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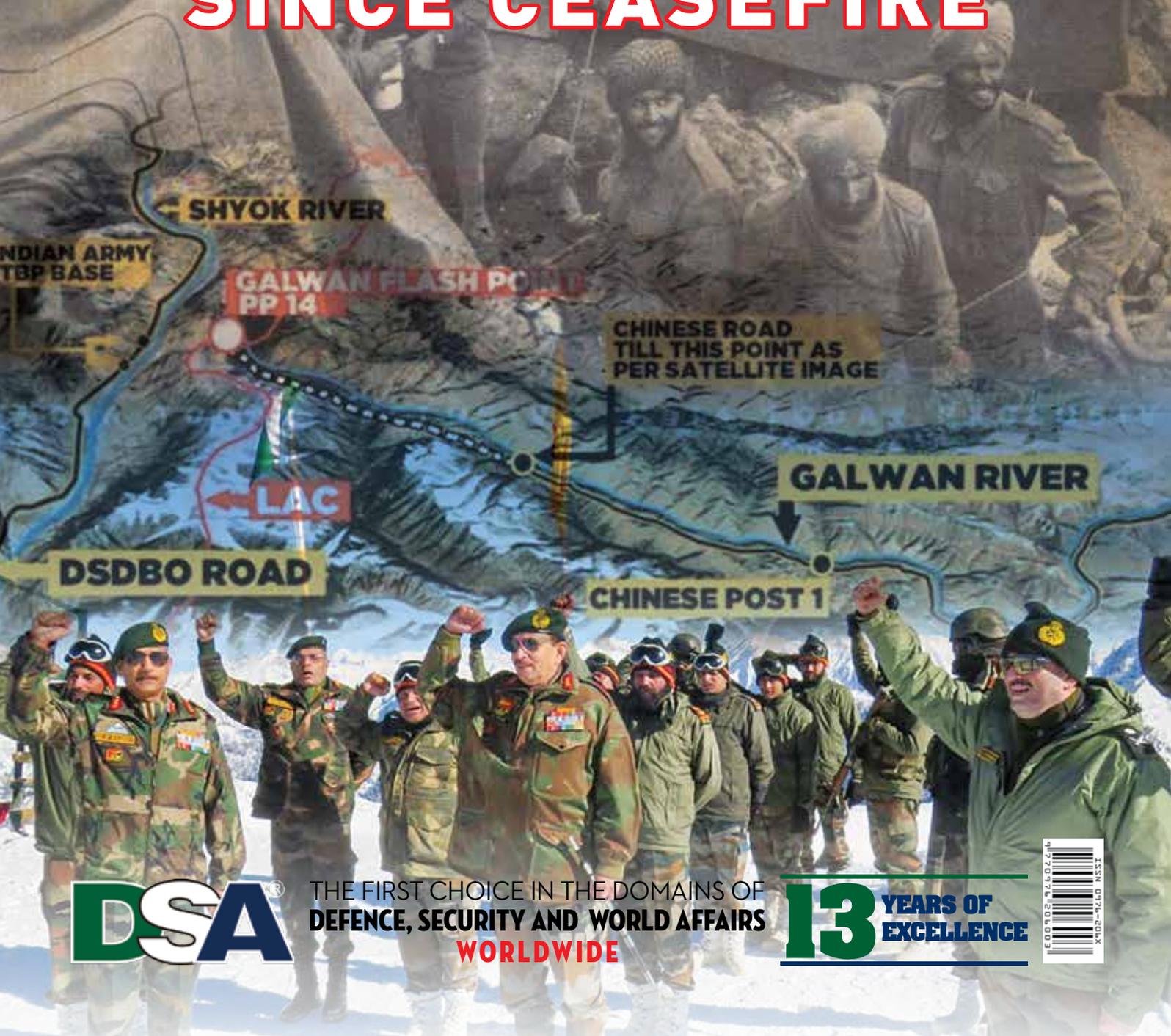
The First and Only ISO 9001:2015 Certified Defence and Security Magazine in India

