

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

June 2020



“Let us all work for the Greatness of India.”
- The Mother

Year II

Issue 3

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SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella

Common name: Indian blanket, Blanket flower, Fire-wheels

Year II

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A Declaration

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

— The Mother

(Collected works of the Mother, Vol. 13, pp. 124-25)

INDIA-CHINA BORDER FACE-OFF: WHAT IT MEANS FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS

The face-off between India and China in the western sector along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh has been one of the most prolonged face-offs between the two countries in recent times. While the face-off and intermittent negotiations to pull back troops from both sides have occurred throughout the months of May and June, the June 15th night clash resulting in the death of 20 Indian soldiers and an unspecified number of Chinese soldiers had come as a breaking point, giving the stand-off a diplomatic and political turn.

From being a minor face-off and unintended clash in a local border domain, the conflict has acquired wider geopolitical-economic dimensions with a global resonance. At a time when China is at the peak of its global power and emerging victorious regardless of numerous political disputes with other countries, it is being made to realize that India will neither give in to nor lightly dismiss any form of overbearing, egoistic, bullying tactics.

As we will highlight in the later part of this article, in the current scenario, ***the issue here is no longer about whom the contentious piece of territory belongs to, but about upholding the country's national dignity and sending out the strongest possible message regarding India's decisive and firm vision about upholding national dignity in a decisive, balanced and clear manner.***

With the resolution of this face-off and China's eventual capitulation, India-China relations have been set on a new path based on India as an equally strong power. ***While China's illusions***

of its own greatness have been dented, India has also realized that its own strength and courage, and not weakness, can be the only sound basis for a vibrant and strong bilateral relationship. This will have improved implications not only for India's future relations with China, but also sent a message to India's other neighbours.

CHANGED EQUATIONS ALONG THE LAC

The current dispute can be traced to purely minor and localized clashes and hand-to-hand brawls between the two countries' soldiers. These have resulted from prolonged months-long face-offs mainly at Pangong Tso lake, Hot Springs, Galwan Valley and Depsang Plains in Ladakh and in Naku La in Sikkim. While the movement of Chinese troops has been on their side of the LAC, the build-up of troops and artillery close to India's claim line, in some places going within the line ***due to differing perceptions of LAC***, has been the source of the current stand-off.

This has arisen because of the fact that the ***LAC¹ has neither been delineated on a map nor demarcated on the ground, with both sides having their own perceptions and claims, and nor have any official maps been exchanged except in the Middle sector*** (bordering Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh). ***This makes LAC the world's largest un-demarcated border. The lack of demarcation, combined with the conditions of difficult mountainous terrain, also means that accidental cross-overs and face-offs remain a high probability.***

This is especially the case when both sides have improved

¹ The concept of LAC, based on actual control of the disputed areas (rather than historical evidence or claims), was first accepted by India only in 1993, and has been regarded as the status-quo.

access and connectivity to the LAC, with India's connectivity and infrastructure drastically improving after 2014. As even PM Modi had attempted to explain – and as should be very much self-evident – that as we keep improving our infrastructure along the LAC, the forces will patrol more and closer to LAC and, hence, frequent run-ins with the Chinese cannot possibly be avoided. And, after 2014, there has been a massive realization of Indian infrastructural capabilities along the LAC, with ***more frequent face-offs not being “a sign of weakness, or due to deteriorating relations, but indicate greater ability on the part of Indian Army to monitor, detect and respond to Chinese PLA patrolling”*** (Dhasmana, 2020).

Indeed, prior to 2013, there were very few face-offs as Indian capabilities were not commensurate with the Chinese infrastructural building. ***On September 6th, 2013, the then Defence Minister of India, A.K. Antony, admitted in the Parliament that, “compared to India, in the area of building infrastructure, China is much advanced” and that after Independence, for many years, India did not develop the border and did not construct any roads or airfields in the border areas, considering that undeveloped border was safer than a developed border.*** In the later sections of this article, during the satellite image analysis of Galwan area face-off, this point will be further reinforced as it will be seen that till 2014, while China had built massive infrastructure in Galwan since 1999, India had only two huts and no roads.

In 2014, this policy sharply changed. One of the early decisions of the Modi government was to issue a 'general

approval’ in July 2014 – meaning that the requirement of prior government approval and other bureaucratic clearances/permissions were disbanded – for the creation of road network by Border Roads Organisation (BRO) within 100 km of aerial distance from LAC, and, extending this ‘general approval’ for all other border infrastructure besides roads (Dhasmana, 2020). The government also changed the policy of Ministry of Defence granting approvals for border infrastructure and delegated powers to the DG, BRO and further delegated these powers to officers up to chief engineer level in BRO (Dhasmana, 2020).

As per data, “between 2008 and 2017, the formation cutting of about 230 km of roads were done annually, but this has now been increased to 470 km per year between 2017 and 2020 along the India-China border. Similarly, between 2008 and 2017, the speed of surfacing of roads was 170 km per year, but it has been increased to 380 km per year between 2017 and 2020. Only one tunnel was constructed between 2008 and 2014, while six tunnels have been made during 2014 to 2020. The construction of about 19 tunnels is also under progress. During 2008 to 2014, 7270 metres long bridges were built, while 14,450 metres of bridges were built between 2014 and 2020. In the period between 2008 and 2014, roads of 3,610 km were constructed on the border while 4,764 kms of roads were built between 2014 and 2020” (Dhasmana, 2020).

These improved access and capabilities naturally mean that face-offs and minor skirmishes with the Chinese have been increasing every year with regularity. Fast incursions into each other’s territories are also common.

Intrusive patrols and incursions across the LAC do not, however, amount, by any stretch of imagination, to occupation of territory. Unnecessary politicization and sensationalization by the media have led to often exaggerated representation of news in this regard.

CONTOURS OF THE PRESENT DISPUTE

Having understood the explanatory background regarding why such incursions happen and will continue to happen in future, we will now come to the contours of the present situation. Movement of Chinese troops and heavy vehicles first reportedly began to occur after mid-April on the Chinese side. Initially, the movement occurred from Chumar and Demchok in the southern part up to Chushul and Pangong Tso in the central part, and, finally up to Galwan river valley and Depsang Plains in the northern parts of eastern Ladakh. These movements were dismissed by India as routine military springtime exercises by the Chinese Army (Shukla, 2020). Indeed, China has been steadily building its border infrastructure along these points along the LAC since the last few years, having completed a road last year near Gogra (Hot Springs area), bringing the nearest permanent Chinese position within 1.8 kms of the LAC (Ruser 2020).

