

China-India Brief

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Guest Column

The 20th Party Congress of the CCP and implications for India

By Amrita Jash

With the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Xi Jinping has been **re-appointed** for a record third term as the General Secretary of the CCP and Chairman of the Central Military Commission—the highest decision-making body at the helm of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Having secured his political and military positions for the third term, Xi will be re-elected as president of the People's Republic of China (PRC) at the 14th National Congress of the CCP, scheduled for March 2023. This stepwise accumulation of power highlights the order of

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The *China-India Brief* is a bi-monthly digest focusing on the relationship between Asia's two biggest powers. The Brief provides readers with a key summary of current news articles, reports, analyses, commentaries, and journal articles published in English on the China-India relationship. It features a Guest Column weighing in on key current issues in China-India relations.

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hierarchy: Party-Military-State. Setting a new precedent in China's political history, Xi Jinping's third five-year term **aims** to “build a modern socialist country in all respects and advance the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts.” This goal holds significant implications for China and the world at large.

In order to assess the implications of the 20th Party Congress, it is crucial to contextualise the PRC's perceptions of its external environment. It is critical to investigate the types of risks and challenges that the PRC is facing. The 20th Party Congress report **states** that China has been responding to “grave, intricate international developments and a series of immense risks and challenges” with looming concerns over “drastic changes in the international landscape,” particularly “external attempts to blackmail, contain, blockade, and exert maximum pressure on China,” and predicts that “[e]xternal attempts to suppress and contain China may escalate at any time.” This interpretation highlights the PRC's pessimistic view of its security environment given that “global economic recovery is sluggish, regional conflicts and disturbances are frequent, and global issues are becoming more acute,” where “strategic opportunities, risks, and challenges are concurrent, and uncertainties and unforeseen factors are rising” compounded with “black swan” and “gray rhino” events. The ninety-one mentions of the term “security” in the report indicate that China is ‘worried and concerned.’

The natural outcome of Beijing's foreign policy behaviour in this external environment will be increasingly contested ties with other countries. The lack of common interests and the narrow space for compromise will be equated with a forceful and assertive China under Xi's third term. Expectedly, to protect what it deems to be China's ‘core’ national interests, China will turn to the political and strategic deployment of coercive measures. As a result, countries may witness increased ‘wolf warrior’ diplomacy and the use of coercive techniques to punish any type of unfavourable behaviour toward China, particularly in relation to its territorial claims over Taiwan, the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and its border with India; Huawei's 5G technology; and the treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, among other things. Here, assertiveness and aggression are the watchwords.

In this regard, India will not be an exception to Beijing's coercive diplomacy. Especially, with the 2020 Galwan Valley clash and the subsequent border standoff, China-India ties have plunged to their lowest point. While there is no direct reference to India in Xi's report, India significantly figured in Xi's run-up to the 20th Party Congress. As **noted**, at the Congress, a brief footage of the Galwan clash was showcased in relaying the CCP's achievements under Xi and Chinese military commander Qi Fabao, injured in the clash, was one of the delegates at the Congress. There is a connection between India and Beijing's **pledge** to “safeguard

China's dignity and core interests." The most difficult diplomatic challenge is and will continue to be the unresolved boundary conflict. This is complicated further by India's **stance** that "the state of the border will determine the state of the relationship." With sixteen rounds of Commander-level talks, China and India have succeeded in disengagement with the creation of "buffer zones" in five areas: PP-14 in the Galwan Valley in July 2020; in the north and south banks of Pangong Tso in February 2021; at PP-17 A in Gogra in August 2021; and at PP-15 in the Gogra-Hot Springs area in September 2022. However, friction points that predate 2020, such as Depsang in Daulat Beg Oldie and the Charding Nullah Junction in Demchok in the western sector, remain thus making de-escalation difficult.

Furthermore, China has been upgrading its civil and military infrastructure along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). In recent statements, Indian Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande **described** the border with China as "stable but unpredictable," and **stressed** that the Indian Army must "carefully calibrate" its activities on the LAC to protect India's "interests and sensitivities" noting that there has been no major reduction in the PLA's force levels and that China's infrastructure development along the LAC is "unabated." Moreover, a closer look at the composition of the new 20th

Central Military Commission (CMC) also reveals an 'India' connection. Here, the appointment of the second-ranked Vice Chairman of the CMC, General He Weidong, is crucial as prior to commanding the Eastern Theatre Command (ETC), he served as Deputy Commander of the Western Theatre Command (WTC) and was Commander of the WTC Army. The WTC oversees China's borders with India. Recently, Xi Jinping, as Commander-in-Chief of the CMC's Joint Operations Center, has set the ground rules for the PLA by **stating** that: "the entire military should devote all its energy to and carry out all its work for combat readiness, enhance its capability to fight and win, and effectively fulfil its missions and tasks in the new era."