The Only Magazine Available On The Intranet Of Indian Air Force

NOVEMBER 2022

VOLUME 14 | ISSUE 02

1962 WAR SIXTY YEARS SINCE CEASEFIRE



DSA

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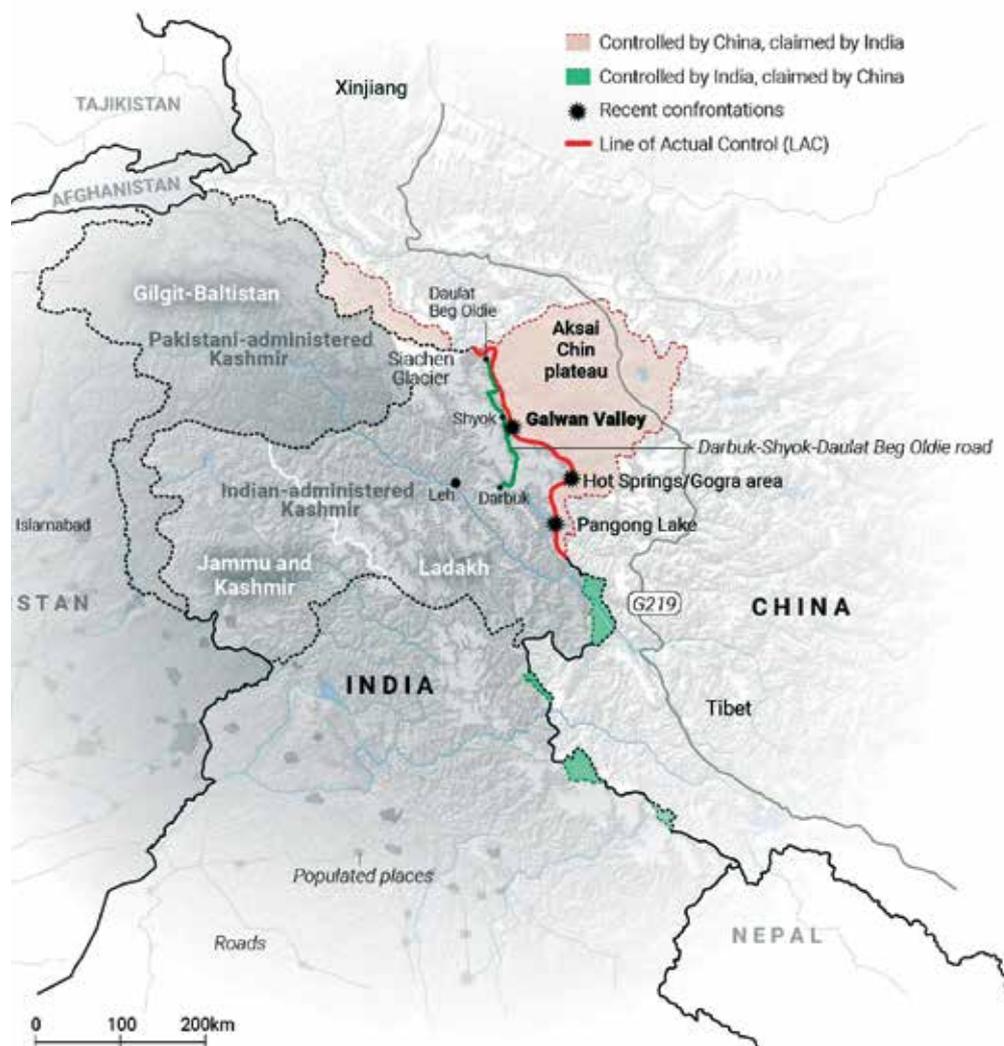
A REFLECTION ON INDIA – CHINA RELATIONS

At the end of the day, not only does India need to have allies to support it in times of crisis, but it also needs a resilient and enviable military capacity, infrastructural and technological apparatus and diplomatic narrative and approach – to be able to resist hostile actions of its neighbour and have a sustaining and stable place in the larger world order – despite the chaos it is in.