And, since 2013, there have been regular, albeit peaceful face-offs with China, as even India rapidly ramps up its own border infrastructure, thereby bringing the troops from both sides into closer regular proximity with each other on the undemarcated border.

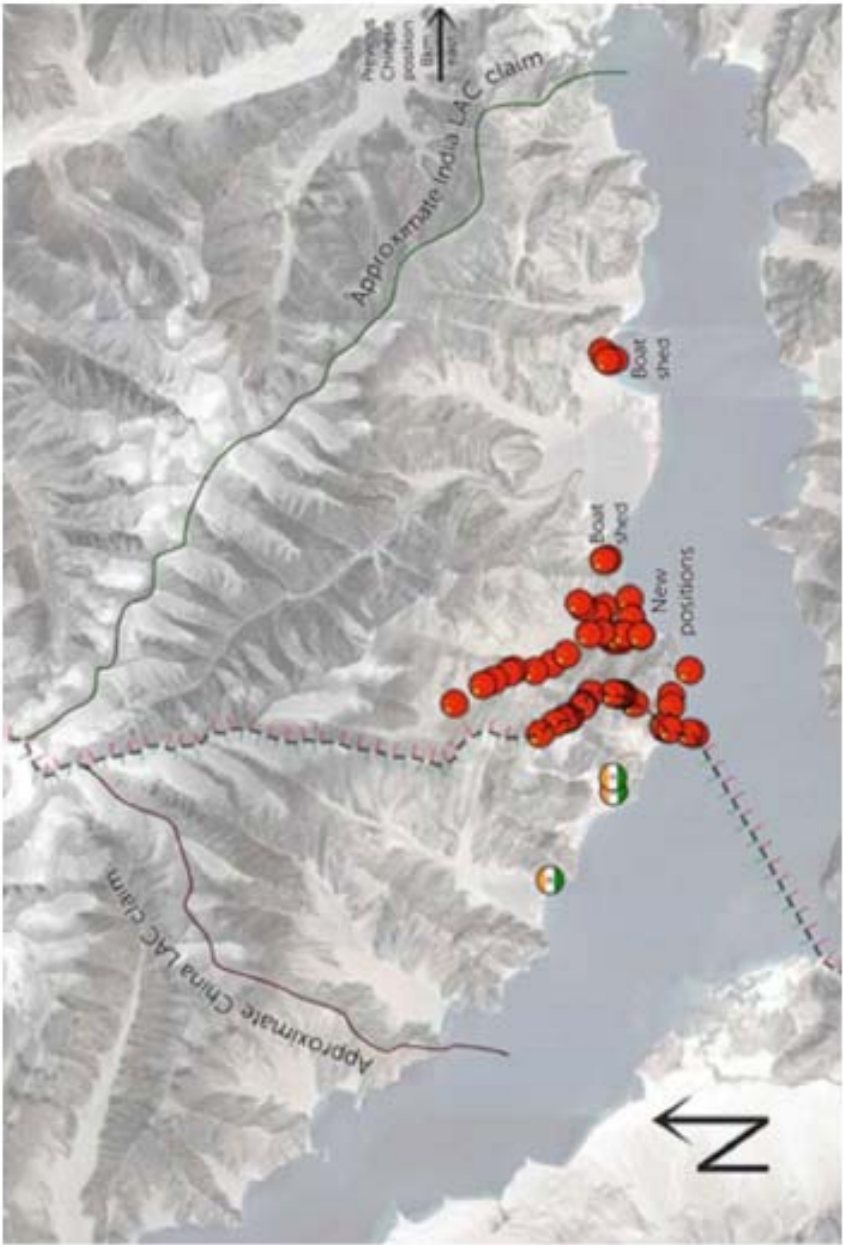
However, this continuous military build-up by China, alongside deployment of artillery guns began to concern India

after middle of May and after some clashes had occurred. The **first physical clash occurred on May 5th** at the Galwan valley and Hot Springs area involving fistfights and stone-pelting between the two sides. These areas continued to witness heavy troop and artillery build-up well into late June. Yet, this build-up along the LAC and temporary intrusions by the Chinese cannot be equated with occupation at any point of time.

In Hot Springs or Gogra area, in particular, India built a forward base in a record 2 months in an area that used to be patrolled in the past by Chinese and used for incursions into Indian side. Rather than viewing the face-off negatively, there should be emphasis on Indian proactiveness which has effectively checked further Chinese intrusions (Mitra, 2020).

On May 9th, there was a clash between Chinese and Indian soldiers at the Sikkim border, resulting from a purely localized physical fight wherein a few punches were thrown. This was resolved quickly, with the Indian Army commenting that it is common for such localized fights to break out between units especially as the border is not demarcated. The Chinese side issued no comment at all on this incident.

On May 17th, the troops again clashed at the Pangong Tso lake area at Finger 5 in Ladakh, wherein Chinese troops reportedly made aggressive ingress into unoccupied northern bank of the lake. This enabled them to dominate the 'Finger area' of Pangong Tso. 'Fingers' refer to natural mountainous tops near Pangong Tso up to which Indian and Chinese troops carry out patrolling in the area.



Source: Ruser (2020) for Pangong Tso lake

After the Chinese ingress here, India has been confined to Finger 4. While India claims that LAC lies at Finger 8 and controls only up to Finger 4, China claims that LAC lies at Finger 2 and controls only up to Finger 8. Subsequent face-offs at Pangong Tso reportedly confined India to Finger 2. ***The most significant and palpable Chinese build-up had been at Pangong Tso lake area***, throughout the months of May and June. In July, after disengagement, Pangong Tso was the last area from which Chinese reluctantly began to disengage.



