

# CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



## CENJOWS

### **CHINA'S STRATEGIC MYOPIA**



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The Sino Indian military pause is part of a geostrategic continuum. Some domestic and international experts opine that India is cornered and in a pickle. They are as myopic as the PRC planners. Bottom line. It has been China's choice to come in uninvited. It is India's choice to let it go back.

[As per Yun Sun \(a Chinese Scholar in Stimson Centre\)](#) "If a strategic friendship with India is untenable, it frees up room for tactical gains". It explains the Chinese aggression. It is a politically motivated, expansionist tactical land grab adopting a strategy of "Belligerent War Avoidance". It needs a matching political response. Surprisingly, some feel that if we cannot evict the Chinese militarily from Finger 4 and restore status quo ante, we have lost it. The issues are larger. We will just see who is in a corner.

## **Two Front Situation**

India has thwarted China twice. [Unchecked incursion at NakuLa and Galwan could have resulted in our troops in the Giagong Plateau or the DSDBO road being cut off](#), respectively. If any of these attempts were successful it would have been disaster. If the ambush at Galwan had been successful and had the Chinese suffered lesser casualties, China would have declared Victory all the way back to Middle Kingdom and [would have painted the town red of having taught India a lesson](#). Finito. Full credit to our boys for giving China a bloody nose. China has been able to come up to Finger 4 in Pangong Tso area and firm in due to a relatively better approach to the Fingers Area. The core issue is how to get China to restore status quo ante. For that talks are on at appropriate levels and some disengagement has commenced. Besides this, both armies have mobilized and are battle ready. Notwithstanding, after their Galwan debacle, big talk and threats have disappeared from that comic strip called Global Times. Enhanced posturing has gravitated forces towards the Chinese rear door. If India fixes considerable Chinese resources here, they will not be available elsewhere. In the South China Sea, China is carrying out a major Naval exercise which portends an Island grab. USA is also carrying out an exercise in the area with two carrier strike forces to foreclose that option. Mutatis mutandis this poses a direct threat to Chinese mainland also. Additionally USA has redeployed forces from Europe into this area. PLA's force gravitation would have taken place towards the East Coast also. If anything goes wrong. PLA could be short on ground forces. As per Yun Sun ["China has always been careful to avoid a two-front confrontation with America in the east and India in the west"](#). Not this time. Careless or myopic? Overall PLA is stretched in a tinder box situation. If a shooting match starts at either end, China is in a bigger pickle.

## Geostrategic Issues

**Geopolitical Isolation.** China has opened too many geopolitical fronts—military aggression, Hong Kong, Virus etc. Our Prime Ministers visit to Leh conveyed unprecedented strategic resolve. The message to China – India will not back down. The message to the world –China can be stood up to. In Ladakh, the Indian Armed forces hold a clear edge for multiple reasons. China will get a rude shock if it attempts to force the issue. India is not in a state of adverse asymmetry with China. Read the [Harvard Belfer Centre report](#). The current Indo-US posturing emboldens smaller nations to face China squarely. UK is upset over the Hong Kong security law and seeks more hands to handle China. Taiwan has been actively cocking a snook at China. Australia has increased its defense budget by 40% for the next 10 years. [France has pledged steadfast support to India](#). [Germany and USA have blocked Chinese](#) anti-India moves at UNSC. A dissipating five eyes Intelligence is back together. The QUAD is taking better shape. [Vietnam and Philippines are protesting Chinese activity in South China Sea](#). Balance of ASEAN, Japan and S Korea are also pushing back. Even Cambodia one of China’s major beneficiary is not toeing the line. Lo and behold! Its iron brother seems to be rusting. A recent view in Dawn is curious. [\*“It would be naive to think that Islamabad and Beijing are not exchanging notes on what’s unfolding in Eastern Ladakh. Yet, it would be equally simplistic to think that there is about to be a pincer movement by the two against India. China has its own reasons for doing what it has embarked upon, and that policy does not include any free lunches or simplistic scenarios”.\*](#) [China is isolated and the world is uniting against its bullying](#) as per New York Post. I agree with it.

**Digital Strike.** The fallout of India banning 59 Chinese apps citing security and sovereignty issues is going to be widespread. It circumvents WTO and GATT regulations. China talks of legally protecting its interests. Whom will it appeal to? International Court of Justice? Ah ha! Laughable. In addition, Huawei and ZTE will be eventually squeezed out from India, USA, and UK. Chinese military aggression legally empowers other countries to follow India's lead. Tik Tok alone represents a 6bn USD loss. That will widen irreversibly. Chinese firms are being excluded from contracts in Telecom and Infrastructure sectors in India. Many Chinese firms are being delisted from US stock markets. Market reputations count and valuations will be hit severely. Incidentally, the balance of trade used to be around \$60bn in China's favor. I read a report that it is down to \$44bn. If India picks up the slack on offer in the digital world China's pole position is under threat. It is an Indian opportunity to exploit. It also opens a case to firewall China out of the digital world on a reciprocal basis. The cost of the land grab in Pangong Tso will keep increasing as time goes by. The digital isolation is severe and is beyond normal understanding.