In sum, the risks of a renewed flareup at the border with India are considerable and tensions at the LAC could well worsen. India's rising profile as a player in the Quad and the larger Indo-Pacific will only add to the discord in China-India ties.

Amrita Jash, PhD., is Assistant Professor, at the Department of Geopolitics and International Relations, Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), in Manipal, India. She was a Pavate Fellow at the University of Cambridge. She is the author of the book *The Concept of Active Defence in China's Military Strategy (2021)*. She tweets at [@amritajash](https://twitter.com/amritajash).

News Reports

Bilateral relations

Defence infra push underway in Ladakh amid China standoff

Hindustan Times, November 23

India has inducted thousands of extra troops and modern military weaponry into the Ladakh sector to counter the Chinese military build-up after the standoff began two and a half years ago.

India to ramp up radar coverage along Indo-china border, to invest \$ 1.5 billion

India Today, November 22

More than 10,000 crores worth of made-in-India radars are planned to be deployed along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the next few years by the Indian Air Force (IAF).

China yet to respond to invite for Delhi conference: Official

Hindustan Times, November 18

The third ministerial “No Money For Terror” (NMFT) conference, was held in Delhi to discuss global trends in terrorism and terror financing, and the use of formal and informal channels to fund terror activities.

LAC is stable but unpredictable, China building infra: Army chief

The Indian Express, November 13.

The Army chief said infrastructure development by the Chinese on their side of the LAC was going on “unabated”.

China and India in the Region

Trudeau to meet PM Modi, wants close economic ties with India not China

Hindustan Times, November 15

Canada sees China as a disruptive global power fraught with geopolitical risks unlike India which is the largest democracy with shared interests in the Indo-Pacific and addressing global challenges.

India bats for free Indo-Pacific at EAS amid China's South China Sea claims

The Economic Times, November 13

India's position was highlighted by Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar who led India at the EAS Summit in Cambodia.

India-Taiwan relations: Delhi wants chips, Taipei needs friends. But what about ‘one-China’?

South China Morning Post, November 12

By forging closer economic ties, New Delhi can benefit from Taiwanese expertise and at the same time send Beijing a ‘political message’, analysts said.

US, India upgrade ties with ASEAN to top-level Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships

Channel News Asia, November 12

“Today, ASEAN-US relations have achieved a new milestone,” says Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

Trade and Economy

[If the world avoids a recession, it'll have India and China to thank](#)

CNN, November 22

India is projected to have the world's second highest growth rates, after Saudi Arabia, at 6.6% in 2022, followed by 5.7% in 2023.

China's economy is predicted to grow by 3.3% this year, followed by 4.6% in 2023.

[Apple supplier Foxconn to increase workforce four times in India as curbs in China disrupt business: report](#)

Outlook India, November 13

The report comes at a time when Foxconn is facing disruption in manufacturing iPhones in China as 'Zero Covid' curbs in the country disrupt production.

[Yellen urges closer US-India ties to 'diversify' supply chains away from China ahead of G20 summit](#)

South China Morning Post, November 12

Washington is looking to cut reliance on countries that "present geopolitical and security risks."

[India, China are converging to high-income levels: Moody's](#)

Mint, November 12

Of the 27 middle-income sovereigns that Moody Investors Service's rates globally, 13, including India and China, are clearly converging to high-income levels, the agency said in a new report on Thursday (November 10).

Energy and Environment

[China, India face peer pressure to help fund loss and damage](#)

Bloomberg, November 16

The calls are a marked departure from the solidarity that's in the past seen China and India stand alongside the world's poorest nations in demanding climate finance from the US and Western Europe.

[World population reaches 8 billion people, with India expected to surpass China as most populous nation](#)

CNBC, November 15

Though China has more people than any country in the world, its population will start declining as early as 2023 and India will surpass it.

[India can buy as much Russian oil as it wants, outside price cap, says US](#)

Hindustan Times, November 12

India is now Russia's largest oil customer other than China.