Source: Gupta (2020)

In the past, while India has had permanent positions within the disputed area (between Fingers 3 and 4) of the Pangong Tso lake and expanded its presence during 2015-16, China began to swiftly build on its already strong presence in the area since May 2020, becoming the dominating majority. China undertook significant positioning and construction between Fingers 4 and 5, including, according to satellite data, “around 500 structures, fortified trenches and a new boatshed over 20 kilometres further forward than previously. More structures appear to be under construction...53 different forward positions have been built, including 19 that sit exactly on the ridgeline separating Indian and Chinese patrols” (Ruser 2020).

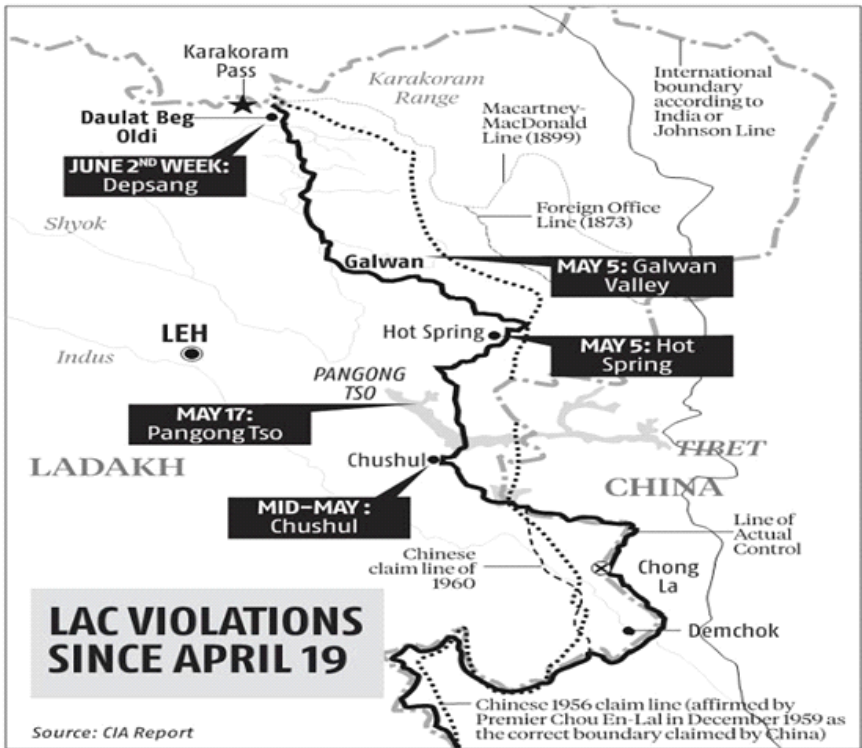
However, this Chinese build-up and patrols cannot, yet again, be equated in any way with control or occupation of the disputed territory. ***In the Pangong Tso area, Chinese had an enormous lead in infrastructure building till 2014. In 1999, China had constructed a 24 km track from the international border to Finger 4. By 2004, this track was converted into a two-lane road. By 2006, the Chinese built a formidable naval base at the foot of Finger 6 and by 2018, an artillery fort was built at the base of Finger 8 (Mitra, 2020).***

In contrast, India, till 2014, had just two small huts at Finger 4 and not even a proper road. Further, by “October 2014, India had significantly upgraded these two huts into a full-fledged base, and built an asphalted two-lane highway. This one Indian construction stopped Chinese patrols west of Finger 4 while successive Chinese constructions had vastly reduced the freedom of patrol that India had east of Finger 4, which has finally come to an end in 2020 with the latest constructions...All of this begs the question what territory has been ceded, and what has been irretrievably lost in 2020, when

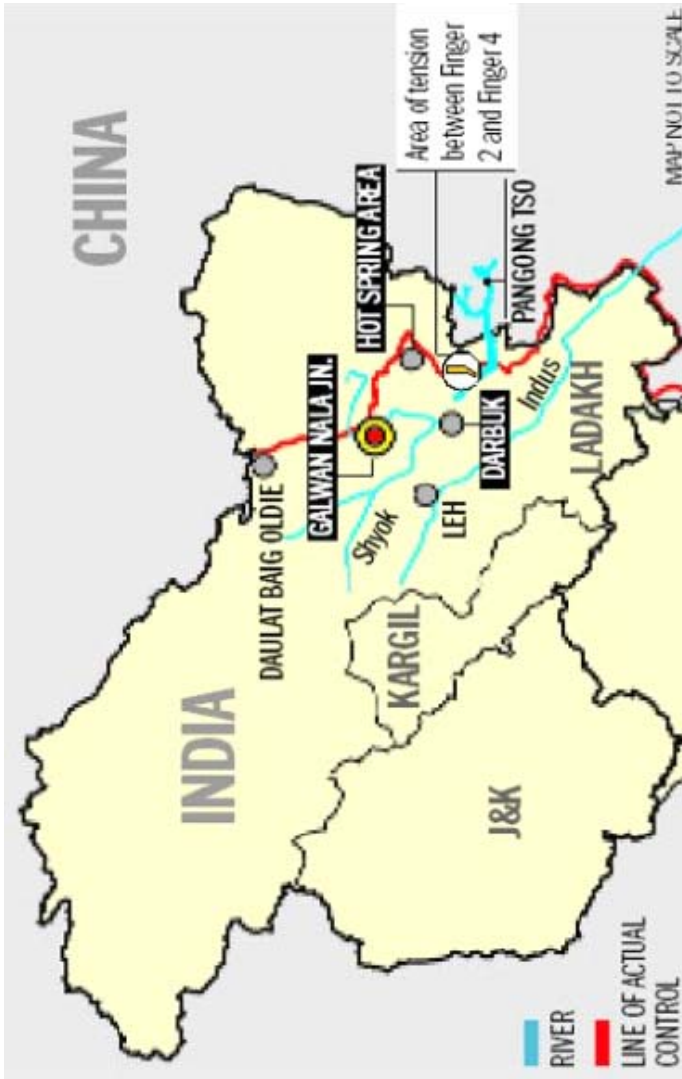
for 21 years, the Chinese have been building infrastructure right up to Finger 4?" (Mitra, 2020).

This shows that many aspects of the present controversy have been politicized to target the Indian government by deliberate obfuscation of facts and through much that is fake news, with wild theories claiming that China had occupied Indian territory.

