The Intractable Sino-Indian Border Dispute: A Theoretical and Historical Account

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This thesis is presented in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Murdoch University, 2017
Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Stephen Westcott
Abstract

The Sino-Indian border dispute remains one of the most significant points of tension between Asia’s two rising powers, generating numerous military standoffs and diplomatic incidents since the founding of the two countries. Yet, despite the importance of the Sino-Indian border dispute in the geopolitics of both states, there have been no theoretical examination to date as to why the Sino-Indian border dispute has become and remain intractable. The lack of a proper theory regarding the intractableness of the Sino-Indian border dispute is symptomatic of a wider dearth of serious theoretical studies investigating why and how interstate border disputes become and remain intractable. This dissertation, therefore, attempts to answer a research question that has not been properly addressed in the scholarly literature on interstate border disputes: “why has the Sino-Indian border dispute become and remained intractable and thereby difficult to resolve?”

Utilising neoclassical realism as a guide, I propose and test one core hypothesis: China and India have maintained their irreconcilable positions towards the border dispute because any attempt at resolution, whether by making painful and unpopular concessions or by attempts to annex the territory by force, is against the interest of three sets of actors in both states. These three actors correspond with Kenneth Waltz’s three levels-of-analysis; that is the individual state leaders, the state’s governing institutions and the State as an actor operating in the international system. When these actors approach an interstate border dispute, there are three general policy strategies available: to escalate, to compromise or to maintain the status quo. For different reasons, actors from both China and India typically consider escalatory and compromise strategies too risky and reject them as options. Thus, maintaining the status quo becomes the default policy for both sides. Consequently, despite several rounds of border negotiations and numerous
confrontations, the Sino-Indian border dispute remains intractable, a state of affairs that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.
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List of Abbreviations

BJP: Bharatiya Janata Party

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

CCS: Cabinet Committee on Security

CMC: Central Military Commission

CSC: Chiefs of Staff Committee

CPD: Central Propaganda/Publicity Department

DIA: Defence Intelligence Agency

DPC: Defence Planning Committee

FALSG: Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group

FAO: Foreign Affairs Office of the PLA

GSD: General Staff Department of the PLA

IAF: Indian Armed Forces

IB: Intelligence Bureau (India’s)

ICJ: International Court of Justice

IOSC: The Information Office of the State Council

IMCO: International Military Cooperation Office of the PLA

INC: Indian National Congress

JOR: Indian Ocean Region
ITBP: Indo-Tibetan Border Police

JIC: Joint Intelligence Committee

JSD: Joint Staff Department of the PLA

JWG: Joint Working Group

LAC: The Line of Actual Control

LSG: Leading Small Groups

MoD: Ministry of Defence (India’s)

MEA: Ministry of External Affairs (India’s)

MFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (China’s)

MPS: Ministry of Public Security (China’s)

MSS: Ministry of State Security (China’s)

NAM: The Non-Aligned Movement

NDA: National Democratic Alliance (the BJP’s coalition)

NEFA: North-East Frontier Agency

NITI: National Institution for Transforming India

NSA: National Security Advisor (India’s)

NSAB: The National Security Advisory Board

NSCi: National Security Council (India’s)

NSCom: National Security Commission (China’s)

NSLSG: National Security Leading Small Group
PAP: People’s Armed Police
PLA: People’s Liberation Army
PM: Prime Minister
PMO: Prime Minister’s Office
PSC: Politburo Standing Committee
RAW: Research and Analysis Wing
SCFAO: State Council’s Foreign Affairs Office
SFF: Special Frontier Force
SPC: Strategic Policy Group
SRM: Special Representatives Meeting
TAR: Tibet Autonomous Region
UPA: United Progressive Alliance (the INC’s coalition)
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Chapter One:

Introduction
The research puzzle

In May 2015, the Republic of India’s Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, made a state visit to the People’s Republic of China (hereafter simplified to India and China respectively). On several levels, this visit was a success, strengthening bilateral ties. Notable achievements for Sino-Indian bilateral relations included securing US$22 billion worth of trade deals, initiatives to make it easier for Chinese citizens to get tourist visas to India and several cultural exchange programmes. However, progress on resolving China and India’s longstanding border dispute, arguably their most contentious bilateral issue, once again proved elusive. Although Prime Minister Modi conducted ‘candid and cordial’ discussions concerning the border dispute with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang, there was no hint of any shift in either side’s position over the ‘boundary question’. Indeed, Modi’s visit actually threw into stark contrast the two states’ different positions over the next step towards resolving the dispute. India has recently advocated the need for the clarification and demarcation of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), as there are currently at least twelve areas where the Chinese and Indian maps differ. These discrepancies are at least partly to blame for the frequent confrontations between the border forces. In contrast, China has argued that an elaboration of the code of conduct for the border forces is needed as previous efforts to clarify the LAC have only exacerbated the dispute and raised bilateral tensions (Aneja 2015b; Dasgupta 2015b; Raghuvanshi 2015).

This state of affairs is particularly curious as both Modi and Xi have indicated their desire to find a peaceful resolution to the border dispute. Additionally, both states have also proven that they are amenable to resolving divisive and intractable disputes. China resolved its longstanding and historically volatile disputed land borders with Vietnam in 1999 and Russia in 2008 (Fravel 2008, 146–48; Wiegand 2011, 225–26). In 2015, India
resolved its border disputes with Bangladesh after Prime Minister Modi pushed through the ratification of the Land Boundary Agreement, initially signed in 2011, despite strong domestic opposition and previous border patrol clashes (Bagchi and TNN 2015). Yet, when it comes to the Sino-Indian dispute, the significant and intractable disagreements have impeded all efforts to reach a resolution thus far. Even the exact extent of the border dispute is contested. Most neutral sources identify the Sino-Indian border dispute as stretching approximately 4057 kilometres (Littlewood 2004, 148; Smith 2014, 22). However, neither side agrees with this figure. Official Indian figures declare the border to be 3488 kilometres long while China only officially acknowledges it to be 2000 kilometres, arguing that Kashmir should not be considered as it is currently contested between India and Pakistan (Smith 2014, 22–23).

The Sino-Indian border dispute has been the major source of distrust between the two sides since relations first broke down over the issue in 1959, eventually leading to a brief war in 1962 in which China decisively defeated India (X. Liu 2011; Malone and Mukherjee 2010). Although relations were normalised between China and India in 1976, and negotiations resumed in 1981, the economic and political connections between the two states have remained relatively stunted and bilateral relations have often become chilled by armed clashes and incidents along the border. Negotiations over the Sino-Indian border dispute remain deadlock today. As of January 2018, 20 Special Representatives Meetings (SRM)¹ and numerous unofficial talks have been held, without any breakthrough (Kalha 2014, 208–28; Smith 2014, 29–30). The continuing tensions that the border dispute generates are exacerbated by frequent border confrontations between the two sides, the

¹ Chinese-Indian border negotiations have undergone numerous official iterations since they were restarted in 1981, with the SRMs only the most recent incarnation. The details of the various negotiations are discussed in Chapter Two and an overview is provided in Annex C.
most recent being a three-month long standoff on the tri-border junction between China, India and Bhutan in 2017 (Fravel 2017; Panda 2017a; Garver 2017).

What is especially puzzling about the Sino-Indian border dispute’s intractability is that much of the contested territory is remote, effectively barren and sparsely populated. As such, common sense would indicate that a dispute over such land should not be hard to resolve. Indeed several commentators have been keen to point out that both China and India have much to gain economically and geopolitically by improved relations (Acharya 2008, 2011; Das 2010; S. Jain and Yan 2011; X. Liu 2011; Malone and Mukherjee 2010; Shen 2010). Yet, this border dispute remains intractable and continues to poison both countries’ perception of each other. This situation, however, is actually common in international relations. Although some critics have declared that state borders are on the verge of withering away due to increasing globalisation and regional integration, international borders still remain of paramount importance to a state’s security and wellbeing (Parker and Adler-Nissen 2012, 773–74; Wiegand 2011, 1). Consequently, interstate border disputes remain an enduring feature of international relations, with some 83 examples of varying severity currently ongoing, as shown in Annex A.

As border disputes\(^2\) can refer to a wide variety of phenomena, for clarity’s sake I shall define the scope of my study here. Border disputes can occur both within and between states. Intrastate border disputes involve either secessionist or irredentist movements attempting to break away from the existing state or some attempt to redraw the provincial borders within the state in order to better reflect ethnic or some other

\(^2\) Some scholars make a distinction between a border and a boundary (Kalha 2014, 2–5; Parker and Adler-Nissen 2012, 775–76), but in this dissertation they are considered to be synonymous. Occasionally a distinction is also made between territorial and border disputes based upon the scale of the dispute. The former concerns the larger tracts of territory and the later minor disputes on the exact position of the boundary (see Prescott 1972, 66). However, as they both are disputes over territory and concern exactly where the border is to be drawn, I agree with those scholars (R. Guo 2012, 1–2) who consider them to be effectively the same phenomenon.
demographic situation. As such, intrastate border disputes tend to occur in states that are a federation with a weak central government, have a colonial empire or have cohesive and concentrated minorities that wish to establish their own territorial identity (Diehl and Goertz 1988, 104–6; Walter 2003; Wiegand 2011, 6).

Intrastate border disputes sometimes cause civil wars and are generally a prominent source of discord in the world today. However, my focus in this dissertation is exclusively on interstate border disputes that take place between established sovereign states. Specifically, I am investigating why interstate border disputes, such as the one between India and China, become intractable and hard to resolve once they are created. An intractable interstate border dispute is an actively contested overlap between two or more states’ claimed borders, where the claimants refuse to compromise or otherwise demonstrate reluctance in border negotiations to reach a settlement. An interstate border dispute is considered intractable only when the border negotiations have reached a deadlock, with neither side able to force a settlement or willing to offer a compromise acceptable to the other side.³ Hence, intractable interstate border disputes are distinct from other forms of interstate border disputes such as ambiguous borders,⁴ inert or non-salient disputes,⁵ those undergoing a protracted settlement process or disputes over cross-border policies (Wiegand 2011, 30).

There are of course many different forms of intractable interstate border disputes, but they all boil down to two essential types: land and maritime. With regard to maritime

³ I have deliberately avoided incorporating a specific time duration into the definition of intractable interstate border disputes as I consider any attempt to do so detracting from the salient point that a resolution is currently unreachable. Nonetheless, it is important to note that intractable interstate border disputes tend to last at least decades and have been known to continue for over a century.

⁴ Ambiguous borders occur where it is unclear which state has sovereignty over a specific territory, typically due to poor cartographic delimitation, but neither potential claimant state is willing to press a claim.

⁵ Inert or non-salient border disputes occur when the two sides have a known overlap in their claimed territorial borders where the territory is considered to insignificant to warrant engaging in resolution efforts but the states still formally maintain their claim.
borders, the ownership of the seas beyond the immediate coastline was somewhat vague until the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was finalised. The UNCLOS established that a coastal state’s territorial jurisdiction does not exceed more than 12 nautical miles from the coastal baseline with a possible exclusive economic zone that could extend no more than 200 nautical miles (Adhikari 1997, 228–31; Prescott 1987, 139–42). This opens up several interesting avenues of research, such as the confusion over maritime rights in narrow straits or whether a state can legitimately engage in island building to extend its territorial seas claim.\(^6\) In this dissertation, however, I will be focusing on interstate land borders for two main reasons. First, while not every state has access to a coastal region, most states (except for island states) share land borders with at least one neighbouring state. Thus, barring a few notable exceptions, most contentious interstate border disputes are over land borders. Secondly, since the Sino-Indian border dispute is situated in the Himalayas and hence is solely a land dispute, any discussion of maritime borders would be superfluous.

For students of international relations, the existence of intractable interstate border disputes poses several interesting problems to ponder. Foremost amongst them is what prompts states to adopt *status quo* policies towards an interstate border dispute ensuring that it becomes intractable? As the Sino-Indian border dispute illustrates, intractable interstate border disputes frequently sour bilateral relations, creating significant mistrust between the disputing states and potentially leading to serious military clashes or even war. One would therefore expect that it would be in the interests of the states concerned to resolve these issues quickly, if only to allow them to focus on more pressing concerns.

\(^6\) Disputes over small offshore islands, both inhabited and uninhabited, pose an obvious definitional problem as they often involve elements of both land and maritime border issues. While not of direct relevance to this dissertation, it is worth noting here that like many recent researchers in this field (Fravel 2008, 10; Wiegand 2011, 7–8) I consider offshore islands to be more akin to a land dispute. This is because islands, no matter how small, are technically land and it is at least theoretically possible for a state to establish some form of permanent presence upon the island as opposed to a body of water.
However, the tendency is for states to obstinately adopt positions they know will be unacceptable to their counterpart, ensuring that the dispute becomes intractable and prolonged (Chung 2004; R. Guo 2012; Wiegand 2011). Why is this the case? Thus far, there has been scant exploration as to why interstate border disputes, once they develop, are left by states to fester, thereby poisoning bilateral relations and raising the prospects of war.

**Research question and significance of this dissertation**

This dissertation seeks to answer one central research question: *why has the Sino-Indian border dispute become and remained intractable and thereby extremely difficult to resolve?*

For scholars of international relations, this question has theoretical significance for two reasons. Firstly, several studies have shown that interstate border disputes are a significant destabilising factor in international affairs, with the potential to cause recurring crises and wars between the disputing states (Goertz and Diehl 1992; Hensel 1999; Huth 1996; Kocs 1995; Kolossov 2005; Sample 2014; Toft 2014; Vasquez 1995, 2009). Even when a dispute is not volatile, contested borders have a tendency to poison bilateral relationships and cause lasting tensions between the disputing states. Such mistrust between the disputing states typically impedes their ability to cooperate on topics of mutual interest or even maximise their trade potential. Thus, as a major cause of tension and disruption, border disputes become particularly concerning when they become intractable. The longer an international border dispute fester, the longer it is able to stunt bilateral relations and the greater the risks of a crisis to develop.

Secondly, within the existing international relations literature, the causes and dynamics of intractable interstate border disputes have yet to be satisfactorily addressed.
Although such disputes are not completely ignored in international relations scholarship, they are more often than not overlooked or mentioned only in passing. Even those scholars who directly address interstate border disputes typically only do so in passing or as part of a larger research topic, such as the nature of war, state development or the emergence of interstate rivalries (see Atzili 2012; Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson 2007; Diehl 1999; Vasquez 2009). There is a small, but growing, group of scholars whose research is dedicated to the various dynamics and issues involving interstate border disputes. Nonetheless, these studies thus far has tended to focus on establishing how interstate border disputes arise and circumstances in which they are likely to escalate (Diehl and Goertz 1988; Fravel 2010; Hensel 1999; Huth 1996; Kocs 1995; Sample 2014; Vasquez 1995) or how they might be resolved by various forms of compromise (Fravel 2005; Gibler 1999, 2012; R. Guo 2012; Huth and Allee 2002; Simmons 1999). While these previous works have provided valuable contributions to the understanding of interstate border disputes, they all fall short of explaining why most of these disputes become intractable and fester for decades.

Notwithstanding these theoretical insights, the primary significance of the central research question in this study is to throw light on the Sino-Indian border dispute. As both China and India are widely recognised as the rising powers in Asia, their friendship or rivalry will have a significant impact upon regional and global politics. Though the Sino-Indian border dispute is not the only issue in the bilateral relationship, it is a significant cause of mistrust and tension and remains the most dangerous flashpoint for the two countries. While most studies of the Sino-Indian border dispute have provided several good insights into how specific events transpired, none to date has provided a comprehensive or systematic explanation of why the dispute has become so enduring and intractable. The Sino-Indian border dispute is unlikely to escalate into a major war any
time soon, but its volatile nature ensures that this remains a possibility. Indeed, the endemic mistrust between China and India is mainly a result of this dispute and periodically generates dangerous crises that could lead to war. Thus, the need for a systematic analysis into the dynamics of the key reason behind the levels of deep distrust that has bedevilled Sino-Indian relations is not only timely but also increasingly necessary.

**Literature review**

As alluded to above, in order to address the research question, research from two fields of inquiry has been drawn upon: the literature on interstate border disputes in general and the literature on Sino-Indian border dispute specifically.

*Previous studies into interstate border disputes*

There have been several studies within the international relations discipline over the past three decades which have demonstrated that territorial disputes between states have been a leading cause of war and conflict throughout modern history (Diehl and Goertz 1988; Goertz and Diehl 1992; Hensel 1999; Huth 1996; Toft 2014; Vasquez 1995, 2009). Prior to these studies, the discourse on interstate border disputes was relatively sparse, comprising mostly of the odd work by political geographers, international law scholars and historians. However, these early works mainly detailed how international borders function or provided in-depth case studies of a specific dispute rather than any investigation into interstate border disputes (Kolossov 2005, 607–12; Minghi 1963).

Indeed, there was no systematic or comprehensive effort to investigate interstate border disputes specifically until the political geographer Victor Prescott addressed the topic as part of his broader studies on frontiers and boundaries (Prescott 1972, 66–72, 1987, 93–133). Prescott categorised interstate border disputes into four types: territorial
disputes involving rival claims of ownership over a significant quantity of land; positional disputes over the exact location of the border; functional disputes over how open or closed a state’s border should be; and allocation disputes over which state has the right to exploit a resource that bisects the border or exactly how this resource is to be distributed. Each of these different disputes has its own specific dynamics although, in practice, contested boundaries can involve several of these dispute types at once (Prescott 1972, 66, 1987, 98).

While Prescott’s studies were a major step forward in terms of conceptual clarity and definitional detail, they did not account for issues such as state leaders’ and citizens’ deep emotional connection to territory or why a state may be willing to negotiate over one dispute but not another (Goertz and Diehl 1992, 13; Kolossov 2005, 612–13).

International relations scholars and political scientists first began to explore these topics and take an interest in interstate border disputes in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. The most noteworthy work from this generation of scholarship is Paul Huth’s (1996) *Standing Your Ground: Territorial Disputes and International Conflict*, one of the most comprehensive and widely cited study on interstate border disputes to date. Conducting a rigorous quantitative analysis, Huth examined 129 interstate border disputes that existed between 1950-1990 in order to identify factors behind each dispute’s initiation, escalation and resolution. In essence, Huth demonstrated that domestic factors play a major role in the emergence of an interstate border dispute and why state leaders tend take a hard-line on border questions or escalate the dispute. In contrast, international factors often explain why an interstate border dispute may move towards a resolution and can reinforce a state’s incentive to escalate.

Other studies from this period were not as comprehensive but nonetheless provided several interesting insights into the nature of interstate border disputes. For example, some studies established the correlation between conflict and territory (Diehl and Goertz 1988;
Hensel 1999; Vasquez 2009), particularly that territorial disputes often act as the primary factor behind war between neighbouring states (Kocs 1995; Senese 1999; Vasquez 1995). Other studies investigated the likelihood of recurring conflict over disputed territory that has generated war between neighbouring states in the past (Goertz and Diehl 1992; Hensel 1999).

In recent years, international relations scholars have begun to produce more nuanced analyses of the dynamic factors at play throughout the duration of an interstate border dispute (Blanchard 2005; Chung 2004; Fravel 2008; R. Guo 2012; Wiegand 2011; Wiegand and Powell 2011). Many of these studies have developed causal theories regarding why interstate border disputes tend to be so contentious, providing good insights into why they tend to oscillate between conflict and an uneasy peace. In particular, these studies have tried to explain the conditions under which states are likely to maintain the status quo or escalate tensions with reference to interstate border disputes, and when and how states are able to resolve such disputes. For example, Jean-Mark Blanchard (2005) hypothesised that the level of a state’s internal strength coupled with what functions its borders play usually determines the specific actions that the state may take on the disputed border. M. Taylor Fravel, in his studies on China’s border disputes, provides an alternative argument. In essence, Fravel (2005, 2008, 2010) theorizes that states, or at least autocratic ones, are more inclined to pursue a resolution of their interstate border disputes when facing domestic unrest so as to focus on their internal troubles, but to escalate tensions on the border when perceiving that the balance of power is beginning to shift in their opponent’s favour.

One study that has provided an explanation of the existence and nature of intractable interstate border disputes is Chien-peng Chung’s (2004) Domestic Politics, International Bargaining and China’s Territorial Disputes. In this study, Chung argues
that negotiations over interstate border disputes are subject to a ‘two-level game’ in which the negotiators are both constrained by what they believe they can get the other side to concede and what their domestic constituents will accept. Hence, an interstate border dispute becomes intractable when domestic political constraints on one or both sides narrow the space to compromise to unacceptable levels, thereby removing any chance for agreement (Chung 2004, 17–25).

An alternative explanation behind intractable interstate border disputes is provided in Krista Wiegand’s (2011) Enduring Territorial Disputes. Wiegand argues that an enduring or intractable interstate border dispute is caused either by the dispute’s lack of salience to the parties concerned or by the dispute’s linkage with other foreign policy goals. When the interstate border dispute lacks salience, the claimants effectively ignore the dispute. However, when the interstate border dispute is linked to other foreign policy goals of the state, the disputing parties use it as a tool for coercive diplomacy or as a form of bargaining chip to trade for other gains. Thus, resolution of interstate border disputes would be possible only when the other foreign policy goals have been achieved or are no longer valid, thereby removing the main obstacle to negotiating a settlement (Wiegand 2011, 41–68). While these two studies provide some useful insights into intractable interstate border disputes, both authors acknowledged that their studies were limited in scope and application (Chung 2004, 161–62; Wiegand 2011, 290).

A majority of the scholarship on interstate territorial disputes has understandably been influenced by and drawn from the realist tradition in international relations either explicitly or implicitly. However, several notable alternative perspectives on interstate border disputes do exist. Liberal theorists, for example, have focused on the problem of how interstate border disputes could be resolved before they lead to war and suffering. In this regard, liberal theorists have encouraged states to use international legal mechanisms,
especially the International Court of Justice, as a means to resolve interstate disputes including border disputes (Huth, Croco, and Appel 2011; Simmons 1999).

Several scholarly studies in the liberal tradition have inquired whether increasing democratisation improves the prospects of peacefully resolving interstate border disputes, although their results have so far been inconclusive (Wiegand 2011, 20–21). For instance, Paul Huth and Todd Allee’s (2002) rigorous empirical study has found that although democracies are initially more inclined towards negotiations rather than to making threats, there is no significant difference in behaviour between democracies and non-democracies during dispute negotiation or escalation. More recently, Douglas Gibler (2012) has argued that the liberal concept of the ‘democratic peace’ would be more accurately described as a ‘territorial peace’. In essence, this means that salient interstate border disputes usually prompt a state to develop strong centralised defence institutions that can also easily be utilised by autocratic regimes for repression. In contrast, those states without interstate border disputes do not require these strong centralised defence institutions and thus are free to develop more democratic institutions (Gibler 2012, 165–68).

Some notable scholarship on interstate border disputes from the constructivist and the critical border studies schools have emerged out of Europe in recent years. While border disputes are not usually a concern for scholars from the constructivist and critical paradigms, some have recently sought to provide explanations as to why they exist (Albert 1998; Cerny 2010; Moraczewska 2010; Parker and Adler-Nissen 2012; Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2009; Strandsbjerg 2010, 2012). These studies have largely produced two related insights. The first is that interstate border disputes are tied to the function that the border plays for the states and the border practices that the states engage in. For example if a state considers its border important for forming its polity than it would likely engage in building infrastructure to demarcate its boundary. If a state considers the less
important than the ability for the market to function, then the border is likely to be porous or open (Cerny 2010; Moraczewska 2010; Parker and Adler-Nissen 2012).

The second is that the practice of creating borders, typically through cartographic exercises, is strongly linked to identity, specific political spaces and how we conceive the world (Albert 1998; Strandsbjerg 2010, 2012). As such, due to the strong attachment and utility that territory has for states and individuals to define themselves, any overlapping claims become vigorously disputed. This process is exacerbated by the fact that states often need to continuously redefine their borders in order for them to be meaningful (Albert 1998, 61). Notwithstanding such insights, neither liberalism nor constructivism has provided a systematic explanation as to why interstate border disputes become intractable and thus difficult to resolve.

*Previous studies on the Sino-Indian border dispute*

The Sino-Indian border dispute has not been as popular a case study among scholars as other interstate border disputes, such as the Indo-Pakistan dispute or the Sino-Soviet/Russian dispute. Nonetheless, there has developed a significant volume of literature dedicated to exploring various aspects of this interstate border dispute. Most of this literature is devoid of any theoretical explanation as to the intractability of the Sino-Indian border dispute and has approached the topic predominantly from historical perspectives (Arpi 2013; Dalvi 1969; Deepak 2005; Kalha 2014; Garver 2001; Lamb 1964; Lin 2004; Ma 2014; Maxwell 2013; Mehra 2007; Wah 1970). A few notable recent contributions have also come from geopolitical analysts. These geopolitical scholars, though still descriptive, have moved their focus to assessing the current status of the Sino-Indian border dispute and its role in broader Sino-Indian relations (Chellaney 2013; Das...
When discussing the origins and formation of the Sino-Indian border dispute, analysts typically focus on four main historical periods. The first period explores the border’s formation and relations between the British Raj and Imperial/Republican China (Arpi 2013; Lin 2004; Mehra 1989, 35–75, 2007, 33–135). The second covers the initial engagement between independent India and communist China up to and including the 1962 border war and its immediate aftermath (Dalvi 1969; Ma 2014; Maxwell 2013; Mehra 1989, 76–126, 2007, 167–207; Wah 1970). The third covers the diplomatic freeze that lasted from 1963 until the 1976 normalisation of relations between India and China and the initial rounds of border negotiations from 1981 to 1988 (S. Ganguly 1989; Z. D. Singh 2011). The final period covers the evolution of the current situation from the post-1989 negotiations. During this period, China and India were able to reach some key agreements over maintaining ‘peace and tranquillity’ before talks became stalemated in 2006. Sino-Indian border relations since then have oscillated between tentative confidence building measures and low-level rivalry (Acharya 2011; Garver 2011; Horimoto 2010; Smith 2014).

One issue that is frequently linked with the dispute is the status of Tibet, owing largely to the important role it plays in determining China’s posture towards the border (Mullik 1971, 3–73; Sikri 2009, 95–103; Smith 2014, 83–109; Thapliyal 2011). Tibet is typically identified as the ‘soft underbelly’ of China with a restive indigenous population whose erstwhile leadership fled to India in 1959. This context has added a special antagonism to the dispute and has heightened the mutual suspicion each country holds for the other (Arpi 2011; Deepak 2005, 31–92, 201–2140; Garver 2001, 53–78; Kalha 2014, 33–65; Malik 2011, 125–64). Additionally, as the majority of the Sino-Indian border is
contiguous with Tibet, local Tibetan administrations have also played a significant role in
the border’s development. Essentially, the two key events that India cites as establishing
the border are the 1846 incorporation of Kashmir, which had a tentative claim to the Aksai
Chin, as a protectorate of the British Raj and the drawing of the McMahon Line during
the 1913-1914 Simla Conference. In contrast, China claims ownership to Tibet’s
‘traditional’ boundary limits, arguing that the McMahon Line illegally sought to detach
‘Southern Tibet’ from China and that the Aksai Chin had always been part of Tibet
(Deepak 2005; Fravel 2008; Garver 2001; Kalha 2014; Lin 2004; Maxwell 2013; Mehra
2007; Smith 2014).

Much of the scholarship dealing directly with the Sino-Indian border dispute
focuses solely on the 1962 war and the events that led to it. As this was a highly evocative
event, especially for India, most of the literature is staunchly partisan and clearly blames
one side or the other for the breakdown of relations. The two main positions taken within
the literature either denounces China as a duplicitous aggressor that misled India about its
intentions or blames India for adopting an obstinate stance and provocative, self-deluding
border policies. The most notable and influential contribution to the latter school of
thought is Neville Maxwell’s (2013) meticulously researched *India’s China War* which is
particularly scathing of the Indian position. In essence, Maxwell argues that it was
effectively India’s intransigence in negotiations and its provocative ‘Forward Policy’ that
drove the Chinese to attack in 1962 (Maxwell 2013).

A more tempered, though no less critical, analysis of the Indian decision making
during the 1962 Border War is found in Steven Hoffmann’s (1990) *India and the China
Crisis*. This book provides the only dedicated theoretical exploration of the Sino-Indian
border dispute to date. Hoffmann utilised a crisis behaviour model to explore the
physiological and institutional issues within India during the late 1950s-early 1960s that
led to the various erroneous assumptions guiding pre-war decisions and the poor crisis management during it. Several more narrowly focused accounts have been provided by other scholars. These studies here typically focused on identifying specific blunders committed by India, from its use of dubious arguments and sources to support its claim (K. Gupta 1982; Rubin 1960) to its poorly considered and undersupplied military manoeuvring along the border that ultimately provoked the Chinese attack (Dalvi 1969; Wah 1970).

However, the majority of the scholarly studies of the period have been produced by India-friendly scholars and consequently denounce China’s position and actions for the border dispute and the 1962 border war. Many of these studies vent a sense of betrayal and indignation that many Indians felt after what appeared to be a Chinese surprise attack. They also champion the legitimacy of India’s position and attack the Chinese negotiation strategies or activities along the border generally. The general narrative in these studies is that the Sino-Indian border was largely determined during the British Raj by the conclusion of treaties between it and Imperial/Republican China or Tibet. Hence, as India is the successor state to the British Raj, the Sino-Indian border forms part of India’s inheritance after the British withdrew from the subcontinent. In contrast, China had made no claim over the areas until the late 1950s and only sought to legitimise the seizure of land it considered strategically necessary to maintain its hold over Tibet (Banerjee 1985; Mullik 1971; Rao 1968). Though several of these accounts are little more than propaganda, they have proven to be a particularly powerful narrative within India and with several sympathetic foreign scholars. As such, the China critical perspective is typically echoed in a number of contemporary studies that cover the Sino-Indian border dispute’s history (Arpi 2013; Chellaney 2013; Deepak 2005; Kalha 2014; Pant 2010; Radchenko 2014; Verma 2011).
In recent years, there have been several comprehensive studies of the events and issues surrounding the Sino-Indian border dispute that move beyond its origin and the 1962 war. These works have generally given detailed accounts on the status of negotiations over the border (Acharya 2011; Garver 2011; Kalha 2014; Maxwell 2011; Z. D. Singh 2011; Smith 2014), analysing the expected military preparedness and broader strategic situation on both sides (Holslag 2009; Kapoor 2012; Rajagopalan and Prasad 2010; Scott 2008b; Verma 2011) or providing several novel ideas and encouragement for policymakers on both sides to resolve the dispute (Das 2010, 2013; S. Jain and Yan 2011; X. Liu 2011; Malone and Mukherjee 2010; Shen 2010). Curiously, despite many accounts stressing the importance of the relationship and the potential volatility of the Sino-Indian border, few of these studies have provided any dedicated analysis of the causes of Chinese or Indian behaviour towards the border dispute. Instead, the Sino-Indian border dispute is often simply incorporated as a factor in a broader analysis of the Sino-Indian relationship (Deepak 2005; Garver 2001; Scott 2008b; Smith 2014) or as a case study of how China approaches its border disputes (Chung 2004, 96–126; Fravel 2008).

