

## Doklam crisis: Crux point for Geopolitical rivalry between India and China and posing threat to Eurasian stability

SK Chand Basha

Department of Zoology and Aquaculture, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India

### Abstract

The Current Doklam crisis between India and China could be perceived as a Geopolitical theatre between India and China, embodying severe security implications on India, and a threat to Eurasian stability. The current piece of work deliberate and assess about why? and how? Doklam became the crux point for varied Geopolitics of India and China. The paper attempts to ascertain that China's belligerent One China policy is the cause for its assertive unilateral expansionism, leading to entire Eurasian instability, and doklam intrusion of china is an integral part of it. The discussion cites various maritime and territorial disputes of china against ASEAN (Association of South East Asian nations) and other nations as substantial evidences for Chinese unilateral maximalism. The paper put its light on different Geopolitical measures of India to counter Chinese expansionist regime, on this line the paper cited utmost recent policy measures of Govt.of India like imposing anti-dumping duties on Chinese products. Discussion also embodies different global responses to current Doklam standoff to signify the magnanimity and gravity of the current crisis. At the end, the author recommends that Assertive Diplomacy at the Regional level for instance, India – ASEAN is the way ahead for India to counter China's belligerent expansionist policy of One China.

**Keywords:** Doklam, Eurasia and One China

### Introduction

Geopolitics is all about International political strata coming under the influence of divergent geographical entities ranging from Rivers, Seas, and Topography to Climatic variations. We shall discuss how topographic features along the Indo – China and Bhutanese border (Doklam), becoming crux point for a wide range of geopolitics for India and China, who culminates to become arch rivals, which is disturbing the peace and tranquillity of the Eurasian region. India and China, the two Asian giants viewed by world as emerging economies sharing a long boundary of around 4050 km. The total stretch of boundary divides into western sector (2150 km), middle sector (625 km) and eastern sector (1140 km) of which, western and eastern sectors were troublesome, with eastern sector which was demarcated by McMahon line is much more contentious and a place for recurrent skirmishes. Owing to their uncertain and contentious boundary line, India and China fought war in 1962 and both continuing their journey as conflicting neighbours<sup>[1, 2]</sup>.

### Doklam: Gateway of Geopolitics for India and China and its Security implications on India

Doklam in Bhutan, also known as Doka La in India and Donglang in China, a tiny area of 90 square kilometres becoming a crux point of geopolitics for India and China and a new Eurasian War theatre. Doklam plateau located in Bhutan to the North of India (Sikkim), Bhutan and China (Tibet) tri junction, juxtapose to Narrow Chumbi valley. The ongoing intense military standoff between Indian border guards (Indian Army and ITBP – Indo Tibetan Border Police) and China's PLA (People's Liberation Army) forces at

Doklam was reportedly instigated by China's PLA forces attempts to construct a class 5 motorable road, which is supposed to connect Doka La (Doklam plateau) and Jampheri ridge in Bhutan, which facilitates smooth transit for China's military logistics and may overlooks India's topographic strategic advantage in Doklam. Doklam plateau is a disputed territory between Bhutan and China, both did tried to resolve the dispute, but failed to turn out to a mutually agreeable outcome. Pertaining to disputed Doklam, China and Bhutan had two agreements in 1988 and 1998, which permits them to maintain status quo as before 1959 case. While India and Bhutan accorded a treaty, by which India may control the defence and foreign affairs of Bhutan i.e. upholding the sovereignty of Bhutan is India's concern. When china transgressed into Doklam, India stepped in on behalf of Bhutan and stopped the Chinese attempts of road construction, in retaliation china destroyed the bunkers of Indian army and prevented the Indian Kailash Mansarovar pilgrims to pass through Nathu La pass. We shall further look into the matter, for why India and China were studiously competing for this tiny territory. Doklam, though a tiny land mass embracing a huge geopolitical and strategic advantage for the contesting parties as follows.

### India's Geopolitical strategies in Doklam

1. India as of now is strong in Doklam plateau, in terms of holding control over key mountain ridges across the Indo – Bhutan – China tri junction, by which India can easily flush out China's aggression in Chumbi valley, which is a narrow funnel like valley which may trap china's armed forces during key war confrontations.

2. India decisively won the two encounters in 1967 at Nathu La and Cho La against china, owing to its strategic topographic upper hand over china at key ridge positions.
3. India's control of Doklam will facilitates easy transport of its military supplies to its different north eastern army camps.
4. India can further its diplomatic relations with Bhutan, and check's Chinese presence in Bhutan.
5. On top of it, Siliguri corridor also known as Chicken's neck - a narrow stretch of land located in North West Bengal, which connects North eastern India to rest of India, which is a sensitive and high secure zone of India. The same shall be safeguarded against Chinese aggression by strong Indian presence in Doklam.
6. India by curbing china at Doklam can send a strong signal across the globe, particularly to South East Asian countries, in how to defend china's aggressive unilateralism by a holistic military and strategic policy.