Following the June 15th clash between the two countries' soldiers, the Chinese have fortified their positions along the Depsang Plains in the northern part as well, closer to and along **India's Darbuk–Shyok–DBO Road (DSDBO) that was completed recently and which has allegedly been objected to by China.**



Simultaneously, there has been a reported Chinese military build-up in the Galwan river valley area in eastern Ladakh, in Hot Springs area, and, in Patrolling points 14 and 15 as well. All these areas of clash – except the initial Sikkim clash – have seen semi-permanent build-up by the Chinese and Indian sides.

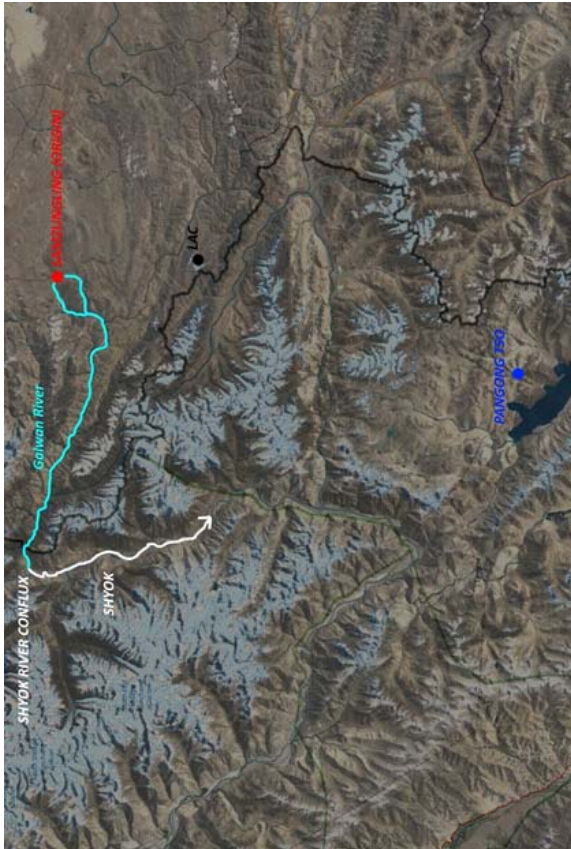


Source: India.com

Subsequent to these clashes, there has been a military build-up – including of air-force – by both sides through the months of May and June. The height of the current stand-off occurred during the June 15th clash between soldiers of both the sides.

THE JUNE 15TH CLASH

It was at the height of these face-offs that the June 15th night clash occurred at the Galwan valley region between Indian and Chinese soldiers. The clash occurred at Patrolling Point 14 (PP-14) at the Galwan valley area. PP-14 is just ahead of the confluence of Shyok-Galwan rivers, close to the LAC.



Source: Mitra (2020)

The clash ended up martyring 20 Indian soldiers of the 16th Bihar Regiment. An unspecified number of Chinese soldiers – including the Chinese Commanding Officer – also died. While the cause of the clash can only be constructed out of the reported sequence of events that evening, from major accounts the clash appears to have been an accidental occurrence which rapidly set things downhill.

The clash began in the evening of June 15th. It initially involved a tiff between Indian Colonel Santosh Babu and his team and the Chinese. The Chinese soldiers were also young, new and aggressive team – faces that the Indian side were not familiar with, and that had not been a part of the earlier, ongoing disengagement talks between the two sides. They were supposedly conducting military exercises in Tibet and from there had been diverted towards the Galwan area.

The Indian objective was to ascertain whether Chinese soldiers – on the ground – are abiding by the June 6th understanding of lowering of military tensions. Most accounts from here on are conflicting. Most reliable would be satellite imagery accounts, rather than random stories construed by media based on sources – many of which are suspected to be fake.

As per available satellite images, analysed by Mitra (2020), around the first week of May, Chinese had crossed around 100 m across the LAC at Galwan and set up two tents housing about

40 troops. These were pushed back by India by fourth week of May and the Chinese tents were dismantled and Indian tents set up. By June 2nd, it was revealed that China had built an obstructing structure 650 to 700 m on their side of the LAC across the Galwan river (which originates from Aksai Chin and flows down towards Indian side), thereby blocking the fast-flowing Galwan river into their side of the LAC. Satellite images show that this resulted in completely drying up of water on the Indian side of the Galwan valley for many days. India, being a lower riparian state, could not allow this weaponization of water by China, as this would have created serious crisis for India's water systems (Mitra, 2020).

At the disengagement talks of June 6th, both sides agreed to move back 2-3 km. But ***China did not dismantle this obstructive structure, which was a violation of this understanding, even if the structure was on the Chinese side.*** And it is clear from the satellite images that the 'structure' was built by the Chinese on their side of the LAC. While the June 17th statement by the Ministry of External Affairs refers to this 'structure' as being built by the Chinese on 'our side of the LAC', this is imprecise since India's claim extends into Chinese controlled territory as well and there are many competing interpretations and perceptions of LAC (MEA, 2020).

The subsequent ***June 19th statement by PM Modi that "no one entered Indian territory, no posts were occupied" was based***