**Theoretical framework**

*Neoclassical realism and its insight*

Although there is a dearth of theoretical research on the Sino-Indian border dispute, the various phases of an interstate border dispute have been studied from several different theoretical approaches. What then would be the best theoretical approach to address the intractability of an interstate border dispute generally and the Sino-Indian border dispute specifically? Since interstate border disputes are inherently too complex for any one theoretical paradigm to adequately encapsulate, one might be tempted to follow an eclectic approach as advocated by international relations theorists such as Peter Katzenstien and
Rudra Sil (2004, 2008; 2010) or Samuel Makinda (2000a, 2000b). In essence, the eclectic approach draws upon insights from different theoretical paradigms to analyse and explain certain actors’ behaviour, events and outcomes in international relations. While a pragmatic fusion of the various theoretical insights would be useful for studying interstate borders in a holistic sense, specific theoretical paradigms remain well suited for analysing different aspects of the phenomenon. So, then, which theory is best suited to analysing the causes of the Sino-Indian border dispute’s intractability?

Liberalism’s focus on the impact of international norms and institutions on state behaviour naturally lends itself to analysing interstate border dispute resolution and assessing how different types of regimes engage during border negotiations (see Huth and Allee 2002; Simmons 1999; Wiegand and Powell 2011). However, this makes liberalism a rather poor paradigm for discussing why interstate border disputes become intractable. Another problematic aspect in using liberalism for this task is the theory’s assumption that a democratic state would be more amenable to negotiation and compromise over an interstate border dispute in which it is involved, especially with another democratic state (Gibler 2012, 112–14; Wiegand 2011, 20–21). However, liberalism fails to explain fully why interstate border disputes involving at least one non-democratic state become intractable or why some democratic states have been unable to resolve their longstanding border disputes with each other.7

Other alternatives are the constructivist and critical geopolitical discussions on interstate borders. As mentioned above, constructivist and critical geopolitical discussions largely focus on how political perceptions towards interstate border disputes form and shape state behaviour towards them rather than why they become intractable (Albert 1998;

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7 Some notable examples include Spain and the UK’s dispute over the Rock of Gibraltar, the border dispute between Costa Rica and Nicaragua and the disputes over several islands between Japan and South Korea.
Yet, these constructivist and critical geopolitical discussions on interstate borders have also been heavily influenced by European regional integration, particularly the formation and impact of the European Union. Consequently, these studies are of little value in evaluating the dynamics of interstate borders outside the European Union area. Another problem with using constructivism and critical geopolitical theories to discuss intractable interstate border disputes is that they do little to explain how ideas and identities change over time. Finally it is often unclear how the outcomes these paradigms identify differ from the alternative theories’ predictions of state behaviour towards interstate border disputes (Katzenstein and Okawara 2001, 172–74; Sherrill and Hough 2015, 238).

Given the typically tense and volatile nature of intractable interstate border disputes, realism provides a more promising avenue for investigating why states become and remain unable to resolve these disputes. Realism is a broad paradigm covering a number of diverse but related theories, which, despite frequent and rigorous criticism from alternative perspectives, remains one of the most dominant paradigms within the international relations discipline (Brown 2012, 857–58; Donnelly 2009, 31–33; Walt 1998, 36–37). There are four fundamental assumptions that unite realists. The first is that sovereign states, simply defined as the entity holding exclusive political authority within a specific territory, are the primary actors in international affairs. Second is the recognition that the international system is anarchic in the sense that there is no form of suprasovereign international government to enforce order and provide security. Third is that states pursue many different abstract or specific goals or objectives, known simply as interests, the first and foremost of which is their security from attack. Finally, with no higher authority to constrain other states, a state must rely on its own prowess to achieve its interests especially ensuring its security. It follows that as states seek to pursue their
interests but have no guarantee as to their security, there emerges a competition for the means with which to achieve their interests, or, more simply put, a struggle for power (Mearsheimer 2014, 17–18; Morgenthau 1973, 4–6; Waltz 2008, 76–80).

What fragments realism into various, often bitterly opposed, theories are differences of opinion over the severity of this competition, how exactly power should be conceptualised, and what assumptions have the largest influence over state behaviour (Brooks 1997, 446; Lawson 2015, 52–53; Schmidt and Juneau 2012, 62–68). While these differing realist theories are legion, I seek to build upon the theoretical work of several earlier studies on interstate border disputes. These studies have utilised what Huth (1996) called the ‘modified realist model’ but what is now known in the contemporary international relation’s lexicon as ‘neoclassical realism’.

Neoclassical realism argues that it is necessary to take into account domestic political factors in order to accurately explain state behaviour within the confines of the international system (Rose 1998, 146; Taliaferro, Lobell, and Ripsman 2009, 13; Toje and Kunz 2012, 4). This is in large part because neoclassical realists recognise that ‘the state’ in international affairs is really shorthand for the state’s political elite. The political elite in this context comprise of the head of the government, key ministers and the chief officials of relevant state agencies. It is this political elite who are the primary creators of the foreign policies that make up state behaviour (Lobell 2009, 56–57; Reichwein 2012, 43; Ripsman 2009, 171). Neoclassical realists agree with structural realists such as John Mearsheimer and Kenneth Waltz that the anarchical structure of the international system is the primary shaper of a state’s foreign policy. Thus, one of neoclassical realism’s key assumptions is that the state elites’ primary interest is to ensure that their state can survive in a self-help system. In doing so, the state policymakers are aware that their ability to react to changes in the global or regional balance of power is inherently constrained by
their state’s prowess and relative position within the system, measured in terms of material and intangible power (Rathbun 2008, 316–18; Sorensen 2013, 368–70).

However, neoclassical realists also argue that the situation within the international system is far vaguer than most structural realists assume. As such, state policymakers need some additional guidelines to help them formulate policies to address their state’s situation in the international environment (Rose 1998, 152). These guidelines are found in the state’s own international prowess but also from the domestic priorities or political pressures within the state (Kunz and Saltzman 2012, 102–7; Sherrill and Hough 2015, 255–56; Sorensen 2013, 367–68). These domestic pressures primarily come from the various interest groups or governing institutions that have a stake in the matter or otherwise wish to influence foreign policy. These domestic governing institutions are diverse, ranging from political party factions to the military to civilian bureaucracies to the media, but all seek to ensure that the chosen foreign policy aligns with their institutional interests (Lobell 2009, 57–59; Ripsman 2009, 181–85).

Additionally, the political elite, particularly the highest decision-maker, have their own interests to consider. The primary concern of the political elite, after securing their state from external threats, is to retain their hold on political power for as long as feasible. Hence, should the political elite rely on one or more domestic institutions to hold power, they become highly susceptible to that group’s preferences. Yet the political elite typically also have their own agenda for their state beyond mere survival and will, circumstances permitting, seek to pursue that interest (Byman and Pollack 2001; Dueck 2009). The interplay between these various domestic political interests becomes the intervening factor that compels or prohibits specific foreign policies after initial considerations regarding the international balance of power.
Therefore, neoclassical realism emerges as a sound approach for analysing the Sino-Indian border dispute for two main reasons. Firstly, it allows me to build upon the insights of existing studies on border disputes. Secondly, it accounts for the diverse range of actors and interests that impact upon intractable interstate border disputes.

*The levels-of-analysis explanation*

Building upon the insights provided by neoclassical realism, I propose and test one core hypothesis: China and India have maintained their irreconcilable positions towards the border dispute because any attempt at resolution, whether by making painful and unpopular concessions or by attempts to annex the territory by force, is against the interest of three sets of actors in both states. First, it is against the interests of political elites, particularly the highest decision-maker, in both China and India to support potentially unpopular border concessions or escalation strategies that pose the risk of backfiring. Second, supporting unpopular border concessions and risky escalation strategies is also against the interest of key governing institutions, particularly the military, the civilian bureaucracy and governing political parties. Finally, making territorial concessions or using force is typically against the interest of the Chinese and Indian states, operating as sovereign actors in an anarchical international system. With compromise and escalation policies usually ruled out by all actors, effectively the only policy approach remaining is to maintain the *status quo*. Thus, both sides insist on their incompatible territorial claims during negotiations whilst trying to preserve the position they currently hold on the ground.

These three different actors (top political leaders, key governing institutions, and the state itself) effectively mirror the three levels-of-analysis, first identified in Kenneth Waltz’s (1959) pioneering study *Man, the State, and War*. The first level of analysis
focuses at the individual decision-maker. The emphasis here is on the highest decision maker since policies are typically approved or rejected by the state’s chief executive. Hence, the individual level-of-analysis explores state leaders as relevant agents whose ambitions, beliefs, temperament and other idiosyncrasies shape a state’s behaviour. The second level-of-analysis is the state level, focusing on domestic governing institutions as the relevant actors who shape a state’s policies and behaviour. Key institutions may include the military and security forces, the civilian bureaucracy and governing political parties. The final level-of-analysis is the system level, where the State itself is an autonomous actor that responds to the pressures of the anarchical international system (Schmidt and Juneau 2012, 69–72; Singer 1961, 80–82; Waltz 1959).

As alluded to above, there are three general strategies available for these actors when deciding upon a policy towards an interstate border dispute. Firstly, they may attempt to escalate tensions by threatening or using force to secure their claim. Secondly, the claimants could attempt a peaceful resolution of the border dispute by a compromise, usually involving some mutually acceptable territorial and/or other concessions. Finally, they may attempt to maintain the *status quo* of the disputed border (Astorino-Courtois and Trusty 2000, 362–63; Huth 1996, 34; Wiegand 2011, 11–15). M. Taylor Fravel aptly summarised the key features of these strategies when he noted:

A delaying [*status quo*] strategy involves doing nothing, whereby states maintain their territorial claim through public declarations but neither offer concessions nor use force. Importantly, states can delay by participating in negotiations while refusing to compromise. A cooperation strategy excludes the threat or use of force and involves an offer either to transfer

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Throughout this dissertation, I have capitalised the conceptual State-as-an-actor to differentiate it from references to specific or general states operating in international affairs.
some or all of the contested land to the opposing side or to drop claims to land held by the other state. Such compromise almost always precedes the final settlement of the dispute … By contrast, an escalation strategy involves the threat or use of force to seize land or coerce an opponent in a territorial dispute (2008, 12).

Escalation strategies can vary significantly in severity in their implementation. Specific escalatory policies can range from the milder versions such as sustained threats of force or trade embargos, to the more forceful, such as increased troop deployment/surges along the border, efforts to occupy disputed territory or outright war (Senese 1999, 153–56; Wiegand 2011, 11–12). What unites all of these policy strands is that they all actively challenge the status quo by utilising force in some manner. Escalation strategies are useful for actors as a means to either consolidate their physical control over the disputed territory or to coerce a change in the rival actor’s policy regarding the border. However, this strategy does carry some significant risks for the actors. The target of the escalation may respond with its own counter threats, potentially even upping the ante and leading to uncontrolled spiral of hostility. Additionally, the initiator’s troops may not perform as expected and may potentially expose the weakness of the state, resulting in, at best, a weaker negotiation position or, at worst, a humiliating defeat (Fravel 2005, 53; Huth and Allee 2002, 51–55).

In contrast, compromise policies are deliberate efforts to reach some form of deal via diplomatic negotiations in order to resolve the border dispute peacefully. The specific compromise policies available similarly vary significantly, ranging from surrendering the territorial claim to offering reciprocal territorial swaps or seeking to trade some form of political or economic benefits for territorial concessions (R. Guo 2012, 85–106; Huth and Allee 2002, 49–51). Apart from one state agreeing to cede territory or renounce their
claims after defeat in a war, compromise policies provide the only way for an interstate border dispute to be resolved (Wiegand 2011, 14–15). However, pursuing such a policy has significant associated risks. While one of the claimants may pursue a compromise policy unilaterally, its rival also has to be receptive to the policy for it to successfully resolve the dispute. Should a claimant offer concessions that are not reciprocated, then the state risks surrendering a bargaining advantage for little or no gain. Offering concessions may even give the state and its officials a reputation of weakness, encouraging its rival or others to seek further gains. Additionally, concessions to rival claimants, especially territorial, are often highly unpopular domestically, often making individual and state-level actors baulk at this option, lest they destabilise the government (Fravel 2008, 12–13; Huth 1996, 171–72).

The alternative to the above two strategies is the maintenance of the status quo regarding the interstate border dispute. However, maintaining the status quo does not necessarily mean that the actors are passive. Indeed, there are a myriad of potential status quo policies ranging from the peaceful or conciliatory to the hostile. For example, the actors can pursue passive status quo policies, such as refusing to engage with the other state over the border dispute or firmly and publicly insisting on territorial claims they know they are unacceptable to the rival claimant. Alternatively, status quo policies can be more aggressive, for example by continuing economic sanctions or using the military to consolidate their position along the disputed border. Some examples of more conciliatory status quo maintenance policies include engaging in confidence building measures or establishing crisis resolution mechanisms (Huth and Allee 2002, 47).

Maintaining the status quo is often a costly policy for the disputing states to adopt. A state typically has to forgo significant economic opportunities and the bilateral relations between the rival states remain acrimonious or at least stunted. Additionally, the
likelihood of minor confrontations occurring along the border is high, as it is common for the disputing sides to seek a tactical advantage along the border or to neutralise similar efforts by their rival. Nonetheless, *status quo* policies are typically the least risky strategy at any given time for the actors involved in an interstate border dispute, thereby constituting the *de facto* position of both claimants (Fravel 2005, 53; Wiegand 2011, 279–84).

In the context of the Sino-Indian border dispute, which actors can be considered relevant and what are their key interests that determine which policy strategy they are likely to pursue or support? At the individual decision-maker level, the most important actor is the head of the government, also known as the chief executive, of each state (namely the Chinese President and the Indian Prime Minister). This is because, as the formal leader of the state’s governing apparatus, they have the final say over its foreign and security policies. Although no contemporary leader in China or India can command the sheer gravitas of Mao Zedong or Jawaharlal Nehru, foreign policy decision making in the two states is still concentrated in the hands of the chief executive (Dillon 2009, 161–62; Lai 2010, 134–38; Sikri 2009, 258–64).

For China, the position of key decision maker falls to the informal post of ‘paramount leader’. While the first two paramount leaders, Mao and Deng Xiaoping, held on to power through sheer personal stature, the position has since become more institutionalised. In the current political structure of China, the paramount leader holds the positions of General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), President of the PRC and Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) simultaneously (H. L. Miller and Liu 2001, 129–33; Lu 2001, 41; Zheng and Weng 2016, 38–39). For India, the key decision maker has always been the Prime Minister, which is granted to the leader of...
the political party or coalition with a majority in the Lok Sabha, India’s lower house of parliament (H. Kapur 1994, 178–79; Ogden 2014, 18–21).

Although Chinese and Indian political elites and leaders often have radically different objectives and agendas, they share a common interest, namely to ensure their political survival. All political leaders, whether in authoritarian or democratic regimes, need to maintain the support of key groups and institutions in order to maintain power. Hence, political leaders have to be Janus faced, aware of both the domestic and international pressures and constraints over action and the political ramifications of their decisions towards such sensitive areas as contested borders (Huth 1996, 41–42; Lobell 2009, 43–45; Ma 2014, 103–4). Beyond raw political survival, leaders are typically also motivated by their political agenda and grand strategy for their state, both domestically and regarding its place in the international system (Brands 2014, 3–4; Dueck 2009, 146–48). Pursuing his/her vision is usually a primary interest for the chief executive, second only to his/her political survival. It is these two primary interests (to hold and retain political power and to implement their agenda) that a state leader would usually contemplate when choosing whether to offer a compromise, to escalate tensions by threatening or using force, or to maintain the status quo towards the border.

In making this choice, state leaders eliminate those policy options that conflict with their interests and choose the optimum policy that is left. Seeking a compromise resolution or escalating tensions by threatening or using force are risky policy options in the context of the leader’s core interests. Hence, most state leaders when faced with an interstate border dispute prefer to adopt a status quo policy as it poses the least risk. State leaders would be particularly disinclined to pursue any policy towards an interstate border dispute that could subject them to domestic backlash from their own party, political opponents and the population at large. Specifically, state leaders would tend to baulk at
resolution attempts that would require making painful territorial concessions that are not strongly in their state’s favour, or launching military assaults that they believe have high chances of failure (Huth 1996, 95–97; Kennedy 2012, 29–33).

Strong domestic criticism is particularly dangerous for state leaders as it can lead to their government being ousted from power at the elections. Alternatively, an unpopular leader may be forced by his/her cabinet or party to step down from the leadership position in favour of another colleague. In extreme circumstances, an unpopular government that is perceived to be making humiliating compromises or undermining national security and prestige may be overthrown in an uprising or a military coup d'état (Hensel 1999, 118–19; Wiegand 2011, 33–35; Ma 2014, 105). Although state leaders usually have some degree of political capital they can draw upon to push through unpopular and risky decisions, they typically prefer to utilise it to pursuing their political agenda or legacy rather than resolving interstate border disputes (Halperin and Clapp 2006, 72–83; Goertz 2004, 18; Lai 2010, 30–31).

Nonetheless, there are instances when state leaders have tried to exploit an interstate border dispute, particularly if a crisis has occurred on the border, to further their own political interests. Such situations typically occur when leaders feel the need to re-establish support for their administration in the face of domestic unrest and economic collapse, or if leaders perceive a unique opportunity to implement or thwart a threat to their grand agenda and vision. One common option has been to escalate tensions over an interstate border dispute by instigating a crisis, which could then be used to politically mobilise the population behind the leader, thereby allowing the leader to shore up her/his popularity, hold on to power and neutralise key challengers (Levy and Vakili 1992; Pickering and Kisangani 2005; Tir 2010). Alternatively, if chief executives deem the risks of conflict escalation on the disputed border to be too high or contrary to their grand
strategy, they can attempt to compromise at key moments to remove the interstate border dispute as a threat to their interests (Fravel 2005, 2008, 17–39). Either way, the benefits that can be gained from pursuing such policies may ensure that state leaders would be hesitant to remove a useful tool to secure their interests. This is especially the case in China and India where domestic politics is often volatile.

While state leaders have the final decision over their state’s foreign and security policy, the room that they have to manoeuvre depends upon the salience that the interstate border dispute has amongst the state level actors. Regarding interstate border disputes, three types of domestic governing institutions influence policy towards a border dispute; namely a state’s military forces, the civilian bureaucracy, and the governing political party. These institutions typically act as institutional interest groups with a stake in government policy (Halperin and Clapp 2006, 16; Hilsman 1993, 86; Allison and Halperin 1972). The key interests of these institutions are to preserve their authority or autonomy and to acquire greater resources to carry out their mission. Hence, governing institutions will lobby for the policy option, whether it be to compromise, escalate or maintain the status quo, that its officials believe favourable to its interests. These lobbying efforts can occur during the decision-making process and/or the action phase, when the policy decision is implemented. In the former process, senior officials deliberate over policy options, often competing with each other in an attempt to have their institution’s preferred policy adopted. In the latter process, more junior officials may seek to alter the policy directives, either to better fit their institution’s procedures or in an effort to avoid implementing what they consider poor policy (Allison and Halperin 1972, 51–53; Halperin and Clapp 2006, 247–54).

A civilian or military bureaucracy’s mission is to draft policy proposals and oversee the specific policy area or areas that it was established to administer. For example,
the military’s primary mission is to defend the state’s territorial integrity and interests abroad, whereas the Department of Treasury is to ensure that the state’s expenditure is sustainable. This sees the various departments compete furiously for resources available in the state to achieve these goals. As such, government departments are unlikely to support any policy that would limit their influence, potentially tarnish their image or detract from their ability to perform their mission. Additionally, civilian and military institutional interests are also shaped by their own organisational culture. Organisational culture refers to a set of established beliefs that members generally hold about what their institution represents and how it should be run (Allison and Zelikow 1999, 153–54; Halperin 1971, 78).

The combination of these two considerations typically ensures that bureaucratic institutions jealously guard those aspects they consider to be vital to fulfil their mission (Drezner 2000). As a number of governing institutions or agencies would be required to implement policies with reference to interstate border disputes, competition often erupts over jurisdictional turf and the finite resources within the state (Halperin and Clapp 2006, 40–48). Concerning interstate border disputes, these factors typically ensure that embracing compromise and escalation policies are against the interests of civilian and military institutions. Compromise policies, such as proposing mutual territorial adjustments, are typically against the military’s mission whilst civilian officials fear that they or their institution will be scapegoated, likely resulting in having funding or resources cut. Similarly, escalation policies such as moving to annex the disputed territory are often opposed as they risk failure, with the supporting institutions likely to lose of influence and resources in an unsuccessful policy’s aftermath. Additionally, the civilian and military bureaucracies will likely see such adventurous policies as distracting attention from more important areas of their mission. Thus, most civil servants would prefer to ‘play it safe’
and support *status quo* maintenance policies rather than sacrificing the political capital required to pursue a risky policy.

A governing political party’s mission, whether in an authoritarian (like China) or a democratic (like India) political system, is to articulate a specific ideology and a set of policies in order to attract enough members and constituents who can help the party acquire and maintain political power (Lobell 2009, 56–57; Ripsman 2009, 181–86). Though foreign policy is usually a niche domain that the public is largely content to allow the government to run, there are certain expectations that the government needs to meet, such as maintaining national security and prestige. Thus, when a governing political party is considering which interstate border policy would best suit its interests, it is unlikely to choose any controversial policies. Compromise polices are often unpopular as, unless the terms clearly favour their side, the necessary compromises or bargains are often viewed by the population to be form of humiliation or ‘selling out’ national security or pride. Regarding escalation policies, openly aggressive polices are usually condemned by the general citizenry as the consequences for any failure or retaliation usually fall on them. Such sentiments can undermine domestic support for the government and provide any political opposition a means to attack the governing party with the aim of ultimately unseating them. Thus, a governing party will typically seek the least risky solution of maintaining the *status quo* so it can focus on other areas on which it can deliver and thereby gain domestic support (Chung 2004, 20–22; Merle 1978, 77–80).

As China and India have political regimes based on different ideologies, the organisation and composition of their governing institutions vary significantly. China is a one-party state, where CCP monitoring bodies shadow the formal organs of the state. As such, the CCP effectively controls all of the policy decision-making bodies, ensuring that all policy decisions are considered in the light of what impact they will have on the Party’s
interests. The CCP’s primary interest is to maintain its monopoly of power by convincing the Chinese people that a one-party state is the best guarantor of public order and the delivery of economic prosperity (M. Bhalla 2005, 214–15; Fravel 2005, 51–55; Sutter 2010, 32–37). Within the CCP, there is vertical competition for power amongst several different factions or cliques that favour different policy approaches, including towards China’s border disputes with neighbouring states (Dillon 2009, 140–46; Harris 2014, 31–32; Zheng and Chen 2009, 14–16).

Officially, the highest decision making body of the CCP is the Politburo Standing Committee, but since the 1980s political power has become dispersed throughout the labyrinthine system of party bureaucracies, which are often engaged in competition over jurisdictions and influence (Harris 2014, 24–26; Lai and Kang 2014, 296–98). Although the CCP permeates all governing bodies, the civilian and military institutions tasked with implementing the policy decisions have their own separate missions and organisational culture, ensuring they have unique interests. The most salient bureaucratic institutions that have influence over how the border dispute with India is handled are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the State Council Office of Foreign Affairs (SCOFA) and the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) (Lai 2010, 138–46; Lai and Kang 2014, 301–10; You 2014, 245–52).

The MFA, under the direction of the SCOFA, is China’s main diplomatic institution and is the primary organisation responsible for negotiations with India over the border dispute. The MFA clearly sees itself as being a professional organisation and the guardian of China’s reputation, operating as a check on some of the more bellicose elements within the Chinese regime. This makes the MFA the institution within China with the most interest in seeing a resolution of the Sino-Indian border dispute. Indeed, MFA functionaries often argue that resolution is the best way to establish ‘peace and
tranquillity’ on the border and a ‘win-win’ situation vis-à-vis India (MFA 2017a; Swaine 2014, 5). However, much of its effort is dedicated to protecting its jurisdiction over foreign policy from encroachment by other departments and addressing more prominent or urgent regions (Jakobson 2016, 140–42; Zhao and Gao 2015, 44–47). Hence, the MFA has been unwilling to expend its limited political capital on promoting unpopular concessions, focusing instead on preventing any serious escalations and maintaining a status quo on the Sino-Indian border.

One of the PLA’s primary mission is to maintain China’s territorial integrity, making them the institutions within China that have direct responsibility for securing the disputed Sino-Indian border. While this has not transformed into any advocacy for irredentist policies, the PLA clearly sees its duty as supressing any ‘nibbling’ away of China’s borders by India (Fravel 2007, 713–14; Joshi 2011, 562–63). This mission and operational culture have ensured that the PLA has developed different priorities and become noticeably more hawkish than most civilian CCP members and bureaucrats. Specifically, the PLA has consistently advocated for more assertive policies towards China’s interstate border disputes that allows it to carry out its mission unimpeded (Heng 2012, 108; Saunders and Scobell 2015, 1–6; Yun 2013, 19–21). All of this has ensured that the PLA has mostly resisted any policy of concession, especially those that would require the surrender of territory.

In contrast, India has a Westminster style parliamentary democracy, with the Lok Sabha as the directly elected lower house and the Rajya Sabha as an indirectly elected upper house. The party or coalition that achieves a numerical majority in the Lok Sabha forms the government. Within the executive branch, the Cabinet is formally the top decision-making institution and operates on the principle of collective responsibility. The Prime Minister, the head of the government and top decision maker, is the head of the
Cabinet as the ‘first amongst equals’. Ministers are appointed more for their party or factional loyalties and less for their policy expertise and often have multiple political or policy issues to deal with at any given time. Therefore, elected Ministers are usually reliant on information and policy advice provided by the bureaucrats under them to deal with specialised issues such as the Sino-Indian border dispute (Pant 2016, 17; Sikri 2009, 265).

India’s policy on interstate border disputes are primarily formulated within the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) and the National Security Council (NSCil) with advice provided from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Indian Armed Forces (IAF) who implement them (Ogden 2014, 21–27; Raghavan 2012; Sikri 2009, 264–74). Whilst the PMO has a number of powerful bureaucrats and advisors to the Prime Minister in its ranks, it actually functions as an organisational body, coordinating a number of committees that formulate the actual policy. Regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute, the most important of these committees is the NSCil, which is formally an adjunct body of the PMO. The centrality of the NSCil to policy making is further enhanced by the fact that its head, the National Security Advisor, is currently India’s lead negotiator with China. Though the NSCil’s advice to the Prime Minister and its deliberations are closely guarded state secrets, as it is staffed largely by experienced civilian security officials and former military personal, it is highly likely that it champions more hard-line views and rejects any significant compromises.

Though all the government ministries and departments are formally answerable to the Indian Parliament, in reality the legislature is largely inconsequential in foreign policy making. Indeed, most parliamentarians are uninterested in foreign affairs, with the few parliamentarians who are interested primarily seeking to champion their own pet projects (Dixit 1998, 328–31; Menon 2016, 129–30). As such, the Indian Parliament is mostly used as a public showcase for the government’s policy initiatives and successes or for
opposition members to question and embarrass the government (Sikri 2009, 267).

Nonetheless, the Indian Parliament’s role in foreign and security policy becomes essential when major policy changes or bilateral treaties need ratification. According to the Indian Constitution, the Lok Sabha and the Rajiv Sabha must pass all international treaties, especially those resulting in territorial adjustments, before they come into effect.

This has historically proven difficult to achieve, in large part because India’s main political parties, the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), are bitterly opposed to each other. This animosity ensures achieving a national consensus often proves elusive, undermining the Indian government’s efforts to have a border agreement ratified. This is especially true regarding treaties or policies proposing the kind of territorial concessions that will have to be made in order to reach a final resolution of the Sino-Indian border dispute. Political parties represented in the Parliament are typically reluctant to embrace concessions to resolve India’s territorial disputes, considering such proposals at best an unwelcome distraction or at worst antithetical to national security. Hence, they are unlikely to support any policy or agreement towards the Sino-Indian border dispute that could involve territorial concessions, especially those which could inflame public opinion and damage their electoral prospects (Baru 2009; D. Kapur 2009; Ogden 2014, 27–31). Consequently, a governing party, whether INC or BJP, has proven highly reluctant to table unpopular issues such as territorial concessions. When that same party is in opposition, it typically becomes obstructive in order to disrupt the rival party’s legislative agenda. This includes becoming highly critical of any move by the new government to make the territorial compromises necessary to resolve the Sino-Indian border dispute, even if the concessions are similar to those it proposed earlier (M. P. Singh 2015, 361–63; Smith 2014, 62–63).
The MEA’s primary mission is to implement India’s foreign policy abroad. Hence, the MEA naturally assumes it is at the forefront of India’s engagement with China and jealously guards its jurisdiction from interference by other departments, such as the Intelligence Bureau or the Ministry of Defence. Additionally, the MEA perceives itself as remaining aloof from the culture of political patronage and nepotism that is rife throughout India and retaining a degree of professionalism in its conduct. However, there exist effectively two schools of thought within the MEA regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute. The first comprises of more dovish officials who argue that India should come to some form of accommodation with China. The second are the more hawkish officials who are unwilling to entertain any major territorial concessions. This internal factionalism over the Sino-Indian border dispute has ensured that the MEA is usually in favour of status quo maintenance policies, albeit with a focus on engaging rather than containing the Chinese (S. Ganguly 1989, 1134; Menon 2016, 18). The MEA’s interest in maintaining the status quo towards the Sino-Indian border dispute is also a function of its lack of patronage, which has left the MEA grossly under-resourced and under-staffed. This lack of material has intensified intradepartmental competition for resources, which, in turn, has hobbled the MEA’s ability and interest to advocate for more proactive policies vis-à-vis China and the border dispute (Ogden 2014, 23–25; Sikri 2009, 271–74).

The Indian military’s primary mission is to defend India’s sovereignty and territorial integrity from any threats or aggression. Therefore, the Indian military has a direct interest in ascertaining where India’s borders lie and preventing any incursions into what it considers Indian territory. The Indian military also has traditionally been deeply sceptical of China’s motivations, particularly after the 1962 border war. As such, it is reluctant to support any policy that tries to resolve the Sino-Indian border dispute through territorial concessions and adjustments (Cohen and Dasgupta 2010, 68–69). However, the
Indian military has rarely sought to directly influence the political decision-making regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute.

