

**Media Representation of the Doklam standoff
between India and China**

**By
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INTRODUCTION

In this research dissertation, coverage of the Doklam standoff between India and China in Indian Print media will be discussed.

On 16 June 2017 Chinese troops with construction vehicles and road-building equipment began extending an existing road southward in Doklam, a territory which is claimed by both China as well as India's ally Bhutan.

There is a great geographical and geopolitical aspect to the ongoing standoff, as Doklam is an area disputed between China and Bhutan located near their tri-junction with India. Unlike China and Bhutan, India does not claim Doklam but supports Bhutan's claim. India intervened in the crisis, supporting Bhutan's stand and asking China to halt its construction work. The tense standoff escalated with China claiming Doklam as its territory and both sides sending troops at the border area. In the wake of the standoff, the pilgrimage to Kailash Mansarovar was also cancelled.

In 1949, Bhutan signed a treaty with India giving allowance to India to guide its diplomatic and defence affairs. In 2007, the treaty was superseded by a new Friendship Treaty that replaced the provision that made it mandatory for Bhutan to take India's guidance on foreign policy, provided broader sovereignty.

From 1958, Chinese maps started showing large parts of Bhutanese territory as part of China. Localized tensions arose in the 1960s but in the 1970s negotiations between China and Bhutan, with India sometimes played a supporting role, failed to create a consensus on the status of the Doklam plateau. Bhutan and China have held 24 rounds of boundary talks since they began in 1984, with notable agreements reached in 1988 and 1998, the latter also prohibiting the use of force and encouraging both parties to strictly adhere to peaceful means.

In the early 2000s, China built a road up the Sinchela pass (in undisputed territory) and then over the plateau (in disputed territory), leading up to the Doka La pass, until reaching within 68 metres distance to the Indian border post on the Sikkim border. Here, they constructed a turn-around facilitating vehicles to turn back. This road has been in existence at least since 2005. It is the southward extension of this road that has sparked the 2017 standoff on Doklam.

On August 28, 2017, it was announced that India and China have mutually agreed to a speedy disengagement on the Doklam plateau bringing to an end a military face-off that lasted for close to three months. The Chinese foreign ministry sidestepped the question of whether China would continue the road construction

This dissertation aims to examine the media coverage of the Doklam Standoff between India and China by two Indian print Media organizations- **The Times of India and DainikJagran**. The reason behind the dissertation is to examine **the media coverage in the light of issues like representation of border and boundary disputes between two countries by print media, ontological security, soft power, post imperial ideology (PII) etc.**

The time frame for the dissertation will be from **16 June 2017 to 31st Jan 2017**. This specific time frame was selected as the Doklam Standoff took off in June and came to a resolution on 28th August 2017, when both India and China announced the withdrawal of troops from the face off site. However extensive Media coverage followed till the month of January.

The two newspapers chosen are Times of India and Dainik Jagran. These newspapers have been chosen based on their circulation in English as well as Hindi Medium.

Apart from these newspapers, I would also be looking at Chinese Media's perception towards India in order to establish a link and compare the content of both the countries Media.

News items, opinion piece, letter to editor, info-graphics, pictures, headlines and placement of stories will be analysed at the time of research from the mentioned newspapers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Complex factors affect India and China's negative media coverage about each other. These include the mind-set of media persons and elites in countries, business and commercial considerations, Western media reports etc.

Control and manipulation of media reporting has been at the core of politics due to ownership patterns and business structures of Media organizations. Both Chinese and Indian media have been starkly separated due to these structural differences.

Every provincial government in China is a creation of the Communist party which directs and monopolizes all forms of Media; however in the Indian federation on the other hand, no state government is allowed to run a radio or television channel. (Ronojoy Sen, 2015).

Apart from that, there are special factors in India and China. For instance, the shadow of the 1962 war and the Pakistan factor affect Indian media coverage of China.

Frequent instances of mud-slinging and chest-thumping in the respective media confirm that the media suffers from the **post imperial ideology (PII) syndrome**. Coining the phrase, PII stems from the traumatic memories of colonialism and has three main components: victimhood and hence, the desire for international sympathy and a sense of entitlement; territorial sovereignty and quest for restitution; and finally, maximization of status. (Manjari Chatterjee Miller, assistant professor of international relations at Boston University)

Debasish Roy Chowdhary in his research 'Between the line': Indian Media's China war, analysed the news reports of two major national English dailies of India on China related news, namely, The Times of India and The Hindustan Times, for the first six months of 2012 found "**shrill jingoism**" in reporting China. He says, "If one went only by the Indian media depiction of China, one could easily be forgiven for thinking war is imminent.

Media, especially external broadcasting, have traditionally served as public diplomacy vehicles of national governments and have traditionally been employed to shape or impose information in target societies, during war and other times ((Wang & Hong, 2011)). For instance, Voice of America (VOA), the US government-funded broadcasting service, operated as the official voice and the public diplomacy component of the US government during the Cold War era and disseminated Western ideas of democracy and freedom (Wang & Hong, 2011) in the political and ideological battle against the Communist camp.

However from the perspective of critical political economy, it can be argued that even non-state media actors, with interlinked political and economic interests, may end up serving public diplomacy aims on behalf of national governments. Although profitability remains the primary concern of owners of corporate media, they may or may not influence output implicitly in line with

their views and values through allocative control (that is by defining the overall goals and scope of the corporation and general deployment of productive resources) (Murdock, 1982).

Since 2003, India-China relations have entered a stage of overall development. Intensified relations have made their reports about each other attractive in their respective media, yet India and China's images presented in these reports are often biased.

There are two aspects to explain this: On the one hand, it should be recognized that due to marketing considerations some of these media specifically seek to promote national pride by showing that one country is superior to the other.

From the end of the 2006 onwards, discussions on Arunachal Pradesh and reports on Chinese 'border incursions' began to increase and reached a peak in the summer of 2009. In summer 2009, from August to September, India's media collectively declared a 'war' with China. For near a month-long period of time, almost on every weekend, there was an exclusive news release of China's incursions in the border area, especially on the 24-hour TV news channels. Many TV debates were held, along with moderators' provocative comments and repeated visual images on troops and border creating a war-like atmosphere. (Tang Lu, 2010).

Ontological Security

By focusing on the recent development of India-China border dispute reported on Indian and Chinese media, this dissertation applies the concept ontological security to explain the persistent conflicts around the border, and explores the relevance of ontological security to the resolution of border dispute as well to India-China relations

Ontological security is the security of identity, achieved by routinized relationships with significant others and actors can become attached to those relationships.

