial claims in the South China Sea.

China claims almost the entire sea, while other nations like Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan have overlapping claims over different islands and seas. The U.S. has shown support for countries like the Philippines and Vietnam in their disputes with

China. The South China Sea dispute has become a global issue now as the Philippines sued China at the Permanent Court of Arbitration on July 12, 2016, and the Philippines won its case (Campbell & Salidjanova, 2016).

The question that now has to be answered is why China and small countries have different claims in the South China Sea, and why is China aggressive towards its claim in the South China Sea? The answer is that the South China Sea is an appropriate maritime choke point for global trade due to its advantageous position. Approximately one-third of global maritime traffic travels through the South China Sea. It is a vital commerce route that links major Asian countries with markets in Europe, Africa, and the Americas, transporting commodities worth about \$3 trillion a year (Turker, 2023). Roughly 80 percent of China's oil imports and 30 percent of the world's global maritime trade in goods transit through the South China Sea (China Power, 2017). Furthermore, the South China Sea is also thought to have substantial natural gas and oil deposits, with estimates of about 11 billion barrels of oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, which have antagonized competing claimants Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam (The Center for Preventive Action, 2024). All these regional countries started claiming islands and different zones in the South China Sea, such as the Spratly Islands, which have abundant natural resources and fishing grounds, as early as the 1970s. As early as the 1970s, countries began to claim islands and various zones in the South China Sea, such as the Spratly Islands, which possess rich natural resources and fishing areas. The region's fisheries are estimated to provide livelihoods for around 3.7 million people (Sato, Prétat, Mallory, Chen, & Poling, 2023). Therefore, control over the South China Sea would not only enhance China's economic and military power, but its strategic location also allows for control over major shipping lanes, further increasing its geopolitical significance. The geopolitical complexities of the South China Sea have been further exacerbated by China's assertive territorial claims, particularly through the creation of artificial islands and military buildup. The South China Sea's geopolitical significance influences the direction of international relations in the twenty-first century as it is a vital trading route and an important area where economic, political, and security concerns converge. The South China Sea continues to be a flashpoint as countries move across this geopolitical chessboard.

Eastern Ladakh:

India and China are partly connected and separated by the crest line of the Himalaya, ranging from the north to the east of India. The Sino India border is divided into three sectors: the western sector, the eastern sector, and the middle sector. In the western sector, India shares around 2,176 km, in the middle sector, India shares around 554 km, and in the eastern sector, India shares around 1,326 km (Chakarborty, 2020). India and China share a 4,056 km border. The India-China border is divided into three sectors: eastern, middle, and western. In the western sector, the border between India and China is between the Ladakh region and the Xin Jiang province of China. The dispute border in the western sector is over the Johnson Line proposed by the British government in the 1860s. The Johnson Line extends up to the Kunlun Mountains and marks Aksai Chin under the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. In 1899, the foreign secretary of the British Indian government, Henry Mac Mohan, again came up with the proposal of the Mac Mohan Line, which would divide Aksai China between India and China (Talukdar, 2015). However, India accepts the Johnson Line as a national border with China in the western sector, whereas China, on the other hand, accepts the McMohan Line as a border line with India, as shown in the picture below. However, there is no common perception of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). According to India, the LAC is 3488 km, while China claims the LAC is only 2000 km. It is also a fact that most of the dissent on the border is reported from the western sector in the eastern Ladakh region. In the western sector, there are six friction points, where frequent incidents were reported: Depsang, Galwan area, PP-15 area, Gogra area, northern bank of Pangong Tso, and Spangur area. The only exception was the Galwan incident reported in May 2020, where twenty Indian soldiers lost their lives. This was the first clash that occurred between the two civilizations after 45 years.