This is partly due to the apolitical stance that is part of the Indian military’s professional ethos, but mostly it is a result of its interest in resisting any further erosion of its autonomy. Indian civilian leaders have attempted to ‘coup-proof’ the state through several measures designed to limit the military’s ability to act independently. For example, Indian civilian leaders intentionally removed the Commander in Chief position for the military, subordinated the military to the civilian Ministry of Defence, and made all three services formally equal (Ray 2016, 48–49; Wilkinson 2015, 19–26, 101–6). Though its ability to independently plan or strategize has been hobbled, the Indian military still retains a strong degree of operational autonomy, allowing it to implement policies as it sees fit once a decision has been made. This has allowed the military to maintain a large presence along the Sino-Indian border and patrol as it sees fit in order to avoid India being forced into making any humiliating concessions (Rehman 2017, 112–14; Scott 2008a, 8).

At the third level-of-analysis, characterised by the anarchical and self-help international system, sovereign states such as India and China find it highly difficult to part with territory voluntarily. The first and foremost interest of any State is its security, primarily from external aggression, with the State’s international borders often serving as a focal point for state security. Consequently, when a State develops a border dispute with one of its neighbours, it becomes almost impossible to make territorial compromises; ensuring that these disputes fester over a long time and thereby become intractable (Huth 1996, 40–41; Mearsheimer 2014, 31).

Specifically, a State uses three international system considerations to identify how its national interests apply to a border dispute: the value of the disputed territory; the geopolitical situation; and normative concerns. The value of a disputed territory can be
tangible and/or intangible. Territory has tangible value when it has some economic and/or military/strategic utility. Economic utility includes the land containing some exploitable resources, such as mineral deposits or arable land. Military/strategic utility involves the territory having some geography that is particularly useful for defensive or offensive military operations, such as high ground or being near a key chokepoint through which any potential invaders would need to cross, or being useful for the state’s wider defence, such as providing a useful buffer between the border and the major cities. As States are loath to permit any other state an advantage, they therefore are highly reluctant to relinquish their possession or claims to territory, ensuring they generally prefer adopting status quo policies to compromising (Huth 1996, 146–47; Toft 2014, 187–88).

The intangible value of territory emerges when the State accepts the idea that the land itself has some form of sentimental significance, usually due to the ethnicity of the local population or a historical ownership of the territory (Goertz and Diehl 1992, 19–20; Wiegand 2011, 24–26). This type of territorial dispute is especially difficult to compromise over as the state with the symbolic claim views the entirety of the land as valuable, ensuring that the territory cannot be satisfactorily split. Additionally, as the State occupying the territory is unlikely to surrender it all without a fight, minor escalations will rarely have much impact and conquest would be difficult without a significant military advantage. Thus, a deadlock emerges when both states become unwilling to relinquish their claims to the territory with an uneasy status quo typically the only feasible policy (Newman 1999, 12–16; Wiegand 2011, 25–26).

Apart from protecting its territory from encroachment, a State’s interest towards its border disputes may also be tied into its broader geopolitical concerns. Although an interstate border dispute may not necessarily be high on the State’s wider concerns, the strategy approaches available towards the dispute are often determined by its international
context. Specifically, the State will be alert for a ‘window of opportunity’ to open that will allow it to either escalate or attempt to resolve the dispute. Lacking such an opening, the State will typically prefer to take a status quo approach (Fravel 2008, 27–37). An unresolved border also can be used for diplomatic leverage, especially if the border has a strong degree of salience for the other claimant. The State may also attempt to use the interstate border dispute as a diplomatic tool. This manifests in two key forms: by using the interstate border dispute as bargaining chip against the other state by offering to trade its resolution for some other concessions, or its use in coercive diplomacy by purposefully applying pressure along the disputed border in an attempt to force some other issue (Wiegand 2011, 55–64).

States also link interstate border disputes to more normative concerns, namely national prestige and sovereignty. In essence, national prestige is the public recognition of, and respect for, a State’s importance within the international sphere, as reflected in its achievements, qualities, capacities or character. As such, national prestige provides States with a means to establish an informal hierarchy amongst themselves and determine the respect that a state can expect to receive from other actors in the international system. Hence, with regard to interstate border disputes, states are typically highly sensitive to how they are being treated or being seen as treated by their rival claimant or other actors (Hensel and Mitchell 2005, 276). If a state feels it is being treated with contempt or being taken advantage of in negotiations, then it may adopt an obstinate position so as not to lose face, thus causing the dispute to become intractable (Morgenthau 1973, 76–81; Wood 2013, 403–4).

National sovereignty, also known as Westphalian sovereignty, refers to the claim by a state, recognised by other sovereign states, that it has exclusive political authority within a specific territory (Hayman and Williams 2006; Krasner 1999, 20–21). Hence, the
border’s location is a matter of extreme importance for the State. Even if a State is incapable of extending its physical control or presence to the area, it is likely to be unwilling to alter or tolerate challenges to its areas of jurisdiction. A State’s claim over its sovereign territory is based on the signing of treaties with other sovereign states or on established norms and customs adhered to by these states (Lapidoth 1992, 337–38; Makinda 1998, 107; Zacher 2001, 236–37). This becomes particularly difficult to establish when the claimants or their predecessors either did not have much interest in clearly delimiting their borders or did so using poorly surveyed maps. Should such a situation arise, both states may claim they have a right to exercise sovereignty over the disputed territory. Consequentially the disputing states will likely adopt obstinate positions, refusing to relinquish what they believe to be rightfully theirs.

To varying degrees, these state interests affect Chinese and Indian behaviour towards their border dispute. The region of the Aksai Chin has significant strategic value for China owing to the Xinjian-Tibet highway that runs through it (Garver 2001, 82–85; Scott 2008a, 5). Arunachal Pradesh also has tangible value for India, acting as an effective buffer territory between China and some of India’s more populous manufacturing and agricultural centres. Both India and China also place some intangible value over the Arunachal Pradesh owing to their respective history with the region (Maxwell 2014, 140; Joshi 2011, 563; Reeves 2011, 8). Additionally, both countries are ambitious and rising great powers in the international system and have a keen eye for how to advance their interests. This makes both states very keen to exploit windows of opportunity when they open or use the Sino-Indian border dispute for leverage. Additionally, as China and India are rising great powers, both are highly sensitive to their national prestige and sovereignty, typically viewing the border dispute as a challenge to both (Y. Chen 2015, 45, 50–51; Garver 2001, 102–3).
Whilst one group of actors may be sufficient to explain a particular period or event, no single level-of-analysis can adequately explain how any interstate border dispute, including the Sino-Indian dispute, becomes intractable. It is, therefore, not only pragmatic but also necessary to utilise a three-level analysis in the study of why interstate border disputes become intractable. While this is an uncommon approach in international relations scholarship, which tends to focus on either the international or domestic levels-of-analysis (see Moravcisk 1993; Singer 1961), it is certainly not without precedent. Indeed, the justification for such an approach was first provided by Waltz when he argued that “so fundamental are man, the state and the state system in any attempt to understand international relations that seldom does an analyst, however wedded to one image, entirely overlook the other two” (Waltz 1959, 160). This brief overview makes it clear that a set of key actors across different levels of analysis, rarely consider it in their self-interest to make the kind of painful and hard compromises necessary to resolve interstate border disputes. Nor is it usually in the interest for most of these actors to attempt to escalate the conflict in an effort to seize and annex the desired territory. Instead, actors typically prefer to maintain the status quo on the border, thereby ensuring that the dispute becomes intractable.

**Methodology**

In order to explore the dynamics of the Sino-Indian border dispute through the neoclassical explanatory framework outlined above, I have drawn upon qualitative methods rather than the more common quantitative approaches used in the previous studies of interstate border disputes. Specifically I have drawn upon process tracking, the qualitative method which involves the identification of the chain of causal mechanisms that lead to a particular event.
or outcome (Checkel 2008; Lamont 2015, 135–37) in order to determine why and how the Sino-Indian border dispute became intractable.

This specific method was chosen in part because, as Blanchard has argued, the “widespread agreement among statistically oriented analysts about the malevolent nature of boundary controversies and the growing body of knowledge about the variables that correlate with them suggest it is time to shift our energies from pattern identification to theory construction and testing” (2005, 689). To be sure, it would be difficult, and not particularly informative, to identify objectively when the interests of specific relevant actors within China and India have an impact upon decision making regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute and plot this data on a table or graph. Qualitative research also has been adopted due to its intrinsic qualities, namely that it allows for a rich and detailed examination of explanatory variables. This enables the researcher to provide descriptive insight into actual events and infer the general causal factors with a fair degree of certainty (Lamont 2015, 78–79; Wiegand 2011, 70–71).

To complement the level of detail that qualitative research allows, a single empirical case study, the Sino-Indian border dispute, was chosen to test the validity of my hypotheses outlined in the explanatory framework. A single case study has two obvious limitations. Firstly, a single case study opens up the possibility for researcher bias to creep in owing to the inherently limited amount of data. Secondly, by focusing on just one case study it is more difficult to demonstrate that factors being addressed are representative of a larger phenomenon rather than being unique to the specific case (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, 128–30; Lamont 2015, 132). However, my choice of the Sino-Indian border dispute has allowed me to mitigate, to the greatest extent possible, these limitations as it is such a multifaceted case study.
There are also two key benefits in using a single case study. First, a solitary case study allows for greater detail in the examination of an empirical situation. This detail permits researchers to test the plausibility and effectiveness of theoretical frameworks regarding a specific phenomenon in international relations (Klotz 2008, 51–52). Second, a single case study is also particularly revealing when researching a previously unobserved or understudied phenomenon (Yin 2003, 42–43). This level of detail is exactly what is needed to test the validity of my hypothesis of the causes of the Sino-Indian border dispute’s intractability.

Data collection

The research data I have utilised in this dissertation was drawn from both primary sources, such as government reports and diplomatic letters, and secondary resources, namely academic books, journal articles and news reports. However, this dissertation relies primarily on secondary sources for two key reasons. Firstly, there already exist several detailed studies, both on international border disputes in general and on the Sino-Indian dispute in particular. As such, it is more prudent for me to draw upon these sources rather than seek to reinvent the wheel in several places in my dissertation. Secondly, my access to primary sources has been limited to what each government chooses to publish. Owing to the sensitive nature of this dispute, both sides have been reluctant to make public more than a handful of the diplomatic communiques and the text of the key treaties on the border relations (for example see: Ambekar and Divekar 1964; Bhasin 2006; Chou 1962; Chang et al. 1960).

That said, I have utilised several available primary resources in order to develop the fullest possible picture of events within the case study so as to ascertain the extent that my explanatory framework applies to this empirical situation. Fortunately, in late 2014,
Neville Maxwell leaked online the still top-secret 1963 Henderson Brooks report that provides a detailed assessment by the Indian military of its performance during the 1962 war. Although pages 112-157 are missing, this is still a valuable primary source that I have also drawn upon (Henderson Brooks 1963). Additionally, though the Chinese did open up the Foreign Ministry Archive in 2008, it was shut again in early 2014. Though this has obviously prohibited me from accessing it, a number of documents were copied, translated and uploaded onto an independent digital archive, the Wilson Centre Digital Archive. This has allowed me to draw upon several useful primary sources that have been previously unavailable to or underutilised by researchers.

These primary and secondary sources have been acquired from extensive searches in libraries and archives. In order to maximise my access to sources, I visited India between January and May 2015 to conduct research in the Indian National Archives and a number of specialist libraries throughout New Delhi. The sources that were acquired here enabled me to gain a grasp of how the Indian government has been managing India’s borders and engaging with its rivals in negotiations. While I would have ideally liked to visit both countries, India was chosen over China as the place to spend my limited time and resources pursuing data sources for two main reasons.

The first is that India has been significantly more sensitive towards the contested Sino-Indian border and has placed notably more stress upon it as a factor in bilateral relations with China. Hence the discourse, academic and otherwise, on the Sino-Indian border dispute has naturally been fairly extensive in India. Indeed, as one recent study on the contemporary state of Sino-Indian relations finds, while the Indian threat perception of China is quite high, China tends to treat India with a lack of interest and even disdain at official and scholarly levels (Smith 2014, 7–12). The second reason is that there is already access in Australia to a number of Chinese released documents on the Sino-Indian
border dispute and a significant body of research in English dedicated to how China generally handles border disputes (Chou 1962; Chung 2004; Fravel 2005, 2008, 2011; Garver 2001, 2016; Mehra 1989; PRC FMA 1961; Smith 2014). While I have been able to rely on these sources for the Chinese perspectives, the noticeable dearth of sources providing the Indian position within Australia required me to seek them out at the source.

**Dissertation structure:**

Before we can adequately explore how the explanatory framework operates in detail, it is necessary first to have a clear understanding of the Sino-Indian border dispute’s history. Chapter Two provides this background, tracking this saga from its origins in the British Raj to the current day. Specifically, Chapter Two begins with a detailed examination of the origins of the border dispute in the British Empire’s periodic and largely unsuccessful efforts to delimit the northern border of the Raj. Following Indian’s independence in 1947 and the conclusion of the Chinese revolution in 1949, the Sino-Indian border dispute effectively lay fallow until the late 1950s when border patrols began to clash. The initial efforts at negotiations quickly turned into brinkmanship on both sides before internal pressures prompted China to launch the 1962 border war. Sino-Indian relations remained frozen until the thaw and resumptions of relations in the mid-1970s leading to the first dedicated round of border negotiations throughout the 1980s. The discussion then moves to the current era where, despite ongoing negotiations and some treaties to deescalate tensions on the border, tensions are again rising and confrontations along the LAC are increasing. Thus, Chapter Two illustrates how neither China nor India has any ironclad claim to the disputed territory, yet both are unwilling to alter even slightly their incompatible positions.
Chapters Three, Four and Five are dedicated to examining why the Sino-Indian border dispute has become intractable by identifying what the interests of the actors in the three levels-of-analysis are and how these interests shape India’s and China’s behaviour and decision-making towards their contested border. Chapter Three begins the investigation with the first level: why it is generally against the interests of the top state leader to support compromise or escalation strategies towards an interstate border dispute. Specifically, Chapter Three utilises poliheuristic choice theory to explain how an individual chief executive narrows down his/her policy options before choosing the policy that he/she considers to be optimal. In essence, this theory argues that a chief executive will likely draw upon his/her own concerns over his/her political survival, ideological visions or temperament to decide upon a policy. The state leader’s interests generally rule out the option of compromise that is necessary for a resolution to the border dispute; in fact, the interests of the state leader usually require that a firm stance be taken vis-à-vis the rival claimant. Yet the chief executive is also often reluctant to pursue escalatory approaches, as such strategies carry significant risks of escalating out of control or resulting in defeat with all of the subsequent consequences. In order to illustrate how the top state leader’s interests and idiosyncrasies affect state policy towards the border dispute, the actions of prominent Chinese and Indian leaders from Mao Zedong and Jawaharlal Nehru to Xi Jinping and Narendra Modi are analysed.

Chapter Four focuses on the second level-of-analysis, investigating how the interests of key domestic governing institutions (notably governing party organisations, the civilian bureaucracy and the military) contribute to making interstate border disputes intractable. Since government policy is often the result of numerous institutions interacting and vying for influence, the governmental politics model is used to illustrate how key state institutions interact and influence policy. Specifically regarding interstate
border disputes, there is often a degree of competition between officials representing the main security and diplomatic institutions as well as the ruling political parties over their preferred policy, whether it be escalation, compromise or maintaining the status quo. It is often in the interests of most organisations to maintain the status quo as more adventurous policies could affect their other interests. Even those institutions that favour escalation or compromise often do not wish to waste political capital pushing the policy or are simply outnumbered by others who are opposed. To illustrate this dynamic in regard to the Sino-Indian border dispute, Chapter Four identifies the relevant governing institutions within China and India. It also outlines what their various interests are and how it is not in the interest of the ruling party establishment, key civilian bureaucracies and the military to support a policy of major compromise or escalation on the disputed Sino Indian border; thereby the status quo is maintained and the dispute remains intractable.

Chapter Five addresses the third level-of-analysis, exploring why it is against the national interests of States to make concessions towards any interstate border dispute in which they are involved. Building upon a neoclassical realist understanding of the international system, three general areas are recognised as pivotal to the national interest. The first and foremost is the state’s inherent interest to hold onto tangibly or intangibly valuable territory. Second is the broader geostrategic considerations, with states wary of the balance of power between them and searching for a window of opportunity to exploit or use the dispute as leverage in service of their greater diplomatic goals. The final factor is the state’s normative considerations, namely its national prestige and sovereignty, which are highly cherished by all states. These three major areas of concern ensure that states typically are incentivised to stand firm in border negotiations and maintain the status quo. As China and India are rising great powers and potential rivals in the international system, all of these concerns impact both states to varying degrees. Hence, it has become

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unpalatable for either side to compromise over their disputed border lest it lose a potential advantage or suffer a humiliation, especially if it could be perceived as weak and capitulating too much.

Finally, this dissertation concludes with a holistic overview of the Sino-India case to show how the interests of the various actors have coalesced to ensure prolongation of the Sino-Indian border dispute. Here I also briefly explore some of the possible resolutions for the Sino-Indian dispute. Specifically, I weigh the merits and issues of potential resolutions to the Sino-Indian border dispute, namely some degree of territorial adjustment, different types of international arbitration or a more conceptual solution that could emerge from a democratic peace dividend. I conclude with a discussion on the likely future for the Sino-Indian border dispute.
Chapter Two:

The History of the Sino-Indian Border Dispute: From Imperial Frontier to the Special Representatives Meetings
Introduction

The Sino-Indian border dispute is currently the largest in the world, consisting of approximately 128,000 square kilometres of disputed territory with an undelimited Line of Actual Control (LAC) stretching a little over 4050 kilometres functioning as the de facto border (Chellaney 2013, 47; Littlewood 2004, 148; Malik 2011, 144). However, geography and different historical circumstances divide the Sino-Indian border dispute into two distinct sections: the west and the east.

The western sector primarily revolves around the dispute over the Aksai Chin, an approximately 38,000 square kilometre desolate and uninhabited plateau north of the Karakorum Range. This sector also includes the Shaksgam Valley just north of Jammu and Kashmir and to the west of the Aksai Chin. The Shaksgam Valley was ceded to China by Pakistan as part of their border negotiations in 1963, a move India vehemently rejects (Kalha 2014, 171; Smith 2014, 24–25). For simplicity’s sake, I also include a number of minor positional disputes along the border between Aksai Chin and Nepal as part of the western sector. Technically, the Chinese and Indian governments recognise these disputed pockets of territory as a distinct middle sector. However, as both sectors are the result of British India’s failure to delimitate its north-western border, I have grouped them together here (Garver 2001, 79; Littlewood 2004, 351–52).

The eastern sector largely stems from China’s refusal to accept the legitimacy of the ‘McMahon Line’. China officially claims a vaguely defined 90,000 square kilometres of land south of the McMahon Line as part of ‘Southern Tibet’, roughly equivalent to four fifths of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh (Horimoto 2010, 169; Lamb 1964, 9). Curiously, there are some discrepancies with China’s eastern claims and the facts on the ground. To be exact, this 90,000 square kilometres claim is shown on Chinese maps as
spanning approximately 80 per cent of Arunachal Pradesh. However, the entire province itself covers only 83,743 square kilometres (Smith 2014, 26–27). The most salient territory in the eastern sector is undoubtedly the monastic town of Tawang. Tawang and its hinterland has strong historical and cultural connections with Tibet, which has seen China maintain an ardent claim upon it especially in recent years (Garver 2011, 109–11; Smith 2014, 71–79). Map 2.1 in annex B provides a basic overview of the areas under dispute.

This chapter explores the historical evolution of both sectors to illuminate the highly tenuous historical justifications used in India’s and China’s border claims and explain how the border dispute first arose and became intractable. Starting with the western sector, it investigates how the interactions between the British Raj, Tibet and Imperial (later Republican) China left present-day China and India with an undefined border. I then move on to discuss how this ambiguous border turned into a full-fledged border dispute between China and India during the 1950s until tensions and misunderstandings eventually culminated in the 1962 border war. The final section of this chapter looks into the contemporary state of affairs, covering in detail the negotiations that have been conducted in various forms since 1981. The chapter concludes by discussing the various moves to manage the recent return in tensions and confrontations along the border and refocusing the question of why the dispute has not been resolved.

The origins of the border dispute

The western sector

The western sector of the dispute has its origins in the lack of any concerted effort during the British administration to clearly delimit with China the northern border of Jammu and Kashmir. Indeed, the British rarely showed much interest in defining exactly where the northwest border lay, often simply marking it as undefined on official maps. Prior to the
British, Mughal, Sikh and other empires that existed in what is now India primarily relied on a nebulous web of patronage and political influence rather than firm borders for their power. For its part, Imperial China, like most of pre-colonial Asia, had no tradition of a defined border. Instead, China had numerous tributaries occupying a vague frontier surrounding its core provinces and cities. As such, both states’ predecessors exercised widely fluctuating control over actual territory, depending on the political and military strength of the regime at the time (Y. Chen 2015, 40; Jacob 2015, 20–21). Although the Republic of China eventually outlined specific borders, these often only existed on maps and bore no resemblance to the reality on the ground.

Thus, post-revolution China and independent India were left to rely on a vaguely worded treaty between Jammu and Tibet in 1842 and a variety of contradictory and unofficial maps of varying authority drawn by British cartographers (Lamb 1964, 42–48; Maxwell 2013, 11–19; Mehra 2007, 41–44). Map 2.2 in annex B provides an overview of the different British proposals for where the northwest border should lie. This high degree of ambiguity allowed both sides to engage in a selective historical reading to support their territorial claims, with neither side able to produce a definitive piece of evidence to prove its claim line. This state of affairs became exacerbated by the fact that the disputed territory is desolate, relatively featureless and uninhabitable; historically transited only by the occasional trading caravan, shepherd or explorer (Lamb 1964, 112–14; Maxwell 2013, 12).

The Indian claim to the territories of the western sector originates from Gulab Singh’s conquest of Ladakh in the 1830s. For much of its history, Ladakh was orientated towards Lhasa and was often referred to as Western Tibet. The Ladakhi kings also typically paid tribute to Tibet, which in turn paid tribute to Imperial China, meaning that Ladakh was technically part of the Chinese tributary system. However, by the 1830s, the
last Ladakhi kingdom was tottering after numerous raids from its neighbours and from a succession of ineffectual kings (Francke 1998, 95–102). Gulab Singh was the highly ambitious head of the Dogra tribe who had risen to prominence by helping the Sikh emperor, Ranjit Singh, to conquer what is now Kashmir in 1819. In recognition of his service, Ranjit Singh made Gulab Singh the Maharaja of Jammu in 1822. Seeking to expand his power and influence, in 1834 Gulab Singh sent his most capable and loyal minister, Zorawar Singh, to conquer Ladakh and turn it into a vassal state (Deepak 2005, 5–6; Francke 1998, 103–13; Maxwell 2013, 9).

After conquering and subduing Ladakh and later Baltistan with relative ease, Gulab and Zorawar turned their attention north and launched an invasion into central Tibet in 1841. Initially, the invasion was a success, with Zorawar Singh’s army routing the Tibetan forces in the region and looting some monasteries. However, the Dogra army became trapped on the Tibetan Plateau by the onset of winter and was annihilated by the regrouped Tibetan army reinforced with some Chinese troops. The Tibetans then attempted to liberate Ladakh but were themselves repulsed just outside of Leh (Francke 1998, 121–25; Lamb 1964, 63–64). With the war effectively stalemated, Jammu and Tibet signed the Treaty of Chushul, which established peace and effectively a non-aggression pact between the two sides, in September 1842. In this treaty, Ladakh was recognised as part of the Kingdom of Jammu and both sides agreed to respect the ‘old established boundaries’ between Ladakh and Tibet proper (Francke 1998, 125; Lamb 1964, 49; Maxwell 2013, 9). Unfortunately for present day China and India, both of which cited this treaty to support their respective claims to the Aksai Chin, the Treaty of Chushul neglected to specify the exact location or even any prominent landmarks along which this boundary ran (Lamb 1964, 49–50; Rubin 1960, 102–3).
Following Ranjit Singh’s death in 1839, Gulab Singh became increasingly disaffected with his Sikh overlords. Additionally, Gulab had been growing closer to the British East India Company\(^9\) during the 1830s and quietly sought to ingratiate himself with them after Ranjit’s death (Francke 1998, 103; A. Singh 2014, 28, 35). This culminated in Gulab Singh’s defection to the British during the First Anglo-Sikh War in 1845-1846. As a reward for helping defeat the Sikhs, the British allowed Gulab Singh to buy the territory of Kashmir for a pittance and recognised him as the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir under British suzerainty (Deepak 2005, 4; Maxwell 2013, 10; Mehra 2007, 36). However, the British were well aware of Gulab Singh’s ambitious nature and were concerned that further efforts of territorial aggrandisement by him or his successors would cause a crisis with either China or Russia. As such, Article 4 of the Treaty of Amritsar, which outlined the conditions of sale of Kashmir to Gulab Singh, expressly forbids Jammu and Kashmir’s boundaries from being altered without the consent of the British administration (A. Singh 2014, 287–89).\(^10\)

To ensure that there was no ambiguity that Gulab Singh could capitalise upon to seize more territory, the British established a boundary commission in 1846 (Deepak 2005, 7; Lamb 1964, 64; Maxwell 2013, 10; Mehra 2007, 37). This boundary commission was the first of several attempts by the British to determine where the northern border of Jammu and Kashmir lay. Initially the British Governor General, Lord Henry Hardinge, attempted to clarify with the Imperial Chinese and Tibetan authorities where exactly they...
perceived the border to lie. However, this proved to be significantly more difficult than Hardinge anticipated. During this period, Britain had no direct links to the Qing government and so had to relay its messages through the Canton administration. As such, there was a delay of approximately a year as the Viceroy of Canton equivocated before eventually agreeing to send a delegation to meet with British commissioners in 1847.\footnote{Though Hardinge requested that the messages be passed to the central government, it appears that the Chinese Viceroy never took these exchanges seriously, let alone forwarded the messages to the Imperial Court (Lamb 1964, 66).} However, the Chinese and Tibetan representatives never arrived in Leh to coordinate with the British (Lamb 1964, 64–66; Mehra 1989, 39–42; Rubin 1960, 103). These difficulties were compounded by the Governor of Ladakh who, with the tacit consent of Gulab Singh, was less than cooperative and often absent, frustrating the initial effort to establish the border’s location clearly (Lamb 1964, 66; Maxwell 2013, 10–11; Mehra 2007, 40–41).

Nonetheless, the British commissioners decided to go ahead with the survey because their mandate was primarily to establish a clearly defined line beyond which Gulab Singh would not be permitted to expand Kashmir’s borders. The commissioners established that the Kashmir-Tibet border stretched from the hamlet of Demchok on the eastern edge of Ladakh through the middle of the Pangong Lake to Khurnak Fort and then along the eastern flank of the Chang-Chenmo Valley (Lamb 1964, 68; Maxwell 2013, 11; Mehra 2007, 41–42). However, the commissioners observed that the land between the Chang-Chenmo Valley in the east and the Karakoram Pass on the west was effectively \textit{terra incognita} as it was uninhabited, barren and difficult to reach. Hence, they concluded that the Aksai Chin was of little consequence and simply labelled the area undefined (Lamb 1964, 68; Maxwell 2013, 11–12; Rubin 1960, 103–4). This commission’s line effectively became the \textit{de facto} international border for China and Jammu and Kashmir during British rule. However, it is important to note that according to international law
and convention this is technically not a legitimate border as it was unilaterally drawn without Chinese or Tibetan consent or ratification (Maxwell 2013, 11). Interestingly, both India and China today only adhere to segments of it.

After the border commission had concluded its work in early 1848, this terra incognita was more or less left alone until the British surveyor and adventurer W. H. Johnson crossed the region and made detailed notes of the terrain (Deepak 2005, 8–10; Maxwell 2013, 12; Mehra 2007, 42–44). In 1865 Johnson, who was commissioned to survey northern Kashmir at the time, accepted an official invitation by the ruler of Khotan to visit his city kingdom. Johnson’s trip produced a detailed survey of the Aksai Chin in which he suggested a border alignment along the Kuen Lun Range, significantly north of the Karakorum Range that had been used as the functional border until then. This proposal caused disagreements among the British officials at the time between those who favoured moving the border as far northwards as possible and those who took a more moderate or conservative approach. This split ensured that adopting Johnson’s proposed border never became actual British policy (Lamb 1964, 84–87; Mehra 2007, 44–46). Nonetheless, the Johnson border was published in an official 1868 atlas as the border and thus became highly influential with several subsequent maps being based on it (Maxwell 2013, 13; Mehra 2007, 43; Rao 1968, 29).

As the Anglo-Russian rivalry known as ‘the Great Game’ began to escalate following Russian territorial advances into Central Asia during the late 1860s, the precise location of the northwest border became a matter of great concern to British India. Several

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12 Khotan was a small semi-autonomous Buddhist kingdom to the north of Kashmir and the Aksai Chin that was annexed by Yakub Bey’s Eastern Turkmenistan kingdom shortly after Johnson’s visit. Interestingly, during his journey Johnson built a small hut, or langar, that he called Haji Langar and used as a landmark in an otherwise featureless plateau. This hut has been cited by India as proof of British use of the Aksai Chin. However, this trip was not officially sanctioned by the British administration and Johnson was severely reprimanded for such adventurism upon his return, prompting him to resign his commission. Johnson eventually was appointed the Governor of Ladakh by the Kashmir Durbar (the local parliament/council) which strongly supported his recommended border (Lamb 1964, 83–84).
British officials were concerned that the trade routes across this area could be exploited by the Russian army and sent several expeditions to scout the terrain. Again, the British policy position was divided between the forward and moderate school. Members of the forward school included Johnson, several supporters from the Kashmir government and the British military. Members of the moderate school, notably the explorer and British India civil servant Ney Elias, argued that there were no legitimate or defensible positions beyond the Karakorum Range and that Jammu and Kashmir should abandon its position at Shahidulla\(^\text{13}\) (Lamb 1964, 78–79; Mehra 2007, 44–46). On the basis of reports written by the moderate school, a cartographer in the Foreign Office in London drew a map in 1873 that showed the Kashmir border following the Karakorum Range. Again, this border alignment was unilaterally drawn largely for the purposes of British imperial administration and was not based on treaties or consultation with the Chinese. As such, it also has no diplomatic legitimacy and indeed was intended to basically differentiate Kashgar and Tibet from Kashmir for the government in London rather than show the formal border (Lamb 1964, 86).