The "**news war**" demonstrates ontological security-seeking behaviour's of India and China

Ontological security, as opposed to security of survival, is **security of the self**. There is a growing body of literature in international relations (IR) theory on ontological security, which argues that in addition to physical security, states also seek ontological security.

The counterpart of a victim is a perpetrator, thus in India's perception, China is perceived as a perpetrator in order to sustain India's identity as a victim; likewise, China perceives India as a loser in order to sustain its identity as a winner. In other words, in India's perception, its relationship with China is a victim-perpetrator relationship, while in China's perception, a winner-loser relationship with India.

With the improvement of bilateral relations, the India-China border dispute has moved to a **postconflict** stage, which means that border conflict has not disappeared, but has, in the recent

years, transformed into a ‘**news war**’ between the two states, where ‘**border**’ is the most common word used in the media reports.

According to Tang Lu’s(reporter at Xinhua) observation, in Chinese media, the frame of India’s image-building basically revolves around nuclear issues, religious and caste conflicts, India’s big power dream and its desire to catch up China, Sino-Indian border issue, the US-India partnership, India-Pakistan conflict, natural disasters and various social news.

Due to marketing considerations some of these media specifically seek to promote **national pride** by showing that one country is superior to the other, by focusing on issues which could foster **nationalist sentiments** and meet the readers/viewers’ tastes ((Tang, 2004).

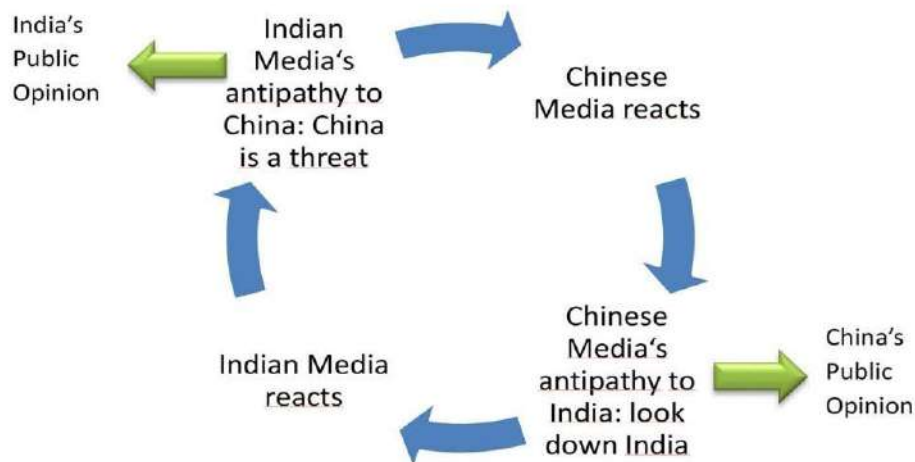
In Indian media, however, since the end of 2006 there had been increasingly negative reports on China (Tang 2010). This turn of India’s media could be triggered by Chinese ambassador Sun Yuxi’s public claim in November 2006 that in China’s position, Arunachal Pradesh is Chinese territory

Indians’ attitude towards China had been largely informed by the brief border war in 1962. The dominant memory and narrative of the 1962 war has been thus one of a sudden and unprovoked Chinese attack on India’s territorial integrity. India was a ‘**victim**’ in this memory. In addition to this, market-oriented news business also played a role in fostering the ‘**news war**’. Topics on such **border issues** can easily attract viewers’ attention, which provides the condition of media hype. The historically determined antipathy to China, together with the anxiety about the challenges that a rising China could bring about, and the market oriented news business, contributed to the media narratives that China is a threat.

Thus the Indian media has traditionally been hostile to China; more often than not, their China related headlines reek of **paranoia and sensationalism**.

A quote from the Press Institute of India Journal (October-December 2015) aptly summarizes this mind-set: “Media reports in India invariably tend to give the impression that China is up to some trick every day; that someone, somewhere in China is forever busy doing something to needle, belittle, encircle, overawe, dismember, intimidate, or deceive India; that aggressive designs are at work to step up military pressures”.

“Even in times of relative peace with no notable skirmishes, headlines such as ‘China violated line of actual control 500 times in last two years’ (*Times of India*, May 2012) and ‘Brazen China enters India, spends 3 days’ (*Hindustan Times*, August 2013) have appeared”- (Lahiri , 2017).



Apart from seeking nationalist pride and security through media reports, one needs to understand that a major part of reporting by media organisations is based on their ownership patterns which often influence and shape their reportage.

Soft power - a softer version of propaganda for furthering national interest - has emerged as a central component of public diplomacy in the era of globalized communication (Thussu, 2010).

Soft Power

The ownership of the media is a major difference between the two countries and is reflective of different media systems. While in China, the state owns all means of media coverage -- telecasting, broadcasting, print and electronic media -- in the case of India, most of the print and electronic media is privately owned.

The concept of soft power has been drawn to explain the hegemony and dominance of AngloSaxon values in global politics, including their manifestation in the international media space. "Soft power refers to domination that does not require the use of hard power (military and economic sanctions). Nye's original conception of soft power refers to the shaping of audiences' taste and preference, which points to its subtle hegemonic process". (Nyein, 1990)

The concept itself emerged with the development of Information Technology, neoliberal theory and globalization in International Relations, and deeply entwined communication as an ideal tool of soft power. He argued that displays of power did not reside in worldly resources but in the ability to change the behavior of the States and the people, and to be able to control the political environment through such mediation.

It may be noted that apart from state-led initiatives non-state actors too can be effective in enhancing a country's soft power since it does not necessitate direct intervention of the government – the point is to enhance the cultural values, global charm and attraction of the country. Thus India's privately-owned free news media can also be included in the discussion of soft power.

Thus, media establishes soft power i.e. a softer version of propaganda for furthering national interest, in order to establish nationalistic pride and build national security, bridging a gap between government and the people through their reportage.

Media and National Security

In terms of matters of national security, media of any country including that of India follows a nationalistic approach, even though the dynamics of media are different and diverse in different countries.

As stated by strategist, Gregory R Copley, “information as an instrument of soft power becomes a strategic instrument within the context of grand strategy”, because the media and the security sphere are dependent on one another, and security institutions like governments depend on public support for their activities and opinion building. In conflict, psychological operation is not the only function which the media can perform in context of national security but it also acts as a bridge between the Government and the people.