### **China's Geopolitical strategies in Doklam**

1. For China, which is intending to construct a road through Doklam to Jampheri will overlook the Indian strategic advantage of holding ridge lines and key mountains in the region.
2. China's links to Jampheri will allow them get access to Jaldhara hydroelectric project, which is the bridge connecting India and Bhutan, thereby checking India's presence in Bhutan.
3. China's stronghold in Doklam will put pressure on India's Chicken's neck (Siliguri corridor). China may also check Indian military and defence supplies to its North eastern Indian army camps.
4. Doklam under China's control will enhances china's bargaining power with India at key global engagements, which may compromise India's security and strategic interests.
5. China – Bhutan may open diplomatic channel in the course of time, which may affect India – Bhutan relations in the long run.
6. China heavily investing in the Chumbi valley, in the way of up gradation of rail and road infrastructure projects therefore, controlling Doklam is imperative to safeguard the china's investments.

The current Doklam standoff can be viewed as China's warning to growing India – U.S. relations which were at best, as it was occurred during Indian P.M. Narendra Modi's visit to U.S. India cautiously dealing the current Doklam crisis by placing its soldiers in a non-combative mode (Nozzle of the gun directing downwards), but any misadventure and miscalculation by China may escalates the tense standoff to a full scale war [2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8].

### **China's Belligerent Assertive Unilateralism/Expansionism of One China Policy, a threat to Eurasian Region**

China, to materialize its One China policy is going beyond the international laws, even at the cost of sovereignty of its neighbouring countries. Under the head of One China, it is robustly propagating the policy of unilateral expansionism otherwise called Maximalism, posing threat to different regions of Eurasian landmass, and the current doklam

intrusion of china is an integral part' of it. The discussion extends in the light of China's maritime and territorial disputes with its neighbours to signify the gravity and magnanimity of China's One China policy. China had maritime disputes over South China Sea (SCS) with majority of the ASEAN countries (Association of South East Asian Nations) viz...Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and Singapore. China through its Nine dash line map, claiming majority of south china sea, which became a bone of contention between china and ASEAN countries therefore, to resolve its maritime disputes Philippines even won the decree in its favour at ICJ, Netherlands against china, but china didn't relented about the award and acting as a rogue state. A group of islands called Paracel islands located in SCS is also under dispute, with Taiwan and Vietnam holding rival claims on the same against china. China to assert its claim on paracel and other islands in SCS even militarizing it, so as to garner international support. China furiously reacted on Indonesia, when it renamed a part of the South China Sea as North Natuna Sea. The same dispute scenario is reported with respect to a group of islands in East China Sea against Japan, which china called it as Diaoyu islands and Japan as Senkaku islands. As discussed china sees any slight derailment to its One China policy, as a threat to its sovereignty and reacting belligerently. When U.S. reinstates to reopen naval ports in Taiwan, china snubs U.S. Mongolia, tiny nation sand witched between Russia and China, also faced the wrath of china in the way of trade restrictions, when it invited Dalai lama to its capital. Therefore, in the faceoff these, we could opine that Chinese incursion into Doklam is not an unprecedented one, and is a part of its unilateral expansionism to materialize its One China policy. China viewing India as a bulwark to its expansionist regime, this perception got further bolstered when India boycotted OBOR project, while entire world was eagerly subscribing to it. In order to impinge India's interests at international level, china is taking every chance,, in the way of blocking India's bid for NSG (Nuclear suppliers group). Even the world peace is also not the concern of china, which got evidenced when china through its veto power as permanent member of UNSC, blocked UN attempt of banning JeM chief Masood Azhar as global terrorist. Despite china's aggressive tactics with respect to current Doklam standoff, India on its part, dealing the crisis with professional and diplomatic maturity by not publicly reacting to provocative statements of Chinese media. India did try to resolve the Doklam issue through diplomatic channels, but china continued its insistence on stepping back of Indian troops, as a precondition for diplomatic engagement. China also rejected the India's proposal of talks along the sidelines of G-20 summit in Germany, and to irk India, china gone to the extent of advising travel safety alerts to Chinese tourists in India [9, 10, 11, 12].

As per the aforesaid discussion, we could infer that china to materialize its doctrine of maximalism, deliberately flouting International laws and becoming an epicentre of disputes. To deter India's interests china is taking every chance, which china consider it as an essential step to consolidate its One China policy, which ultimately posing threat to entire Eurasian region.

## **India's Counter Geopolitical Measures to China**

It is apparent from the aforesaid discussion that China's incursion into Doklam has severe security implications on India. India to control Chinese aggressive tactics formulated a set of counter geopolitical measures as follows.