As concerns over Russian forward movement increased in the late 1880s, interest in reviewing the undefined border was rekindled. Thus, in 1890, Captain Francis Younghusband was dispatched to survey the land to determine its potential to be used for military purposes and the exact limits of Chinese authority in the region (Lamb 1964, 91; Mehra 1989, 49–50). Traversing the region, Younghusband ascertained that the terrain was largely unsuitable for any significant Russian military operations (Mehra 2007, 47–48). However, Younghusband argued that the Russians could exploit the lack of control in the area to gain influence amongst the various tribes occupying the surrounding

\(^{13}\) Shahidulla was a small trading post north of the Karakorum Ranges. Gulab Singh’s soldiers had established a fort occupied by small garrison in the 1840s. However, the British never recognised it as a legitimate Kashmiri border post and by the 1860s it had fallen into disrepair. Interestingly this post now also lies beyond the Indian claim over the Aksai Chin.
mountains and thereby harass Kashmir. Indeed, a Russian agent and adventurer, Captain Bronislav Grombchevsky, was traversing the Karakorum and Pamir Ranges about the same time and had just entered an arrangement with the Mir of the Hunza tribe.\(^\text{14}\)

As for the second aspect of Younghusband’s mission, he reported that although the resident tribes erratically paid tribute to the local Chinese authorities, there was effectively no Chinese presence in the area. When Younghusband reached the city of Yarkand in 1891, he prompted the resident Chinese Amban to declare where the Chinese considered their border to lie. In response the Amban of Yarkand declared that the Karakorum Range was the natural or ‘heavenly mandated’ boundary (Mehra 2007, 52–53). In order to stake China’s claim, the Chinese sent an expedition to the Karakorum Pass and erected a border pillar in 1892 (Lamb 1964, 48; Maxwell 2013, 16–17). The British administration at the time was in favour of China filling in what they considered to be no-man’s land and made no protest. Both China and India today recognise the Karakorum Pass as being part of the border even though there were no formal negotiations or exchanging of documents/maps to formalise the alignment (Maxwell 2013, 16).

Soon after China erected its border post, its inability to maintain its position was demonstrated when the Russians seized the western Pamirs in 1893 and China was routed by the Japanese in the 1895 war (Deepak 2005, 10; Lamb 1964, 105–6). As a result, the forward school of thought towards the north-western border was reinvigorated within the British administration. In 1897, Sir John Ardagh, the director of British India’s military intelligence and one of the forward school’s most influential advocates, produced a memorandum outlining the forward school’s thinking. In essence, Ardagh argued that

\(^{14}\) The Mir is a localisation of the word Emir meaning ‘prince’ or ‘commander’. In response to Grombchevsky’s move Younghusband provided the rival Kurghiz tribe, which had just been raided by the Hunza, with some resources to help them rebuild their defences (Mehra 2007, 47). In 1892 the British, acting on the information in Younghusband’s reports, helped Kashmir ‘reassert’ its suzerainty over the Hunza by launching a military expedition and replacing the Mir with a more pro-British one (Lamb 1964, 97).
Russia sought to push its borders as far south as possible and, due to China’s inherent weakness, was therefore likely to annex Sinkiang, or at least Kashgar and its hinterland.\textsuperscript{15} In anticipation of such a situation, it made sense to push the border past the Karakorum Range and instead run along the Kuen Lun Range to establish a buffer between Russia and British India’s cities (Lamb 1973, 24–26; Maxwell 2013, 17–19).\textsuperscript{16} This line of thinking became highly influential, especially during Lord Curzon’s administration of the Raj. Indeed, Curzon made it part of British Indian military doctrine to occupy the Aksai Chin should Russia make any move towards Kashgar (Lamb 1964, 107–8).

Although Lord Curzon and several influential members in the British Indian military were ardent that the boundary should be pushed as far northward as possible, other members of the British government and the Indian civil service remained unconvinced. Hence, a compromise position between the two schools of thought was proposed in 1898 by the British representatives in China, George Macartney in Kashgar and Sir Claude MacDonald in Beijing (Deepak 2005, 11; Lamb 1973, 42–51; Maxwell 2013, 20). This proposal was the only one regarding the western border ever formally submitted to China. In essence, it proposed that the border run from the Karakorum Pass along the northern slopes of the Karakorum Ranges until it hit the Karakesh River. The border would then turn south to round the source of the Karakesh River before turning northeast to encompass the Lingzitang salt plains. This would place the Karakesh river and the majority of the Aksai Chin within China but include the Lingzitang salt plains and the Chip Chap Valley within British India (Lamb 1964, 102–3; Maxwell 2013, 20).

\textsuperscript{15} Somewhat ironically, Ardagh’s interest had been aroused by a memorandum from the moderate-leaning British resident in Kashgar, George Macartney. In it, Macartney proposed a compromise position under which the territory claimed by Kashmir and the Hunza north of the Karakorum Range remain under Chinese control as long as China remained in control of Kashgar, thereby establishing a firm border with China and simultaneously deterring the Russians from advancing (Lamb 1973, 21–23).

\textsuperscript{16} As Ardagh’s proposed border closely matched the Johnston’s, this proposed alignment is known as the Johnson/Ardagh Line.
Although it was reported that the Sinkiang administration had no objections to the proposed alignment, the Chinese government never formally responded to the Macartney-MacDonald proposal (Deepak 2005, 11; Maxwell 2013, 20–21). However, as Lord Curzon became the Viceroy of India in 1899 and London was reasonably satisfied with the status quo, the matter was not pursued.

The ambiguous border was again neglected until the onset of the 1911 Chinese Revolution when the Chinese central government lost its already tenuous control over Sinkiang and Tibet (Lamb 1964, 108; Maxwell 2013, 21). In response Britain and Russia, each concerned that the other was seeking to take advantage of the situation, began negotiations in 1912. These negotiations sought to expand the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention, which had established a code of conduct for the two powers to follow in Central Asia, to also include China. Though some tentative agreements were reached during the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia ended any serious negotiations over this sector (Lamb 1964, 108–10). With China and Russia receding as threats, subsequent British administrations relapsed into a benign neglect of the northwestern border. Depending on the inclination of the administration, the Karakorum Range, the Macartney-MacDonald proposal or the Ardagh proposal were at various times treated as the unofficial border. Thus, both China and India inherited an undefined western border, allowing both countries effectively to pick and choose which border proposal or interpretation was historically accurate to justify their stance during negotiations over this sector.

The eastern sector

In contrast to the western sector, the eastern sector has received significantly more attention, scholarly and otherwise, largely focusing on the events surrounding the 1913-
The 1914 Simla conference. Before the 1900s, the disputed territory was primarily inhabited by a multitude of autonomous tribes occupying the rugged terrain, comprising mountains and thick forests. Though some of these tribes were nominally Tibetan vassals, the majority were beyond the administration of China, Tibet or the British Raj (Deepak 2005, 18; Lamb 1964, 115–25; Lin 2004, 26). The main point of contention is the legitimacy of the McMahon Line which was drawn during the Simla conference but never officially delimited. Though China today tacitly accepts the basic contours of the McMahon Line, it maintains its longstanding denunciation of it as illegitimate, instead formally acknowledging the old British administrative ‘outer line’ of Assam as the border (Lin 2004; Maxwell 2013).

Assam was absorbed into the British Indian territories in 1826, bringing the British into increasing contact with the various hill tribes that populated what is now Arunachal Pradesh (Deepak 2005, 17; Lamb 1964, 115; Lin 2004, 26; Maxwell 2013, 27). Once established in Assam, several British officials were interested in opening up trade links with Tibet and managed to rejuvenate several trade routes that had flourished as late as 1809 but had since been disrupted by bandits (Lamb 1966, 296–97). Though willing to launch the occasional punitive military expedition if a tribe attacked British interests, the British governments in both Calcutta and London were largely uninterested in trying to extend their control beyond the plains of Assam. Hence most of the initial British

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17 The most notable of these efforts was the successful establishment by Lieutenant Rutherford in 1833 of the town of Udalguri just south of the Tawang Tract. The Tawang Tract, not to be mistaken with the monastic town of Tawang, was the main eastern trade route between India and Tibet, populated by tribesmen who owed fealty to Tibetan authorities. Running along what is now the Bhutanese border, the Tawang Tract started in Tawang and made its way south through the Se La Pass before ending at the Assam Plains (Lamb 1966, 294).

18 Indeed, the only notable effort to do so had nearly ended in a crisis. In 1844, Major Francis Jenkins persuaded some chiefs from the Tawang Tract to surrender their claims over the region of Kariapara Duar in exchange for an annual payment of 5000 rupees, which the chiefs were then obliged to pass on to Tibetan authorities in Lhasa. In 1852, Monpa Raja Gelong attempted to keep part of the payment for himself prompting Tibet to dispatch a force to capture him prompting Gelong to flee into British territory. The Tibetan forces attempted to pursue Gelong, compelling the British to mobilise against them. The Tibetans were forced to withdraw but were determined to make an example of the offender and turned to more
engagement with the tribes was restricted to a handful of explorers who concluded treaties with the tribesmen and surveyed the terrain (Deepak 2005, 19; Lamb 1964, 122–23; Maxwell 2013, 27–28).

In order to avoid any tensions or crises arising between the British and the various tribes from accidental encroachment upon each other’s territory, the British established an ‘inner line’ and ‘outer line’ for Assam in 1873. The inner line served as an internal administrative boundary beyond which no taxes were to be collected and nobody was to be permitted to cross into without a permit. The outer line marked what the government in India considered to be the actual extent of Assam, running from the southern border of Bhutan and along the foothills of the Himalayas (Deepak 2005, 18–19; Lamb 1964, 125–26, 1966, 312–15; Maxwell 2013, 27–28). This policy remained in place until 1908 when the Indian Viceroy, Lord Minto, authorised the abolition of the inner line, extending Britain’s direct administration up to the outer line (Deepak 2005, 19). However, although the outer line was intended to delimit the extent of British territory, it cannot be considered a formal international border. Rather it was intended to mark the edge of British control and what they considered a no-mans-land, as the British did not consider the tribes beyond to be sovereign entities or under the jurisdiction of another state (Lamb 1964, 127).

China, for its part, had virtually no presence within Tibet or the tribal areas throughout the nineteenth century beyond its Amban in Lhasa (Guruswamy and Singh 2009, 23–24; Lin 2004, 26). This changed in 1904 due to an unintended consequence of British imperial policy. The British had been growing increasingly frustrated by the difficulty in contacting Tibet and were paranoid that the Russians were gaining influence on the roof of the world. Lord Curzon therefore dispatched a military expedition to Lhasa clandestine operations. Hence Gelong was eventually assassinated in 1864. Although reprisals were considered, Britain eventually decided to let the matter slide (Deepak 2005, 18; Lamb 1964, 118–19, 1966, 300).
with the stated objective of opening up Tibet to the British and preventing any Russian presence from being established in the Himalayas. The 1904 expedition, consisting of approximately 5000 British India troops led by the now Colonel Younghusband, easily routed a Tibetan force sent to stop them, prompting the Thirteenth Dalai Lama to flee to Mongolia (Arpi 2013, 29–31; Lamb 1966, 9–12).

After the Younghusband expedition secured British trade and diplomatic interests from the Amban and local Lamas by September 1904, it withdrew from the area. Into this power vacuum stepped the Chinese who, along with several local collaborators, quickly took control of Tibet and began to consolidate their position (Deepak 2005, 24–26; Lamb 1966, 123–24; Mehra 1989, 63–64). In 1906, Beijing dispatched a more ambitious Amban, Lien Yu, to take over in Tibet. Yu promptly arrested his predecessor for a lackluster performance and began a more active policy of Sinofication within Tibet (Lamb 1966, 132). This policy consisted of establishing Chinese schools, reforming the local administration and encouraging Han settlement in the Tibetan Marches to the east of Tibet proper. This policy caused a revolt throughout eastern Tibet in 1905, prompting China to appoint Zhao Erfeng to put down the rebellion (Lamb 1964, 135; Wah 1970, 24).

Zhao Erfeng was given this responsibility primarily because he was from a prominent Manchu family, though he soon proved to be perfectly suited for the task. Noted for being energetic, patriotic, ruthless to enemies and intolerant of incompetence amongst his subordinates, Zhao mobilised a regiment of well trained and equipped veterans and galvanised the local troops (Lamb 1966, 187–88; Arpi 2013, 33–34). With this relatively small force, Zhao quickly pacified the region by massacring the rebels in their homes, demolishing any monasteries that had been supportive of the revolt and executing local Tibetan officials before replacing them with Chinese (Deepak 2005, 53; Lamb 1966, 188). As a reward for his success, Zhao was confirmed as the border commissioner of Szechuan
and Yunnan in 1906, a role which he embraced with characteristic zeal. Throughout 1906 Zhao sent troops to occupy several towns throughout the Tibetan Marches and in December proclaimed a series of reforms in an effort to assimilate the locals and encourage Han colonisation (Lamb 1966, 189–92; Lin 2004, 26–27).

Zhao’s efforts continued to earn him rewards, most notably promotion to the position of joint Amban of Tibet in 1908 and finally the Governor of Szechuan in 1911. Despite never actually setting foot in Tibet, it appears that Zhao remained determined to continue to bind Tibet closer to China. However, the Chinese Revolution in October 1911 put an end to these schemes, with Zhao himself seized by mutineers in Szechuan and beheaded (Arpi 2013, 37–38; Lamb 1964, 141; Lin 2004, 27). Following the Revolution and Zhao’s death, China’s control in Tibet quickly unravelled. Lien Yu was forced out of Lhasa and most of the Chinese forces in central Tibet went on a looting spree before deserting. A contingent of loyal troops under one of Zhao’s lieutenants-turned-revolutionary, General Chung Ying,\(^\text{19}\) did remain in Lhasa. This contingent was touted by Chinese officials at the time as evidence of their continuing sovereignty over Tibet. However, Chung’s troops were effectively besieged in a pro-Chinese monastery by Tibetan forces and ultimately were compelled to withdraw in early 1913 (Deepak 2005, 58; Mehra 2007, 59–61).

The British had noted Zhao Erfeng’s efforts to consolidate Chinese rule with some concern not least because, should Zhao seek to push further south, China could potentially threaten the lucrative Assam tea industry (Lamb 1964, 137–38; Maxwell 2013, 31). In January 1911, Noel Williamson, the British political officer in the Assam border town of Sadiya, heard reports from friendly tribemen of Chinese agents in the Assam Himalayas.

\(^{19}\) It was actually General Chung who had expelled Lien Yu from Tibet, as he considered the Amban to be the representative of the Imperial Court not the Republic. Following the Chinese evacuation of Tibet, General Chung was made the scapegoat for China’s failures in Tibet and executed in 1915.
Without awaiting orders, Williamson mounted an expedition to ascertain the extent of the Chinese penetration into the tribal regions (Arpi 2013, 52–57; Lamb 1966, 333–40). Williamson was a passionate advocate of incorporating the various tribes into the Raj, either by encouraging them to settle in British territory or adjusting where the outer line lay, believing that they would benefit from British rule. As such, he had already made several unofficial expeditions north of the outer line to cultivate relations with the various tribes living to its north (Lamb 1964, 131–33). This time, however, there arose a misunderstanding with the Abor tribe who ambushed and murdered Williamson along with most of his party, with only five survivors making their way back to British territory (Arpi 2013, 50–51; Lamb 1966, 344–45).

In a tragic irony, Williamson’s death at the hands of the Abor tribe furthered his ambitions for incorporating the tribal regions into British territory more than his advocacy in life did. Though Williamson had been acting without orders, his death outraged the British government, which determined that the murder warranted a punitive expedition against the Abors. Further reports of Chinese activity along the frontier added extra impetus for the British to have a firm understanding of the situation beyond the outer line (Lamb 1966, 346–47; Maxwell 2013, 33–34). Thus the expedition was also to be tasked with surveying the tribal no-mans-land with the mind to create a new boundary north of Assam’s outer line so as to establish a proper border with China (Arpi 2013, 58–61; Lamb 1966, 350–52). The expedition was dispatched on 28 October 1911 and quickly subjugated the Abors, bringing Williamson’s murderers to justice and razing the few villages that offered resistance.

By January 1912, the military phase was over and the expedition began the task of surveying the territory and negotiating with the resident tribes. During this process, the British expedition discovered that several Chinese expeditions had indeed penetrated into
the region, laying several boundary flags near Walong (Lamb 1964, 135–37). More dramatically, the British confirmed that in early 1911, a Chinese expedition had summoned several tribal chiefs and told them that they should consider themselves Chinese subjects and under Chinese protection. The Chinese officials had even provided the tribesmen with documents to that effect issued in the name of Zhao Erfeng (Lamb 1966, 356–57).

Though the 1911 Chinese revolution had removed the immediate threat of a Chinese forward policy, the advances made by the Chinese were unacceptable to the British. Hence, the British decided that the policy of an ambiguous eastern frontier would no longer suffice (Lin 2004, 27–28). The British administration therefore moved to gather intelligence about the frontier and bring the tribal regions under what the Viceroy, Lord Charles Hardinge, termed ‘loose political control’ (Lamb 1964, 140–41; Maxwell 2013, 34–35). This policy involved formally claiming the tribal regions as under British jurisdiction and the establishment of a few permanent police posts in the region but otherwise leaving the various tribes to their own devices. The British would only intervene in the province if the Chinese resumed their probing into the territory or any of the tribes showed ‘an undue sense of independence’ (Lamb 1966, 350–51). In order to implement this policy, the British established the North-East Frontier Administration in 1912, which was eventually reorganised into the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) in the later years of the Raj (Deepak 2005, 19). By the time the Simla conference was convened in 1913, Chinese, Tibetan and British influence had penetrated deep into the tribal areas, approximately along the lines indicated in Map 2.3 of Annex B.

Following the collapse of the Chinese Imperial government in 1911, Tibet gained *de facto* independence. The 13th Dalai Lama, who had fled Tibet again to British India in 1910 during a Chinese crackdown, returned in January 1913, promptly re-established his
Kashag (ruling council) and declared Tibetan independence. The new Republican government of Yuan Shikai in China rejected these claims and tried its best to convince and coerce Tibet to join the ‘family of five nations’ and re-establish a Chinese resident in Lhasa (Deepak 2005, 61–62; Lamb 1966, 396–402; Mehra 2007, 59–63). Ultimately, a brutal conflict erupted throughout eastern Tibet between the local Tibetan rebels and those troops still loyal to Beijing. In this context, the British saw an opportunity to establish Tibet as a genuine buffer state and clearly define the borders within the troubled region in order to mitigate any future tension. Encouraged by the precedent set by the 1912 Russo-Chinese Treaty over Mongolia, \(^{20}\) the British decided to position themselves as a mediator between China and Tibet, albeit one with its own strong interests (Deepak 2005, 62–63; Malik 2011, 128–29).

Under significant British diplomatic pressure, China reluctantly agreed to participate in tripartite negotiations, held in the Indian border town of Simla, to establish the status of Tibet. Yuan chose the experienced diplomat Chen Yi-fan, \(^{21}\) to lead China’s delegation. However, Chen was to be ‘assisted’ by Lu Hsing-Chi, a businessman and Chinese spymaster based in Calcutta who had also convinced Yuan to name him ‘Administrator of Tibet’. \(^{22}\) Tibet chose as its plenipotentiary Lobchen Sutra, a senior monk and minister in the Dalai Lama’s government. Britain was represented by Sir Henry

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\(^{20}\) This treaty saw Russia recognise Chinese suzerainty over Mongolia but split Mongolia into a Chinese controlled inner section and an autonomous outer section. Outer Mongolia effectively became a Russian protectorate and several officials within the British Indian Administration feared that Russia could use the cause of Mongolian unification as a proxy to reach the borders of Tibet (Lamb 1964, 143).

\(^{21}\) Known to many Europeans as ‘Ivan’, Chen had served in the Chinese Legation in London for several years and as such was generally held in high regard by the British who considered him to be an experienced and intelligent diplomat (Deepak 2005, 64; Lamb 1966, 470; Maxwell 2013, 37).

\(^{22}\) Lu was never able to enter Tibet to adopt the role of Administrator and neither Britain nor Tibet ever recognised him in this capacity. However, Lu did show a fair degree of expertise as a spymaster, managing to gain a large network of high quality informers and accurate information. Unfortunately for the Chinese, the British authorities had already identified him as a spy and were reading Lu’s correspondence with Beijing, enabling them to control the extent of information that flowed through his network (Lamb 1966, 398–400; Maxwell 2013, 38; Mehra 2007, 58–74).
McMahon,\(^{23}\) then British India’s Foreign Secretary and regarded as a man with a notably strong will but judicious temperament. The proceedings began on the 6 October 1913 with the Chinese and Tibetan delegations detailing their inherently irreconcilable positions on Tibet’s status in China and arguing at great length the exact boundaries of Tibet (Lamb 1966, 478–82).

When the conference resumed in January 1914 after a break, McMahon put forward the suggestion of replicating the Mongolian Treaty by splitting Tibet into inner and outer sections. While the Tibetans agreed, the Chinese eventually rejected it in early March, disagreeing with the proposed Outer Tibet border (Deepak 2005, 66–67; Lamb 1964, 144, 1966, 499–500; Lin 2004, 27). In response to the Chinese government’s obstinacy and delays, McMahon informed Chen Yi-fen in March that if the Chinese continued to persist with its negotiating strategy, Britain would be compelled to deal with Tibet bilaterally. McMahon and Sutra then proceeded to conduct talks on the delimitation between British India and Tibet. The result of these talks was that British India and Tibet agreed that the border should approximately follow the crest of the Assam Himalayas (K. Gupta 1982, 112–13; Lamb 1964, 144–45; Maxwell 2013, 41–42). The two exchanged notes and a map on the 24-25 March, establishing the border now known as the McMahon Line. A copy of the original two-part map is provided as Map 2.4 in annex B.\(^{24}\)

Owing to the accuracy of Lu’s intelligence in India, it is likely that the Chinese delegation was aware of the McMahon Line’s creation (Lamb 1966, 505; Mehra 2007, 23). McMahon had the benefit of considerable experience in negotiating and establishing borders. As a Captain in the 1890s, he was part of the delegation to Kabul that established the Durand Line which delimited the border between the Raj and Afghanistan and personally spent two years demarcating it (Maxwell 2013, 37). Following the Simla negotiations, McMahon returned to Britain briefly before taking up the post of Britain’s High Commissioner, and effectively governor, of Egypt for most of the First World War where he played an instrumental role in the Arab Uprising.

\(^{23}\) As part of the arrangement, Britain agreed that the alignment could undergo some minor revisions should any important Tibetan religious sites to be within a day’s journey on foot of the border. Owing to the events following the Simla Convention, it appears that neither side actually attempted to carry out this test. For the full text of the exchange, see Lamb (1966, 618-619).
However, this border alignment was never officially discussed with the Chinese or raised by Chen in subsequent negotiations. This was in part because McMahon wanted this issue resolved with as little fuss as possible. Additionally, the British also recognised that the Chinese and Tibetans clearly considered the status of Tibet and the location of the internal border to more pressing (Lamb 1964, 145). Hence much of the discussion was focused on these issues, with only Article IX of the final Convention addressing the issue of Tibet’s borders (Lamb 1966, 620–25; Mehra 1989, 181–89).

In April 1914, Chen managed to secure several concessions in the draft Convention, mostly regarding the nature of China’s authority in Central Tibet and the activities allowed by British officials in Inner Tibet (Mehra 1989, 171–82). On 27 April 1914, Chen agreed to initial the final draft on the understanding that initialling rather than signing was simply an acknowledgment that it represented the outcome of the negotiations, not the acceptance by China (Deepak 2005, 68–69; Lamb 1966, 500–505; Maxwell 2013, 38). As the final map attached to the Convention included the McMahon Line, several advocates of India’s position have seized upon Chen’s initial as China’s tacit support for the border alignment (Deepak 2005, 69; Rao 1968).25

However, the Chinese government immediately repudiated Chen’s actions and instructed him not to sign under any condition, thereby calling into serious question the validity of any such claim (K. Gupta 1982, 113; Maxwell 2013, 43–44). Subsequent efforts to convince the Chinese government to change its position proved fruitless, compelling Chen to withdraw from the conference proceedings.26 As such, on the 3 July 1914 McMahon and Sutra signed a separate declaration to the effect that they agreed to

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25 Interestingly, the maps of Tibet’s borders drawn up by the British also show the Aksai Chin as squarely within Tibetan territory, a fact that the independent Indian government has ignored (Hoffmann 1990, 15).

26 Chen did attempt to convince Yuan that he had negotiated the best deal possible and Yuan was purportedly inclined to agree. However Yuan was also under strong domestic political pressures to reject it and was also being exhorted by Lu to take a tougher line (Lamb 1966, 498; Lin 2004, 27; Mehra 2007, 23).
be bound by the Convention and that China would receive the rights granted to it in the Convention only when it formally ratified it (Deepak 2005, 70; Lamb 1966, 145–47; Maxwell 2013, 39–40).

In the aftermath of the Simla Conference, the British made some overtures towards China, proposing some amendments to the Convention in order to secure their signature. However, the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 and China’s disintegration into anarchic warlordism after Yuan Shikai’s failed attempt to proclaim himself as Emperor in 1916 saw the issue effectively forgotten (Deepak 2005, 73–75; Lamb 1966, 569–70; Maxwell 2013, 44). Following the First World War, the British quietly continued its policy of establishing ‘loose political control’ in the NEFA. However, they deliberately shied away from any overt displays of sovereignty over the territory lest it exacerbate the strong anti-British sentiment within China and prompt attacks on British interests in East Asia (Lin 2004, 31; Mehra 2007, 128). On the Chinese side, Tibetan forces managed to rout the Chinese armies in eastern Tibet in 1919 and established a presence in several areas south of the McMahon Line, including directly administering Tawang (Lamb 1966, 571–72).

This situation remained unchanged until 1928, when Chiang Kai-shek’s newly established Kuomintang government sought to restructure China’s provinces and assert China’s claim to its ‘lost’ outlying regions, including Tibet. Prior to this restructuring, China’s previous border claimed by Zhao Erfeng’s forces only ever stretched a few miles south of the McMahon Line (see map 2.3) (Lamb 1964, 170). Now, the Kuomintang sought to extend their administration down to Assam as part of a new province called Xiking (Lin 2004, 28–29). However, Xiking only ever existed on the Kuomintang’s official maps. The local warlords, Tibetans and tribal leaders continued to rule as before
and, though documents were drafted and officials appointed, the Xiking government was never inaugurated and passed no laws (Lin 2004, 29–30).

Britain also officially ignored the Chinese new territorial claims over the NEFA. However, the declaration of the Xiking province may have been the catalyst for the belated publication in 1929 of the Simla Convention, without the corresponding maps, in the fourteenth edition of *Aitchison’s Treaties*\(^2^7\) (Mehra 2007, 24–25). Prior to this publication, the establishment of the McMahon Line was officially given a low profile, although it did appear in several accounts from former frontier officials. The most notable of these is Sir Charles Bell’s\(^2^8\) memoirs, published in 1924, which included an account of the Simla Conference and a map showing the McMahon Line as the border of India and Tibet (K. Gupta 1982, 116; Mehra 2007, 25–26).

Although the British Indian administration did sporadically send expeditions into the tribal areas, it did not actively attempt to make the McMahon Line its effective boundary until the mid-1930s (Lamb 1966, 574–76; Maxwell 2013, 46). The catalyst for this move occurred in 1935 when a renowned British biologist and explorer, Captain Kingdon-Ward, was arrested by a Tibetan police patrol for trespassing into Tibet via Tawang. Embarrassed by Kingdon-Ward’s public criticism over the British administration’s ‘casual approach’ towards the border, Delhi became highly interested in establishing exactly where the border lay (K. Gupta 1982, 117–18; Maxwell 2013, 46; Mehra 2007, 129–30). A deputy secretary named Olaf Caroe\(^2^9\) unearthed the Simla

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\(^2^7\) First published in 1862 by Sir Charles Aitchison of the Indian Civil Service, *Aitchison’s Treaties*’ official title was *A collection of Treaties, Engagements, and Sunnuds relating to India and neighbouring countries*. This record quickly became the official collection of all treaties relating to India and was revised at regular intervals until the British withdrew from India in 1947.

\(^2^8\) Bell had been McMahon’s assistant advising on Tibetan affairs during the Simla Conference. He lived in Tibet for a number of years as a British agent, becoming well informed about Tibetan affairs and even befriending the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.

\(^2^9\) Caroe eventually rose through the Indian Civil Service to become the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province in 1946-1947 and after Indian and Pakistani independence became a prolific writer on global security issues and West Asian affairs.
Conference documents during his investigations and proceeded to strongly advocate the publication of the McMahon Line as the border. London eventually approved Caroe’s suggestions in 1937, resulting in a revision of Aitchison’s Treaties and the publication of new Survey of India maps that showed the McMahon Line as the delimited border. London also permitted the British Indian government to dispatch several expeditions up to the McMahon Line to help consolidate this move (K. Gupta 1982, 122–29; Maxwell 2013, 46–47; Mehra 2007, 26–28).  

The onset of the Second World War largely halted the expansion of the British Indian administration over the tribal areas. Although the Japanese invasion of Burma sparked British interest in strengthening the security of the NEFA, it was not until after the war that a systematic effort was made to consolidate their presence there (Lin 2004, 34–36; Maxwell 2013, 51–55). By the time the British handed power over to the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1947, their authority had been brought up to the Se La Pass just south of Tawang and police posts had been established along the major rivers in the NEFA up to the McMahon Line (Lamb 1966, 579–80; Maxwell 2013, 55). Nonetheless, as the British withdrew from India in 1947 and the Kuomintang government began to collapse under the communist guerrilla’s onslaughts, the NEFA remained effectively an ungoverned frontier. Notwithstanding pockets of British and Tibetan control, the NEFA was largely the domain of the various independent tribes that were beyond the purview of any of the claimants to their territory (Lin 2004, 38). Hence it is worth noting here that

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30 One of the most audacious of these, led by Captain Lightfoot, was dispatched in April 1938 to Tawang which was still under Tibetan control. Upon Lightfoot’s arrival the Tibetan authorities lodged a protest and openly collected taxes for Lhasa in defiance of his insistence that it was British territory. Upon returning to Assam, Lightfoot recommended that to incorporate Tawang into British India, the Tibetan authorities should be expelled and replaced by a permanent British representative who would rule through eminent locals. The British Government ultimately rejected this idea in 1939 (K. Gupta 1982, 128; Lamb 1966, 577; Smith 2014, 76).