The Indian media is thus used by the Government as a tool to rightly inform and replace misinformation that could hamper India's relations with its neighboring countries.

As, discussed above all these concepts of ontological security, or national security are included to influence public opinion and set public agenda.

Thus, one of the main mechanisms used by the media, mainly the process of agenda setting, helps in prioritizing issues and events and the significance of the news as put forward to the public.

Media and Agenda Setting

Researchers suggest that, the more media coverage a nation receives, more likely the respondents think that the nation is very important to its respective nation; thus supporting the agenda setting framework. Agenda setting theory describes the ability to influence the important placed on the topics of the public agenda. With agenda setting being a social science theory, it also attempts to make predictions. That is, if a news item is covered frequently and prominently, the audience will regard the issue as more important.

The agenda setting nature of the media helps and influences the public's thought process in a large manner and decides for the individual as to what to think and not to think.

The geopolitical perception of media by a contemporary State is seen as an instrument that follows and affects the shifting balance of power, mainly as an overseer of the policies of the Government.

The media is used to generate political action and is also an apparatus of national security regime. For the State and the media, propaganda is understood as 'the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist'.

Summary

Thus, one can conclude that media reportage is often based on certain patterns or ideologies that influence its reportage. While studying different works already done on a similar subject, I concluded that some of the most dominant ideologies that guide media reportage include, the post imperial ideology (PII) syndrome, which stems from the traumatic memories of colonialism and in case of India- China relations it is referred to the 1962 War. However, with improvement of bilateral relations, the India-China border dispute has moved to a post-conflict stage, which means that border conflict has not disappeared, but has, in the recent years, transformed into a 'news war' between the two states, where 'border' is the most common word used in the media reports. Similarly other major domination themes affecting media reportage include, the concept of soft power, media and agenda setting for influencing public perception and lastly the concept of national security, thus acting as a bridge between government and the public.

METHODOLOGY

In June, a fresh row erupted between India and China over the Doklam plateau. India perceived China's decision to build a road leading up to the Doklam plateau as a geopolitical threat as the region is very close to the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction. Tensions escalated and since June 16, India and China have been embroiled in a bitter stand-off.

Constantly portraying China as a bully and an aggressor responsible for regular border incursions, the Indian media has been flaunting the victimhood card as an essential element of the PII (Post imperial ideology) framework. The frequent border intrusion reports also point at the heightened importance of territorial sovereignty. The recent border clash has sparked a shift in the status quo in the media reportage from both countries.

The strong sense of national pride within the Indian as well as Chinese News media becomes a subject of analysis, considering the prolific nature of their news media, their media markets and the two countries much hyped status as emerging global powers. Keeping these issues in mind, this paper will analyse the media coverage of the Doklam Standoff between India and China.

The methodology would include an In-depth analysis of the Indian print media coverage in the light of various issues such as, Representations of events, through the use of language (spoken or written) and/or images (still). Such representations are often restrained by propagandas, nationalism, sensationalism, agenda setting etc. Additionally, summaries of events may be coloured by the political priorities of newspapers or the ownership pattern of the organization.

Research Questions

- (i) Did the news coverage on Doklam issue made provocative and threatening statements, indulging in media warfare.
- (ii) Did the news coverage of Indian media organizations reflected a range of self boosting statements such as domestic preparedness, politics, defence budget etc.
- (iii) Did the media coverage on Doklam issue suggested a pattern of geopolitical rivalry i.e. including other countries influence on the issue.
- (iv) Whether there was 'Jingoism' in media reports found or not?

Tools of data collection

For the research purpose, two leading newspapers from India will be studied, i.e. Times of India and Dainik Jagran, meanwhile from China, I will also look at Global Times additionally to establish a comparative analysis,

The newspapers were shortlisted due to its circulation ranking among English and Hindi newspapers. News items, opinion piece, letter to editor, info-graphics, pictures, headlines and placement of stories will be analysed at the time of research from the mentioned newspapers.

The analysis will be processed in two time frames. First, from **June 6, 2017 to August 28, 2017**. This time frame was locked as the Doklam Standoff took off in June and came to a resolution on 28th August 2017, when both India and China announced the withdrawal of troops from the face off site and media coverage followed extensively during this period.

The second time period is from **September 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017**. The second frame is selected because media coverage followed even after the withdrawal of troops.

The data was collected from the online platform of selected newspapers. Both the newspapers have an e-paper available online which provides required data for the purpose of the research.

Objective

The objective of this thesis is to analyse the content of news in print media and study how generally media reportage exists and reports on the basis of certain patterns. It also aims to study whether media establishes these patterns in every other story on the same issue or does it change on the basis of events or occurrences.

Sampling and Technique of Research

Sampling of data will be processed in both, qualitative as well as quantitative method. For qualitative method, Textual Analysis will be used for the research purpose.

Textual Analysis Method will be utilized for this research. This method is generally used to address research questions by analyzing public texts such as newspaper articles, media stories, headlines and graphics in the form of cartoons.

It is the method communication researchers use to describe and interpret the characteristics of a recorded or visual message. The purpose of textual analysis is to describe the content, structure, and functions of the messages contained in texts.

For this research, only news articles will be utilized. The reason for using a textual analysis method was generated as the researcher wanted to utilize media news articles to examine whether or not the media reinforces jingoism and nationalistic pride in regards to the Doklam Standoff. While looking at these themes, it is important to note the terminology used in different ways. It should also be noted that the language used played a greater role in shaping perspectives and thus should be analysed.

While Chinese officials suggested that India should learn from historic lessons, China's Global Times echoed "India will suffer worse losses than 1962, if it incites border clash".

The headlines in Indian newspapers such as, Times of India also indicated negative and vehement coverage with headlines such as "Dragon's psychological warfare on India's economy is laughable".

Limitations

- Stories covered by other newspapers may have given some other important perspective, which is left and may have been a valuable addition to the research.
- Stories covered by the online edition of the newspapers might have a different approach of reporting and may add other details to the research.
- Electronic media or Television might have a different perspective of reporting of the issue and may have added different elements or variants to the research.

FINDING AND ANALYSIS

Doklam, or Donglang, is an area spread over less than a 100 sq km comprising a plateau and a valley at the trijunction between India, Bhutan and China. It is surrounded by the Chumbi Valley of Tibet, Bhutan's Ha Valley and Sikkim.