India and China, both countries, share a long history of civilization and cultural exchange. Both countries have had a history of crossing difficult terrain for trade and cultural exchange. Buddhism has also reached China through the Himalayas. The border issue emerged only after the establishment of two newly formed states. Since then, the relationship between the two countries has started deteriorating with the emergence of border issues in the late 1950s. The British government left behind a conflicting and complex claim of border between India and China, and until today, both nations are in a perpetual state of mutual distrust and hostility. Both countries had stepped into the new modern state almost together. China declared the creation of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949, and India achieved its independence on August 15, 1947. Soon after the newly established state, India was striving to consolidate its position as a newly sovereign state and was also struggling with her own internal

problems as a consequence of partition. While China was following the expansionist policy and deeply involved in Tibet affairs, India was striving to consolidate its position as a newly sovereign state and was also struggling with her own internal problems as a consequence of partition. India, after becoming independent, accepted Johnson Line in the western sector and claimed Aksai Chin as its own; moreover, it accepted McMohan Line in the eastern sector of the northeast frontier between Tibet and India as the decision of the Shimla Conference in 1914. China, on the other hand, kept silent on India's acceptance of the Johnson Line as a border between India and Tibet for a few years after the establishment of the PRC. However, the PRC has shown his resentment of the decision of the Shimla conference by constructing a motorable highway that links Tibet with Xinjiang across Aksai Chin, of which 179 kilometers pass through the Aksai Chin region of Ladakh between 1956 and 1957, which was published in China's People's Daily on September 2, 1957. Moreover, the PRC released a map soon after the signing of the Panchsheel agreement, showing a large part of Indian territory as an integral part of China following a continued intrusion of China into Indian territory from 1954 to 1958. By 1958, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) had intruded into the Ladakh region and occupied Khurnak Fort. The border dispute was raised between the two countries for the first time when a letter was received from Zhou En-lai, the premier of the PRC, on January 23, 1959, to Prime Minister Nehru claiming that around 40,000 square miles of Indian territory is a part of China (Pardesi, 2016). A series of protest notes were exchanged between Prime Minister Nehru and Chinese Premier Zhou En-lai regarding the border area and the construction of the road from April 19 to 25, 1960. However, no common agreement could be reached; rather, it led to prolonged negotiations, which led to the Sino-India War in 1962. Since then, border issues have become a main concern in the Sino-India relationship. Despite having several rounds of border talks since 1981, there has been no mutual perception of a border between India and China to date.

It is also a fact that most of the dissent on the border is reported from the western sector in the eastern Ladakh region (Bhonsale, 2018). In the western sector, there are six friction points where frequent incidents were reported: Depsang, Galwan area, PP-15 area, Gogra area, northern bank of Pangong Tso, and Spangur area. The only exception was the Galwan incident reported in May 2020, where twenty Indian soldiers lost their lives. This was the first clash to occur at the border after 45 years.

Aggressive Tactics in the South China Sea Conflict

Military Build-up and Island Reclamation

To assert their respective claims to the South China Sea, several countries, including China and the United States, have kept a military presence in the region. China has reclaimed a large area of land, including man-made islands in the Paracel and Spratly Islands. These islands are equipped with military infrastructure, which includes runways, ports, and missile systems, which has further raised alarm among the neighboring countries and the US about China's growing assertiveness and military actions in the South China Sea. In regards to China's territorial claims that overlap with those of Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan, China maintained its assertive stance over its "Nine-Dash Line" claims. In recent years, China has been making more of an effort to reclaim land in the South China Sea by either expanding the existing islands or creating a new one. China has also constructed ports, military installations, and airstrips, particularly in the Paracel and Spratly Islands, where it has twenty and seven outposts, respectively (Prabhakar, 2024). China has militarized Woody Island by deploying fighter jets, cruise missiles, and a radar system. By making these outposts more militarized, China is able to exert more authority and influence over the South China Sea, which successfully prevents other countries from challenging its claims. China's growing assertiveness has led to incidents of maritime confrontation in the South China Sea.