31 In the mid-1940s, the British sought to use Tawang as bargaining chip to formalise the McMahon Line, swapping acceptance of Tibetan sovereignty over Tawang for recognition of the rest of the alignment, although there is no evidence that either Tibet or China responded (K. Gupta 1982, 29; Mehra 2007, 138).
although the legitimacy of the McMahon Line is undoubtedly dubious, China’s claim to sovereignty over all the territory up to Assam’s Outer Line is even more questionable (Mehra 2007, 30–31; Rubin 1960, 106–8). This lack of merit in both sides’ border claims continues to haunt the Sino-Indian border negotiations.

The emergence and entrenchment of the Sino-Indian border dispute

1950-1961: From misunderstandings to intransigence

In 1950, the newly proclaimed People’s Republic of China ‘liberated’ Tibet, ending Tibet’s de facto independence and establishing a contiguous frontier between China and India for the first time since the 1911 revolution (Dalvi 1969, 6; Chellaney 2013, 48–49). Although India had gained independence in 1947, New Delhi initially sought to continue the British policy of maintaining an autonomous Tibet as a buffer from any possible threat from the north. Nonetheless, India acquiesced to Chinese sovereignty over the Tibetan plateau after raising a few symbolic protests (Garver 2001, 43–47; Kalha 2014, 33–38; Mehra 2007, 146–51). Initially the two countries were unwilling to broach the topic of their ambiguous borders. China was preoccupied during the early 1950s with the consolidation of the communist regime and the reconstruction of the ruined infrastructure throughout the country generally and Tibet in particular (Chung 2004, 100; Fravel 2008, 72–74). India, for its part, was intent on establishing friendly relations with the new Chinese regime, as Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru believed that an Indo-Chinese friendship was pivotal to his plans for a peaceful post-colonial Asian community. Hence Nehru actively sought to establish good relations with China, most notably by signing the

32 Indeed, India retained not only control of the British mission in Lhasa and the telegraph infrastructure that they had built throughout Tibet but also all of the actual staff. It was reported at the time that the only perceptible change in the mission was the flag above the door (Fravel 2008, 73–74; Maxwell 2013, 62).

However, both sides continued to view the other with a fair degree of suspicion despite the air of mutual friendship. The arrival of Communist China in Tibet now caused India to view its ambiguous northern borders as a potential threat to national security, just as Zhao Erfeng’s campaigns had done with Britain 40 years earlier. As such, India began low-key but systematic efforts to consolidate the Indian administration along its northern frontiers, including dispatching an expedition to establish the first direct Indian control over Tawang on 12 February 1951 (Lamb 1964, 167; Kalha 2014, 52; Maxwell 2013, 68). The Chinese regime for its part inherently mistrusted the Indian government. Chinese officials at the time perceived the Indian government through their revolutionary Marxist-Leninist lens as ‘anti-imperialist bourgeoisie’. As such, India was considered to be a temporary ally in attacking colonialism but who would inevitably fall under the sway of the ‘big bourgeoisie’ (Chung 2004, 105; Maxwell 2013, 305–10; Mehra 2007, 175). Chairman Mao Zedong himself also suspected that the Indians were, if not actively assisting, complicit in the Tibetan resistance to the Chinese rule that was being organised out of Nepal and India (Deepak 2005, 168–71; Garver 2011, 104–5).

33 Panchsheel means ‘five principles/values’ in Sanskrit. Officially these principles were enunciated in the preamble of the “Agreement on trade and intercourse between Tibet Region of China and India” which saw India formally acknowledge Tibet as part of China and agree to sell China the Tibetan infrastructure that it had inherited from Britain in exchange for trade corridors into Tibet (Chellaney 2013, 49–50; Dalvi 1969, 29–31; Deepak 2005, 149–54; Kalha 2014, 65–68). This issue will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

34 Indian control over Tawang was established in a somewhat clandestine manner when the Assam governor, without approval from New Delhi, dispatched several hundred soldiers to seize the town. The Indian Major Ralengnao Khating commanded the expedition accompanied by Major T.C. Allen, a British officer who had remained in the Indian Army. Major Allen conducted the negotiations with the Tibetan representative in Tawang and convinced him to accede control of the town to India. Allegedly, this was agreed to only after Major Allen after took his pistol out of its holster and placed it beside him during the negotiations, apparently because of discomfort but nonetheless giving the negotiations an air of coercion. Nehru was reportedly furious when he heard but did nothing to reverse the fait accompli and Beijing did not learn of India’s presence in Tawang until 1953. Allen was later rewarded for his efforts by being appointed the Lieutenant Governor of the NEFA (Smith 2014, 76–77).
Both sides appear to have also mistaken each other’s silence on the border’s location and overtures of friendship as a tacit acceptance of their own position (Kalha 2014, 56–57; Mehra 2007, 169–72). In essence, communist China’s position was that it refuted any borders established by European colonial powers during its ‘century of oppression’ and, just like the former Kuomintang regime, sought the recovery of its ‘lost’ provinces. In contrast, India believed that the borders of the British Raj were established by tradition or treaty and therefore had sound international legal status. Although both China and India were probably aware of the contradictions in their positions, each refused to directly raise the border’s location with the other, seemingly intent on trying to achieve a fait accompli before broaching the topic (Chung 2004, 100; Maxwell 2013, 77–79).

By the mid-1950s, China and India’s mutual silence over these divergent perspectives became increasingly untenable, with border patrols encountering each other as early as 1954 (Deepak 2005, 187–88; MEA 1963a, 1–10). Although these initial confrontations were bloodless and kept out of the public eye, the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai felt that the time had come to formally raise the issue of ambiguous borders during his visit to India in 1956, receiving permission from the Politburo to do so. Unfortunately, this initial discussion on the border ambiguity only ended up deepening the misunderstandings between the two countries. Zhou in his meeting with Nehru raised the eastern sector, stating that China did not consider the McMahon Line legitimate but was inclined to accept its alignment if the border could be renegotiated. However, Nehru and his government did not appreciate the nuance of this position and assumed that it equated to a tacit recognition of India’s border alignment in both sectors (Chung 2004, 100; Deepak 2005, 167–68; Maxwell 2013, 94–95).

Although this misunderstanding in the eastern sector would have made a settlement difficult, it was the revelation in 1957 that China had constructed a road through
the Aksai Chin that noticeably inflamed tensions. India had inherited maps from the British stating that the north-eastern border of Jammu and Kashmir was ‘undefined’, although they were typically shaded to incorporate the maximum claims envisioned by Johnson and Ardagh. In 1954, after the Panchsheel Agreement was signed, India quietly and unilaterally changed its official maps to replace the undefined zone with a firm border, thus incorporating the Aksai Chin within India (K. Gupta 1982, 152–53; Kalha 2014, 72–73). However, the Aksai Chin lay across one of the main routes into Tibet from China and hence had significant strategic importance for China. In an effort to ensure access to its remote and restive province, China constructed the sealed road following an old caravan route between Sinkiang and Tibet from 1955 and 1957 that inevitably crossed the Aksai Chin (Deepak 2005, 185–86; Maxwell 2013, 85–86).35 In 1958, India dispatched two reconnaissance patrols to investigate reports it had received on the construction of the Chinese road. One of these patrols was apprehended by Chinese frontier guards who deported them via the Karakorum Pass,36 marking the first serious clash between border forces (Chung 2004, 101; Dalvi 1969, 38–39; Deepak 2005, 199).

This incident and fate of the Indian patrol was initially also kept from the public. Nonetheless, it did prompt Nehru to write to Zhou on 14 December 1958, initiating what would be a series of increasingly acrimonious letters (Chung 2004, 101; Deepak 2005, 199–201). Seeking to address the topic indirectly, Nehru stated that China was still using old maps that showed parts of India in China. Nehru declared that the continued use of

35 When the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) initially moved into Tibet in 1950, there were only three passages onto the plateau and no paved roads, making it hard to transport any artillery or rapidly deploy troops into Tibet. There were two other routes built into Tibet, one from the Yunnan in the West and one from Sichuan in the north. However, the tendency for landslides and a hostile population along the other two roads ensured that the Sinkiang-Tibet road was the most reliable for Chinese forces to enter Tibet for several decades (Garver 2001, 82–84).

36 To India’s indignation the patrol was left to find their way back to base on their own, with China even neglecting to alert India to the patrol’s location. As the Karakorum Pass sits at approximately five and a half kilometres above sea level with no Indian bases nearby at that time, the patrol was lucky to be found and rescued (Kalha 2014, 83; Maxwell 2013, 96).
these ‘incorrect’ maps puzzled him because he was not aware of any border dispute between them and claimed that India’s borders were “well known and fixed” (Ambekar and Divekar 1964, 112–16). Zhou responded on 23 January 1959, arguing that the border had never formally been delimitated and this was the cause of the discrepancies between their respective maps. Zhou suggested that to avoid further border incidents, both sides should maintain the status quo before conducting proper surveys (Ambekar and Divekar 1964, 117–19). This response was received with some trepidation in New Delhi. Indian leaders felt that China’s position on the border was a new approach, which was in breach of the ‘principles of coexistence’ and foreshadowed further territorial claims on India (Deepak 2005, 200–201; Maxwell 2013, 97–98).

Nehru responded to Zhou on the 22 March 1959, arguing India’s case in more detail and stressing the “great concern” that China’s position and actions were causing in India (Ambekar and Divekar 1964, 120–23). Though Nehru does not appear to have deliberately timed the letter’s dispatch, he could not have chosen a more inappropriate moment to send it. Simmering resentment amongst Tibetans over the Han Chinese chauvinism displayed by many communist cadres and the PLA garrison erupted on 10 March 1959 following a rumour that the PLA was planning to abduct the Dalai Lama. Initial demonstrations quickly turned violent and flared into a full-scale insurrection. During the following week, several communist supporters and Chinese officials were lynched by mobs, Tibetan independence was declared by a newly formed ‘People’s Assembly’ and armed rebels began clashing with PLA troops (Deepak 2005, 203–4; Fravel 2008, 77–78; Garver 2016, 149–50). Though the revolt was quickly crushed by the PLA, several rebels and the Dalai Lama escaped by crossing the border into India on the 31 March and received political asylum. To an infuriated Chinese regime, this confirmed their suspicions that India had been abetting the Tibetan rebels. Indeed, a Chinese
intelligence report assessed that India was complicit in fomenting the rebellion in part to
force China to accept India’s territorial claims (PRC FMA 1959). Hence, Nehru’s letter
was seen as an opportunistic attempt to claim Chinese territory and to undermine Chinese
control in Tibet (Garver 2001, 60–61; Kalha 2014, 97; Maxwell 2013, 104–6).

The Tibetan revolt and the Dalai Lama’s subsequent flight to India ended any
lingering amicable relations between the two countries. Considering the events in Tibet,
India began to believe that China was aggressively taking advantage of their absence in
the disputed territory. Hence India started to move more forces into the border regions
in mid-1959 in order to assert its territorial claims (Chung 2004, 102; Maxwell 2011, 77–
78). This resulted in an increase of Indian forces along the border, where they established
forward posts in the disputed territories and engaged in frequent patrolling. However,
these Indian patrols quickly began to clash with Chinese forces patrolling the region to
secure the border from further rebel operations (Fravel 2008, 82–83; Kalha 2014, 101).38
On 8 September 1959, Zhou wrote back to Nehru, adopting a significantly harsher tone.
In his letter Zhou elaborated the Chinese position to the Indian government unequivocally
for the first time, denounced a number of Indian incursions as the cause of the border
clashes and called for the dispute to be resolved peacefully (Ambekar and Divekar 1964,
123–30).

The Indian government, and Nehru in particular, was highly vexed by Zhou’s letter
and promptly responded on 26 September 1959. In the lengthy response, Nehru

37 Originally these were paramilitary police units, most notably the Assam Rifles and Jammu and Kashmir
militia. Following the 1959 border clashes, the police were replaced by Indian Army units in 1960, though
several still remained in position until 1962 (Maxwell 2013, 222).
38 The two most serious of these near Longju in the NEFA on 25 August 1959 and at the Kongka Pass near
the Aksai Chin on 20–21 October 1959. Both sides gave contradictory accounts, each claiming the other as
the aggressor and trespasser. However, China showed its superior force in each confrontation, arresting
twelve Indians with no casualties at Longju and killing nine Indians and capturing the remaining ten for one
Chinese casualty at the Kongka Pass (Dalvi 1969, 44–46; Deepak 2005, 216–18, 221–23; Maxwell 2013,
112–14).
expounded upon India’s position and insisted that no negotiations could be conducted while Chinese troops remained within India’s ‘traditional frontier’ (Ambekar and Divekar 1964, 130–51). Zhou responded in an impassioned letter on 7 November 1959 that argued that though there were clearly fundamental differences of opinion, the border was best negotiated directly. Zhou also urged that each side observe the status quo and mutually withdraw their troops twenty kilometres from their claim lines to avoid future clashes (Ambekar and Divekar 1964, 151–53). Nehru quickly dismissed this suggestion and took umbrage with the Chinese position, declaring that it was not an adequate response as it did not take into account the position that he had earlier presented (Ambekar and Divekar 1964, 153–58). Both sides proceeded to trade proposals and rejections of the other’s suggestions until Nehru finally accepted China’s appeals for a meeting between the Prime Ministers and invited Zhou to India for talks between 19 and 25 April 1960 (Deepak 2005, 225–27; Maxwell 2013, 147–54).

Zhou arrived in New Delhi with a large delegation and proceeded to hold extensive talks with Nehru and his other ministers. In January 1960, China had demonstrated that it was willing to be accommodating and flexible in border negotiations by resolving its border dispute with Burma (Fravel 2008, 86–88). This potentially was an important precedent for the disputed Sino-Indian border as China largely accepted the borders that the British had established with only a few minor adjustments (Chung 2004, 103–4; Maxwell 2011, 235–38). Further, in January 1960 the Chinese Politburo Standing Committee had met and decided to seek a swift resolution of the border dispute with India on a principle of ‘give and take’ (Chung 2004, 104; Fravel 2008, 85). Thus, Zhou during talks with Nehru proposed a ‘package deal’ to resolve the border dispute. In essence, this deal argued that the status quo was the most reasonable border. Thus Zhou proposed that China abandon its claim to territory below the McMahon Line in exchange for India’s
abandoning its claim to the Aksai Chin, with minor amendments to be made along the border as necessary (Garver 2001, 100; Kissinger 2011, 187; P.N. Haksar Papers 1960, 17–26).

However, the Sino-Indian talks ultimately proved fruitless. India maintained an inflexible approach towards the disputed border throughout the negotiations, rejecting Zhou’s package deal and insisting on a Chinese withdrawal from Indian claimed territory (Fravel 2008, 94–95; Garver 2001, 102). Prime Minister Nehru deliberately maintained an aloof demeanour in his discussions with Premier Zhou to demonstrate India’s disapproval over China’s stance. Other Indian ministers involved in the negotiations discourteously harangued or pompously lectured the Chinese delegates about India’s territorial claims (Kalha 2014, 134; Maxwell 2013, 171–73). Whilst the Chinese delegation was highly offended by Indian leaders’ behaviour (Malik 2011, 77; Maxwell 2013, 172), it was nonetheless agreed that a number of officials from the two countries would meet to establish the facts of the dispute (Chung 2004, 104; Deepak 2005, 232; Mehra 1989, 89–90).

The representatives of both sides met over three sessions between June and December 1960. Both China and India produced several authoritative records, maps, travel journals and official correspondence to substantiate their claims. However, both sides, to their mutual irritation, also drew upon many tangentially related or dubious sources. China frequently cited vague passages from Qing and Tibetan archives, which often did not specify any locations whilst India drew heavily upon Indian mythology, poems and epics to help establish its claims (Chang et al. 1960; Deepak 2005, 233–35). With no common ground reached, the Chinese and Indian negotiators grew increasingly exasperated and the negotiations only helped to entrench the two sides’ respective views. Hence, when the final 660-page Official’s Report was published in February 1961, it was
little more than a list of evidence and rebuttals provided by both sides (Chang et al. 1960; Deepak 2005, 232–39; Kalha 2014, 134–35). Though both sides claimed that the Official’s Report showed the superiority of their claims, it in reality only confirmed both sides refusal to budge from their positions on the Sino-Indian border.39

The 1962 Border War and its aftermath

The blame for turning the historically ambiguous Sino-Indian border into a full-fledged border dispute was largely the fault of Prime Minister Nehru and the Indian government’s inept diplomacy and ham-fisted tactics. However, it was Chairman Mao’s ambitions and the Chinese desire to consolidate control over Tibet that was ultimately responsible for escalating the border dispute into the war that ultimately hardened both sides’ position, thereby ensuring that the border dispute would become intractable (Chung 2004, 109; Garver 2011, 105). Following the failure of talks in 1960, India moved to strengthen its presence in the disputed territory in an effort to strengthen its claim. However, after a decade of deliberate neglect, the Indian military had begun to suffer from serious logistical and supply deficiencies curtailing its ability to perform operations. The Indian Army in particular was suffering from chronic shortages of materials, from boots to modern rifles to radios (Cohen and Dasgupta 2010, 6–7; Maxwell 2013, 259).

Furthermore, the Indian Army was afflicted by factional infighting throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s. The first faction were traditionalists, believing that the Indian military should retain the regimental practices and apolitical stance adopted by the colonial British Indian military. The second faction were nationalists, willing to incorporate more Indian cultural practices into military life and respond to the political

39 It was reportedly joked by scholars and officials at the time that the only thing that the two sides agreed upon is that the report should be bound (Mehra 1989, 90).
requirements of the government, viewing their rivals as out of touch and possibly disloyal (Maxwell 2001).

The nationalist faction quickly coalesced behind Lieutenant General Brij Mohan Kaul; a charismatic and intelligent officer who reverred Prime Minister Nehru and was respected by Krishna Menon, the acerbic Defence Minister and fellow Nehru loyalist (Hoffmann 1990, 118–19, 125–26; Maxwell 2013, 205–9). Kaul had been in the military since 1933 but had mostly served in logistical and public relations roles, not seeing any combat during the Second World War or the 1948 Indo-Pakistan War. Nonetheless, Kaul enjoyed disproportionate influence and a meteoric rise owing largely due to Nehru’s favouritism. This patronage was largely due to Kaul’s clear political loyalty, though it was also helped that he was a Kashmiri Brahman and purportedly a distant relative of Nehru (Dalvi 1969, 87–95; Maxwell 2001, 1190).

By 1961, Lieutenant General Kaul and his supporters had managed to force out or sideline their traditionalist rivals and take prominent positions within the Indian Army’s HQ. With the direct access to Nehru, who had confidence in his analysis, Kaul began supporting the more proactive approach towards the Sino-Indian border advocated by Menon and the Intelligence Bureau Chief, B.N Mullik (Hoffmann 1990, 95–98; Wilkinson 2015, 128). Thus, in a meeting between Nehru, Kaul and a number of other highly placed officials on 2 November 1961, it was decided that India would officially adopt the ‘Forward Policy’ (Deepak 2005, 243–44; Henderson Brooks 1963, 8–9; Kalha 2014, 136–37). This policy sought to build upon earlier efforts to deploy the Army along the whole border by establishing outposts where possible in order to dominate any Chinese posts that were established within the Indian claimed territory.

However, as the Henderson-Brooks (1963) report found in the aftermath of the 1962 Sino-Indian war, the Forward Policy was flawed in two major ways. First and
foremost was that the Forward Policy was significantly detached from the reality on the ground. Prime Minister Nehru and his advisors had only a rudimentary understanding of the terrain and the logistical requirements that were necessary to sustain such a military operation in the Himalayas. These difficulties were further exacerbated by the Indian Army’s supply shortages, which severely curtailed its ability to perform the tasks assigned to it. Additionally, the Forward Policy also was based upon the idealistic assumption, not supported by military intelligence or the experiences of 1959, that the Chinese were unlikely to use force against the Indian positions (Dalvi 1969, 44–45; Henderson Brooks 1963, 8). Although Indian troops were instructed not to fire upon the Chinese except for self-defence, it is clear that Nehru and his advisors greatly underestimated the provocative nature that their efforts to change to the status quo would have (Deepak 2005, 244; Maxwell 2013, 331).

The second major flaw was that the Indian Army HQ, partly due to political interference, poorly implemented the Forward Policy. At the 2 November 1961 meeting, the third and final directive stated:

In view of the numerous operational and administrative difficulties, efforts should be made to position major concentration of forces along our borders in places conveniently situated behind forward posts from where they could be maintained at short notice and from where they can restore a border situation at short notice (Henderson Brooks 1963, 8).

However, this directive was omitted from the orders eventually given to the Indian Eastern and Western Commands on 5 December 1961, with Indian field commanders instead
ordered to establish forward posts immediately (Henderson Brooks 1963, 9–10). The Indian Army HQ also neglected to provide any clear direction as to where to establish the forward outposts. Instead, Kaul, occasionally with input from Nehru and Menon, chose to micromanage the situation by selecting the locations and troops to operate most posts, often overriding the chain of command in the process (Hoffmann 1990, 99–100; Maxwell 2013, 251–53).

Efforts to supply the Indian forward posts were also largely a failure. The rugged terrain ensured that supply lines were unable to keep up and efforts to supply the Indian forward posts via airdrops were largely failures. The Indian Air Force was incapable of meeting the demands set by Army HQ and the poor weather and terrain made it difficult to establish drop points. This ensured that supplies were often lost, dropped significantly off target or sometimes even accidentally dropped onto Chinese positions (Deepak 2005, 244; Dalvi 1969, 80–82; Henderson Brooks 1963, 34).

The Forward Policy with all of its problems increased the likelihood for a crisis to develop and provided a perfect casus belli for China. Still, it cannot be considered a sufficient cause for the outbreak of war in October 1962. Indeed, China had also been increasing the deployment of troops along the border, establishing several frontier posts in the Aksai Chin and along the McMahon Line (Deepak 2005, 240–42; Kalha 2014, 136). After the initial border clashes in 1959, China unilaterally suspended active patrolling 20 kilometres from their claim line in order to establish a buffer zone and avoid further incidents. However, in response to the Forward Policy in 1962, Mao ordered Chinese posts to be pushed forward to match the Indian advances, though Chinese troops were ordered not to fire under a policy that Mao termed ‘armed coexistence’ (Fravel 2008, 179–80; 40 It has been alleged that this directive was never actually issued at the meeting as was a latter add on by the MEA secretary in order to ‘hedge their bets’ and protect the civilian wing of the government from blame (Hoffmann 1990, 98). I could not find confirmation of this one way or the other.
Garver 2006, 107–8; Kissinger 2011, 187–88). Map 2.5 in Annex B shows the approximate situation on the eve of hostilities in 1962. The fact that China engaged in ‘armed coexistence’ and constantly advocated for negotiations in the months before and after its invasion suggests that it did not initially hold any aggressive intentions towards India.

Yet, by 1962, there were several other factors at play that made the Chinese regime and Mao in particular feel vulnerable. The ‘Great Leap Forward’ that Mao had championed in 1958 had proven to be a catastrophic failure, significantly damaging the Chinese economy and causing a serious famine (Deepak 2005, 268; Kissinger 2011, 183–84). This damaged Mao’s credibility within the Communist Party’s leadership and cadres, leading to the shift of day-to-day policy making to Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi by 1961. In early 1962, Mao’s proactive and revolutionary foreign policy was challenged when the veteran CCP member and diplomat Wang Jiaxiang wrote a report to the Politburo recommending a more moderate and conciliatory foreign policy especially towards China’s neighbours (Fravel 2008, 98–100; Kennedy 2012, 107–8).

Furthermore, a rift between the Soviet Union and China over leadership and direction of the international communist movement was also growing noticeably wider just as the Sino-Indian border tensions began to escalate. Though the Soviet Union publicly maintained an air of neutrality regarding the dispute, this was considered by Mao and the rest of the Chinese leadership as tantamount to treachery to the cause of socialist solidarity (Kissinger 2011, 191–92). India’s manoeuvres also stoked Chinese suspicions that India desired to establish Tibet as a buffer zone between the two countries (Deepak 2005, 265–66; Garver 2011, 105).

In September 1962, Chinese and Indian troops began clashing over Dhola post, established in the Thag La region just north of the cartographic McMahon Line, as shown
in Map 2.6. India’s justification for establishing Dhola post was that the cartographic McMahon Line did not correspond accurately to the situation on the ground and that the intention was to follow the ‘high ridge line’ of the Assam Himalayas. Whilst the Chinese had indicated that it was willing to adhere to the McMahon Line as a de facto border, they were not willing to allow India to reinterpret where it lay (Chung 2004, 106; Fravel 2008, 180). The Chinese sent several reconnaissance patrols to assess the situation and established a checking outpost. On 8 September 1962, one of these patrols demolished a bridge to disrupt Indian supplies and cut off Dloha post. This prompted India to launch ‘Operation Leghorn’ on the 15 September with the aim to clear the Chinese forces from Thag La. This resulted in a series of manoeuvres and counter-manoeuvres between the two forces before a serious skirmish broke out on 10 October 1962 resulting in dozens of casualties on both sides (Deepak 2005, 246–50; Fravel 2008, 189–91; Maxwell 2011, 78).

In light of these early manoeuvres, Mao saw a chance to reassert his authority domestically and demonstrate China’s prowess internationally by ‘teaching India a lesson’. Mao convened a special meeting of the Central Military Commission between 6-8 October 1962, during which the Chinese leadership decided to order preparations for war (Fravel 2008, 192–93; Garver 2006, 115–18; Wah 1970, 135). On the morning of 20 October, the PLA launched a simultaneous assault on Indian positions in the Aksai Chin and the NEFA, quickly overrunning them and occupying Tawang before halting operations on 25 October. On 24 October, Premier Zhou sent a letter to Prime Minister Nehru offering a ceasefire, believing that India was sufficiently chastised enough and would be willing to return to negotiations (Fravel 2008, 196; Maxwell 2001, 1190).

Nehru and Zhou had continued to trade counterproposals for a ceasefire since the initial skirmishes in early October (MEA 1963c). However, Nehru rejected this ceasefire proposal, stating India would not negotiate over the border as long as China remained in
possession of territory that India claimed (Deepak 2005, 251–53; Kennedy 2012, 234). Instead, Nehru recalled Parliament for an emergency session that was convened on 8 November. This session almost unanimously passed a resolution rejecting border negotiations while China still occupied the “sacred soil of India” (Chung 2004, 106–7; Mehra 2007, 187–94). However, the Parliament remained highly polarised over possible responses to China’s ceasefire proposals. At the same time, the Indian Army was attempting to regroup and establish some defensive positions. On 14 November Indian forces attempted a counterattack at Walong in the NEFA, but the Chinese repulsed the effort by the end of the day (Maxwell 2013, 447–49).41

This attack prompted China to resume their military operations the following day. The PLA quickly routed the Indian Army in the NEFA and compelled it to withdraw completely from the eastern sector. The Indian Army offered stiffer resistance in the western theatre but ultimately was pushed off most of the Karakorum Ranges by methodical Chinese assaults (Deepak 2005, 254–55; Maxwell 2013, 448–65). On 21 November, China issued a statement unilaterally declaring a ceasefire, effective from midnight. It also stated that PLA forces would withdraw to positions twenty kilometres north of McMahon Line in the east and to the ‘Line of Actual Control’ (LAC) in the west by 1 December 1962. The note also warned that if India tried to occupy its former positions along the frontier, then China reserved the right to strike back again (MEA 1963c, 17–21). This time India grudgingly accepted and, though there were several skirmishes for a week after, the PLA’s withdrawal was completed on schedule. The total casualties suffered by India during the war were recorded as 4885 killed or missing with 3968 captured while

41 Lt. Gen Kaul allegedly chose the 14 November to attack despite his troops not being sufficiently reinforced because it was Nehru’s birthday and he wished to present the Prime Minister with an Indian victory (Kennedy 2012, 234–35; Maxwell 2013, 447–48).
China suffered 722 dead and 1967 wounded with no personnel captured (Deepak 2005, 255–58; Maxwell 2013, 482–84).

During the Sino-Indian Border War, a number of Afro-Asian countries attempted to seize the initiative and called for an immediate conference in Colombo, Ceylon, to discuss a mutually acceptable ceasefire agreement. As both China and India were mostly estranged from the American and Soviet led blocs, both had been actively corresponding with the Non-Aligned Movement and Afro-Asian countries to plead their position and gain international support (Čavoški 2017; Chou 1962). Though the second Chinese ceasefire ended the war before the conference could convene, Burma, Ceylon, Cambodia, the United Arab Republic, Ghana and Indonesia decided to proceed, changing the focus of the conference to mediation (Chung 2004, 107; Deepak 2005, 259; Maxwell 2013, 489). The Colombo Conference proposed that China uphold its proposed withdrawal and urged India to maintain its position thereby creating a demilitarised zone that would be administered by civilian personnel on both sides.

China accepted the Colombo Conference proposals in principle, taking issue only with point C of the second clause of the proposal. This point proposed that civilian administration posts from both sides could be established in the demilitarised zone pending a final solution, which China believed would be exploited by India to establish a presence north of the McMahon line and LAC (Deepak 2005, 259–62; Maxwell 2013, 489–91). In contrast, India accepted the proposals in toto and insisted that China also

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42 Sri Lanka was formally the Dominion of Ceylon until it adopted a new constitution in 1972.
43 The United Arab Republic was formed when Egypt and Syria merged in 1958. Though Syria seceded from the Union in 1961, Egypt still was formally known as the United Arab Republic until 1971.
44 Indeed, on 13 January 1963 India published ‘clarifications’ on the Colombo Proposals that stated Indian troops could be deployed right up to the LAC with the twenty-kilometre demilitarised zone to be on the Chinese side to be administered by civilian officials from both sides. India claimed that these proposals were those provided by the representatives of the Colombo Conference when they visited New Delhi. However, as these same officials had just visited Beijing and had not provided any such clarifications, the Chinese suspected an Indian hand in their writing and refused to acknowledge them (Deepak 2005, 260–62; Mehra 1989, 291–98; Wah 1970, 150–54).
completely agree to the proposal as a precondition for border negotiations to begin (Čavoški 2017, 170–73; Kalha 2014, 163–64; Maxwell 2013, 490–91). Ultimately the Colombo Conference failed to bring China and India back to negotiations and even strained relations between the participants (Čavoški 2017, 171–72). Nonetheless, it is significant in that it is the only attempt for a third party to mediate the border dispute between China and India.