It flared up in 2017 when the Chinese were trying to construct a road in the area, and Indian troops, in aid of their Bhutanese counterparts, objected to it, resulting in the stand-off. Doklam is strategically located close to the Siliguri Corridor, which connects mainland India with its northeastern region. The corridor, also called Chicken's Neck, is a vulnerable point for India.

The trijunction is the point where the borders of India (Sikkim), Bhutan and China (Tibet) meet. The trijunction is disputed — India claims it is at Batang La, while China claims it is around 6.5 km to the south, at Gympochen. Both claims are based on competing interpretations of the 1890 Calcutta Convention between Britain and China. As per the agreement between the Special Representatives of India and China in 2012, the two sides have to maintain the status quo until their competing claims are resolved in consultation with the third party, Bhutan.

According to Indian claims, it began on June 16, 2017, when Chinese troops came to the area with equipment to extend a road southward in Doklam, towards the Bhutanese Army camp near the Jampheri Ridge, which according to both Bhutan and India are an integral part of Bhutanese territory.

The Chinese government released a map to accuse India of trespassing into its territory, and in a detailed statement in the first week of August, it said “India has no right to interfere in or impede the boundary talks between China and Bhutan.”

The China reportage is an influential section for the Indian Media in the past few years. The residual memory of 1962 war in a country invaded throughout its history is one of a sudden and unproved Chinese attack on India's integrity. This surmise forms the backbone of the border tension/aggression frame that feeds all adversarial frames in India's China reportage (China report, 2015).

1962 War Memory

Indians' attitude towards China had been largely informed by the brief border war in 1962. India's own role in the border crisis and the problematic border legacy were filtered out of India's popular discourse except in occasional, contrarian media commentaries. The dominant memory and narrative of the 1962 war has been thus one of a sudden and unprovoked Chinese attack on India's territorial integrity (Yang, 2016).

Take for example the headline **“India of 2017 different from that of 1962: Jaitley to China”** (*TOI, July 1, 2017*), suggests how Indian media still projects China in that post imperial ideology (PII) frame. While India media constantly portrayed China as a bully, and flaunted the victimhood card, their Chinese counterparts focused on status maximization, thus poking India’s sore spot of 1962. Another headlines reported **“Just like India, China is also different from 1962’: Beijing reacts to Arun Jaitley’s remark”** (*TOI, July 3, 2017*). These headlines clearly indicated Indian media’s stance towards safeguarding country’s pride with the help of statements issued from government officials.

The Indian media at the same time also tried a few strong rebuttals exploiting the aspect of PII with headlines such as **“A Sino-Indian armed conflict: Why China can bark but can’t bite”** (*TOI, July, 2017*). Thus, plagued by internal tensions, India is desperate to put up a strong front where national security is concerned to divert the attention from domestic vulnerabilities. As Maxwell Macomb’s states that media ‘not only tells us what to think about’, but also ‘how to think about’ (Macomb’s, 2014), thus setting the agenda for public.

Another headline in a leading Hindi daily reported **“सिक्किम में चीन को आंख सिखानी पड़ िकती है भारी”** (*Dainik Jagran, July, 2017*). The opening lines of the report stated ‘That the growing interference of China in the Sikkim-Bhutan-Tibet Tri junction has led India to deploy thousands of soldiers. However the position of India in 2017 is not the same as it was in 1962, with India also having deadly weapons such as T-90 tanks etc.’ Thus, border aggression is increasingly finding an expression in Indian Media reportage with ‘geopolitical rivalry’ and ‘war preparation’ as other sub tones.

Playing on the 1962 memory, another headline stated, **Today’s India not that of 1962, ready to fight China if it wants: Keshav Prasad Maurya.** (*TOI, August 28, 2017*)

The report further stated that , “Hailing the end of India-China border standoff at Doklam, UP deputy chief minister Keshav Prasad Maurya said, "Our soldiers didn't leave the border, in fact, they stood there firmly. If China wants war, our soldiers are ready to reciprocate with bigger force. India today is not that of 1962. This is because of our powerful leader who is at the helm of the affairs and his successful strategy which forced China to pull its troops back".

Thus, the media’s institutional memory is particularly bitter because the Indian government for a long time kept the media in the dark about the brewing border problem in the run-up to 1962 war. As a result, the media in India still reflexively sees the ghost of war in any talk of rapprochement with China. (*China report, 2015*)

Another pattern of media reportage emerging out of border tension and aggression or the residual memory of 1962 war has been the idea of ‘War’ or establishing comparative strength between the two countries and establishing power in terms of how the situation is different from the past.

Warmongering

Warmongering is another major aspect of reportage which flows naturally from 'border tension'. The news reports have tried to establish a comparative military strength between India and China with headlines such as **“China moved huge military hardware into Tibet after Sikkim standoff”** (TOI, July 19, 2017), or **“Chinese army conducts live-fire drills in Tibet”** (TOI, July 17, 2017), establishing a sub theme of 'war preparation' and competition. Another story stated **“Russia is keen on selling its new fighter jet MiG-35 to India with the MiG corporation's chief saying the country has evinced interest in the aircraft and talks were on to understand its requirements”**. (TOI, July 23, 2017), thus advocating India's military buildup more saliently and establishing a nationalistic pride.

A Times of India Headline quoting Sushma Swaraj quoted, **“India is well-equipped to defend itself against China,' says Sushma Swaraj in Rajya Sabha”** (TOI, July 20, 2017)

Another headline reported **“डोकलाम सिंिाि: भारत पर डि 'हसियार' िे हमला करेगा चीन तो आएगी तबाही”**. (Dainik Jagran, Aug 14, 2017). The opening lines of the report stated that “if China attacks the military, both countries will suffer a lot. However, defense experts believe that China has the option of 'water-war' in addition to its military strength”.

Excerpts from a new story in Dainik Jagran reported **“चीनी िीमा पर तैनातटी-90 टैंक”** would be worth to analyze at length here to understand how the Indian media establishes an interpretative commentary for the need of more military preparation.

The news story further states, “India has deployed its T-90 tanks on the border with China in north Sikkim. But no such tank has been deployed in East Sikkim. T-90 are main battle tanks. The T-90 tank is the Battle Tank of the Third Generation built in Russia, which is an upgrade model for T72 B and T80U. Though, India has enough tanks, only half of them can fight in the night. While 80 percent of Pakistan and 100 percent of China's tanks are equipped with the capacity to fight at night”

चीन ने िेना में शासमल सकया यह टैंक, डोकलाम सिंिाि के िौरान सकया िा परीक्षण (Dainik Jagran, October 12, 2017). The report further stated, “One can witness a spate of stories around comparative military strength, status quo, progress, and competition on infrastructure buildup. Thus, suggesting that the Indian Media does not take kindly to any resistance towards arming the nation for the coming **War**”.