Coercive Diplomacy

In order to strengthen its territorial claims and alter the course of other claimant nations, China has resorted to coercive techniques. China regularly conducts air and naval patrols in the South China Sea to strengthen its military presence in the region. Other claimant governments are intimidated by this display of might, which keeps them away from going against China's interests. To strengthen its claims to the region, the Philippines intentionally grounded a ship in the West Philippine Sea in 1999. Since then, the Philippine Coast Guard has conducted monthly resupply missions to its military presence on board known as the BRP Sierra Madre. In 2023, Chinese Coast Guard warships started using risky methods to block Philippine resupply operations, leading to heightened clashes. The frequency of collisions has increased, and the Chinese Coast Guard has used a military-grade laser and repeatedly fired water cannons against Philippine ships. When a Chinese ship and a Philippine supply ship collided on June 17, 2024, close to the Second Thomas Shoal, each side held the other accountable for the accident. The Philippines has consolidated its alliances with other Indo-Pacific neighbours

amidst the escalation of hostilities with China. Marcos has signed deals to increase base access, joint exercise training, and weapons transfers with the United States. In March 2024, U.S. Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin confirmed that the United States' Mutual Defence Treaty with the Philippines extended to both countries' armed forces, public vessels, and aircraft in the South China Sea. In the meantime, Japan has increased its influence in the maritime security space in recent years by selling military equipment to Vietnam and the Philippines.

Military Presence and Exercises in South China Sea:

While the United States is doing its first joint military exercises with the Philippines, Japan, and Australia, China has been conducting military “combat patrols” in the disputed South China Sea (The Economic Times, 2024). On April 7, 2024, Beijing announced a naval drill a day after defense chiefs from the U.S., Australia, Japan, and the Philippines decided that the Philippines would conduct joint drills in the same location on the same day. The joint drills were intended to ensure that all countries are free to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows (Aljazeera, 2024). China's coast guard also exchanged allegations with the Philippines on April 6, 2024. China's coast guard claimed that they had handled a problem near Iroquois Reef which lies about 128 nautical miles (237 kilometres) from the Philippines' island of Palawan, and within its 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as defined under international law on April 4, 2024, when many Philippine ships were involved in illegal activities (The Economic Times, 2024). Spokesperson Gan Yu stated that under the guise of protecting fishing, Philippine government ships have illegally violated and provoked, organized media to intentionally incite and mislead, continuing to undermine stability in the South China Sea (France 24, 2024). Satellite images from 2018 reveal that several auxiliary and logistical boats, as well as PLAN destroyers, frigates, and other combat ships, as well as CCG patrol vessels, frequently make their way to the manmade islands. The satellite image provides a limited picture of naval and coast guard deployments at specific times. However, the frequency with which PLAN and CCG ships have been seen in images of Fiery Cross, Mischief, and Subi Reefs since the beginning of 2017 indicates how strong China's presence at the island bases has grown over the year (Cordesman, Burke, & Molot, 2019). Furthermore, China's aggressiveness in the South China Sea has caused neighboring nations to worry about China's intentions and its potential impact on regional security and stability. Additionally, it highlights the ongoing militarization of the South China Sea by China, which has been a point of contention in international relations.

Aggressive Tactics in Eastern Ladakh

Border Incursions and Standoffs:

There are six major friction points in Eastern Ladakh, i.e., Depsang Plain, Panggong Tso, Hot Spring (PP-15 Area), Gogra Post (PP 17A), and Galwan Area (PP. 14). Depsang Plain, a 972-sq-km stretch under India Sub Sector North (SSN) at 16,400 feet, is strategically and geographically important to both India and China. The SSN is like a sandwich between Aksai Chin and Siachen. The strategic importance of the Depsang area lies in its geographical location. The Depsang area is strategically significant to both India and China due to its flat terrain. The Depsang is a flat terrain as compared to the other friction points in eastern Ladakh, which provide land access to Central Asia and Pakistan. Moreover, the Depsang Plain also provides access to Aksai Chin, where China has built a highway (G219) connecting Tibet and Xin Jiang province (Blasko, 2024). Furthermore, China's proximity to Daulat Beg Oldie makes the Depsang area more strategically important to China because of Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldie (DS-DBO) a 255-kilometer-long road connects Leh to Daulat Beg Oldie and also a military base with a highest airstrip in the world. Moreover, the DS-DBO road also connects to Sasoma through Saser La Pass, which is the base of Siachen Glacier. DS-DBO is the only connectivity we have to Daulat Beg Oldie and Siachen Glacier. The DS-DBO is 255 km long and runs close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC); therefore, many sensitive places can be connected through this road. Depsang Plain also provides land access to Central Asia, especially Pakistan, through the Karakoram Pass, as the Depsang area is between the Saltoro Ridge on the Pakistani border and the Saser Ridge close to the Chinese border. Therefore, Depsang may serve as a location for physical military collusion between Pakistan and China. Ladakh is a sparsely populated region, and the only way to endorse our territorial claim is by regularly patrolling and developing the villages near the border. However, the clash of 2013 and 2017 in the Depsang area resulted in China's incursion of 18 kilometers into Indian territory in proximity to the base of Daulat Beg Oldie (Philip, 2020). The presence of PLA at the key point in the Depsang area, 18 kilometers inside the India claim of LAC, known as the Bottleneck/Y junction is a threat to the whole Depsang Plain (Singh, 2020). Moreover, PLA has blocked Indian Army patrols from the Y junction area to PP11, PP12, PP12A, and PP 13. The line claimed by China is around 1.5 km from the Indian military camp in Burtse, as shown in the picture. India, on the other hand, has also blocked the Chinese patrol beyond Y Junction. In the 2015 clash, China intruded until their claim line eventually retreated; however, India, on the other hand, never forced them to reach their traditional claim line or

their traditional patrolling point so as to avoid clashes between the two armies. Despite the fact that PLA has stopped Indian Army from patrolling beyond Y junction, Indian Army can still patrol further by foot through two different routes: the north route and the south route. The north route, following the Raki Nala, reaches towards PP10 and the southern route reaches till PP13 along Jiwan Nala (Philip, 2020). There is a large tract of land between the Y junction and the line claimed by India. Blocking the Indian Army's access to this tract of land, which is around 972 square kilometres is a matter of concern (Dutta, & Sen, 2020). As China stated that India patrol never had access to area beyond Y junction and has no claim over the area beyond Y junction (Civildaily, 2022).

Threat to the Depsang Plain means the DS-DBO road is threatened, which connects Daulat Beg Oldie to Karakoram Pass to Leh. It also threatens the Saser La Pass base of Siachen Glacier. The loss of territory in this sector will undermine India's position in border talks and strategic future moreover, it will also threaten the Indian army base at Burtse, the DS-DBO road, and the Siachen glacier, and we must not overlook the strategic importance of the Saltoro Ridge border to Pakistan. India must take a firm stand and challenge China's territorial hegemony in the eastern sector of Ladakh. Furthermore, China also constructed a 20-kilometer road along the Jiwan Nala in 2010 and a 15-kilometer road along the Raki Nala from JAK II to GR 626516 in 2011 in the Depsang Plain (Philip, 2020).

The confrontation in the Galwan Valley has changed the status quo of the entire area completely. The varying Chinese claims over the Galwan area have changed the status quo of the entire region. In 1959, Zhou Enlai, Premier of China, claimed that the map released in 1956 is the correct alignment, which shows the entire Galwan Valley as a part of India. However, in 1960, before the Sino-India war, China released a map claiming sovereignty over the whole Galwan area. Several maps released by China afterwards show the LAC run beyond the confluence of the Galwan River and Shayok River, up to which armies of both nations have been patrolling till 2019. The Chinese claim over the territory and unilaterally altering the LAC according to their convenience have been seen throughout. China raises its objection to India developing its border area by constructing the DS-DBO road. When China saw that India continued to construct roads that would give the center (Delhi) an upper hand over their claimed territory and mobilize the army in times of crisis, China altered the LAC and intruded into the territory claimed by India as their own. Moreover, on June 19, the Chinese Foreign Minister claimed in a statement that the entire region of the Galwan Valley as an integral part of China

lies on the Chinese side of LAC (Krishnan, 2021). India views the military standoffs that occurred on the night of June 15, 2020, in Galwan differently. India views the clash as a measure China has taken in response to the DS-DBO road, plus the revocation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. There is no different perception of different LAC along the Galwan River; therefore, it is a clear indication that the Galwan Clash was an attempt by the PRC to dominate this area, which threatened our only connectivity, the DS-DBO road. Moreover, China's changing alignment of LAC according to its convenience is also against the Border Peace Treaty and Tranquillity Agreement (BPTA) signed between the two countries in 1993. Though after several high level military and diplomatic talks, Chinese troops have stepped back 2.5 kilometers each. However, a buffer zone of around 5 kilometers was created between the two countries. Which obstructs the Indian Army from getting access to PP14.