Regardless of China’s motivations for launching the border war, India’s quick and decisive defeat reverberated throughout the Indian national psyche, leading to a belief that India had been ‘betrayed’ by China (Chung 2004, 107; Maxwell 2011, 79; Scott 2008b, 251). Prime Minster Nehru was left noticeably deflated and bitter, with his foreign policy ambitions effectively in ruins. The Sino-Indian Border War also effectively destroyed much of Nehru’s stature and authority within Indian politics, although Indian veneration of him was largely restored after his death a year and a half later on 27 May 1964 (Deepak 2005, 263; Kennedy 2012, 235–36; Maxwell 2013, 500–504). This all ensured that it was completely unpalatable for the Indian political class to begin negotiations on anything less than the Colombo Proposal’s terms that they insisted China accept as a precondition. The Chinese regime, assured by its comfortable victory, was content to wait for India to approach it with a proposal to start negotiations that it could accept. Thus, with China and India each unwilling to make a move towards resolving the dispute in the short term, an impasse was reached.

Restoring bilateral relations and developments in the 1980s

Following the 1962 Border War Sino-Indian bilateral relations were effectively frozen, though both sides maintained formal diplomatic contact through downsized embassies run by a chargé d’affaires. During this suspension of relations, there were numerous small-
scale clashes along the LAC in the west, including at several areas that had largely avoided any incident prior. The most notable of these incidents happened on September 1967 over about 30 metres of no-man’s-land at Nathu La pass on the Sikkim border. The exact numbers of the casualties from this three-day skirmish involving intense gunfire and artillery is uncertain. Estimates range from 36 Indian troops killed and an unknown number of Chinese (Fravel 2015, 254) to 88 Indian soldiers killed and 163 wounded to approximately 300 Chinese killed and 450 wounded (Kalha 2014, 182) to simply citing “hundreds on both sides” (Garver 2001, 171). Whatever the final casualty list, the Nathu La incident marked the first and so far only lethal skirmish between the two sides in post-1962 war period (Fravel 2008, 197–98; Garver 2016, 435).

Both sides also started developing relations with their rival’s enemies. China began to actively support Pakistan, quickly concluding a border agreement delimiting the border between Pakistani controlled Kashmir and Xingjian Province in March 1963. China also intervened in the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war by mobilising troops along the border and sending India an ultimatum to stop all hostile actions along its borders (Deepak 2005, 276–77; Mehra 1989, 95–96; MEA 1965). However, Pakistan announced a ceasefire a few hours before the Chinese deadline ensuring that nothing came from the situation (Smith 2014, 131). India for its part fostered strong ties with Chiang Kai-shek’s government in Taiwan and the Soviet Union, eventually formally allying itself with the USSR with the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in 1971. Both countries also began actively supporting insurgencies against their rival. Specifically, India began actively supplying and training the Tibetan resistance whilst China provided similar

45 This treaty saw the Chinese-Pakistani border clearly delimited, with specific latitudes and longitudes as well as key landmarks stated. In essence, the border followed roughly the Karakoram Range with China recognised Pakistan’s claim over Hunza lands in return for Pakistan ceding the Shaksgam Valley. Needless to say India was furious, sending formal diplomatic protests to each country. Nehru denounced the treaty as illegal and even suggested that it was deliberately timed to undermine Indo-Pakistan rapprochement efforts (Ambekar and Divekar 1964, 218–23).
support for several ethnic and Maoist insurgencies in India’s north-east (Deepak 2005, 284–88; Garver 2011, 105–6; Smith 2014, 28).

However, by the 1970s, both China and India were looking for ways to deescalate their rivalry and normalise relations in order to free resources to address other security issues or domestic situations (Kalha 2014, 184–85; Smith 2014, 28–29). In 1969, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi started signalling in press conferences and in the parliament that her administration was willing to consider friendlier relations with China and reengaging in talks. In response, Mao made a symbolic gesture in early 1970 by shaking warmly the Indian chargé d’affaires’ hand when receiving diplomats and stating China’s desire to become friends with India again (Chung 2004, 109; Deepak 2005, 293–95; S. Ganguly 1989, 1124).

These tentative steps towards normalisation were interrupted by the signing of the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty in 1971, the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War and the incorporation of Sikkim into the Indian Union in 1975 (Deepak 2005, 296–97; S. Ganguly 1989, 1124–25). Nonetheless, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi took the opportunity presented by Zhou Enlai’s death in January 1976 to improve bilateral relations by offering India’s condolences. This goodwill gesture prompted an offer from Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Han Nianlong that the two countries reinstate ambassadorial relations, a position that Indian government had been advocating (Deepak 2005, 297–99; Kalha 2014, 186–87). The two countries exchanged ambassadors later that year, with the Indian ambassador arriving in Beijing on 7 July 1976 and the Chinese ambassador arriving in New Delhi in 20 September 1976.

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46 Sikkim was officially left by the British as a buffer state similar to Bhutan and Nepal. Though historically it had been a Tibetan vassal, the British Raj and independent India maintained effective political control of the country, dictating its foreign and most domestic policies.
Though relations had been normalised, progress towards restarting border negotiations was delayed by the domestic turmoil within both countries. Following Mao’s death on 9 September 1976, China went through a brief interregnum from which Deng Xiaoping and his reformist minded allies emerged triumphant by December 1978 (Deepak 2005, 299–301; Kissinger 2011, 327–39). In India, the Indira Gandhi administration’s cronyism and authoritarian tendencies during the Emergency saw it lose the 1977 national election to a fractious coalition headed by Morarji Desai (Chung 2004, 110; Deepak 2005, 302; S. Ganguly 1989, 1125). However, the stress of trying to hold the coalition together ensured that there was little time or initiative available to spend on foreign policy.

It was not until February 1979 that the first non-Congress Foreign Minister, Atal Vajpayee, went to China in order to explore ways that the two countries could form closer ties. Unfortunately, this visit was largely overshadowed by China’s invasion of Vietnam, which prompted an uproar in India (Garver 2016, 437; Kalha 2014, 188–89). Nonetheless, Vajpayee’s visit still saw the two parties agree to a three-point formula for how Sino-Indian bilateral relations should proceed during border negotiations. In essence, the three points specified that: first, a solution to the Sino-Indian border dispute should be reached as soon as possible; second, both sides should ensure that peace and tranquillity was maintained in the border areas; finally, bilateral relations should not hindered in other areas (Z. D. Singh 2011, 85). During the visit, Deng also officially reproposed Zhou’s ‘package deal’ as the basis of the solution to the border dispute (Deepak 2005, 303–5; Z. D. Singh 2011, 84–85).

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47 India took affront not just to the fact that the invasion was launched whilst Vajpayee was visiting but that the Chinese justified their war by stating that it needed to ‘teach a lesson’ to Vietnam, the same language used to explain their actions against India in 1962 (S. Ganguly 1989, 1125; Kalha 2014, 189).
48 Deng publicly repeated this offer in 1980 after Mrs Gandhi had been returned to power in two separate interviews with Indian journalists but the Indian government remained indifferent (S. Ganguly 1989, 1126; Garver 2016, 439–40).
Before it could form a coherent response to China’s proposal, Desai’s government collapsed in July 1979. Fresh national elections swept Indira Gandhi’s Congress Party back into power in 1980 (Kalha 2014, 189; S. Ganguly 1989, 1125). China’s Foreign Minister, Huang Hua, visited India in June 1981 and it was agreed that official border talks would begin without any preconditions in December of that year. In the first round of the border talks, China and India probed the flexibility of each other’s positions. China again proposed the package solution but India remained unenthusiastic, rejecting both such a deal and China’s suggestion that bilateral relations should be furthered before the border was settled (Chung 2004, 111–12; S. Ganguly 1989, 1126–27; Kalha 2014, 193). India’s counterproposals that the border be resolved sector by sector, starting with the areas of least disagreement, or that the LAC be clearly defined first were equally unacceptable to China (Deepak 2005, 311; Kalha 2014, 193; Z. D. Singh 2011, 85–86). Though both sides remained committed to the negotiations, they also maintained their positions during the second and third rounds of talks, held in May 1982 and January 1983 respectively, ensuring that they remained deadlocked (Chung 2004, 112; S. Ganguly 1989, 1127).

Negotiations made progress during the fourth round of talks held in October 1983 when both sides agreed to shift from their original positions. China accepted India’s position that the border be negotiated section by section on the proviso that a final resolution still be reached rather than trying to solve the dispute piecemeal (Kalha 2014, 195; Z. D. Singh 2011, 87). In return, India dropped its opposition to progress in other areas irrespective of the border negotiation’s outcomes and agreed to China’s condition for a comprehensive final settlement (Chung 2004, 112; S. Ganguly 1989, 1127–28). Nonetheless, though the fifth round of negotiations held in September 1984 were

49 Indeed, Narasimha Rao, then Indian Foreign Minister, equated the proposal to making a deal with a thief, allowing them to keep what they stole as long as they promise not to steal any more (Garver 2001, 103).
conducted in a friendly atmosphere, they quickly became stalemated again (Deepak 2005, 315; S. Ganguly 1989, 1128).

During the sixth round of the border talks, held in November 1985, both sides agreed to address the eastern sector. However, during this round of negotiations serious differences in the positions between China and India emerged (S. Ganguly 1989, 1129; Z. D. Singh 2011, 87). Specifically, the Chinese officials stressed that China considered the eastern sector to be the largest area of dispute and that they would be adopting a principle of ‘mutual adjustments and concessions’ to the negotiations (Garver 2001, 104; Smith 2014, 59–60). In other words, India would have to agree to adjustments to the McMahon Line, especially around Tawang, if they wanted concessions in the western sector. This stance replaced China’s package proposal and has remained its basic position on the border negotiations ever since.

Though China argued that this change in policy was simply providing specific details to the swap proposal, what it effectively amounted to was a significant hardening of its position and reversal of its previous logic (Garver 2001, 105; Kalha 2014, 195–96). This hardening of China’s stance was the result of a number of interconnected factors and calculations within China. First and foremost was China’s concern that India was not taking its position seriously and needed to be reminded that China has a serious claim to the eastern sector (S. Ganguly 1989, 1129; Z. D. Singh 2011, 87–88). Another reason may be that the Chinese leadership calculated that, as India insisted that each sector be dealt with independently, it made sense to push for the maximum gains to improve its bargaining position (Chung 2004, 113; Garver 2001, 106; Smith 2014, 60). Some other

\[50\] There was over a year pause in the negotiations due to the assassination of Indira Gandhi on 31 October 1984. Her son, Rajiv Gandhi, was sworn in as the Prime Minister and convincingly won the elections in 1985. All of this ensured that India was not in a position to resume negotiations until Rajiv Gandhi’s administration had time to form and settle.
explanations include the rise of influential elements in China advocating for a tougher approach or the emergence of a more favourable geopolitical environment following a thawing of Sino-Soviet tensions (Deepak 2005, 319; Garver 2001, 106).

Whatever were the reasons for the Chinese change of policy, Indian negotiators and commentators were incensed, not least because New Delhi considered India’s longstanding administration of the NEFA to be a fait accompli (Kalha 2014, 197). Additionally, Indian negotiators had assumed that the eastern sector would be easy to resolve given China’s prior tacit acceptance of the ‘McMahon alignment’. As such, the delegation was preparing for a tough round of negotiating over the western sector and was relatively unprepared for the Chinese demands (Deepak 2005, 319; Kalha 2014, 196–97). Following the sixth round of negotiations, relations between China and India began to deteriorate throughout 1986, eventually cumulating into the first major confrontation on the disputed border since 1967.

The Sumdorong Chu incident originated with India’s Operation Falcon, authorised by Indira Gandhi in 1980. In essence, Operation Falcon involved the deployment of Indian soldiers as close to the LAC as possible to defend the NEFA and reinforce India’s claim to the region (Deepak 2005, 321; Garver 2016, 440–41). As part of this mission, India had established a seasonal observation post at a hamlet called Khinzemane in Sumdorong Chu Valley,51 just south of the Thag La Pass in 1983. This post’s location is of significance as it was in the same area that saw the initial skirmishes that escalated into the 1962 Border War. Unbeknownst to India, China had been monitoring the post not long after its establishment. Before the Indian detachment could return from their 1985-1986 winter quarters, the PLA sent a 40-man strong unit to occupy it, building a helipad to keep

51 Also known as Wangdong by the Chinese. Sources vary as to whether this post was established by the Indian Army/Indo-Tibetan Border Police or by the Intelligence Bureau without the knowledge of the military. See map 2.6 in annex B for details of the Tawang region.
themselves supplied. When the Indian detachment arrived on 23 June 1986 and found their post occupied, they called in reinforcements. By the spring of 1987, the Sumdorong Chu standoff involved approximately 50,000 troops from both sides, marking it as the largest confrontation between the two sides since 1962 to date (Deepak 2005, 320–22; Fravel 2008, 199–200; Kalha 2014, 199–203). The standoff gradually deescalated from late 1987 onwards and was finally resolved by Rajiv Gandhi’s 1988 state visit to China, during which both sides agreed to mutually withdraw from the area.

It was in this context that the seventh round of negotiations over the border took place in July 1986, although the Sumdorong Chu incident had made both sides obstinate ensuring that no breakthrough was possible (Chung 2004, 113; S. Ganguly 1989, 1130). The eighth and ultimately final round of border talks was held as planned in December 1987. Yet these talks remained clouded not only by the ongoing border tensions but also by Chinese anger over India’s decision to grant the NEFA full statehood in December 1986, renaming it Arunachal Pradesh (Garver 2016, 441–42). It had become apparent that the border talks had reached an impasse and that some initiative at an executive level was needed in order to reduce tensions and revitalise the negotiation process (Chung 2004, 114; Deepak 2005, 324; S. Ganguly 1989, 1131–32). Thus Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi decided to go ahead with a state visit to China between 19-23 December 1988, despite the qualms of several senior leaders within his Congress party, objections from hardliners within the Indian bureaucracy, and criticisms from the opposition parties (Deepak 2005, 328–29; Kalha 2014, 205).

Although Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s visit did not achieve a breakthrough in resolving the border dispute, it did defuse much of the tension by successfully ending the Sumdorong Chu standoff. As such, this state visit is widely considered to be a major milestone or turning point as it paved the way for increased depth and breadth in Sino-
Indian bilateral relations (Acharya 2011, 163; Chung 2004, 114–15; Deepak 2005, 332–33). One of most important outcomes to emerge from Rajiv Gandhi’s visit was the establishment of the Joint Working Group (JWG). The JWG elevated Sino-Indian border talks to the Vice Foreign Ministerial level and included a subgroup of border specialists from both sides, which met more frequently to address ways to resolve the dispute (Fang 2002, 151; Kalha 2014, 206–7; Z. D. Singh 2011, 89).

Post-Cold War developments

The pacification of the border

Shortly after Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s visit to China the international system fundamentally changed when the Cold War ended, as the communist regimes in Eastern Europe collapsed and India’s primary ally, the Soviet Union, disintegrated not long after. China and India also faced significant internal unrest at the close of the decade. China was rocked by anti-corruption and pro-democracy protests throughout the first half of 1989 before the government dramatically cracked down on 4 June on protesters in Tiananmen Square (Deepak 2005, 333–34; Kissinger 2011, 408–11). In India, a number of corruption scandals saw Rajiv Gandhi’s government lose power in the November 1989 national elections, ushering in an era of unstable minority governments which continued throughout the 1990s (Deepak 2005, 336–38; Kalha 2014, 208).

Nevertheless, during this period of great change and instability the JWG began its work, meeting for the first time between 30 June and 4 July 1989 (Carlson 2003, 691; Chung 2004, 118; Fang 2002, 154–55). Although the JWG eventually turned into a routine bureaucratic exercise,\(^\text{52}\) it nonetheless had great success in establishing better

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\(^{52}\) As of 2015 fifteen JWG meetings have been held since 1989, the majority of which occurred throughout the early 1990s. Although the JWG was never formally concluded, it was eventually superseded by the
communication and trust between the two sides. The JWG was also pivotal in laying the groundwork for India and China to sign three key treaties that have largely governed border relations since (Fravel 2008, 169–70; Z. D. Singh 2011, 89; Smith 2014, 31).

The first of these treaties was the “Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas”, signed on 7 September 1993 during Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao’s state visit to China (Chung 2004, 119; Deepak 2005, 343–44). In this agreement, both sides pledged to seek a resolution to the border dispute and any future crises via dialogue, renounced the use or threat of force as a tactic, agreed to strictly observe the LAC and reduce the number of military personnel stationed on the border (MEA 1993). The 1993 Agreement was an important milestone in Sino-Indian relations for two main reasons. Firstly, in signing the first formal treaty specifically regarding the border, China and India managed to significantly ease tensions along the LAC. Secondly, this agreement effectively established the basic parameters and goals that would guide all future border negotiations and interactions (Chung 2004, 119; Kalha 2014, 211–12).

The second border agreement was the “Agreement on Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas” signed on 29 November 1996 during Chinese President Jiang Zemin’s visit to India (Chung 2004, 120; Deepak 2005, 351–52). This agreement was effectively a non-aggression pact and sought to build upon the 1993 Agreement by specifying limitations on the type of weapons and number of troops that could be deployed, the areas in which they could operate and what activates each side could conduct (MEA 1996). It also

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53 All of the treaties mentioned in this dissertation provide both states’ full formal names within the titles. In order to avoid convolution, I have omitted them.

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stipulated that the two sides improve their military-to-military cooperation and communication as well as speed up efforts to clarify where the LAC actually lay (MEA 1996).

However, efforts to implement this treaty quickly stalled. Though the JWG did begin discussions to clarify the LAC (Deepak 2005, 350; Fang 2002, 169–71), their deliberations were interrupted by India’s 1998 testing of nuclear weapons, which Prime Minister Vajpayee justified by citing the threat generated by China’s rise (Carlson 2003, 692–93; Chung 2004, 120; Pant 2011, 234). In an effort to repair relations with China, the Indian Foreign Minister, Jaswant Singh, travelled to Beijing personally in December 1998 to seek the resumptions of the JWG, requesting China’s assistance to help India ‘untie the knot’ (Fang 2002, 166–67; Kalha 2014, 214). The JWG eventually resumed in November 1999 after Prime Minister Vajpayee publicly stated that India did not see China as a threat. Nonetheless, the JWG quickly become deadlocked again over the issue of LAC clarification with no notable progress being made on any front for the next four meetings (Acharya 2011, 165–66; Deepak 2005, 419–20).

Again, a significant breakthrough in the bilateral relationship needed some initiative from the chief executive level. This occurred in 2003 when Prime Minister Vajpayee visited China and the two sides signed the Joint Declaration in which they agreed to establish the Special Representatives Meeting (SRM) to assist the JWG and revitalise the stalled negotiations (Acharya 2011, 167; Z. D. Singh 2011, 89; Pant 2011, 235). During this visit, China also made the tacit recognition that Sikkim is part of India. Though no formal declaration was made, China exchanged maps with India on the border’s location and changed their official world maps to show Sikkim as a province of India. Later that year, the two sides reopened the Nathu La Pass on the Sikkim-Tibet
border which had been closed since 1962 (Deepak 2005, 430–34; Kalha 2014, 217–18; Smith 2014, 37–38).

The SRM first convened in October 2003, met again three times in 2004 and once in March 2005 with the fifteenth and final JWG meeting, held a few weeks after on the 30-31 March 2005. This flurry of meetings was conducted as part of a concerted effort to reach an agreement before Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao’s visit to India in April (Smith 2014, 38). Ultimately, however, these efforts failed to reach a mutually acceptable position on the location of the border or the LAC. Nonetheless, the SRM and JWG did manage to agree upon the text of the third key border treaty, the “Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India China Boundary Question”, which was signed on 11 April 2005 (Acharya 2011, 169; Kalha 2014, 218–20; Z. D. Singh 2011, 89–90).54

This treaty committed both China and India to resolving the border dispute via mutual adjustments to their positions in order to arrive at a comprehensive ‘package settlement’. Specifically this goal was to be arrived at via negotiations which took into consideration each other’s history and strategic interests as well as the geography and settled populations (Bhasin 2006, 836–38; MEA 2005a). These treaties and dialogues have been criticised by commentators for being largely ineffectual. Obligations outlined in the treaties are often ignored at whim by both sides and the treaties have not led to a resolution, potentially even delaying an actual settlement. Yet it is clear that these negotiations took much of the animosity out of the Sino-Indian relationship to the extent that, despite resent

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54 During Wen Jiabao’s visit the two sides also signed the “Protocol on the Modalities for the Implementation of Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas” which refined the 1996 Agreement (Bhasin 2006, 839–44; MEA 2005b).
tensions, a war or even a lethal skirmish over the border remains unlikely (Acharya 2011, 169–70; Z. Liu and Jacob 2013; Menon 2016, 29–31).

*The return of tensions*

The 2005 Agreement marked the apex for amiable cooperation in the contemporary bilateral relations between China and India. During the seventh SRM held in March 2006, the Chinese side stated that they still considered the eastern sector of the dispute to be the largest disputed area and demanded that India consider concessions especially around Tawang (Malik 2011, 146; Smith 2014, 40). This position enraged India, which had assumed that Article VII of the 2005 Agreement effectively amounted to a tacit renouncing of Chinese claims in the eastern sector (Kalha 2014, 220; Smith 2014, 39–40). The SRM convened five times during 2006 and 2007 in an effort to address these issues but no solution could be reached. After 2007, the SRMs settled into an annual exercise for China and India, effectively becoming little more than a diplomatic ritual in which both sides meet to reiterate their positions.

As the political process became frozen, mutual suspicion as to the other’s intent increased. This prompted both China and India to divert more resources toward the Sino-Indian border and to resume active patrolling up to their interpretation of the LAC’s location. As such, both sides frequently strayed into territory that the other claims, occasionally leading to confrontations between patrols (Z. Liu and Jacob 2013; Z. D. Singh 2011, 92; Menon 2016, 24). Bilateral frictions were also generated by both sides’ efforts to improve their infrastructure along the border. Specifically, both China and India have constructed several observation huts, bunkers, airfields and roads that the other side

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55 Article VII states that: “In reaching a boundary settlement, the two sides shall safeguard due interests of their settled populations in the border area” (Bhasin 2006, 838).
often views as provocative (Reuters 2014; Scott 2008b, 252). These border confrontations have been mostly innocuous, typically involving a handful of troops from one side being caught patrolling in one of the 16 areas where the LAC is ambiguous before withdrawing (Smith 2014, 49). Whether the ‘incursions’ are intentional or not, they have tended to spark acrimonious outbursts from both states’ media and officials, making it difficult for negotiations to make progress.

Since 2013, there have been several more robust and dramatic confrontations between Chinese and Indian troops stationed on the border that have notably increased the tensions in Sino-Indian relations. The first of these confrontations occurred between 20 April and 6 May 2013 when a Chinese patrol of approximately 50 soldiers entered the Dapsang Bludge near the Karakorum Pass and established a bivouac. Indian forces stationed at the border post Daulat Beg Oldi investigated and after a tense 21-day standoff that was punctuated by occasional flag meetings between the two field commanders, the Chinese patrol unilaterally withdrew (Z. Liu and Jacob 2013; Smith 2014, 48–50). In September 2014, just prior to Xi Jinping’s first state visit to India, another Chinese patrol entered Chumar, an Indian border post near the disputed border town of Demchok in Indian controlled Ladakh, and engaged in a 16-day long standoff with Indian border forces (Dutta 2014; TNN 2014c; Reuters 2014). A similar, though shorter lived incident cast a cloud over Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to China in April 2015 (Menon 2016, 25).

In order to mollify and manage these rising tensions, China and India signed two more treaties: the “Agreement on the Establishment of a Working Mechanism for the Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Areas” signed on 17 January 2012 and the “Agreement on Border Defence Cooperation” signed on 23 October 2013. The 2012 Agreement, signed at the conclusion of the 15th SRM, established a separate group
with the mandate to hold consultations at least once a year to address any issues that may arise on the border (MEA 2012). Effectively this new mechanism was created to relieve the SRM of some of its workload so that it could concentrate on negotiating a resolution to the dispute. However, this Working Mechanism is not intended to reinvigorate negotiations or supersede the SRM. Indeed, Article V of the Agreement explicitly forbid it to discuss a resolution to the ‘Boundary Question’ or otherwise interfere with the work of the SRM (MEA 2012, 2).

The 2013 Agreement sought to refine existing cooperation protocols, articulate a more specific code of conduct for both sides to follow along the border and establish a ‘hotline’ between the Chinese and Indian military headquarters (MEA 2013). However, despite the creation of the Working Mechanism, the SRM has continued to make little progress in settling the border dispute and most of the 2013 Agreement had yet to be implemented. To be sure, during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s 2015 visit to China, both sides expressed a desire to expand military cooperation and expedite the establishment of the military hotline that was agreed to in the 2013 Agreement (Aneja 2015a; Raghuvanshi 2015). 56

These efforts were also not enough to prevent the Doklam standoff, which became the most serious Sino-Indian border confrontation since the 1986-1987 Sumdorong Chu incident. The Doklam standoff flared up on 18 June 2017 on the Doklam/Donglang plateau on the Bhutan-Sikkim-Tibet border tri-junction and lasted for three months, ending on 28 August 2017. This standoff was caused when Indian troops crossed the border to prevent China’s attempted extension of road through the disputed territory. India

56 Technically this hotline was originally agreed to in Article VII of the 1996 Agreement which stipulated that telecommunication links should be established between the two sides as part of the effort to improve communication and cooperation (MEA 1996, 7–8). As of January 2018, China and India have still not come to an agreement over how the system should be established.
feared that not only would this road have helped cement China’s control of the territory but potentially make it easier to strike India’s strategically important Siliguri corridor (Lau 2017; Panda 2017b).

The origin of the Doklam dispute stems from an ambiguity in the 1890 ‘Convention between Great Britain and China Relating to Sikkim and Tibet’ that delimits the border. Article One of the Convention states that “The boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be the crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into the Sikkim Teesta and its affluents from the waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet. The line commences at Mount Gimpochi on the Bhutan frontier, and follows the above-mentioned water-parting to the point where it meets Nipal territory” (UK FCO 1890, 1–2). Unfortunately, the poorly surveyed map of the region that the plenipotentiaries relied upon did not show that Mount Gimpochi, which China recognises as the legitimate border marker, actually lies approximately six kilometres south of the watershed, which India and Bhutan recognise as the border (Panda 2017a).

Technically, the Doklam/Donglang plateau is disputed between China and Bhutan and is not part of the Sino-Indian border dispute. Nonetheless the Bhutan-Sikkim-Tibet border has been linked to the rest of the Sino-Indian border dispute and has been the site of several confrontations in the past (see Fravel 2015, 254; Smith 2014, 49). This time, the Doklam standoff was the catalyst for a number of other minor standoffs along the LAC, most notably a savage brawl between a Chinese and an Indian patrol near Panggong Lake in Ladakh that resulted in several injuries (R. Singh 2017). Additionally, the Doklam standoff prompted the 20th round of the SRM, scheduled to be held in late July 2017, to be suspended (Mohan 2017).57 This confrontation was eventually resolved through a

57 The 10th Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs was the first formal bilateral discussion after the Doklam disputes resolution and was held on 17 November 2017. These talks were clearly a test of each side’s mood, focusing simply on ways to strengthen communication
‘mutual understanding’ that saw both sides conducting an ‘expeditious disengagement’ from the territory. In essence, it appears that this understanding involved the reestablishment of the status quo in the area, with both sides withdrawing their troops and equipment but China maintaining patrolling of the disputed section (Bagchi and TNN 2017; Mitra 2017).

**Concluding remarks**

Notwithstanding belligerent hardliners on both sides, there appears to be measure of genuine goodwill between contemporary India and China. This has allowed the two states to peacefully manage, though not resolve, their border dispute. China and India inherited the border as an unfinished and largely neglected imperial project. Even though there was no clear delimitation of the border, both China and India for their own reasons sought to ignore it as they sought to consolidate their domestic and international position. Ultimately, both sides’ border patrols began to increasingly clash and after the 1959 Tibetan uprising, Sino-Indian relations became tense.

After a failed attempt at negotiation in 1960-1961, Prime Minister Nehru and his cabinet decided to pursue the Forward Policy, sending Indian troops as close as possible to where they believed the border to be. Unfortunately for India, Chairman Mao was in need of a populist policy in order to mobilise the CCP and the Chinese people after the disastrous Great Leap Forward; the Indian government’s provocative Forward Policy provided him with the perfect *casus belli*. After China’s relatively swift victory in the 1962 Sino-Indian border war, China and India entered a period of bitter rivalry, with diplomatic relations only being normalised in 1976. Negotiations over solving the border

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and cooperation, especially between the border security personal (MEA 2017b). Following the Mechanism’s success, the SRM was quietly rescheduled and held on the 22 December 2017 in New Delhi with little fanfare. The talks were described by the two sides as ‘positive’ and apparently focused on returning the discussion to where it was prior the Doklam dispute (MEA 2017a; MFA 2017c).
began in 1981, but after many iterations have only managed to produce some treaties to help pacify it.

Today, both sides recognise that the resolution to their border dispute will require mutual painful and unpopular compromises in order to come to a mutual arrangement. Nonetheless, both sides are equally unwilling to make the necessary compromises and remain wedded to their irreconcilable positions. Hence, intractable disagreements have even begun to develop over how to manage the boundary question, let alone how to resolve it. As of January 2018, the two sides were unable to agree on the next step of negotiations, with India arguing that the LAC needs to be clarified whilst China insists that a strong code of conduct needs to be implemented first (Aneja 2015b; Dasgupta 2015b). Even with the creation of specific diplomatic groups dedicated to negotiating the Sino-Indian border dispute and several high-level bilateral visits, progress on resolving the issue remains glacial at best. What remains unclear from this discussion is why the compromises necessary to resolve the Sino-Indian border dispute are seemingly impossible for either side to stomach. To answer this question, the remaining chapters are dedicated to exploring the motivations and interests of the relevant actors in the dispute.
Chapter Three:

The First Level of Analysis: The Interests of the Chief Executive and the Sino-Indian Border Dispute
Introduction

The role of individual leaders in foreign policymaking has generally been neglected by international relations scholars, especially when discussing interstate border disputes. Indeed, one of the basic assumptions that most international relations scholars hold is that individual leaders have negligible agency in the face of international constraints or bureaucratic forces (Hermann and Hagan 1998, 124–25; Kennedy 2012, 10). Though undoubtedly influenced by such forces, the state’s top leader, or chief executive, remains the primary policy decision maker. Thus, the chief executive’s own idiosyncratic ambitions, agendas, perspectives and personalities are essential to understanding his/her state’s conduct towards any intractable interstate border dispute that it is involved in (Byman and Pollack 2001, 133; Reichwein 2012, 42–44). This logic is amplified in China and India where the foreign policy decision making is concentrated into the hands of the political executive (H. Kapur 1994, 178–80; Lu 2001, 39).