भारत-चीन के बीच हो िकता है युद्ध, राजनसयक करें आपी िंिाि: चीनी सिशेषज्ञ (Dainik Jagran, September, 2017). The opening lines of the report state that “An expert in China says that

there is a possibility of war between India and China regarding the Doklam issue. In this case, the diplomats of both countries should try to stop the fight.

Border infrastructure thus plays as a sub-theme of the 'war preparation' frame, with a spate of stories on need/status/progress/competition on infrastructure build-up by both countries.

चीन की नई चाल : भारतीय पत्रकारों को बुलाकर सिखाई िैन्य ताकत (*Dainik Jagran* , *September, 2017*). The opening lines stated, "With the intention of increasing pressure in the Doklam controversy, China showed its strength by making a team of Indian journalists visit a military training center. Senior Colonel Li of the People's Liberation Army (Chinese Army) said in the form of an intimidation that, Indian army must withdraw from China's land to avoid collision.

This visit organised by the Chinese government on Monday, became propaganda at that time, when the Chinese army adopted a stern stand on the ongoing tension in Dokalm. Colonel Lee said Indian Army invaded Chinese land".

Another headline insisting on the pattern of comparative analysis is, **India a powerful country, no nation can destabilise it: Rajnath Singh** (*TOI, October 8, 2017*). The report further mentioned, "Home Minister Rajnath Singh has said India is emerging as a powerful country on both economic and security fronts and no nation, including any neighbour, can destabilise its security. The remarks assume significance in view of recent standoff between India and China in Doklam region, where troops from both sides were locked in a faceoff for over two months".

China's ill intentions and its growing military prowess being the twin edifices of the 'war preparation' frame, the Indian media does not take kindly to any resistance to arming the nation for the coming 'war' (China Report, 2015).

Army has to remain prepared to counter Doklam-like situation: Bipin Rawat (*TOI, October 21, 2017*), a more elaborate version of the same frame. The reported further mentioned, "Rawat, while speaking to reporters at a function here, also said that the mountain strike corps, designated as 17 Corps, was being raised as a "force of deterrence" and the process of its establishment was on schedule. So far, one division comprising nearly 25,000 soldiers has been raised for the Corps, which is at present headquartered at Ranchi. Once the raising of the 72 division is complete, the Corps will be based out of Panagarh in West Bengal. Asked if there was any possibility of a Doklam-like standoff with China in any other part of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Rawat said, we have to remain prepared".

Another headline stated **Xi Jinping's military reforms: China likely to flex muscles in Indian Ocean** (*TOI, November 11, 2017*). The report further said, " China's ongoing military organisational reforms, including major command and control changes that percolate down, is likely to see its power projection in the Indian Ocean and beyond but lead to less skirmishes at the border with India, believe defence analysts".

In first winter stay, 1,800 Chinese troops camping at Doklam (*TOI, December 11, 2017*).The report further stated, “Around 1,600-1,800 Chinese troops have now virtually established a permanent presence in the Doklam area, near the Sikkim-Bhutan-Tibet trijunction, with the construction of two helipads, upgraded roads, scores of pre-fabricated huts, shelters and stores to withstand the freezing winter in the high-altitude region”.

Thus, ‘War preparation’ flows most naturally from ‘border tension’. It builds on the China threat in the border tension stories and reports on capacity build-up (or the lack of it) to counter the threat. Without exception, they include an interpretive commentary on the need for more military preparation. Border infrastructure is a sub-theme of the ‘war preparation’ frame, with a spate of stories on need/status/progress/competition on infrastructure build-up in the past few years. India has recently reversed an ultra-defensive policy of not building infra- structure along the border and has been briskly laying roads and setting up airbases to catch up with Chinese facilities across the border.(China report, 2015)

Another headline which manifested the narrative of comparative analysis was “**चीन के सलए युद्ध करना आिान नहीं, भारत अब नहीं है कमजोर** “. (*Dainik Jagran, July 6, 2017*).The opening lines of the report along with very nationalistic graphics states, “Can India and China be evergreen friends? Does China consider itself as a challenge for India's growth? Both these are questions for which we have to look at the principles of Panchsheel before 1962 or the war of 1962 itself. In 1962, the Chinese leaders, who chanted the chorus of Hindi-Chinese as brothers, backstabbed India”.



A similar headline establishing the dominant theme of military strength was “**भारत कु छ य ं है शक्िक शाली**” (*Dainik Jagran, July 6, 2017*).

The first paragraph of the new story says, “If we compare China and India's military capabilities, surely China's military strength is ahead of India. But the situation has changed globally. Two things are of utmost important in today's battle. First of all, in what area are you fighting, and in

what numbers do you place your army there? There are so many areas which are beyond the Himalayas, China's ability in these areas is not such, that they could defeat India by sending so many soldiers so soon.

Apart from this, the number of items in China's GDP and defense spending are not counted as is done in our defense sector. But they work in the interest of national security. The number of semimilitary forces in India, is equal to our army. In this way, half of our army is under the Home Ministry”.

These graphics clearly represent how in matters of national security, the Indian media follows a nationalistic approach by establishing a comparative analysis of the military strength between two countries thus creating supremacy or superiority of power to the other country and confirming people’s faith in their government, while portraying the government as nation’s guardian.