[Carbon dioxide emissions rising globally, but drop in China](#)

The Washington Post, November 10

China's carbon pollution was down 0.9% this year compared to 2021, while emissions in the United States were 1.5% higher, said a study by scientists at Global Carbon Project.

Analyses

China's SCO diplomacy: creating a parallel world order?

The Politburo, November 23

By Henrick Tsjeng, Associate Research Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), and Muhammad Faizal, Research Fellow, RSIS, NTU.

As a political, economic and security organisation, the SCO could be a useful instrument for China to promote an alternative to the western-led international order.

What is it about the nature of the India-China conflict that defies resolution?

The Hindu, November 21

By Sonia Trikha Shukla, Professor of Practice, Jindal School of Journalism and Communication

Sixty years on from 1962, having forged various peace settlements, the two countries are back to sporadic conflict on the border, still wrangling for every inch of land.

If China invaded Taiwan, what would India do?

Bloomberg, November 14

By Hal Brands, Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)

The New Delhi government fears its expansionist neighbor but is deeply wary about getting in the middle of a brawl with Beijing.

Even as the world's most populous nation, India will muddle along

Nikkei Asia, November 13

By Rupa Subramanya, Distinguished Fellow, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada

Overtaking China likely to be neither a dividend nor a disaster.

What a Russian nuclear escalation would mean for China and India

United States Institute of Peace, November 10

By Andrew Scobell, Distinguished Fellow, China, USIP; Vikram J. Singh, Senior Advisor, Asia Center, USIP; and Alex Stephenson, Program Specialist, China, USIP

China and India are approaching the situation in Ukraine with caution and calculated diplomacy to preserve their own strategic interests—both in Russia and the West.

Books and Journals

A Potential Conflict over Taiwan: A View from India

The Washington Quarterly Vol. 45, no.3 (2022): 147-162.

By Jabin T. Jacob, Associate Professor, Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence, and Adjunct Research Fellow, National Maritime Foundation

China's August 2022 military exercises around Taiwan in the wake of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to the island set off concerns about another potential regional

conflagration following on the heels of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. While the exercises have ceased, they were another opportunity for Beijing to underline its willingness to use force to take over Taiwan. This ever-present Chinese threat to regional peace and security throws up several questions for key players in the Indo-Pacific about how they might respond. Given Indian interests in the region—a substantial flow of its trade runs through the South China Sea—its own ongoing boundary dispute with China, as well as its status as a key member of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, how does India view a potential Taiwan contingency?

This paper attempts to answer this question by examining two aspects of the issue. One, it looks at the likelihood of a Taiwan conflict from India's perspective, including examining whether the Russian invasion of Ukraine has influenced New Delhi's calculus on its probability. It puts forth a couple of reasons why the hitherto predominant Indian view of the low likelihood of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan might be changing. Two, it explores India's interests and responses in the case of a conflict through the prism of India's relations with Taiwan, with China, and with the United States. This section also lays out what India's expectations of the US would be in the case of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. The article concludes by stating that a military role for India looks infeasible, but outlines what some plausible means of Indian involvement in the case of a conflict might be.

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The Centre on Asia and Globalisation is a research centre at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. It conducts in-depth research on developments in the Asia-Pacific and beyond, and aims to provide academics, decision-makers, and the general public with objective analysis on issues of regional and global significance. The Centre's motto "Objective Research with Impact" reflects its commitment towards ensuring that its analysis informs policy and decision makers in and about Asia.

OTHER CAG PUBLICATIONS

- *What Can the United States Learn from China about Infrastructure?* by Selina Ho in *The China Questions 2* (Harvard University Press, 2022)
- *Failure to launch? Indonesia against China's Grey Zone Tactics* by Evan Laksmana (IDSS Paper No.37)
- *Remodelling Indonesia's Maritime Law Enforcement Architecture: Theoretical and Policy Considerations* by Evan Laksmana (Contemporary Southeast Asia 44(1), 2022)
- *India-Australia-Indonesia Maritime Partnership: Shared Challenges, Compelling Opportunities* by Premesha Saha, Natalie Sambhi, and Evan Laksmana (ORF, 2022)
- *India Versus China : Why they are Not Friends* by Kanti Bajpai (Juggernaut Books, 2021)
- *Winning the Fight Taiwan Cannot Afford to Lose* by Drew Thompson (Strategic Forum, 2021)
- *Routledge Handbook of China-India Relations* edited by Kanti Bajpai, Selina Ho and Manjari Chatterjee Miller (Routledge, 2020)



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