This chapter is dedicated to outlining how and why top state leaders make the policy decisions on interstate border disputes. As discussed in Chapter One, there are three basic policy approaches available when addressing interstate border disputes: compromise, escalation and maintaining the status quo. I argue here that it is seldom in the political interest of top state leaders to escalate the dispute or support territorial compromises, without which an interstate border dispute cannot be resolved. This line of reasoning is particularly evident in the case of the Sino-Indian border dispute, where Chinese and Indian chief executives have generally shied away from policies of forceful annexation or territorial adjustment. With little appetite for any serious risk taking concerning the Sino-Indian border, state leaders have instead preferred to maintain the status quo, thereby ensuring that the dispute has continued for decades.
This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section outlines poliheuristic choice theory to explain how top state leaders, acting upon their political interests, narrow down policy choices vis-à-vis an interstate border dispute and ultimately decide upon a particular policy. Sections two and three profile the top Chinese and Indian leaders respectively and examines the situations these leaders faced and how these leaders’ political interests, temperament and agendas/priorities influenced them to support policies that contributed to making the Sino-Indian border dispute intractable. These sections address the key interests and concerns that have guided the decision-making process of China’s paramount leaders from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping and India’s Prime Ministers from Jawaharlal Nehru to Narendra Modi. The primary interests and situation of each leader are reviewed to demonstrate why the top leadership on both sides have steadfastly maintained a hard-line policy position vis-à-vis the Sino-Indian border dispute.

**Poliheuristic choice theory and intractable interstate border disputes**

As outlined in Chapter One, neoclassical realism recognises that a state’s foreign and security policies are determined by the interest calculations of its political elite, the most important of which is the chief executive. A chief executive, by his/her nature as the state leader, must be Janus faced; alert to both his/her state’s international interests and his/her own domestic political interests (Lobell 2009, 43–44; Reichwein 2012, 43; Ripsman 2009, 171–72). Yet, owing to the incomplete information available to the chief executive, the international situation is ‘murky’ or difficult to read. Thus, in order to interpret and formulate policy responses to the international environment, state leaders must draw on ‘unit level variables’, such as the domestic political situation or their own perceptions of the world, as a guide (Kitchen 2010, 118; Rose 1998, 152). One of the most effective models available to scholars for explaining how this process works and why a chief
executive makes certain foreign policy decisions, including towards interstate border disputes, is poliheuristic choice theory.

Poliheuristic choice theory argues that in order to simplify the international environment, compensate for the lack of information and narrow down the policy choices available, a state leader needs to have a cognitive shortcut to make a decision. This is found in heuristics, or the chief executive’s use of past experiences and his/her political interests as a guide for comparing policy options and deciding upon a course of action (Goertz 2004, 14–15; Mintz and Geva 1997, 83–85). This process effectively has two stages. The first stage involves the chief executive eliminating unacceptable options by implementing a ‘dimension-based noncompensatory’ rule. This means that expected positive outcomes in one area cannot compensate for poor outcomes in another. Should these poor results be in an area that he/she considers to be a core interest, then the policy will be unacceptable and discarded as an option (James and Zhang 2005, 32; Kinne 2005, 115; Oppermann 2014, 24–25). The second stage involves the chief executive determining the optimum decision from the remaining options. This optimum policy is ascertained by either engaging in a cost-benefit calculation of various alternatives or seeking to maximise the expected benefit towards the decision maker’s most vital priority (Goertz 2004, 15–16; James and Zhang 2005, 33; Mintz 2004, 7).

In regard to interstate border disputes, state leaders utilise two primary interests to help them chose from the status quo, compromise and escalation strategies. The first and foremost interest is for a chief executive to retain his/her office for as long as feasibly possible. For most chief executives, the source of their political power comes from the domestic sphere ensuring that the domestic political situation becomes the primary consideration in decision making (Huth and Allee 2002, 69–70; James and Zhang 2005, 34; Mintz 2004, 7).
The security of a leader’s position at the apex of political power depends upon two main factors. First is the support from the majority of the ‘selectorate’, or the group of individuals within the state that has the power to elevate or remove a leader. The exact composition of the selectorate is contingent on the regime type and can be as broad as the voting population or as narrow as a handful of prominent elites in control of key state institutions (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2002, 561–63; Kinne 2005, 118–20). Second is the number of potential or actual challengers for the chief executive’s position. Strong domestic criticism over a leader’s policies can lead to his/her ouster by rivals, either through internal party/bureaucratic mechanisms, defeat in elections or via an uprising/military coup d’état (Hermann and Hagan 1998, 127–30; Ripsman 2009, 179–83; Wiegand 2011, 32–34). Hence, those policies that the chief executive believes would cause a backlash from the key groups or weaken the leader politically vis-à-vis his/her domestic rivals are usually discarded (Kinne 2005, 118–19; Oppermann 2014, 28–29).

In order to calculate the likely impact of a policy towards an interstate border dispute, a chief executive must consider two specific factors: the salience the border dispute has amongst the selectorate and the extent that his/her position is under threat from domestic forces. Issue salience, especially in the case of interstate border disputes, affects the leader’s decision making by determining whether the leader can expect a domestic political reaction towards the policy or whether it would go uncontested (Oppermann 2014, 27–28). If the salience of an interstate border disputes is negligible, then the leader will have little political incentive to take any action, ensuring he/she will likely discard compromise or escalatory policies lest they provoke internal dissent (Wiegand 2011, 30). However, when the disputed territory has resonance with the selectorate, any move to relinquish the state’s claim to it, without at least some measure of compensation, is likely to provoke domestic opposition. When faced with a potential backlash that could threaten
their position, chief executives will typically discard any compromise options. Instead, state leaders will favour *status quoist* or escalatory policies in order to rally the population or at least avoid the ire of the selectorate being directed towards them (Huth 1996, 94–98; Wiegand 2011, 34–35).

When a chief executive faces an uncertain domestic situation, whether due to ambitious rivals or growing discontent amongst the population, he/she may seek policies that will allow him/her to secure his/her position and discard those that will not. Typically, a chief executive will consider it safest politically to adopt a *status quoist* policy towards an interstate border dispute such as publicly maintaining a firm and uncompromising stance towards the border. Escalation policies, such as efforts to occupy disputed territory, contain the inherent risks of having the situation spiral out of the leader’s control or see the leader blamed if state forces are decisively defeated. Policies of compromise also hold a significant political cost, especially if the salience of the dispute is high. Should a compromise involve unfavourable territorial concessions, the leader is likely to be charged with cowardice or treason by his/her political opponents, thereby exacerbating the instability of his/her position (Fravel 2005, 53; Huth and Allee 2002, 44–48; Huth 1996, 97–98).

However, if a chief executive calculates that the risks are acceptable or that he/she can use some form of action on the border to improve her/his political situation, he/she may discard *status quoist* policies in favour of more adventurous ones. One common option in this context, especially if the salience of the dispute is high, is to escalate tensions over the interstate border dispute. The aim of such an escalation is to artificially create a national security threat in order to rally the population behind the leader and his/her regime (Levy and Vakili 1992; Pickering and Kisangani 2005; Tir 2010). Alternatively, a chief executive can seek to compromise if he/she deems any escalation of the border dispute
too risky or if the regime is facing a significant uprising. In such situations, leaders attempt to trade territorial concessions for assistance or to free up resources to address the more pressing issues facing the regime (Fravel 2005, 2008, 17–39).

A state leader’s second core interest is to pursue his/her agenda or ‘grand strategy’ for the state. Most chief executives have some form of vision for their country that goes beyond state security, encompassing how they believe their country should develop domestically and engage with the world more generally. In order to implement this vision, a leader develops an explicit or implicit conceptual framework that designates his/her priorities and appropriate responses to various political stimuli (Brands 2014, 3–4; Dueck 2009, 146–48; Stenslie and Chen 2016, 118–19). Although grand strategies inherently draw upon national interests and emerge out of debates amongst the selectorate (P. D. Miller 2016, 240–42; F. Zhang 2012, 321), the onus remains with the leader to articulate the principles or basic contours of the strategy (Stenslie and Chen 2016, 123–24). Hence, chief executives will discard those policies that do not resonate with the priorities identified in the strategy when deciding on a best policy approach (Brands 2014, 8; Goertz 2004, 18).

Typically, an interstate border dispute will have little to do with a chief executive’s grand strategy and therefore will be considered a distraction from his/her overall agenda. In such cases, a leader will seek to expend as little political capital as possible upon addressing an intractable interstate border dispute, discarding any bold compromise or escalation policies so as to save his/her effort and resources for his/her priorities (Lai 2010,

58 The concept of grand strategy, also known as ‘doctrine’, is still a highly contested term in International Relations. Some theorists argue that the grand strategies are virtually indistinguishable from military strategy or foreign policy and are therefore conceptually useless. However, I agree with those theorists (see Brands 2014; P. D. Miller 2016; Murdock and Kallmyer 2011) that consider grand strategy to be a valuable concept that explains how leaders utilise their inherent or explicit principles to guide foreign policy decision making.
30–31; Murdock and Kallmyer 2011, 544). Nonetheless, there are several instances when an intractable interstate border dispute becomes part of or linked to some aspect of the leader’s grand strategy. In these situations, the chief executive will discard status quo options, instead seeking to achieve his/her aims either by trading compromises over the dispute for cooperation in other areas or by escalating the dispute in attempt at coercion (Wiegand 2011, 55–65).

Of course, a leader’s political survival and grand strategy can be either congruous or in conflict vis-à-vis an interstate border dispute. In cases where the two interests are congruous, leaders can use both effectively to narrow their policy options towards the border dispute. However, when the two interests clash, the chief executive’s leadership style and current situation will shape the weighting that he/she will place on the specific interest when making a policy decision regarding the border dispute (Goertz 2004, 27, 30–31; Keller and Yang 2008, 691–93). No leader will completely ignore either interest. Yet, those state leaders who are motivated by a sense of mission or ideology will be more willing than their pragmatic counterparts to bear domestic costs rather than compromise on their agenda. Similarly, those leaders with aggressive/self-assured or impulsive dispositions will be less sensitive to the selectorate’s opinions and have a higher threshold for domestic opposition then those who are more cautious or vacillating (Byman and Pollack 2001, 136–40; Hermann and Hagan 1998, 103–33; Keller and Yang 2008, 688–90).

Notwithstanding the chief executive’s temperament, usually it will be his/her situation that dictates which interest will become the priority. For example, should a leader have only a tenuous grip on power or is facing an uprising, he/she will be forced to prioritise retaining his/her office rather than his/her grand strategy should the two clash. Alternatively, a chief executive may consider it more important to pursue her/his grand
strategy rather than secure her/his hold on office if he/she believes that a unique window of opportunity has opened or a threat has emerged (Hermann and Hagan 1998, 132–34; Keller and Yang 2008, 690).

Once a chief executive has eliminated those policies that he/she considers inimical to his/her interests, he/she must then identify the optimum policy from the remaining choices. Sometimes the confluence of the chief executive’s interests curtails the choices available, leaving only one or two permissible policy options. However, often decision makers will have a sizable number of choices available even after they have eliminated those policies that do not pass the noncompensatory test (Astorino-Courtois and Trusty 2000, 361–62). Poliheuristic choice theory predicts that the leader determines the optimum policy from the remaining options either by engaging in the cost-benefit calculations or choosing to maximise a specific benefit (James and Zhang 2005, 33; Mintz 2004, 6–8). At this stage, the leader’s decision making will be shaped by his/her beliefs in his/her state’s ability to perform in the international environment and what he/she perceives any rival leader’s intentions or likely reactions to be (Hermann and Hagan 1998, 133–34; Kennedy 2012, 29–31).

To determine which of the remaining policy choices are more likely to succeed, the chief executive draws upon his/her belief in the state’s prowess, in the form of either military or diplomatic efficacy. Those state leaders who are confident in their state’s martial capabilities favour pursuing escalation strategies, expecting to be able to compel their rival into making concessions. Those who doubt the state’s prowess are likely to avoid using force if possible. Similarly, those leaders who believe they can achieve their vision via diplomatic means will be more willing to seek negotiations or even make bold compromising gestures to achieve a resolution. Those who lack faith in their ability to convince their rival will discard this option (Kennedy 2012, 29–35).
As policies towards an interstate border dispute also inherently depend upon the policies of the rival state, a state leader must also try to fathom the enemy leadership’s interests and intentions concerning the disputed border. Hence, when formulating a border policy, a chief executive must take into consideration the most likely response from the rival state. Typically, a chief executive would attempt to choose a policy that will elicit the most favourable reaction from the rival state (Astorino-Courtois and Trusty 2000; Byman and Pollack 2001; Hermann and Hagan 1998). For example, a leader with an interest in resolving an interstate border dispute will need to assess the rival leader’s political situation, compulsions and temperament before deciding whether a cooperative approach is likely to work. If the rival leader appears constrained by a hostile domestic environment or if her/his leadership style is confrontational, then a cooperative approach would likely fail, and a status quo policy might be more feasible.

**Chinese leaders and the Sino-Indian border dispute**

In China, ultimate power over foreign and security policy decisions rests with the ‘paramount leader’, often with input from one or two chief lieutenants (Dillon 2009, 161–67; Lai 2010, 36–37; Lu 2001, 41). Initially the position of paramount leader was the recognition of the leader’s political domination of the system rather than attached to any specific office. Indeed, Chairman Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping held several different offices during their tenure yet maintained the central leadership position through their sheer personal gravitas and political acumen. In the post-Deng era, the executive office has become formalised. Since 1990, the paramount leader has been the person simultaneously holding the positions of General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), President of the PRC and Chairman of the Central Military Commission.
(CMC)\(^{59}\) (H. L. Miller and Liu 2001, 129–33; Zheng and Chen 2009, 3–4; Zheng and Weng 2016, 38–39). Additionally, the paramount leader also chairs a number of the Leading Small Groups (LSG) that devise and oversee policy for the Politburo. This usually includes the Foreign Affairs LSG (FALSG) and the National Security LSG (NSLSG), the two key bodies responsible for devising policy towards China’s borders, including the Sino-Indian border dispute (Harris 2014, 29–30; Lai and Kang 2014, 300–301).

Chinese foreign policy has predominantly focused on its relations with the great powers, especially the USA, and those states immediately off its eastern coastline. Additionally the balance of power in terms of military, economic and political influence between China and India has been tilted significantly in China’s favour for decades, ensuring that the leadership perceives India as posing little threat (S. Ganguly 2004, 104; Smith 2014, 8–10). Hence, the Sino-Indian border dispute is often inconsequential to the paramount leader’s grand strategies and typically has low salience amongst the CCP Politburo, who act as the leader’s selectorate. As the logic of poliheuristic choice theory predicts, China’s paramount leaders have primarily sought to neutralise the Sino-Indian border dispute as an issue by either engaging in compromise or status quoist border policies. The basic interests of the paramount leaders have been the same, namely to consolidate their power as much as feasible and to pursue an agenda they believe will improve China’s situation. However, exactly how these interests have manifested themselves has been subject to the different leaders’ situation and vision. Thus, in order to understand why China’s paramount leaders have chosen specific policies towards the disputed Sino-Indian border that have contributed to making it intractable, we must examine the dynamics at play for all five of them to date.

\(^{59}\) As there is a formal separation between the State and the CCP, these different posts all have different periods where they are formally handed over, leading to a transition period of several months.
Chairman Mao Zedong was the founding leader of the People’s Republic of China and continued to dominate both the CCP and the state until his death in 1976. Chiefly motivated by revolutionary zeal, Mao was convinced of the need to engage in a ‘continuous revolution’ to establish communism within China and to adopt a vanguard role in a worldwide revolution to restore China’s position as a great power. Yet Mao was also afflicted with great anxiety that his revolution would lose momentum or be discarded without his leadership and that he would be denounced in posterity just as Stalin had been in the Soviet Union (J. Chen 2001, 10–15; Kissinger 2011, 92–112). Hence, throughout his tenure as leader, Mao’s primary interests were to cement his position as the paramount leader, secure communism at home and propagate it abroad.

Initially, in the 1950s, these interests manifested in the ‘leaning-to-one-side’ policy. This saw Mao ally China with the Soviet Union in exchange for economic support, and political campaigns designed to restructure Chinese society and remove any potential domestic opposition to the new communist regime (Pantsov and Levine 2012, 390–412). Thus Mao, secure in his position as supreme leader and with his strategic priorities fixed on consolidating communism domestically, originally adopted a status quo policy towards the Sino-Indian border, effectively ignoring the border rather than risk detracting from his agenda (Fravel 2008, 70).

This situation changed dramatically in 1959 when two key events compelled Mao to change his policy towards the Sino-Indian border dispute. First was the failure of the Great Leap Forward by late 1959 and the subsequent famine it caused. Mao was initially
able to conceal the full impact from the international community of the Great Leap Forward and purged several critics of his policies from the CCP (J. Chen 2001, 78–79; Pantsov and Levine 2012, 463–75). However, the growing scale of the economic and human disaster perturbed most members of the Politburo leading to an unprecedented level of criticism of Mao’s policies. Though Mao kept his formal title of Chairman, he was sidelined from the day-to-day governance and even forced to make a ‘self-criticism’ in 1961 (J. Chen 2001, 82–83; Joffe 1975; Pantsov and Levine 2012, 475–84).

The second key event occurred in March 1959 when the first major rebellion against Mao’s regime broke out in Tibet. Mao’s own ideological convictions and reports from Chinese military intelligence, which linked India with CIA-run Tibetan rebels, convinced Mao that India had played a leading role in provoking the rebellion (Fravel 2008, 79–82; Garver 2001, 60–62; PRC FMA 1959). The Dalai Lama’s flight and asylum in India confirmed Mao’s suspicions of Indian designs on Tibet, prompting him to publish a polemic lambasting Nehru in May 1959 (Deepak 2005, 178–83; Garver 2011, 104–5; Kalha 2014, 96–99). These two events, coupled with two lethal skirmishes between Chinese and Indian border forces, had the effect of loosening Mao’s hold on office and raising the salience of the border dispute at roughly the same time. Hence, Mao recognised that a change of policy towards the Sino-Indian border dispute was needed.

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adoption of amateur backyard smelters. Although the Great Leap Forward did revive revolutionary enthusiasm, it also diverted significant amounts of resources away from agricultural production and into inefficient cottage industries that mostly produced useless materials. This situation was compounded as local managers began to inflate growth figures in order to avoid punishment for failing to meet quotas. The Chinese leadership, believing the figures, exported more foodstuff than they could afford, causing the famine in 1959 and 1960 (Kissinger 2011, 181–84; Pantsov and Levine 2012, 449–58).

61 According to Mao’s radical Marxist-Leninist worldview, Nehru and his administration were ‘anti-imperialist bourgeoisie’ who could be allies of convenience against colonialism as long as their interests aligned with the communist movement. Nonetheless, Nehru’s class would ultimately transform into reactionaries as their interests became opposed to the proletariat’s and, having assimilated the ‘imperialist mentality’ of their former colonisers, would seek to exploit other states. Mao believed that Nehru was undergoing such a metamorphosis in 1959 and remained convinced that Nehru sought to mimic the British by attempting to make Tibet a protectorate (Garver 2006, 93–95; Maxwell 2013, 295–99).
In the face of these domestic pressures and confrontations along the border, Mao recognised the necessity to change from his status quo policy in order to recapture the initiative. Whilst still fuming at what he perceived to be Nehru’s role in the Tibetan revolt, Mao initially sought a compromise with India on the border issue. Mao considered this to be the optimum policy at the time for two reasons. First, Mao believed that Nehru was inclined to negotiate with China on the border issue. Second, Mao calculated that if he could secure China’s southern border with India he could then focus his attention on re-establishing his position domestically.

Following the clashes between Chinese and Indian border forces in August 1959, Mao instructed Premier Zhou Enlai\(^\text{62}\) to propose that both countries withdraw 20 kilometres to establish a buffer zone between the two border forces and seek negotiations. After India rejected these proposals Mao ordered Chinese troops to unilaterally withdraw 20 kilometres from the Chinese recognised line of actual control and cease patrolling in the forward area in order to defuse the situation (Garver 2006, 106; Kissinger 2011, 187).

In January 1960, Mao convened a meeting of the Politburo Standing Committee where it was agreed that a resolution should be sought on a ‘give and take’ principle. This compromise policy proposed that the territorial dispute be settled along the status quo ante, meaning that China would acknowledge the McMahon Line as the border if India would accept China’s sovereignty over the Aksai Chin (Chung 2004, 104; Fravel 2008, 85). Despite Nehru’s discourteous rejection of Zhou’s overtures, Mao maintained that reaching a compromise with India was the optimum policy and continued to pursue negotiations (Deepak 2005, 231–32; Fravel 2008, 95–96; Keith 1989, 128–30).

\(^{62}\) Although Mao kept a firm grasp on foreign policy decision making and was an adroit strategist, he had little patience for the day-to-day running of foreign affairs, leaving the task of overseeing implementation to Zhou (Keith 1989; Kennedy 2012, 58–59; Kissinger 2011, 241–42).
However, by 1962 the situation had changed significantly enough for Mao to re-evaluate his approach towards the Sino-Indian border dispute and to adopt more escalatory policies. The first major catalyst for Mao’s change in policy was India’s confrontational Forward Policy, which was initiated in November 1961. The Forward Policy further raised the salience of the Sino-Indian border dispute within the Politburo and drove Mao to the conclusion that Nehru was unreceptive to negotiations. Therefore, Mao decided that some forceful action was necessary to wrench Nehru out of his complacency; declaring in his usual poetical style that “someone sleeping in a comfortable bed is not easily roused by someone else’s snoring” (Garver 2006, 107–10; Kissinger 2011, 187–88). In April 1962, Mao decided to respond with a mild escalation policy of his own that he referred to as ‘armed coexistence’. Under this policy, Mao instructed Chinese border forces to resume patrolling within the 20-kilometre buffer zone and to counter any Indian positions by erecting their own posts. However, Mao explicitly ordered PLA forces to refrain from opening fire unless authorised by the central leadership (Fravel 2008, 184–88; Garver 2006, 109–10).

The second major change in Mao’s policy towards the Sino-Indian border was precipitated by his eagerness to regain control of the CCP and reverse the ‘revisionist’ policies that were adopted in the wake of the Great Leap Forward. In July-August 1962 Central Committee work conference, Mao mobilised his supporters and launched angry tirades against the moderates and their policies. This was quickly followed by the Tenth Plenum of the Central Committee, held in September 1962, during which Mao was able to reassert his authority (Joffe 1975, 44–50; Pantsov and Levine 2012, 484–86; Teiwes 1984, 38–40). Mao’s main criticism of his colleagues was that their reform policies had effectively abandoned collectivisation and adopted ‘capitalist’ policies. However, he also
attacked the moderate foreign policy proposed by Wang Jiaxiang\textsuperscript{63} in February 1962 which essentially advocated improving relations with China’s neighbours (J. Chen 2001, 83; Fravel 2008, 100–101; Kennedy 2012, 107–9). Though Mao succeeded in reconcentrating power back into his hands, by rejecting the moderates’ pragmatic policies towards capitalists and ‘reactionaries’ he also effectively ruled out any compromise options with India in the near future. In addition, although Wang was purged, more prominent moderates such as Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi were cowed but remained in office. Hence, Mao needed some form of bold successful policy to reunify the CCP and consolidate his leadership (Kennedy 2012, 108; Pantsov and Levine 2012, 486).

With the cooperative and status quo policy options unacceptable, and the existing policy of armed coexistence failing to disabuse Nehru of his provocative border policy, Mao determined that a stronger escalation policy was necessary. Thus Mao decided in an early-October 1962 CMC meeting that a short punitive war was necessary to provide the shock needed to ‘sober up’ India’s policy makers and ‘teach them a lesson’ (Garver 2006, 115; Kissinger 2011, 190). Mao chose to launch a limited war in part because his options at this point were increasingly limited, but mostly because he perceived it to be the optimum policy to achieve his interests at the time. Specifically, Mao’s decision to launch a punitive war against India in an effort to force India to accept his preferred ‘give and take’ resolution proposal and to bolster his leadership after his return to central policy decision-making. Mao’s decision to launch a punitive war also demonstrated his confidence in the PLA’s prowess and his belief that the use of force could produce these desired political results. Thus, supported strongly by Zhou, Mao argued that a decisive

\textsuperscript{63} Wang Jiaxiang was a founding CCP member and one of the ‘28 Bolsheviks’ faction before becoming an early supporter of Mao. He became China’s first ambassador, posted to the USSR, and became head of the International Liaison Department in the late 1950s. Wang had begun actively championing his policy by 1961 though several elements of it had been implemented since 1959. Following his purge from the CCP, he kept a low profile but was nonetheless harassed throughout the Cultural Revolution until his death in 1974 (Hyer 2017; Pantsov and Levine 2012).
military defeat was necessary both to pacify the border by deterring further Indian incursions and to ‘knock Nehru to the negotiating table’ (Fravel 2008, 194–96; Garver 2006, 115–19).

Mao also sought to tie launching the 1962 border war to his grand strategy of combating ‘reactionaries’, namely the Soviet Union. The growing embrace of ‘revolutionary diplomacy’ and the rhetoric of Maoism had seen Chinese-Soviet relations become increasingly acrimonious since the late 1950s and Mao’s return to supremacy in 1962 had again strained relations. In the Sino-Indian dispute, Mao saw a chance to force the Soviet Union to side with China or expose the Soviet leaders as ‘revisionist traitors’, thereby consolidating and advancing the cause of ‘proletariat internationalism’ (Deepak 2005, 168–73; Kissinger 2011, 190–92). The Soviet Premier, Nikita Khrushchev, was aware of Mao’s machinations but nonetheless ideologically committed to his own interpretation of Marxist-Leninism and wanted Chinese support for his policies in Cuba. Hence, Khrushchev guaranteed Mao that if India attacked China, the Soviet Union would ‘stand together with China’ (Garver 2006, 120–21; Kissinger 2011, 190–92).

Defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian border war did not compel India to negotiate as Mao expected. Nonetheless, Mao achieved his other key goals of neutralising the border dispute as an issue and ‘exposing’ the Soviet Union’s lackadaisical support for socialist unity when it remained neutral. With India defeated and the threat to China’s territorial integrity and stability removed, the salience of the border dispute for Mao and other CCP leaders evaporated. This allowed Mao to refocus his attentions on consolidating his leadership domestically and pursuing his revolution (Garver 2016, 171–81; Pantsov and Levine 2012, 486–89). As these interests had little to do with the Sino-Indian border dispute, Mao was content to return to the status quo policy he had maintained prior to 1959.
Though Mao left open the option for negotiations with India on the border issue and expressed his desire to see Sino-Indian relations improve, he was content to let the dispute lie and wait for India to take the initiative (Chung 2004, 109; Kalha 2014, 185). This policy was most clearly expressed in Zhou’s 1963 letter to Nehru urging the resumption of border negotiations when he stated “if the Indian government, owing to its internal and external political requirements, is not prepared to hold negotiations for the time being, the Chinese government is willing to wait with patience” (MEA 1963b, 13; Maxwell 2013, 507). This state of affairs continued until after Mao’s death in 1976. Indeed, no notable changes in policy or approach towards the Sino-Indian border occurred until Deng Xiaoping had secured himself as China’s next paramount leader.

*Deng Xiaoping*

Deng Xiaoping rose to the position of paramount leader by 1979 after overcoming the radical Maoist ‘Gang of Four’ and Hua Goufeng’s ‘Whatever’


64 Hua was an orthodox communist who advocated centralised planning methods to bolster industry and agriculture. Anointed by Mao as his successor in early 1976, Hua’s ‘Whatever’ faction was formed by the more moderate Maoists who rallied behind Hua’s 1977 call to uphold whatever policy directions and instructions Mao had given. Though formally the head of the CCP and the PRC between 1976 and 1982, Hua and his supporters were outmanoeuved by Deng’s reformist faction in the December 1978 Plenum. Hua was gradually sidelined from active policymaking and finally stripped of his formal positions between 1980 and 1982. Though fallen from power, Hua was allowed to quietly slide into obscurity as a regular member of the CCP Central Committee, a post he retained until 2002 when he finally retired. Hua managed to outlive most of his contemporaries, dying in 2008 (Bradsher and Wellman 2008; Kissinger 2011, 328–30; Teiwes 1984, 77–82).

Though largely successful, Deng remained reliant on the support of a coalition of other veteran CCP leaders, some of whom grew increasingly concerned with the scope of his reforms. As such, Deng depended upon his unrivalled abilities as an administrator and mediator between the various interest groups to retain power. This, coupled with Deng’s own administrative reforms, resulted in the dilution of the paramount leader’s power through the delegation of duties and development of a more deliberative policy making process (He and Warren 2011, 276; H. L. Miller and Liu 2001, 132–33). Nonetheless, Deng retained firm control over China’s foreign and security policies, including holding the Chairmanship of key LSGs and staffing the military and bureaucracy with loyal lieutenants (Lai 2010, 37; Barnett 1985, 9–14).

In order to establish a regional environment conducive to his economic reforms, Deng recognised that it was in his interest to improve China’s relations with the world in general and with its neighbours specifically (Kissinger 2011, 356–60). This prompted Deng to adopt compromise and status quoist policies towards the Sino-Indian border dispute believing that its removal as an issue was complementary with the thrust of his foreign policy and reform program. Initially, Deng pursued a compromise policy, proposing several times between 1979 and 1981 a ‘package deal’ to resolve the Sino-Indian border dispute. Deng’s package deal effectively mirrored Zhou’s 1960 proposal, offering mutual territorial concessions based upon formalising the Line of Actual Control (LAC) (S. Ganguly 1989, 1126; Garver 2001, 101–2; Z. D. Singh 2011, 84–85). This policy was abandoned only after the two sides’ irreconcilable positions stalled the border talks, and India resumed forward patrolling of the LAC in the early 1980s. The impasse eventually provoked the Sumdorong Chu incident in 1986 and raised the salience of the
border dispute amongst the Chinese selectorate. It also made Deng realise that the Indian side was not amenable to a territorial swap deal, at least on such a scale.

In response to the changed situation, Deng authorised a hardening of China’s position towards the Sino-Indian border dispute and the publication of several polemics attacking India’s position towards the border (Carlson 2003, 684–85). Nonetheless, Deng, secure in his leadership, saw no need or benefit from escalation strategies or even disengaging from negotiations with India. Deng also seems to have remained sanguine that the Sino-Indian border dispute would eventually be resolved through diplomatic negotiations and considered an amiable India as beneficial for his grand strategy. Thus, Deng tried to maintain the status quo on the disputed border by continuing negotiations with India even during the height of tensions in 1986-87 over the Sumdorong Chu crisis (Fravel 2008, 200–201).