1 October 2022, marks the 60th anniversary of the start of the India-China War of 1962. While this war has traumatized Indians and the Indian state over the generations while carrying some valuable lessons to learn, the Chinese state is paying attention to the narrative of this war only now, when there are tense border relations with India. We also see that in the 20th Congress Session of the People’s Republic of China, which started on 16 October 2022, a brief video footage of the Galwan Valley clash between India and China was also a part of a larger video which showcased the achievements of the Chinese President Xi Jinping at different sectors. This brings us to a juncture of reflecting on what the war has taught us and what is the future of relations between the two neighbours that we see ahead of us.

Inconsistent Relations

India and China relations are embroiled with a lot of underlying complex elements – which



A skirmish in the Galwan Valley on 15 June 2020 left 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of Chinese soldiers dead, marking the first loss of life on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) since 1975.

when manifested together, bring out a highly complex and also contradictory relationship. The relationship where India is still heavily dependent on China, economically, while having increasingly tense and hostile relations in strategic and geopolitical terms. For China, India is a part of the eastern version of NATO, also known as the Quad by the rest of the world. So, for China, not only is India a key rival for becoming the Asian superpower, but India is also seemingly an ally of the US and Japan, which is equivalent to being China's enemy and a hostile neighbour. There is also a huge

possibility that China's increasing attention towards formulating its narrative regarding the whole situation, now of all times, seems to be a way for the Chinese leadership to pacify and mobilise the people – who are enraged with China's zero COVID policy, its economic and food crisis, and recent droughts which just adds on to their plight. Once, in the minds of the Chinese, there is a common enemy which is threatening their existence and sovereignty, and there is a situation of war, they will rally behind the leadership, much more strongly than ever before.

Indian foreign policy concerning China has become **more pragmatic** and realistic in recent years