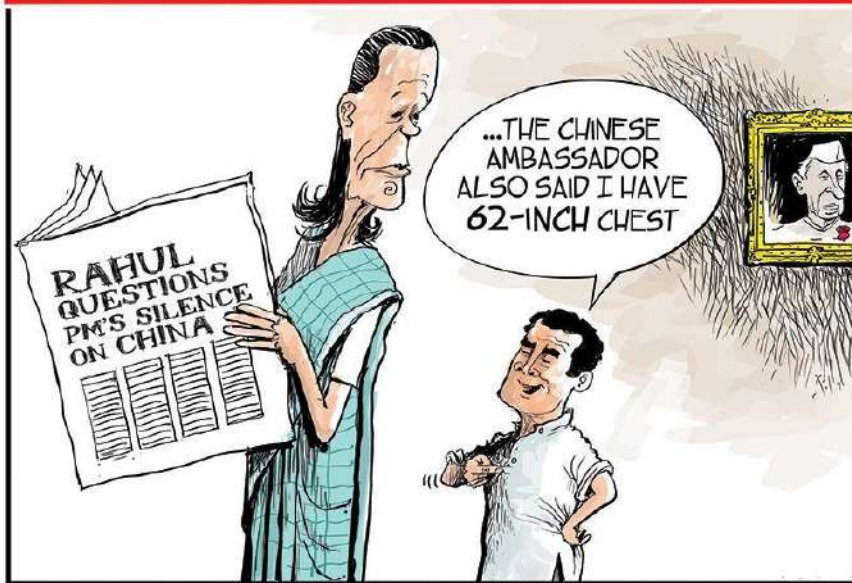
A nation that is not motivated cannot preserve its freedom and ideology for long as threat to any element of national power creates security concerns. The unique coverage and impact of the media can, thereby, be accelerated to promote and expand securityawareness among the people and used for moral building (Media and National security, 2012)



The flip-flop of the Congress on Rahul Gandhi's meeting with the Chinese envoy and Congress's questioning of defence preparedness was ridiculed in (*TOI, July 10, 2017*), through a cartoon.

LINE OF NO CONTROL

SANDEEP ADHWARYU



In another cartoon (*TOI, August 29, 2017*) Xi Jinping was depicted telling his tailor to stitch him a 62 inch size shirt.



Border tension/ aggression

The news stories built on this frame are based on reports of Chinese troops entering the Indian side. The headline **“Chinese expert warns of troops entering Kashmir”** (TOI, July 10, 2017). Or the headline **“Border face-off: China and India each deploy 3,000 troops”** (TOI, June 30, 2017), clearly presents Indian media’s rhetoric around violations of Indian Territory by Chinese forces. The opening paragraph of the report says that, “The ongoing troop face-off between India and China on the Sikkim-Bhutan-Tibet tri-junction has emerged as the biggest such confrontation in the region in decades, with both sides continuing to pump in reinforcements to the remote border region.” It further states that “Both sides are as yet not willing to budge from their positions. Flag meetings and other talks between the rival commanders have not worked till now,” a source said.

Three things which can be witnessed in news reports around border incursions are firstly, the allegations of Chinese incursions are all based on the existence of a defined and agreed boundary separating the two nations. However neither the Mc Mohan lines in the east nor the Line of Actual control in the west are mutually recognized or demarcated. Secondly most of these stories are based on information from unidentified sources or unnamed military sources, thus raising issues on the reliability of information. And thirdly all these stories establish a strong tendency for readers enabling them to take sides and thus indicating the government officials to issue their statements.

Headlines suggesting similar commentary and using the term ‘Border’ are **“China issues 'map' to claim Indian troops' 'incursion' in Sikkim sector”** (TOI, July 1, 2017). The report in further detail states that **“China has released a map to back its claim that Indian troops "transgressed" into the disputed Doklam area of the Sikkim sector, days after releasing photographs of alleged Indian incursion into the area, which it claims as part of Chinese territory”**.

“Chinese troops entered Doklam area in attempt to construct road: MEA” (TOI, June 30, 2017)

Some of the elements that further follows from such representation of India- China relationship include establishing a comparative military analysis between the two nations, thus focussing on the strategic capabilities that without exception, include commentary on the need for greater military preparation by India.

Geopolitical rivalry

Trade deadlock with US dims China's hopes for support on Doklam stand-off, (TOI, July 22, 2017). The opening lines comments that “China’s hopes of getting the West's support on the Doklam stand-off dimmed with a setback this week for its negotiators at the annual US-China Strategic Economic Dialogue in Washington. Chinese envoys are already facing an uphill task trying to convince western countries that the world's biggest democracy was actually an aggressor on the border with the second biggest economy”.

The geopolitical rivalry frame or pattern is applied to news reports in order to seek attention of the western media or their international counterparts and spice up diplomatic ties between countries. It also helps in establishing the government policies and helping the states to attain their goals, mainly due to its agenda setting framework.

A *Dainik Jagran* headline said, “चीन पर परोक्ष प्रहार, त्यौहारों में स्वदेशी के उपयोग की िलाह” (July 30, 2017). The report further stated, “The Prime Minister gave information to the general public about the social economics of festivals and appealed for the use of homemade items on this occasion. He said that due to this our festivals will be social as well as economic festivals. Though he did not name China, but the hint was clear”.

TOI cartoons also supported the widespread belief that Chinese goods are of poor quality and that we need to say ‘Bye Chinese’ and ‘Buy Indian’ (*TOI, July 24, 2017*).



It is employment versus deployment.

भारत-US की नजिकी िे भड़का चीन कहा- जंग कराना चाहता है अमेररका (Dainik Jagran, July 26, 2017).

LINE OF NO CONTROL

SANDEEP ADHWARYU

TRUMP MAKES U-TURN ON HIS ANTI-CHINA RHETORIC



However, TOI in a carton depicted how geopolitical rivalry is at work in the doklam issue with other countries intervening in the issue.

Another headline suggesting the dominant pattern of geopolitical rivalry is **चीन पर आक्रामक हुए अमेररकी राष्ट्रपसत टरंप, नेिी को िी खुली छ ट** (Dainik Jagran, July 23, 2017). The opening paragraph of the report stated that “The US has raised concerns for China, who became aggressive towards the Doklam Border dispute. An aggressive move by US President Donald Trump has increased China's insecurity. Trump has moved its Navy (US Navy) in the South China Sea, which has increased its military presence there making China come under full-fledged pressure.

भारत-US की नजिकी िे भड़का चीन कहा- जंग कराना चाहता है अमेररका (Dainik Jagran, August, 2017). The report stated that “China is showing anger in the growing friendship between the United States and India. Two days ago, the Chinese media was teased on an article printed in the American newspaper Washington Examiner. The Chinese media accused America of inciting war between India and China.

According to an English newspaper 'Times of India', the Chinese newspaper Global Times said that many countries including the US are directly interfering in the dispute between India and China”.

Thus, China's disputes an relationship with other countries provide a natural scope for frame extension, making distant geopolitical stories more salient for Indian readers by wrapping them in a national-interest master frame and exhorting the Indian government to get involved in these distant conflicts.