Hot Spring (PP-15 Area) and Gogra Post (PP 17A) came into the limelight when Chinese troops intruded into Indian Territory in May 2020. PP-15 was one of the major confrontations that occurred between the two nations. PP15 and PP 17A are both close to the Chang Chenmo River in the Galwan Sub-Sector region of eastern Ladakh. Both areas lie close to Kongka La, which is only 4-5 km from Hot Spring. China marked Konka La as the border between India and China. According to China, the north of Konka La is the boundary between Xinjiang and Ladakh, and the south of Konka La is the border between Tibet and Ladakh. These two are the areas where both India and China agreed on the LAC.

Pangong is one of the most contentious sectors in eastern Ladakh. The standoff that occurred in May 2020 at Pangong Tso was unforgettable following the violent clash between the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Indian Soldiers. The standoff of May 2020 resulted in the encroachment of PLA into the Indian territory between Finger 8 and the eastern side of Finger 4. Furthermore, PLA has built posts between Finger 8 and Finger 4, blocking the access of those areas to Indian soldiers (Bhaumik, 2022). Before the army clashed at Pangong Tso in 2020, Indian Army patrols went up to Finger 8, whereas the PLA patrolled up to the eastern side of Finger 4. Since the standoff, both countries have held around 15 rounds of military talks to resolve the standoff at the friction point, which reached the disengagement deal in January and February 2021. As a result, the post that was built between Finger 8 and 4 by the PLA was moved back to their original base at Khurnak. After the 1962 war, China expanded its control to the Sirijap Complex, keeping its base at Khurnak Fort, as shown in the picture below.



Source: (Gupta, 2020).

In the western sector, India holds its control up to the finger 4; however, India claims the line of actual control (LAC) runs through finger 8. On the other hand, China claims the LAC runs through finger 2, as shown in the picture below.



Source: (Tawari, 2020).

China is intruding into Ladakh from every side, making Pangong a focal point because of the water. It is easier for China to travel by water than to cross passes. Therefore, there is a major development occurring at the border with China.

Chinese incursions are part of a wider strategy of throwing India off balance in a territory whose geo-strategic importance is only set to increase as the government expands its air and road infrastructure, allowing its troops to patrol hitherto inaccessible frontier regions. The government of China had made clear to India its intentions to structurally alter power in eastern Ladakh. As a part of its global and regional hegemonic drive, China is making incursions into several regions of the world, including South Asia. Chinese incursions are part of a wider strategy of throwing India off balance in a territory whose geo-strategic importance is only set to increase as the government expands its air and road infrastructure, allowing its troops to patrol hitherto inaccessible frontier regions. The round of talks has been partially

successful in disengaging the forces temporarily; however, 60,000 troops on each border is evidence of the absence of genuine progress over the last 4 years.

Military Buildup and Infrastructure Development:

China's three main arteries-oil pipelines, internet, electrical connectivity, and more recently, well-off village in border areas, have all contributed to the growth and protection of China's border areas. China has budgeted over \$30 billion for infrastructure development in Tibet between 2021 and 2025 under the current 14th Five Year Plan (Business Today, 2021). In order to facilitate the quick movement of soldiers and military hardware, China has constructed a vast network of highways throughout Eastern Ladakh. One of the major initiatives is the G219 highway extension, which passes across the disputed Aksai Chin area to link Tibet and Xinjiang. The whole road network in Tibet was just 7,300 km in 1959, but by early 2022, it had grown to 1,20,000 km, with an average daily expansion of 5 km. Tibet will have more than 1,20,000 km of roads and more than 1300 km of expressways by 2025 (Deccan Herald, 2022). The proposal calls for the renovation of national roads G-219 and G-318, which both pass close to the border between China and India and run parallel to Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh (Singh, 2024). These highways strengthen China's strategic position by facilitating quick mobilization and logistical assistance. China's airlift capabilities are enhanced by the development of airstrips and helipads, such as those located near Pangong Lake. India is becoming increasingly concerned about China's building efforts in Eastern Ladakh from a strategic standpoint (Singh, 2024). Along the Line of Actual Control, observation stations and fortified bunkers have been established, which will give China an upper hand in monitoring Indian activity. These stations improve China's capacity to maintain military operations in eastern Ladakh.

The Xiaokang villages initiative, launched by the CCP in Tibet, is intended for the construction of 628 modern villages along the Tibet border with India. The village is expected to shelter 62,000 people and is being built throughout 21 border counties in the Himalayas with 62,160 homes (Singh, 2024). The main purpose of these settlements is to strengthen China's control over border areas by serving as a buffer zone between China and India. China has historically used civilian resources, including farmers, fishermen, herders, and nomadic tribes, to further its military goal and to gain access to grazing pastures in order to expand its territorial claims. China has also started 5G network capabilities in border

villages, providing each smart home in the most distant border locations with high-speed data access. In addition to giving the locals access to cutting edge amenities, this would improve the towns' capacity for military monitoring. Fast communication networks make it easier for Chinese military forces to coordinate and maintain command over one another, which guarantees clear communication in the difficult terrain of the area. The upgraded infrastructure of China facilitates its military presence, and quicker mobilization poses a threat to India.

Conclusion:

This paper has argued that China takes aggressive approaches with its boundary disagreements and maritime disputes with India and in the South China Sea, respectively. China is engaged in provocative actions both in the South China Sea and in Eastern Ladakh. A comparative analysis of China's tactics in the South China Sea and Eastern Ladakh highlights the consistent use of aggressive strategies to assert territorial claims and enhance strategic positioning. While the specific contexts and regional dynamics differ, the underlying principles of military assertion, diplomatic moves, and economic interests drive China's actions in both regions. In both the South China Sea and Eastern Ladakh, China's physical tactics are intended to change the status quo and strengthen its territorial claims. China's methodical approach to territory expansion and sovereignty assertion is shown in its deployment of physical methods in the South China Sea and Eastern Ladakh. Beijing has encroached in the South China Sea by deploying its strong coast guard, militias, and armed fishing fleet, supported by the potent PLA Navy (PLAN). Consequently, these actions have systematically forced Malaysian and Indonesian maritime forces to reposition themselves and forced Philippine and Vietnamese marine forces out of some areas of China's EEZs (Burgess, 2020). Furthermore, China has also expand its anti-access, area denial (A2/AD) capability, which poses a threat to the United States, its allies, and its partners in the South China Sea, by stationing PLAN and PLA Air Force (PLAAF) units, and deploying surface-to-air (SAM) and surface-to-surface missiles in the Spratly and Paracel Islands and by building artificial islands. China can now possibly obstruct oil and gas development due to its maritime expansion efforts, and its anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities pose a challenge to US Navy, Air Force operations as well as maritime and aviation traffic. China's assertive in South China Sea might be a threat to military operations in a very critical area, resource exploitation, and commercial flows (Burgess, 2020). China's use of physical tactics in the South China Sea and Eastern Ladakh reflects a calculated

approach to territorial expansion and assertion of sovereignty. These actions have significant implications for regional security, international law, and global geopolitical dynamics. As China continues to pursue its strategic objectives, the potential for further tensions and conflicts remains a critical concern for regional stability and international peace. Moreover, ‘Chinese Dream’ launched by China in 2012 embarked to achieve political, economic, cultural, and military goals by 2049. China’s covert actions of beautifying its sovereignty in the Eastern Ladakh region and building massive structures in the South China Sea have therefore led to a noticeable increase in Chinese aggression.

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