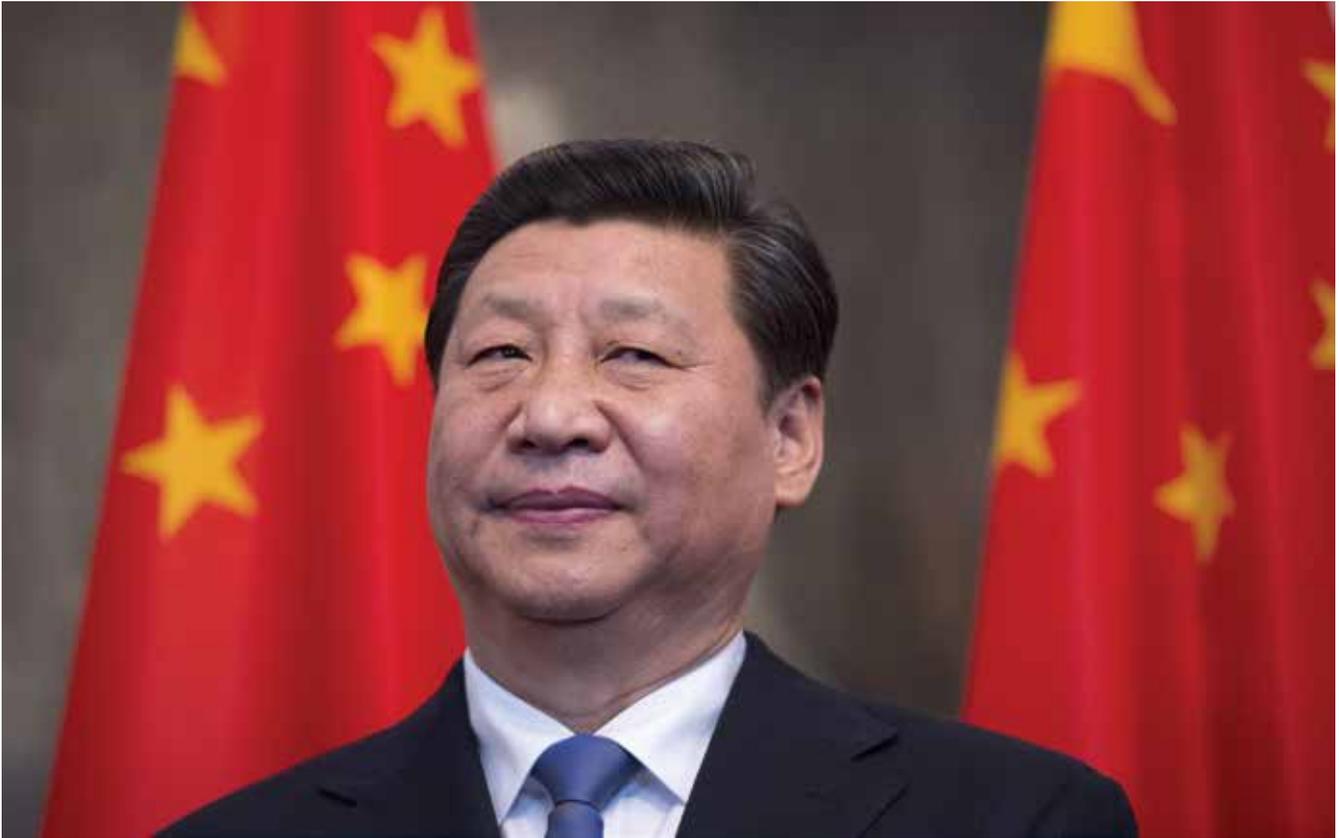


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US President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese attend the Quad Summit in Tokyo on 24 May 2022.



Chinese President Xi Jinping stands by national flag.

If we reflect on what has happened over the decades since the end of the war, on one hand, we see that both India and China have grown exponentially over the years, and have learnt some harsh lessons. But on the other, we see that there is much to be done - not only in the case of building India's military and infrastructural capacities on the borders but also in the case of solving the issues which have plagued India-China relations since the formation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Nevertheless, one critical thing that India has learnt and is seemingly implementing now is that it cannot trust China and phrases like "Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai" can only be seen as a fever dream. One can argue, therefore, that Indian foreign policy concerning China has become more pragmatic and realistic in recent years.

Crux Of War

We can say that the essence of the 1962 War reflects deeply into the kind of relations India and China share even today, even after 60 years. However, one notable thing is that the core issues which "instigated" the war are far from being solved. Be it the Tibet issue, the border issue in Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin which only got further complicated after the 1962 War, these issues still plague relations between the two Asian giants. Now, in 2022, we still have the same border issues with one another, however there are not many prospects of solving them in the immediate time. The Chinese mobilization in the Ladakh region in 2020 and the Galwan Valley clash and the eventual standoff that we see even now indicate to the point that solving the border issues with China is only getting more and more complicated with

time. The fact that China also introduced and implemented a new land border law last year is indicative of the fact that they are not going to be an easy party for negotiation. As per many analysts and observers, it was kind of obvious that the law was targeting the situation with India's borders with China, especially in the Ladakh region.

Aggressive Leadership

The China of today under the leadership of President Xi Jinping is a hyper-nationalist and highly centralised state, which is also getting more and more assertive, hostile and aggressive. All the neighbours of China who have a territorial dispute with the dragon are facing an increasing threat of Chinese invasion. China's recent activities in Taiwan are understandably increasing the levels of anxiety in the minds of



China's President Xi Jinping (L) and Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen.

China's recent activities in **Taiwan** are understandably **increasing the levels** of anxiety in the **minds of some Indians**

some Indians. Even though the possibility of it might seem slim now, one can't help but be wary of China's activities in the Ladakh region. India, even now, is far behind in terms of being able to come at equal levels to China in terms of its economy, military and infrastructural technologies.