**Economic Slide.** Examine any Chinese economic index. It is going southwards. Imports are down. Exports are down. Consumption is weak. [BRI is in deep trouble](#). Military expenditure on two fronts will spike. Jobs are scarce. [If bloggers and gamers are considered as 'employed'](#) in China, the situation is bad. The digital strike has wider economic ramifications. The Virus is dampening the economy and will not allow revival beyond a point. The theory that "while we are weak, others are weaker" will hold up to a point. As the current situation and the Virus persist, decoupling will move faster. There is an opinion that [disengaging from the noxious elements of the Chinese economy isn't a divorce, it's a deworming](#). The law of diminishing returns will set in soon. The famed and flaunted comprehensive national power of China is eroding. An aging China will hasten the erosion.

**Lebensraum and Nazism.** Communist China, first usurped East Turkestan, Tibet, and Aksai Chin militarily and made a deal illegally with Pakistan for the Shaksgam Valley. Later they coerced Central Asian Republics into parting with territory when settling borders. Now they are again looking at Indian territory from a convoluted perspective. It is a precursor to slicing territory off Nepal, Bhutan, and Russia. The claim on Vladivostok has clearly rattled Russian neutrality. China claims sovereignty over the entire South China Sea and disputes with all maritime neighbors. Debt trap diplomacy supports expansionism through BRI and CPEC. Hambantota in the pocket, Pakistan is the next target. Hitler's lebensraum pales in comparison. Examine the sociological pairings. Middle kingdom and Aryan supremacy. Century of Humiliation and Versailles Treaty. Nazi and Uighur concentration camps. In some ways the Galwan Valley intrusion is akin to the Ardennes Offensive. Xi Jinping and Hitler. Desire to create the greatest military on earth and orchestrate operations. Public exhortation to prepare for war under garb of "peaceful rise". If China is not checked now, a scourge will rule. India has provided a bridgehead to stem it. Will the world leaders heed the message and act? Or. Will they be Chamberlains at Potsdam to allow reincarnation of Hitler?

**Century of Self-Humiliation.** Much is made that Chinese seek revenge on the "Century of Humiliation". However what is hidden is the post imperial "Century of Communist Engineered Self Humiliation". It encompasses two man-made famines, Civil War (the Long March), the failed Great Leap, Expansionism, the Purges and disastrous wars with Japan, Russia and Vietnam. Do not forget the disastrous "one child policy" which will hasten an aging China into decline. The Communist Party has distorted history and peddled it. We believed it. Chinese strategic thinking is insidious. We fell for it.

## **Strategic Myopia**

The Chinese are strategically myopic. It is now clear that too many tactical objectives were attempted through miscalculation without thinking through strategic ramifications or having a fall back option. PLA has failed in Ladakh in achieving its primary objectives. Indian infrastructure is intact, and its development is going to be trebled. All their enforcement actions are having opposite effects. India by itself has a [bouquet of options](#) to handle China. These are unfolding. The disastrous Galwan ambush and its handling has made India the underdog and everyone is rooting for it. World opinion, trust and image matters to China. That is on India's side. Any military confrontation with India runs the risk of driving the Indo US relationship closer. That has happened. Beyond that India and USA have discovered a strategic partnership paradigm where China can be forced into an adverse two front worst case option. Very importantly, China has managed to shred the One China Policy. Where are my bifocals?

The Chinese are now caught in a situation. After Galwan, they cannot risk another setback. They cannot declare victory and go back after the hidden losses. After the PMs talk, the area between Finger 4 and 8 is a mirage. Till they continue to sit there it will continue to fuel Indian and international antagonism to check the Chinese. If they continue to sit there past August, the elements will get them. Very importantly, this generation of Indians will always consider China as its enemy. They are not prepared for all this by any stretch of imagination. China might soon realize that Nations do not run on conflict and nationalism alone. Either democracy or economic prosperity must go with it. If one goes out, the other comes in. Need to get my long-term vision checked. Any Chinese ophthalmologist around?

## **Strategic Gains**

Where does it leave India? Having stood up to China, international opinion has gravitated to our side despite some Chinese acolytes and disbelievers. The Armed Forces will stand resolute. That confidence and message is quite clear. Has [China miscalculated the rise of India](#)? That is what South China Morning Post thinks! [Are we seeing the emergence of India as a new global power](#)? That is what Dawn thinks! This event has probably paved way for a seat on the UN high table. However we still need to focus on seeing the Chinese off properly. A process is underway. Let us have the strategic patience to go through the long haul. Till then do not trust the Chinese. Shoot first and talk later. In the meanwhile we must capitalize on the strategic opportunities which have opened. [Atma Nirbharta](#), Decoupling and Distancing from China, [Strategic Independence](#) and Digital Leadership need to be converted into practical programs and outcomes. That is also a long haul. That will be our victory.

*From little acorns grow mighty oaks.*

*Let us thank our boys at Galwan who stood fast and resolute in the face of odds,*

*They have made it possible for India to hold its head high*

*In the pantheon of things theirs might be a small tactical action*

*It is that little acorn from which a mighty India will grow*

*Jai hind*

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