डोकलाम का तनाि तो सिखेगा सिक्स में (*Dainik Jagran, October, 2017*). **The first paragraph of the report said, “Just** before the BRICS meeting, India and China have resolved the Doklam dispute, but its tension can be seen in the conference starting on Monday. There is a sign from China that he will interfere in the way of serious debate on terrorism at this conference. His intention behind this is that India should not be able open its friendship with Pakistan anywhere”.

भारत-जापान की बढ़ती नजीकी िे चीन बेचैन (*Dainik Jagran, October, 2017*). The report further mentioned, “China's discomfort has increased due to the growing proximity of India and Japan. Beijing has strongly reacted on the agreement between the two countries regarding investment in North-Eastern states. Foreign Ministry spokesman Hua Chunying said that China is against any third party intervention to resolve the border dispute with India”.

डोकलाम के बाि अब सिक्स िम्मेलन में चीन को घेरने की कोसशश में भारत (*Dainik Jagran, October, 2017*). The report further mentioned, “About a week before the conference on August 28, when it came to the news that the Chinese army would withdraw from the dockyard area, one thing became clear that for the first time, China understood that India is no longer India of 1962. India succeeded in delivering messages to China through successful diplomacy”.

A natural fallout of the supposed race with China for world domination has been a profusion of spins advocating stronger alliances with regional and world powers ranged against China, mainly the US and Japan. Thus, the biggest driver of the 'geopolitical rivalry' frame is India's relationship with the United States (China Report, 2015).

Media Warfare

Another dominant element of the Doklam standoff has been the concept of **Media warfare** between the two countries. Headlines such as “**Chinese media accuses Sushma Swaraj of lying, puts pressure on its own government**” (*TOI, July 21, 2017*) or “**China's media warfare: Winning without fighting**” (*TOI, Sept 1, 2017*), indicates how Indian media ran report after report based on Chinese coverage of the Doklam crisis.

Chinese media oscillated between threatening India, painting India as an aggressor, and portraying China as simply a defender of its territorial sovereignty with Global Times report stating that Beijing "doesn't fear going to war to safeguard sovereignty".

Another report stated **“Now, China's state-backed media threatens standoffs beyond Doklam”** (TOI, July 18, 2017). The opening paragraph of the report states “China's state-backed media has taken warmongering to the next level and is now threatening confrontation in not just Doklam but in other areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as well. China's hardline Global Times declared that Beijing doesn't recognize the land under the actual control of India is Indian Territory and indicated that China could take "further countermeasures" along the LAC”.

Media warfare has been a dominant element of reportage, with Indian media portraying how Chinese media has been using this concept to influence domestic and international public opinion in support of China's action. This news war also focuses on the ‘Ontological security seeking behaviors of India and China’.

In another news report by **Times of India**, the newspaper quoted Chinese Media in order to establish the country as a victim to China's aggressive news media stating that, “China's Global Times, published by Communist Party's People's Daily and known for over its hardline commentary, called for teaching India a "bitter lesson", saying it would suffer losses heavier than in 1962 if war broke out. It also claimed that the Chinese public was infuriated by India's "provocation" near the Sikkim-Tibet-Bhutan tri-junction”.

"We believe the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) is powerful enough to expel Indian troops out of Chinese territory. The Indian military can choose to return to its territory with dignity, or be kicked out of the area by Chinese soldiers," Global Times said.

“India must withdraw troops to end Sikkim stand-off: Chinese media” (TOI, July 2, 2017). The opening lines of the report asserted that “Asking India to withdraw its troops from the area to end the current standoff, Xinhua news agency in a commentary said, "It is well known that the Sikkim section of the China-India boundary has been demarcated by the 1890 Sino-British treaty”.

All these news reports retaliating to the Chinese media reports, illustrated the interactivity at work. The Indian media's response on Chinese media's reports about India, tends to increase negative perception amongst the people as well as indicate Indian Media's attempt towards questioning the government officials and asking them to show a tough stance and response. Thus interactive media coverage leads to establishing hostile judgments about each other.

A news report by Dainik Jagran stated that “चीनी मीडिया का िािा 158 भारतीय िैसनक मारे गए, भारत ने बताया 'चाल' (July 18, 2017).

The report further said, “It was reported in Chinese media yesterday that the Chinese army has killed 158 Indian soldiers on the border. Similar stories are also being reported on Pakistan news

channels. But India has called these reports a liar. Indian Foreign Ministry spokesman Gopal Bagale said, "Such reports are completely baseless, malicious and mischievous. They should not take any cognizance with the responsible media"

डोकलाम सिंिाि पर भारत को समले अंतरराष्ट्रीय िमिथन पर भड़का चीनी मीसडया (*Dainik Jagran, September, 2017*). The opening lines of the report stated, "Most countries are standing in favor of India in a trilateral border dispute in the Doklam region. US President Donald Trump has openly supported India. Despite this, China is not ready to step back, though India had already cleared its intentions. Meanwhile, the Chinese media has accused the western media of supporting India".

A similar headline flashed in Times of India, **Western media favour's India', says Chinese media** (*TOI, September 8, 2017*). The opening lines of the report stated, "Miffed at international opinion seemingly tilted in favour of New Delhi in the Doklam standoff, China's aggressive statebacked media has accused Western media of being biased in favour of India simply because it is a democracy. What's more, India 'arouses sympathy' because it is 'in a weaker position compared with China', said an opinion piece in China's Global Times. India in the Western media is a victim which has been bullied by China, even though India illegally entered Chinese territory and violated international law to unilaterally intervene in the 'territorial dispute' between China and Bhutan," said the Global Times article"

Such reports often create a dominant theme of Reprisal by portraying what the media of the adversary country is talking about. Such reportage clearly indicates how China is trying to put pressure on India in every way by pursuing the policy of 'divergent punishment'. When the border is not being emphasized, China is adopting a variety of tactics through media.

Another headline representing media frenzy between two countries reported **“चीनी मीसडया की अपनी ही िरकार को सहियत- भारत की तरिी पर शांत रहे चीन** “(*Dainik Jagran, July 17, 2017*). The opening paragraph explains that, "China's official newspaper reported that India's foreign investment is in abundance. This will increase the development of India's manufacturing sector. But China should not be disturbed by it and should exercise restraint. The newspaper advised that China should now work on a new era and for effective development. The Chinese newspaper Global Times in its article on Sunday said that the influx of foreign investment will fuel the Indian economy, employment and industrial growth. Therefore, seeing the rise of India, China should not be disturbed. China will also play a key role in this process. It has been said in the article that in the past, India had no such capital, skilled worker and developed manufacturing sector".