It is important to note that along with the video footage of the Galwan clash, in the first session of the 20th Congress, Xi Jinping also hailed the activities of China in Hong Kong and Taiwan as China protecting its territorial integrity and also proclaimed that China will use force against Taiwan, if needed,

to quash external interference and separatist forces in the island nation. Xi Jinping, yet again, claimed that the reunification between Taiwan and China is inevitable. He also expressed Chinese opposition towards the hegemony of any single power – echoing China's ambition to change the world order and make itself as the core of the new envisioned power system. China has also, time and again expressed its displeasure towards the activities of the Quad, which it views as the eastern version of NATO – a security alliance formed to counter and contain China. It also rejects the notion of the idea of Indo-Pacific and sticks to the

concept of Asia-Pacific. Such a strong stance from China is not good news for India, one of the Quad members and an integral player within the framework of Indo-Pacific as propagated by both the Americans and the Japanese.

Misleading Front

If one looks into the larger geopolitics in the context of the Russia-Ukraine War and Chinese aggression in Taiwan, we can see that India is playing safe when it comes to engaging with China. On one hand, India is showing a cold shoulder to China, for instance, we could see this in the interaction between President Xi Jinping of China and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit at Samarkand, Uzbekistan last month. This also showed a gloomy picture in terms of the nature of diplomatic engagement between the two nations. While on the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin and others pose for photographs during Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

other, India has recently abstained from voting at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) for a resolution against the Chinese state's violation of the human rights of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang. China does not seem that willing to cooperate with India and solve the territorial and border issues any time soon. During the days leading to the SCO meet, reports were coming that China is working towards disengagement in the Ladakh region. And just days after the Summit, we could see an aggressive push from the Chinese side to build border infrastructure yet again. And this is not the first and unfortunately not the last time India has witnessed and will witness such fickle and deceptive behaviour from the Chinese side.

This contradictory behaviour is indicative of the fact that while India wants to show a strong stance against Chinese aggression, it also knows a little too well that it is heavily dependent on China while also not having enough capacity yet to be able to counter and this is China by itself. Adding to India's worries and woes, there is also a strong fear that if China activates

its String of Pearls Strategy, which would include a hostile front from the Pakistani side on the North and the West, the Chinese side to the North and the East and also Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean Region, particularly in places like Pakistan, Maldives and Sri Lanka - ultimately surrounding and choking India from all sides. And that is something India doesn't want in the slightest and severely endangers its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Chinese deployment of Yuan Wang 5, the ship deployed for spying on Indian naval capacities in Hambantota Port, Sri Lanka - is another indicator of China perceiving India as a more serious enemy and strategic rival, and thus wants to measure out the Indian naval capacity.

Diplomatic Approach

Does that mean that India should still stick to appeasing China as it used to until a decade ago? No. Not at all. What needs to be done, is to rather have a more clear and more consistent policy drafted when it comes to China. And for that, Indian policy-makers need to understand the Chinese psyche, their statecraft

and their infamous way of playing with words. India needs to seriously listen to what Sardar Patel said about China in the 1950s - the Chinese cannot be trusted. Like it has been suggested, time and again by many prominent thinkers like Kautilya, and Machiavelli, it is extremely critical to know your weaknesses and strengths while also knowing your enemy inside out. Therefore, the key for India to have a more pragmatic and resilient policy framework for dealing with the dragon is to understand it from inside and out, build on its capacities and work on its other weaknesses. China is not an easy adversary to deal with and India cannot always get the option to play safe without compromising its interest and national security. At the end of the day, not only does India need to have allies to support it in times of crisis, but it also needs a resilient and enviable military capacity, infrastructural and technological apparatus and diplomatic narrative and approach - to be able to resist hostile actions of its neighbour and have a sustaining and stable place in the larger world order - despite the chaos it is in. **DSA**