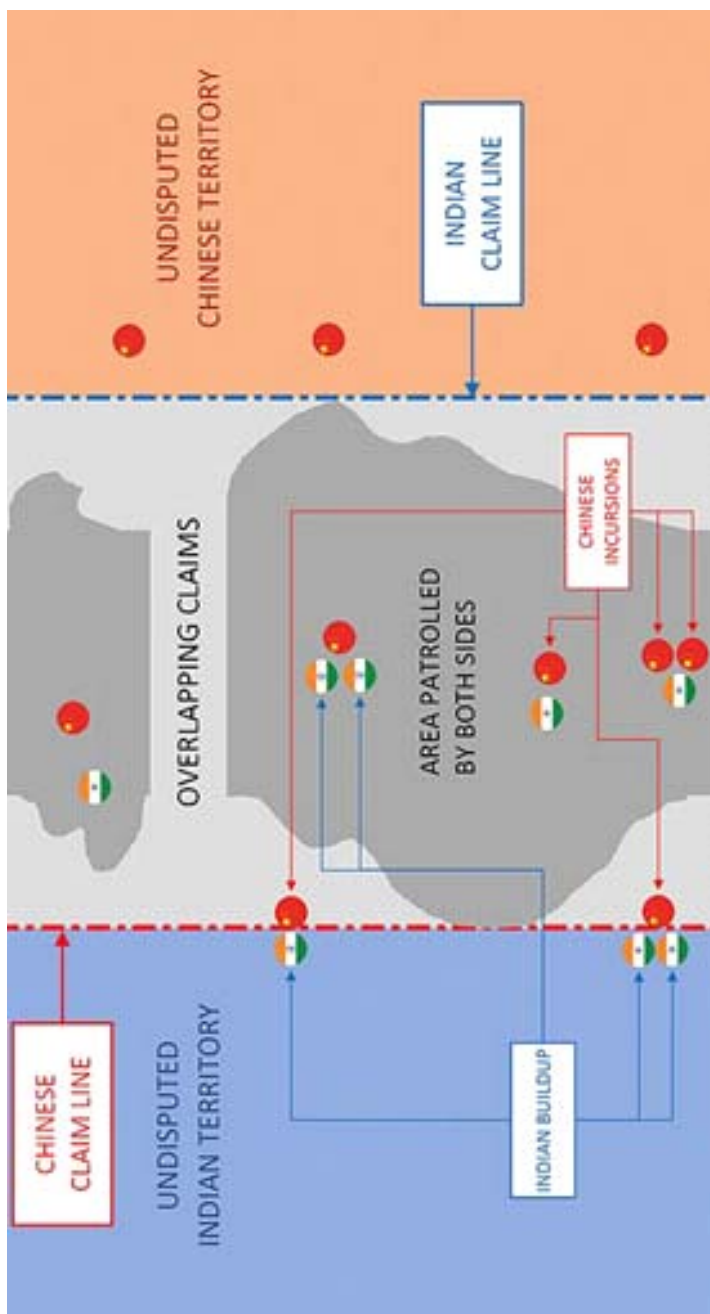
on more precise intelligence and correct in fact. Further, the June 20th notification by the PMO mentions that, “As regards transgression of LAC, it was clearly stated that the violence in Galwan on 15 June arose because Chinese side was seeking to erect structures just across the LAC and refused to desist from such actions” – nowhere does it state that the structure was on Indian side of LAC, but was ‘just across the LAC’ (PIB, 2020).

Thus, on the night of June 15th, the Indian troops had gone in to ensure that this structure was dismantled, in accordance with the June 6th understanding to restore the status quo, which China was not complying with.

What started out as a minor confrontation turned into something bigger as both sides called in their reinforcements and ***around 600 soldiers fought on at the Galwan valley point at a very narrow ridge. Not a single shot was fired during this confrontation*** – since, as per existing protocols, soldiers avoid the use of firearms in interest of peace.

However, the Chinese side reportedly possessed sticks, batons and iron rods. The Indian side also reportedly snatched the Chinese weapons and used them on the Chinese. Other than that, the soldiers fought with bare hands.

Furthermore, the incident occurred right at the LAC which is neither delineated nor demarcated and where difficult terrain can lead to both sides crossing over.



Source: Shah (2020)

The above representational image shows the kind of situation along LAC tension points in Ladakh. The points at which the Chinese incursions have occurred are in the disputed territory – the grey area where both sides often patrol and come face-to-face with each other. With increasingly better and continuously improving Indian infrastructure capabilities, these face-offs as well as minor transgressions by the Chinese side have naturally increased.

In this conflict, Chinese incursions in the grey, disputed area have been often magnified and sensationalized by media accounts to allege that ‘thousands’ of Chinese soldiers have invaded Indian territory – claims not rooted in fact. Indeed, when PM Modi asserted that “not an inch” of Indian territory had been infringed upon and there were no intruders on Indian land, he was absolutely technically correct. However, as a result of China’s domination of the disputed grey area territory, India had been confined away from its perceived claim line and prevented from patrolling along its routes.

What makes the present confrontation more significant is not the face-off itself or the wild allegations of territorial invasion, but the fact of the large extent of Chinese build-up and the fact that Chinese had, unlike earlier times, refused to dilute their build-up despite multiple rounds of high-level negotiations. And this has been viewed by India as an escalation in itself – as an attempt to alter the existing status quo (Shah 2020).

In this clash, many soldiers died by falling into the freezing and fast-flowing Galwan river, since they lost their footing or were pushed off the narrow ridge over the river at which the brawl took place. Three Indian soldiers – Col. Babu and the two soldiers accompanying him – died immediately. The other **17**

ESTIMATING CHINESE CASUALTIES BASED ON AVAILABLE DATA FROM SATELLITE IMAGERY

A reliable estimate of Chinese casualties and injuries combined (since it is difficult to tell apart casualties from injuries in satellite images) can be acquired from satellite movements of medical emergency services, involving helicopters and trucks, on Chinese side for emergency medical evacuation.

While on the Indian side, evacuation involves a 5 km pullback to Shyok valley, on the Chinese side, the closest evacuation point is 39 km away and nearest heli-strip is 70 km away, implying a tough 2 hour drive on a rough terrain. Satellite images show that, between June 10th to 23rd, only Mi-17 helicopters were deployed by the Chinese and only at the Hotan base, amounting to only about 4 helicopters. According to estimates, “Despite range and weight limitations they can carry between eight to 12 severely wounded troops depending on the medical evacuation configuration chosen. It is highly unlikely that they were used to evacuate one soldier at a time, but it is also equally unlikely that they waited to fill up to 12 injured. Purely on averages it’s best to go by four to eight casualties per helicopter. Also it is impossible to determine what their mission was, except radio frequency scanning confirms they did ply to the heli-strip near Galwan six times. If we assume all six of these trips were medical, this would mean a Chinese casualty figure (serious) of anywhere between 24 and 48” (Mitra, 2020).

Truck movement patterns through satellite imagery further show that, “On June 14 and 15 it’s hard to detect ambulances, but, by June 16, we can see at least 16 large ambulances leaving over a six-hour period. Again the same proviso applies. It is highly unlikely they evacuated one soldier at a time, but they are provisioned for between four and six, based on the length. This gives us a safe range of casualties between 16 and 96 going by extremes, but more likely between 48 and 64 by averages. Note that these figures are for injuries. The deaths on the spot may have been additional to the figures cited above, being deemed non-essential for immediate

evacuation. To note, no ambulances were observed at the heliports in Ngari or Hotan.