A recent survey by the Global Times, China's influential daily, disclosed that apart from "China" and "India," "border" is the most common word used in headlines of Indian media reports on China and has appeared in the headlines of 17.8 per cent of all reports. All this suggests media's constant

establishment of counter narrative or counter reporting thus depicting India and China as rivals or enemies.

A *Times of India* report headline said ‘**Miffed at a US publication's support for India, Chinese media says 'US is instigating military clash between China, India' (July 26, 2017)**

The opening paragraph stated, “Miffed at a US article supporting India, China's state-backed media has accused Washington of trying to instigate a military clash between India and China. Two days ago, 'Washington Examiner' carried a column titled "Trump must support India against China" in the Doklam border standoff. The reason? "India-US relations offer special value in our shared ability to deter and counter growing Chinese aggression," said the column in the American publication”.

Another headline indicating at the dominant media warfare is, “**Chinese state media divided over outcome of Ajit Doval's visit**” (*TOI, July 25, 2017*).

The opening of the news story states, “Ahead of NSA Ajit Doval’s visit, China's state media struck two different notes with the China Daily hopeful of a peaceful resolution to the deadlock with India while the Global Times said the "main schemer's" trip wouldn't sway Beijing. In its editorial, 'It's never too late for India to mend its way', China Daily pressed for exploring ways to avoid confrontation”.

Thus, the Indian Media is increasingly analyzing what is appearing in China’s media, presumably for portraying Beijing’s mindset to the people and to shape their opinions. It also appears that the psychological war launched by China’s Media is solely intended to invite counter attacks from the Indian Media. This ‘Media war’ only serves to deepen the common Indian’s negative perception of china and also to set agenda for the government to react and come out with a strong statement.

In a paper entitled Media, Messaging and Misperceptions in India-China Relations: Reading the Tea Leaves, Ananth Krishnan observes: “An alarming inadequacy and confusion pervades India’s media and strategic community when it comes to reporting and analyzing China.”

It’s a limitation that distorts and severely restricts the mainstream discourse that shapes perceptions in India and China.”

Summary

The study is a preliminary exploration of the India- China relations specifically in terms of the Doklam Standoff through the prism and reportage of print media. After analysing the reportage of two leading newspapers in India i.e. *Times of India* and *Dainik Jagran*, English and Hindi respectively, I concluded that news selection by media organisations is often premised on the

certain patterns and frames. These frames are put forward by establishing the news in their context, which aids its dissemination. Some of the key patterns I noticed while analyzing news reports were **the residual memory of 1962**, along with warmongering which flows naturally from ‘border tension and aggression framework’. The media reports often establishes comparative military strength analysis between two countries, thus projecting one country as superior to the other in terms of defense capabilities, military and other resources.

CONCLUSION

The dominant themes that encrust Indian Media reportage regarding China on the Doklam Issue majorly represents **the residual memory of 1962**, along with Warmongering as another major aspect of reportage which flows naturally from ‘border tension’. The media often establishes comparative military strength analysis between the two countries, thus projecting one country as superior to the other in terms of defense capabilities, military and other resources.

Another dominant element of the Doklam standoff has been the concept of Media warfare between the two countries, where the Indian media often reports about what the Chinese media has reported, thus establishing political as well as international perception and raising questions for the government to react strongly.

Border tension and aggression has also been a major pattern of Indian media reportage with news stories based on reports of Chinese troops entering the Indian side, thus leading to seek responses internationally and establish the geopolitical rivalry framework covering other countries opinion on the issue.

The “border tension/aggression” frame, which deals most directly with the border dispute fuelling a great deal of Sino-Indian tension, appeared as the mother frame, with elements that fed into the majority of adversarial reports. It involves stories of, or related to, purported violations of Indian Territory by Chinese forces.

Also the, “border tension/aggression” stories all come with the ingredients of a strong frame. For readers to be interested in a story, they must usually be able to take sides. Hence, a strong frame faithfully identifies a clear problem or villain—in this case, China. To further eliminate ambiguity, it also comes with a prescribed solution—in this case, the need for greater assertion by a supposedly spineless Indian government.

The other major adversarial frames follow naturally from such representations of the India-China relationship. For instance, if we take China’s territorial aggression for granted, it is only natural to

obsessively compare Indian and Chinese military strength. Hence the “war preparation” frame, which encompasses reports on Indian or Chinese strategic capabilities that, without exception, include commentary on the need for greater Indian military preparation

Stories under the “geopolitical rivalry” frame range from those keeping an eye on India’s neighbor to ones on distant alliances whose main purpose is reportedly to keep China in check. The “geopolitical rivalry” frame is also applied to spice up dull diplomatic stories from farther afield and without an immediate China connection.

This overall negative slant of Indian coverage comes with great costs. Chinese diplomats and journalists, like many of their international counterparts, closely track India’s major English language media outlets. They take these media organizations’ representations to approximate the national policy and mood, and transmit them as such, setting in motion a cycle of mutually hostile news content, which in turn has contributed to a poisoning of public opinion on both sides

These are distinct narrative structures that ascribe set meanings to events, which help readers grasp the news but often strip it of nuance and ambiguity. I divided the prevailing frames into two groups, adversarial and non-adversarial, and found the dominant share of stories to be unambiguously adversarial in nature, portraying China as a rival power that needs to be countered.

After two decades of diplomatic silence following the 1962 border war, India and China started border negotiations in the 1980s, and in the 1990s established confidence-building measures in the border area. Since then, peace in the border area has largely been maintained. With the improvement of bilateral relations, the India-China border dispute has moved to a post-conflict stage, which means that if current trends in bilateral relations continue, force is unlikely to be used to settle the ongoing dispute. However, border conflict has not disappeared, but has, in the recent years, transformed into a ‘news war’ between the two states, where ‘border’ is the most common word used in the media reports (Yang, 2016).

The media reports of the Doklam plateau rift reveal two important facts: the power hierarchy between India and China is getting fuzzier due to the boost in India’s self image. Plagued by internal tensions, both sides are desperate to put up a strong front where national security is concerned to divert attention from other domestic vulnerabilities. There is also no dearth of suspicion from both sides – while India views the tiff as a ploy to pull it into China’s Belt and Road project, China feels India is stirring up trouble to gauge US and Russia’s loyalties or to score brownie points domestically by flexing its muscles. As both countries remain headstrong, the prolongation of this spat threatens to freeze the carefully cultivated bilateral relationship and undermine regional stability.

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