### **1. India – ASEAN arch, a buffer to China's Unilateralism**

Since 2014 India revitalized the Look East policy to Act East policy, which embodies deeper engagements with ASEAN countries, particularly on strategic, security and defence issues. Countries like Vietnam, Myanmar, Singapore and Malaysia were the main stake holders. India even expanding its India – ASEAN arch to Pacific by including Japan in its geopolitical axis, to contain china's policy of unilateralism. Amid Doklam crisis, India embraced Vietnamese Deputy P.M. and Myanmar's military chief, the two engaged with top Political and Diplomatic brass of the country. Different agreements on defence and security ties including supply of ammunition and military visits took place during their visits. In an unprecedented way, India likely to invite the Heads of all 10 ASEAN countries to 2018 Republic day event.

### **2. Anti-China policies on board**

In the midst of Doklam crisis, Indian establishment's rethink of their policies with respect to Chinese investments in India's sensitive sectors. Of late Indian establishments based on CEA (Central Electricity Authority) report, revised its policies with respect to power supply sector apparently aiming to corner china. Chinese companies like Dongfang electricals and Shanghai electrics were prominent in Indian power supply sector. The new rules will encourage the local Indian companies under Make in India programme, and discourage Chinese investments in the power supply sector. India took this decision to deter the Chinese cyber-attacks. Akin to it, Indian government imposed anti-dumping duties on 93 products of china, which aims to discourage the Chinese imports and encourage the indigenous products under Make in India programme.

### **3. Joint Naval Drills**

Hard policy option is also one of the fragments of geopolitical strategies of India. It took the expression of Malabar exercises – Joint naval drills between India – U.S – Japan conducted in Bay of Bengal, with the aim of Freedom of navigation in Malaccan strait, the hotspot of Chinese incursions.

Of late, Chinese incursions also reported in Pangong Lake, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir leading to scuffle between Indian and Chinese armed personnel, even at this moment India holds army officers talks with Chinese in Leh, Jammu and Kashmir. Based on this we can decipher that India following a balanced geopolitical strategy which aims to reduce tensions with China [13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19].

### **World Response on Doklam**

The Paper extends its discussion on the World response on Doklam, to signify the Magnanimity and Gravity of the current standoff. World keenly watching the Doklam standoff between the two Asian giants, only few took different stands, while majority of nations advocated to settle the dispute

peacefully through diplomatic channels. Beginning with the U.S., which advocated resolving the Doklam dispute through dialogue. Australia advised both India and China to resolve the dispute peacefully, without further escalation. U.K. maintains complete Neutrality by restricting the conflict as a bilateral dispute. Nepal advocated diplomatic based dispute settlement, even the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader advised that India and China cannot overpower each other, and has to continue as peaceful neighbours. But Japan and Pakistan took different stands, Japanese ambassador to India publicly supported India and criticized Chinese violation of status quo at Doklam, which amounts to china's ire leading to furious response from China on Japan. Unsurprisingly, Pakistan supported China on its every stand, from Tibet to Doklam, Pakistan high commissioner to India even sought diplomatic contact with the Chinese counterpart to extend Pakistan's support to China. On top of it, ASEAN countries who were the victims of China's assertive unilateralism, maintained neutrality as of now, but expecting strong India to check China for peaceful regional dispute settlement [20, 21, 22, 23, 24].

On the whole, we could decipher that world leaders expecting the Doklam crisis to settle peacefully by matured diplomacy, but it all depends on how china respects the international laws and bilateral agreements.

### **Conclusion**

Keeping in view the Nuclear capability of the two Asian giants, and their interdependence on economy and political issues at International level for instance, India – China commitment against climate change in the face of U.S. withdrawal from Paris accord. Considering the deeper engagement on this front between India and China, the author opined that the current Doklam crisis may not escalates into full scale war. In the face of growing Chinese assertion on One China policy, the author recommend that any policy/strategic step should aim not just to deter Chinese incursions in Doklam, but it has to address the overall Chinese policy of Assertive Unilateral Expansionism, which is the cause for entire Eurasian instability. In this regards, author recommends that there is a need for Assertive Diplomacy instead of Passive diplomacy, India already took initiatives on this line, by imposing anti-dumping duties on Chinese products and tightening rules of Power supply sector in India, which aims to corner china. The Recommended Assertive Diplomacy has to be extended to regional bodies like creation of India – ASEAN (or) India – ASEAN – Pacific, with provisions for trade restrictions against Chinese goods which are the key for china's economy, and terminating diplomatic channels at crucial times to reflect the quantum of heightening tensions with china. Internationalizing the same at different platforms like G-20, BRICS, EAS, UNGA will put pressure on China and compels them to respect and act as per International law, which ultimately leads to Eurasian stability.

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