All up, based on imagery, predicting casualties is a highly fraught exercise with a large number of caveats built in. However, at the very least we can average between 48 and 64 of which between 24 and 48 were serious enough to require helicopter evacuation to better hospitals.

Indeed, the Chinese casualties assuming a one man, one ambulance, one helicopter could be as low as 16 with six badly injured, or in the worst case scenario of jam-packed ambulances and helicopters, 96 injured” (Mitra, 2020)

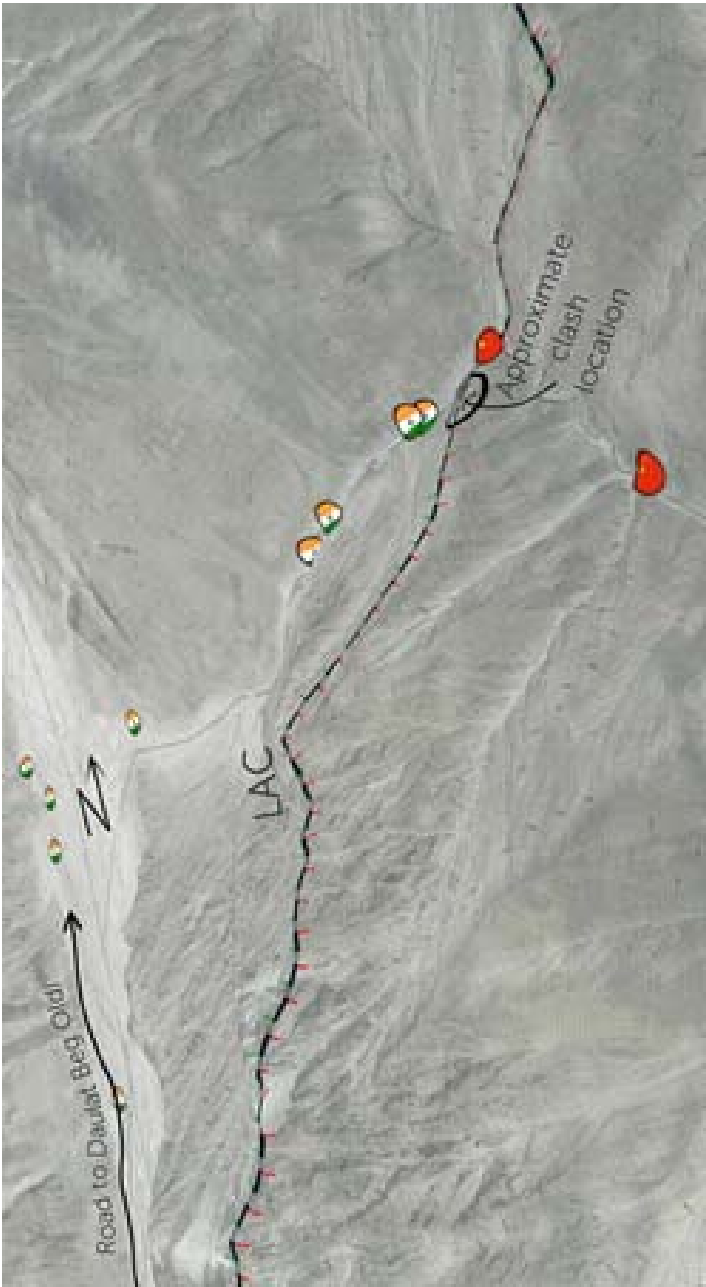
soldiers died later due to hypothermia and injuries by falling into the river, and due to the extreme environmental conditions of ‘sub-zero temperatures’ as was highlighted by the Indian Army statement after the June 15th clash. Several others have sustained injuries.

Similarly, on the Chinese side too, many deaths have reportedly occurred in the brawl. China has only officially confirmed the death of its Commanding Officer. Chinese government has refused to disclose how many other soldiers have died, although official state-owned Chinese media and Chinese defence ministry have admitted that there have been deaths on the Chinese side too. According to US intelligence estimates, around 30-35 Chinese soldiers may have died in the clash by falling into the river and by sustaining injuries (Shinkman, 2020). Indian Army sources have said that several stretchers and medical teams were visible on the Chinese side the day after

the clash, and 16-17 Chinese soldiers may have certainly lost their lives while up to 40 may have been injured.

Two days after the clash, according to Indian media reports, 10 Indian soldiers were released from the Chinese custody in good condition. However, China, in a subsequent foreign office media briefing, denied ever detaining any Indian soldiers (Al Jazeera, 2020). ***On June 17th, satellite images showed that the obstructing 'structure' had been dismantled by the Chinese and the Galwan river flowed fully up to Shyok on the Indian side and by June 19th, the flow of the river had become torrential (Mitra, 2020). This indicated that Chinese had begun to comply with the June 6th understanding after the June 15th clash. This included dismantling of the 'structure'. However, pull back of the build-up of the Chinese troops along the LAC in the Chinese side itself was still a sticking point*** in Galwan, even after the clash.

Thus, contrary to sensational claims by sections of Indian media and India's opposition party, most reliable accounts and satellite image analysis agree that this was not some kind of an invasion or attack on Indian territory by the Chinese. Indeed, contrary to media reports, the Indians had shaken the Chinese and sent out a firm and clear message to them against holding nature's bounty as ransom, forcing them into compliance of status-quo, and acting as a future deterrent against all mischievous attempts.



Source: Ruser (2020)

Subsequent to this clash, there have been at least three rounds of talks between the two sides, which finally resulted in a positive agreement in the first week of July as a result of Special Representatives video conference. However, during the remainder of June, the initial rounds of talks did not break the ice and both the sides continued to engage in military build-up at different points across the LAC. Indeed, after the June 15th clash and the accusations that freely flowed between the two countries, Chinese military build-up was further noted in various other areas along Pangong Tso and Depsang Plains as well.

More significantly, the Galwan valley area – where the June 15th clash had occurred – continued to be a major sticking point. An important reason for Chinese incursions at Galwan and refusal to move back has been India’s construction and completion of the strategic DSDBO road, which would easily allow Indian vehicular access to the posts just along the LAC. Another important reason is that Chinese permanent occupation of the area would provide an improved vantage point for observing Indian movements along India’s base at Daulat Beg Oldie and monitor traffic movement along the strategic DSDBO road (Ruser 2020).

A SOLID REPLY TO CHINA’S HIGH-HANDEDNESS

Existing patterns of Chinese build-up and temporary incursions along the LAC show that Chinese motivations were undertaken to rile and humiliate India without possibly incurring any military costs. It was a serious underestimation of India. The June 15th clash – while not likely to be a conspiracy – was an attempt to rile Indian soldiers by diverting new faces and setting up tents despite the June 6th de-escalation understanding. While the Galwan valley clash was bloody and serious and did not take the turn that China would have intended, the unprecedented

and aggressive Chinese build-up and refusal to budge from areas like Pangong Tso was even more serious than Galwan.

All this has been started since mid-April – a time when India has been busy with coronavirus, including differentiated virus protocols for the Indian Army due to which there were constraints in usual patrolling. Given the understanding reached by India and China at Wuhan and Chennai and the immense progress in diplomatic bilateral relations, India may have trusted China. China took advantage and initiated build-up along LAC with the intention to build permanent forward posts. This was never an incursion into Indian territory, yet signified substantial Chinese control over disputed patrolling areas.²

The subtle and offensive strategy of China has interestingly occurred under the watch of General Zhao Zongqi, the PLA's (People's Liberation Army) Western Theater Command's leader. China's PLA's Western Theatre Command was created in 2016 by merging Xinjiang and Tibetan Military Commands. It is the largest of China's five commands and handles China's borders with India. ***The Doklam confrontation of 2017 as well as the***

² Patrolling Points (PPs) refer to points along the LAC where the security forces patrol with a stipulated frequency with the objective of establishing claim or actual control on ground. However, PPs are not points which are manned or physically held or where permanent posts are established. Thus, they have no defensive or tactical use or potential for the forces. The claim is established by more frequent physical presence and by leaving behind some physical markings like food tins etc. to show to the Chinese that the Indian forces have been in a certain area. PPs began to be set by the China Study Group in 1975, although the decision on frequency of patrolling is dynamic and taken by military leadership. In the current dispute, the patrolling points under contention are PPs 10 to 13 in Depsang sector, PP14 in Galwan, PP15 in Hot Spring, and PP17 and PP17A in Gogra (Singh, 2020).

present confrontation happened under General Zongqi who was given charge in 2016.

In the present confrontation, a new Chinese unit conducting military exercises in Tibet was suddenly stationed at Galwan, having been diverted from there it led to creating confusion and confrontation with the Indian soldiers on June 15th. **According to US intelligence sources, General Zongqi had intended the Galwan confrontation with India, so as to teach ‘Indians a lesson’** (Amar Ujala, 2020).

However, the Chinese had not anticipated the robustness and firmness of India’s response. Analysis of Indian actions throughout May and June show that China really had no option in this case, but to agree to disengagement. China finally got the message that India would not back down. In major disputed areas – like Galwan valley – Indians actions had begun to act as a strong deterrent for China even before the disengagement in the first week of July, and during May and June, India has been able to effectively check Chinese incursions, although the build-up on both sides was finally resolved only in July.

PM Modi’s Ladakh visit, on July 3rd, supplemented these actions and further cornered the Chinese. Besides performing the ‘Sindhu Darshan Puja’ on his arrival in Ladakh, the PM made some symbolic statements which clearly signaled the decisiveness and clarity in Indian approach to the situation. He addressed the soldiers that, “The bravery you have shown recently has sent a message to whole world about India’s strength...Bharat mata’s enemies have seen both your fire and fury...The era of expansionism has come to an end...**Those who are weak can never initiate peace, bravery is a prerequisite for peace...Your courage is higher than the heights where you are serving today.** When the safety of the country is in your hands,

then there is a belief. Not only me, but the entire nation believes in you. We all are proud of you” (Outlook, 2020).

He further said that, “We are the same people who pray to the flute playing Lord Krishna but we are also the same people who idolise and follow the same Lord Krishna who carries the ‘Sudarshana Chakra’” (ANI, 2020).

More than anything, **the visit sent out the strongest possible message to China and to the rest of India’s neighbours** about the perils of underestimating or taking India for granted. **Noticeably, countries like Pakistan and Nepal have maintained a strong silence throughout the entire dispute**, even though Pakistani aggressions along the LoC increased right on the heels of the June 15th incident and Nepal committed a grave bilateral blunder by officially changing its maps and picking a serious row with India. **Both these countries fell in line as India forced China’s disengagement** and took unnerving economic action by banning 59 Chinese social media applications.

China was forced to react after the PM’s visit, by issuing a statement cautioning against the attempt to alter status quo. But it was clear that China had not anticipated the calibrated firmness and scale of Indian response.

China had also not expected **the international support India would receive** from major countries. US, France, Australia, Taiwan and Japan openly supported India. Russia made it clear that it was more tilted towards India. In the midst of the stand-off, when Indian Defence Minister visited Russia, orders for missiles and bombs were placed and expedited, despite China’s reported pressure on Russia to not sell arms to India (Malhotra, 2020).

In the final leg, PM Modi’s Ladakh visit was followed by a 2-

hour long video call between Special Representatives on Sino-Indian Border Issues viz. Indian National Security Advisor (NSA), Ajit Doval, and Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, in which Doval was firm about the need for timely action in disengagement. There has been disengagement following the July 5th talks wherein each side has decided to move back, with satellite images showing palpable disengagement from Galwan, Hot Springs/Gogra and Pangong Tso lake areas, with Chinese withdrawing by 1.5-2 km. However, India expects that complete stabilization will be a long drawn out process, and further talks among the military commanders and diplomatic groups will be held in the coming days.

More significantly, for the long term future of India-China ties, the conversation between Doval and Yi was based on the understanding reached by PM Modi and Xi Jinping at Wuhan (2018) and Mamallapuram (2019) that ***the two countries would 'not allow differences to become disputes'***. These are ***not just rhetorical words, but the new cornerstone of Sino-Indian relationship***. And the first testing point of this understanding came in the form of the present stand-off which has been commendably resolved by the two countries, doing good for both and teaching something new to both, while hoisting the relationship on an even more surer ground for the future.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE CONFRONTATION

The present confrontation makes it clear that while China did ingress and intrude into Indian territory on Indian side of LAC, such intrusion was fast, short-lived and temporary and stand-offs throughout May showed that Indian troops were successful in confronting and driving out the Chinese. Past records also indicate that it is common for such intrusions to take place. Prior to 2014, when India's infrastructural capabilities

were still being developed, China built massive capabilities which allowed it good access to the LAC and capability to intrude into Indian areas from time-to-time. However, with India's infrastructural capabilities also drastically improved, such face-offs have become common.

However, ***the question in this entire confrontation is not of who the territory belongs to, the historical claims or actual control and how these came about. That is an altogether separate problem that is not the issue at hand. In the present confrontation, the only significant development is that India's actions, under the present balance of forces, have sent a strong message to China and thereby, set the India-China relations on an improved trajectory based on India's strength.***

It is important here to focus on the fact that India was successful in forcing the Chinese to withdraw. The genesis of the June 15th clash at Galwan also shows that India ensured that Chinese dismantled the offensive 'structure' on their side of the river which had resulted in blocking water flow to Indian side, thereby being a violation of the June 6th understanding between the two countries. The final withdrawal of China, starting after the June 30th talks between military leadership, and hastening after PM Modi's Ladakh visit and Doval-Yi July 5th talks, also shows that India had managed to ensure China's withdrawal. Satellite images after July 6th showed that the Chinese had dismantled their camps and other semi-permanent infrastructure from Galwan and Hot Springs and had moved back.

The entire episode – despite being a localized border face-off – yet gives greater weight and credence to India's capabilities and decisiveness, with the clear message being delivered to

China and India's other neighbours that India will not back down from protecting national interest. The tendency to take India for granted by assuming that India will bend to Chinese diktats or dictates on how India should manage its border infrastructure is not likely to arise again in China after this, in the future. As we have seen, such situations have become frequent only after 2013. Prior to that, India's reticent approach and hesitation in developing its border infrastructure suited the Chinese just fine.

The present confrontation has reinforced with renewed vigour the ***new crux of India-China relationship*** that has been developing progressively since 2014. ***This new crux is based on strength, and not weakness, as the basis of relationship, as has been brought home by PM Modi's address in Ladakh. Under the present balance of forces, India sent an absolutely right message to China which was needed at this time, for the two neighbours to have the right kind of relationship. Indeed, the question in the present circumstances, was not of who the territory belongs to or the exact points where territorial contestation is taking place – these are small issues that obfuscate the unique nature of India-China relations, including the border dispute – but of striking the right psychological poise between the two countries which would determine the larger relationship in every other area.***

As the present episode shows, it is not the intention of Chinese that are suspect – it has become more than clear since the last 60 years that China has no intention of territorial occupation of Indian territory – but only the psychological perception due to which the Chinese think of themselves as very great that leads to overbearing border behaviour and psychological warfare to bend India. This psychological

perception was first dented in Doklam in 2017 and now again it has been dented in the present circumstances.

Psychologically, the outcome of present confrontation is good for both China and India, as China needed to have this perception of greatness and superiority broken, while India needed to more and more start expressing the principle that ***courage, and not weakness, is the only true basis of strong and equal relationship between two countries.*** It has now become clear to India that ***relations between India and China will be better only if India is also very strong.*** In the light of that principle, the actions taken by Modi government – combined with restraint and strong response without any sensational public politicking – have been on the right track.

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HIGHLIGHTS:

RESULTS OF RAJYA SABHA ELECTIONS:

Rajya Sabha elections to 19 seats were held on June 19th, 2020. While the biennial polls were announced for 61 seats (including 55 in March), 42 members were elected unopposed earlier.

The state-wise split of 19 seats which went for the election was as follows:

State	Seats contested
Andhra Pradesh	4
Gujarat	4
Madhya Pradesh	3
Rajasthan	3
Jharkhand	2
Meghalaya	1
Manipur	1
Mizoram	1

Prior to the elections, BJP had 75 (while NDA as a whole had 90 members) out of 245 members in Rajya Sabha. In these elections, out of the 19 seats, BJP won 8 seats, Congress and YSR Congress won 4 seats each, while others won 3.

In key states like Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan, BJP did well. In Madhya Pradesh, BJP won 2 seats, while Congress won 1 seat. In Gujarat, prior to elections, Congress witnessed the exit of 8 of its MLAs. BJP won 3 out of the 4 seats in Gujarat,

while Congress bagged 1 seat. In Rajasthan, Congress retained 2 seats, while BJP won 1 seat.

In Andhra Pradesh, YSR Congress won all the 4 seats. In Jharkhand, BJP and JMM won 1 seat each. TDP infighting and revolt was clearly visible, while the lone Jana Sena MLA declared support for YSRCP.

Manipur saw high political drama just prior to the elections, in which Congress had attempted to steal disgruntled BJP legislators. As far as appearances went, the media had already written the obituary of the Manipur coalition government (BJP-ruled). However, in a surprise move and management by senior BJP leaders like Amit Shah and Ram Madhav, the BJP finally won the lone seat of Manipur. Even after this, critics continued to predict the downfall of the government. This did not happen and the situation was speedily stabilized.

As of now, BJP currently has 86 members in Rajya Sabha, while Congress has 41. NDA, as a whole, now has nearly 100 members in the Upper House. If the support of friendly parties like AIADMK (9), BJD (9), YSR Congress Party (6) etc. is counted, then the government will not face any major difficulties in passing its planned legislations through the Upper House.

After the election results, while BJP got a good boost in its tally in the Rajya Sabha, it is still short of achieving majority on its own.

The Great Weakness of India in the Past

“The great weakness of India in the past has been the political depression and nullity of the mass of the population. It was not from the people of India that India was won by Moghul or Briton, but from a small privileged class. On the other hand the strength and success of the Marathas and Sikhs in the eighteenth century was due to the policy of Shivaji and Guru Govind which called the whole nation into the fighting line. They failed only because the Marathas could not preserve the cohesion which Shivaji gave to their national strength or the Sikhs the discipline which Guru Govind gave to the Khalsa.”

– Sri Aurobindo

(Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol. 6, p. 365)