Deng also embraced Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s December 1988 visit to China as a chance to revitalise the negotiations. By this stage though, the aging Deng was preparing to transfer power to the next generation of leaders. As such, Deng was reluctant to divert from the standing status quoist policies by offering specific compromises. Instead, Deng simply declared that both states’ leaders had to look towards the future and resolve the dispute peacefully and in a mutually acceptable manner (Deepak 2005, 331–33; Kalha 2014, 206). As shown below, this commitment to engaging in negotiations with India without significantly changing its position has largely remained the policy of the subsequent paramount leaders of China.

**Jiang Zemin**

Jiang Zemin rose to be the paramount leader as a last-minute compromise candidate between Deng and his reform minded colleagues and the hardliner CCP elites in the
aftermath of Tiananmen Square. In order to ensure a smooth transition, Jiang was quickly confirmed as China’s leader at the CCP Congress held in November 1989. Gaining power in a turbulent domestic and international situation without a power base outside of Shanghai, Jiang has been China’s weakest paramount leader to date. Indeed, throughout Jiang’s tenure he had to deal with strong factional rivals and was often overshadowed by the retired CCP veterans, especially Deng, who continued to act as ‘mentors’ until their deaths in the 1990s (Fravel 2008, 131–34; Kissinger 2011, 440–48). Hence, Jiang’s primary interest throughout his tenure as the paramount leader was to restore the legitimacy of the CCP and consolidate both his leadership and China’s place in the world. Jiang also differed from his predecessors and successors in that he developed no unique grand strategy of his own as a guide for his administration. Instead, Jiang largely followed Deng’s famous 24 character maxim for foreign affairs, albeit with a stronger emphasis on promoting nationalism and private enterprise to help foster domestic stability (Lai 2010, 37; Whiting 1995, 297–99).

Regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute, Jiang calculated that a status quo approach was in his best interest, a position that did not change during his tenure as paramount leader. This status quo policy primarily manifested in the development of the Joint Working Group negotiations and various confidence building measures, which resulted in the signing of two key agreements in 1993 and 1996 (Carlson 2003, 691–92).

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65 Deng’s original intended successor was his protégé Zhou Ziyang, a dedicated reformist and moderate who had been holding key positions since Deng ascended to power in 1977. However, Zhou fell from favour for his open sympathy with the pro-democracy protests that rocked China in 1989 and his opposition to the imposition of martial law in May that year. Zhou was dismissed from all offices in June 1989 and placed under house arrest where he remained until his death in 2005.

66 Jiang had been the Mayor and Party Secretary of Shanghai before his elevation and promoted several of his followers onto the national stage, forming the ‘Shanghai gang’ faction that remains powerful through to today. However, many members of this clique are unpopular outside of Shanghai and it appears to have faded in influence recently. See Chapter Four for more details.

67 Deng’s instructions circulated amongst the CCP leadership in the early 1990s were to: ‘observe carefully; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; and never claim leadership’ (Kissinger 2011, 438; H. L. Miller and Liu 2001, 139–45).
Chung 2004, 119–20).\(^{68}\) Jiang considered compromise policies unacceptable largely due to the domestic situation he faced as China’s supreme leader. Though keen to neutralise the Sino-Indian border as an issue, any territorial concession to India would have likely affected China’s national security, and renewed public unrest due to the increasing adoption of nationalism by China’s citizenry towards the end of the 1990s (Carlson 2003, 693).

Yet escalatory policies were equally unacceptable to Jiang, even after India’s 1998 nuclear tests, for two key reasons. Firstly, though Jiang clearly wished to consolidate his position throughout his tenure, the low salience of the Sino-Indian border dispute within China or the CCP made escalation an infeasible tool for strengthening his grip on power. Second, escalatory policies ran contrary to the grand strategy of ending China’s post-Tiananmen international isolation and would have thwarted Jiang’s efforts to promote China as a responsible member of the international community. Thus, Jiang calculated that the only realistic policy that reinforced his interests was to continue negotiations with the Indian government in order to deescalate tensions along the LAC without offering any territorial concessions (Chung 2004, 119–20; Z. D. Singh 2011, 89).

**Hu Jintao**

Hu Jintao succeeded a reluctant Jiang\(^{69}\) in 2002 marking the first orderly planned transfer of leadership and culmination of Deng’s institutionalised succession reforms. In an interesting contrast to previous paramount leaders, Hu collaborated closely with his

\(^{68}\) It is rumoured that Jiang unofficially raised the swap proposal as a solution during his 1996 visit, although this has yet to be verified and did not alter in any way the ongoing negotiations (Fravel 2008, 170).

\(^{69}\) Jiang had only been able to step out from Deng’s shadow after the former leader’s death in 1997 and was loath to let his power go just as it had reached its apex. Though Jiang stepped down as required from the positions of General Secretary and Chinese President in 2002 and 2003 respectively, he maintained his chairmanship over the CMC until September 2004 after several generals pressured him to resign so as not to split loyalties (Dillon 2009, 164; Fewsmith 2008, 254–55).
Premier and political ally Wen Jiabao. Though there were often rumours of tensions due to their different factional backgrounds, Hu and Wen ostensibly operated as a team and divided their duties (Dillon 2009, 166; Lai 2010, 37). Both Hu and Wen were noted for their technocratic governing style and continued the trend since Deng toward a more deliberative policy making process. Though Hu maintained a firm control over the foreign and security policy making process, he was notably risk-averse, preferring to build broad coalitions and utilise the formal institutions to implement his policies (Harris 2014, 31–32; Lai 2010, 37–38). During Hu’s administration, China experienced exponential growth of its economy and global influence. In order to deal with the numerous pressures caused by this meteoric rise, Hu sought to refine Deng and Jiang’s grand strategy by advocating a Confucian-inspired vision of a ‘harmonious society’ domestically and a ‘peaceful rise’ internationally (Fewsmith 2008, 252–54; Kissinger 2011, 490–91, 499–500).

With this vision to guide him, Hu's foreign policy towards the Sino-Indian border dispute initially adopted the mild cooperative policies (Cabestan 2009, 64; Ferdinand 2016, 941–42). Under Hu, efforts continued to stabilise Sino-Indian bilateral relations and even attempted some new diplomatic initiatives to revitalise the deadlocked border negotiations. In pursuing this policy, Hu made some minor concessions and good will gestures towards India. The first such incidence occurred during Prime Minister Vajpayee’s visit to Beijing. During this visit, China tacitly recognised Sikkim as an integral part of India and agreed to establish the Special Representative Meeting (SRM) to reinvigorate negotiations. Another minor concession was made in the 2005 Agreement Political Parameters and Guiding Principles, signed during Premier Wen’s visit in which China explicitly agreed to ‘safeguard the interests of settled populations’ (Acharya 2011; B. M. Jain 2008, 143; Sikri 2009, 93). Additionally, during Hu’s first years in office, there was also a notable upsurge in the intensity of Sino-Indian border negotiations. Indeed,
between 2003 and 2007, there were 12 rounds of formal border negotiations and numerous lower level or unofficial discussions between China and India in what appears to have been a genuine effort to reach a settlement.

However, a mutually agreeable compromise to resolve the border dispute remained out of reach. By 2007, two serious developments combined to alter Hu’s perspective on the Sino-Indian border dispute, making the adoption of a status quo policy the optimum means to achieve his interests. First, hawkish and nationalist elements within China were becoming increasingly strident in their calls for China to take a more assertive position in world affairs, especially in regard to its territorial disputes. Hence, Hu needed to maintain the delicate balancing act of maintaining the nationalists’ support for the CCP while limiting their impact on policy (Lam 2006, 213–17; Smith 2014, 63–64). Second, India began to grow strategically closer to the United States and its allies during the mid-2000s. This generated a concern within Chinese policy circles about the potential for China to become strategically encircled by US forces acting in tandem with forces from India and other Asian states. Hu therefore needed some trigger to ensure that India remained ‘sober and cautious’. The Sino-Indian border dispute proved to be a perfect low-cost means to apply pressure on India (Garver 2011, 108–9; Kalha 2014, 223–27; Z. D. Singh 2011, 92–96).

Bold escalation policies, such as seizing the disputed territory, remained an undesirable option for Hu. Not only would such a policy run contrary to his grand strategy, but any serious military escalation along the Sino-Indian border would most likely result in serious costs and distractions rather than any significant gains. Aware that India would never agree to the concessions necessary to mollify the Chinese nationalists, compromise approaches were also ruled out by Hu. Yet Hu clearly considered negotiations on the border issue to be too useful a channel of communication to sever. Hu therefore calculated
the optimum policy was to deploy soldiers along the LAC to proactively maintain the *status quo* whilst still maintaining the formal dialogue. Thus, PLA began patrolling up to where China claimed the LAC lay whilst Chinese diplomats began insisting on territorial concessions during the SRMs (Smith 2014, 39–48).

**Xi Jinping**

Xi Jinping gained the position of paramount leader in 2012 in the smoothest transfer of power in the People’s Republic of China to date after Hu stepped down from his posts as required. During Xi’s first five years in power, he has been remarkably active and has in many ways reversed the norms of Chinese governance that had developed over the past twenty years. Whereas Jiang and Hu were more ‘first amongst equals’ than supreme leaders, Xi has moved quickly to consolidate power into his hands. The clearest sign of Xi’s success occurred at the Sixth Plenum of the 18th Central Committee, held in October 2016, during which he was formally declared China’s ‘core leader’ with a mandate to push through his ambitious reform agenda (Buckley 2016; Martina and Lim 2016). Additionally, in 2013 Xi created two new overarching CCP organisations, the Chinese National Security Commission and the Central Leading Group on Comprehensively Deepening Reforms. These two Party organisations have helped Xi to acquire almost total control over every aspect of policymaking, earning him the nickname of ‘Chairman of Everything’ from his detractors (Lam 2015, 77–79; Zheng and Weng 2016, 45–47). This process cumulated at the 2017 19th CCP Congress during which Xi was able to stack the Politburo and other key positions with trusted allies, centralising power to an extent unseen since Mao and Deng (K. P. Chong 2017; Chung-yan 2017).

As part of his grand strategy for China, Xi has sought to revitalise the CCP’s Marxist-Leninist ideological foundation in order to increase its legitimacy. Indeed, Xi has
reportedly argued in several CCP fora that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union lost its direction and ultimately collapsed because it descended into ‘ideological nihilism’ (Huang 2016; Wong 2016). Hence, Xi has argued strongly for a revitalization of the CCP by going back to its core Marxist-Leninist ideological foundations. Part of this revitalisation has taken the form of a comprehensive and ongoing anti-corruption campaign70 and efforts to promote not just competent but ‘ideologically educated’ cadres (Economy 2014; Lam 2015, 94–110).

Xi has also sought to develop his own important ideological innovation, championing in several speeches the nebulous but aspirational concept of the ‘Chinese Dream’. In essence, this concept fuses the nationalist and communist ideologies in a call to ‘rejuvenate’ China, creating a prosperous socialist society and making China a leading international power that all Chinese could be proud of (Ferdinand 2016, 944–46; Xi 2014, 37–70). This ‘Chinese Dream’ forms the basis of Xi’s grand strategy, which government policies must promote and help realise (Stenslie and Chen 2016, 124–25; Zhao and Gao 2015, 43). Xi’s vision of a rejuvenated China has seen him depart from the cautious foreign policies of Deng, Jiang and Hu and take a more assertive and proactive role in international affairs. Xi has sought to establish a number of international institutions, most notably his signature ‘one belt, one road’ initiative,71 in order to project China’s soft power. Despite Xi’s stated policy of ‘good neighbourliness’ (Xi 2014, 325–29), the

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70 Thousands of businessmen/women and government officials have been arrested including several high-ranking CCP members who had largely been immune from such campaigns in the past. To date, the two highest profile casualties of the anti-corruption campaign have been General Guo Boxiong, the former top ranking PLA officer and vice-chairman of the CMC between 2002 and 2012, and Zhou Yongkang, a Politburo Standing Committee member between 2002 and 2012 and previously responsible for China’s internal security apparatus (Zheng and Weng 2016, 55–61). Given that Zhou was suspected to be one of Xi’s main factional rivals, some China scholars have questioned whether the campaign is really about law and order or is a disguised means to engage in a purge of Xi’s detractors (Economy 2014; Lam 2015).

71 The ‘one belt, one road’ strategy was announced by Xi in 2013 and involves the development of two trade routes, the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road. The economic belt involves the heavy investment in infrastructure to facilitate the progress of trade across Eurasia with Europe and China at either end. The Maritime Silk Road involves the construction of ports and other infrastructure to help facilitate the flow of trade from mostly Africa and South Asia into China and vice versa.
Chinese Dream has also manifested itself in more assertive positions towards China’s territorial rivals, especially in regard to its maritime disputes (Ferdinand 2016, 948–49; Harris 2014, 77–84).

This more proactive grand strategy is designed to address the various domestic and international security issues that Xi has identified as threatening China. Specifically, Xi has argued that “Internationally, there are sovereignty issues, security issues and development interests to protect. Domestically, there is political security and social stability to preserve” (cited in Zhao and Gao 2015, 52). The latter issue is particularly concerning for the Chinese regime as activists’ and disgruntled Chinese citizens’ ability and willingness to protest various issues has grown significantly. Some unofficial reports suggest that there are as many as 180,000 ‘mass incidents’ annually, or on average about 500 a day (Stenslie and Chen 2016, 130–31; J. Zhang 2014, 393). Xi’s appeal to a ‘Chinese dream’ is a deliberate invocation of Chinese nationalism to help bolster the CCP’s legitimacy. However, this appeal to nationalism equally limits his ability to compromise on China’s claimed territorial borders without inciting public opinion and potentially generating further internal unrest (Smith 2014, 63–64; J. Zhang 2014, 394–95). Thus, Xi has adopted a status quo policy towards the Sino-Indian border dispute. This policy has largely manifested itself as the continuation of negotiations with India without making any notable demands or offering any territorial concessions.

Yet, in recent years, Xi may have begun to adopt an escalation policy. Since late 2013, PLA units along the border have increasingly engaged in more assertive patrolling, passing through or setting up bivouacs in areas where the LAC’s location is in dispute. It currently remains unclear whether Xi ordered these operations as a deliberate effort to

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72 The term used by China’s Ministry of Public Security to refer to riots, organised protests, strikes and other forms of social unrest.
pressure the Indian government or whether they were undertaken independently by overzealous or self-interested officers (Medcalf 2014; Menon 2016, 25; Smith 2014, 48–50). However, based upon a poliheuristic choice theory analysis of the current situation, I consider the latter to be most likely for two key reasons.

First, Xi is currently the most powerful paramount leader in generations but even he does not have absolute control over every facet of foreign and security policy (Jakobson 2016, 150–51). Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Four, the PLA has a significant degree of operational autonomy and does not always consider its interests perfectly aligned with China’s official policy (Swaine 2015, 146–48). There also appear to be sections of the PLA disaffected by recent organisational reforms, especially within the Army branch which has seen its status relative to the other services in the PLA decline. Whilst it is plausible that Xi has ordered these patrols to put pressure on India, they often prove to be an embarrassing distraction and spoiler for important diplomatic events, including Xi’s 2014 state visit to India (Medcalf 2014; TNN 2014c).

Second, Xi’s clear priorities are to rejuvenate China domestically and internationally. Hence, Xi has little incentive to take risks inherent in utilising the military to alter the status quo along the disputed Sino-Indian border. Such actions would undoubtedly disrupt his efforts to promote Chinese international leadership and economic development. Indeed, notwithstanding some of the nationalist rhetoric from official CCP news sources, Xi’s administration has been notably restrained towards its interstate border disputes (Ferdinand 2016, 949). Under Xi, China has typically responded to any Sino-Indian border incidents with silence or a standard call for all sides to restore peace and tranquillity rather than provocative actions.73 Indeed, any altercations between the two

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73 The only notable exception from this pattern of behaviour occurred in response to the Doklam standoff. When Indian forces, ostensibly on behalf of Bhutan, crossed into Chinese controlled territory to disrupt Chinese operation, Chinese officials strenuously protested and Chinese media reacted with uncharacteristic
sides’ border forces have been confined to small sections of the LAC and are usually smoothed over quickly by diplomatic negotiations. With Xi’s attention focused on achieving his grand strategy, it is highly unlikely that he will consider it in his interest to change China’s policy towards the Sino-Indian border anytime soon.

**Indian leaders and the Sino-Indian border dispute**

India is governed via a Westminster or parliamentary system ensuring that the chief executive is the Prime Minister, who is the leader of the majority party or coalition within the lower house of Parliament. However, unlike most Westminster systems, the Indian Prime Minister has nearly unbridled control over foreign and security policy decision-making including towards interstate border disputes (Menon 2016, 126).

The predominance of the Indian Prime Minister over foreign and security policy making derives from four factors. First, the ministerial departments and political institutions that are entrusted with foreign and security policy are often starved of resources and dependent on the Prime Minister’s patronage. Second, following the Westminster tradition, the Prime Minister is the head of the Cabinet, which is formally responsible for all government policy. Hence, the Prime Minister must approve major policy decisions before they can be implemented. Third, India’s highly hierarchical culture creates a degree of deference towards those in positions of power and authority. If a Prime Minister is a forceful personality who makes his/her policy preferences known to top bureaucrats and ministers, the various ministries and departments normally try to comply with their wishes. Finally, the Indian political class and the Indian public at large are seldom deeply knowledgeable about or interested in international affairs and foreign vehemence towards India. Nonetheless, any direct comment or involvement by Xi or other leaders was conspicuously absent.
policy (H. Kapur 1994, 178–79; Ogden 2014, 18–21). These factors guarantee the Indian Prime Minister significant leeway in designing India’s foreign and security policies or smothering proposals that he/she disagrees with. A strong Prime Minister can therefore shape India’s foreign policy according to her/his political interests and grand strategy (Narang and Staniland 2012, 78–81; Sikri 2009, 260–63).

An Indian Prime Minister’s selectorate effectively comprises of both the voting population and party members. As the head of a democratic state, every Indian Prime Minister must take into consideration the likely reception his/her policies will receive within the Indian voting public to ensure his/her political longevity and hold on power. Unfortunately for most Indian Prime Ministers, the Sino-Indian border dispute has remained one of the few sensitive foreign policy issues for the Indian public since 1959 (Ma 2014, 105; Maxwell 2011, 79–80).

Though foreign policy has been the near exclusive domain of Indian Prime Ministers since Nehru, they still must be mindful of the opinion of their party colleagues. No political party, especially the two major national parties in India, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC), wishes to sit in Opposition where its ability to impact policy is limited. Hence, the governing party’s leaders are particularly sensitive to government policy, especially controversial or unpopular policies that cast a shadow over their popularity and threaten the party’s hold on power (Menon 2016, 128; Sikri 2009, 267–68). Should dissatisfaction within the party grow significantly, the senior party leaders can challenge the Prime Minister for his/her spot or, more commonly, split away to form a new party, leaving the Prime Minister and his/her loyalists potentially in the minority. Indian Prime Ministers must therefore keep his/her party, and any coalition partners, happy in order to hold on to their position of top leadership.
As poliheuristic choice theory suggests, the need to keep their selectorate happy and the relative salience of the disputed Sino-Indian border to the Indian public at large ensure that Prime Ministers seldom enjoy a wide range of policy options. Compromise options especially are considered too politically risky and therefore treated with extreme caution. Similarly, escalation policies may carry the built-in risk of transforming to full-scale war with a more powerful neighbour. Indian Prime Ministers have therefore mostly adhered to status quoist policies as a matter of prudence and political expediency. Nevertheless, depending upon circumstances, some Indian Prime Ministers have found it in their interest to occasionally pursue compromise or escalation policies towards the Sino-Indian border dispute. As the Indian political scene is often highly fluid and different Prime Ministers have had their own unique grand strategies, it is necessary to examine the case of each Indian Prime Minister to date to understand why they have overwhelmingly favoured status quoist policies vis-à-vis the disputed Sino-Indian border.

**Jawaharlal Nehru**

After the death of the powerful Deputy Prime Minister Vallabhbhai Patel in 1950, jawaharlal Nehru was free from potential challengers to his position of leadership and dominated Indian politics until his death in 1964. Though Nehru was willing to use force if necessary, he was an ardent believer in the morality and efficacy of non-violence and persuasion (Kennedy 2012, 142–63). This view manifested in Nehru’s drive to establish

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74 Initially Nehru shared power with Vallabhbhai Patel, commonly known as ‘Sardar’ (Chief/Boss). Patel was a prominent leader in the INC where he had significant factional support that would have made him India’s first Prime Minister had Mohandas Gandhi not intervened and handpicked Nehru. Instead Patel secured the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Affairs portfolios as well as retaining the position of INC President. As Patel was also markedly more politically conservative and pro-free market than Nehru, there was often significant friction between the two leaders. It was only after Patel’s rapid decline in health and death in 1950 that Nehru was able to fully consolidate his position domestically (Bandyopadhyaya 1970, 227–28; Edwardes 1971, 215–44; Kennedy 2012, 140). Patel was also notably more hawkish than Nehru regarding China, pushing for a more forceful response to China and the location of the border from India’s independence. Indeed, shortly before his death, Patel wrote to Nehru arguing that India needed to confront Chinese ‘irredentism’ with a firm response, arguing that India could not afford to ‘vacillate’ in its policies. See Dalvi (1969, 489–95) for the complete letter.
India as a social democracy with a staunchly independent and impartial foreign policy. Holding both the Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs portfolios, Nehru was able to focus on implementing this grand strategy without distraction. This vision for India culminated in the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and India’s championing of anti-imperialism causes (S. Ganguly and Pardesi 2009, 5–7; Mansingh 1984, 13–17; Narang and Staniland 2012, 81–84).

However, Nehru’s pursuit of his non-aligned vision and rejection of Cold War power politics grand strategy was often inadvertently at the expense of India’s national security. The most prominent example of this problematic side to Nehru’s grand strategy was his deliberate stymieing of the Indian military’s growth and modernisation, lest it detract from the country’s economic development (Maxwell 2013, 197–203; Wilkinson 2015, 19–26). Inevitably, India’s military atrophied and its weakness was brutally exposed in 1962 when it proved unable to withstand China’s assaults during the Sino-Indian border war.

Another insidious problem with Nehru’s grand strategy was its impact on Indian diplomacy. Under Nehru, Indian diplomats became primarily concerned with multilateral projects and elegantly written communiques rather than the substantive discussions and pragmatic compromises necessary to resolve interstate border disputes (Sikri 2009, 259–60). Nehru was also seemingly oblivious to the fact that his arrogant presumption of leadership and rambling, sanctimonious lectures on the virtues of peace irritated his counterparts within the Afro-Asian states and the NAM, alienating India within the movement. As a result Nehru, to his evident shock, found only half-hearted support for India’s position from a handful of the NAM countries, when he had presumed he would get near unanimous backing by the movement (Edwardes 1971, 274–76; Garver 2001, 119–24).
In the initial years after India’s independence, Prime Minister Nehru considered China as a key partner in his vision for pan-Asian solidarity, anti-imperialism and world peace. Nehru clearly also believed that the Chinese revolution was more nationalist than communist and primarily sought to expunge the humiliations endured under Western imperialism (Hoffmann 1990, 52–53; Kalha 2014, 41). Therefore Nehru actively engaged with the Chinese communists, believing that they would ultimately moderate their policies if unprovoked and given due respect and recognition by the international community (Deepak 2005, 119–21; Garver 2001, 117–18). In this regard, the most notable of Nehru’s efforts was the signing of the 1954 Panchsheel Agreement between India and China. Under this agreement, Nehru sought to practice the anti-colonialism he preached by shedding the extraterritorial rights in Tibet that India had inherited from the British. In return, Nehru believed that he had secured Chinese support for his international program by having China agree to the five principles of coexistence detailed in the treaty (S. Ganguly 2004, 108–9; Kalha 2014, 67–68). Nehru also took the position that the Agreement’s identification of several mountain passes to be opened for trade and pilgrimage amounted to a ‘gentleman’s agreement’ on the border’s position (Deepak 2005, 150–51; Kalha 2014, 66–67; Lüthi 2017, 32).

In relation to the Sino-Indian border dispute, Nehru initially decided to pursue the status quo policy, mostly refusing to broach the issue. Nehru quickly dismissed escalatory policies at this time as he faced no domestic challenges to his position, an Indian populace and Parliament mostly focused on domestic issues and a grand strategy that required engagement with China. Though compromise was a possible option, Nehru calculated that any border negotiations were bound to be contentious and would unnecessarily aggravate Sino-Indian relations just when he was trying to win them over to his concept of pan-Asian cooperation (Garver 2016, 110–11; Hoffmann 1990, 32–34). Additionally, although
Nehru was effectively unconstrained by considerations by Cabinet or Parliament until 1959, he was likely also concerned that conceding territory would not sit well with Indian public opinion. Despite the general atmosphere of Sino-Indian bonhomie, there were significant sections of the Indian public that held staunchly nationalist views who strongly opposed any relinquishment of territory and urged a tougher stance on China. There were also a significant number of Indians sympathetic with the Tibetan cause who publicly urged a tougher stance against China and criticised Nehru for his abandonment of Tibet (Deepak 2005, 154–55; Ma 2014, 106–7).

It is also appears that Nehru believed he could secure India’s border with China via a *fait accompli* by quietly establishing a military presence in the undefined zones (Chung 2004, 100). This policy was most clearly expressed in the memorandum that Nehru issued in July 1954. In it, Nehru stated that following the Panchsheel Agreement India’s northern border was to be considered “a firm and definite one, not open to discussion by anyone” and directed that border posts be established along the frontier “especially in those places as might be considered disputed areas” (Edwardes 1971, 281; K. Gupta 1982, 55–56; Maxwell 2013, 76–77). Under this policy, official maps of India were amended to display the McMahon Line in the eastern sector as established and the Aksai Chin region in the undefined western sector as part of Ladakh. The Assam Rifles, a paramilitary police regiment, were also dispatched to establish border posts along the McMahon Line, though the difficult terrain and other logistical issues largely prohibited similar efforts in the Aksai Chin region (K. Gupta 1982, 56–62; Kalha 2014, 72–73; Maxwell 2013, 79–83).

Nehru’s surreptitious efforts to absorb the disputed territories along the Sino-Indian border soon came undone. By 1958, Chinese and Indian border patrols were increasingly confronting each other and China had constructed the Xingjian-Tibet
Highway which crossed the Aksai Chin (S. Ganguly 2004, 112). When Nehru protested to Premier Zhou over the publication of ‘incorrect’ Chinese maps, Zhou responded that China and India evidently had very different perspectives on the border’s location and negotiations were needed to resolve the issue (Ambekar and Divekar 1964, 111–19). Thus, Nehru was forced to recognise that his original tactic had failed and it was necessary to adopt a different policy towards the now clearly disputed Sino-Indian border. At first Nehru was in favour in reaching some form of compromise with the Chinese over the Aksai Chin region and sought to defuse tensions by ordering the border forces to cease patrolling (K. Gupta 1982, 61–64; H. Kapur 1994, 182–83). However, Nehru quickly abandoned this policy due to several developments. First, China’s ruthless suppression of the Tibetan rebellion came as a rude shock to Nehru and the Indian leadership. Second, two lethal clashes between Indian and Chinese border forces in 1959 demonstrated China’s resolve to defend its claim with force if necessary. Finally, Mao’s polemic against Nehru generated significant anti-China sentiment and an upsurge in jingoism throughout India and destroyed any semblance of India-China friendship.

This sudden surge in the salience of the Sino-Indian border dispute within India created the first serious threat to Nehru’s position since independence, as critics both within and outside of the INC began to publicly question his leadership and policies (Edwardes 1971, 286–87; Ma 2014, 107–9). In the face of such opposition, Nehru was compelled to discard any policy of compromise with China over the disputed border. Indeed, Nehru reportedly declared in a high-level meeting held at the turn of 1959-1960 that “If I give them that [the Aksai Chin], I shall no longer be Prime Minister of India-I will not do it” (Garver 2001, 102; Kennedy 2012, 228; Maxwell 2013, 176–77). Nehru opted instead to engage in a bold status quo policy, deciding to engage in talks whilst
obstinately maintaining India’s position, agreeing only that officials from both sides
should meet to discuss the issues (Deepak 2005, 229–32; Keith 1989, 128–30).

By the end of 1961, the situation had evolved enough for Nehru to be convinced
that a mild escalation had become the optimum response. The Official’s Report,
completed in December 1960, had found that neither side could produce any definitive
evidence to support its border alignment. Yet the Ministry of External Affairs reported in
its summary to Nehru that it had established the ‘manifest correctness’ and ‘overwhelming
superiority’ of the Indian position whilst exposing the ‘intrinsic weakness’ and
inconsistencies of the Chinese argument (MEA 1961). Nehru therefore had become
convinced of the legal and moral strength of India’s claim and increasingly irate that the
Chinese would not change their position. Adopting an unyielding stance during the 1961
Officials Talks on the Sino-Indian border dispute with the Chinese also had not eased the
public uproar over China’s continued control of the Aksai Chin region (Kennedy 2012,
229; Maxwell 2013, 244–48). There were concerted efforts between 1961-1962 to secretly
negotiate a possible resolution involving a territorial swap (see for example PRC FMA
1961). However, these initiatives either foundered on certain issues or were killed by the
outcry within India owing to the public mood opposed to compromises (Kennedy 2012,
229; Ma 2014, 110).

Hence Nehru concluded that a more forceful policy was necessary to gain leverage
over China in the negotiations and counter his domestic critics’ claims that his government
was failing to act. However, an openly aggressive escalation policy was antithetical to
Nehru’s grand strategic vision of India as a non-aligned and pacific state. Nehru believed
he had found a solution in the Forward Policy which was devised and discussed at a senior
level defence meeting on 2 November 1961. In essence, the Forward Policy involved
establishing small, primarily symbolic, military posts along the border to establish an
Indian presence in the disputed territory. The logic of this policy was, as Nehru reportedly declared during the 2 November meeting, that ‘whoever succeed in establishing a post would establish a claim to that territory as possession was nine-tenths of the law’ (Dalvi 1969, 68).

In implementing this policy, Nehru believed that he had found a policy to meet all of his three key interests: maintaining his nonviolent agenda; dispelling his critics’ claims of laxity towards border defence; and bolstering India’s position on the border and thereby strengthening its negotiating position (Chung 2004, 107–8; Kennedy 2012, 229–30). Nehru was further assured of the feasibility of an escalation policy following the success of India’s seizure of Goa from Portugal in December 1961, not long after the Forward Policy had been formulated. Specifically, following the ease in which Indian forces captured Goa to only minimal international protests, Nehru and some close advisors began publicly contemplating utilising force to compel China to back down (Bandyopadhyaya 1970, 250–53; S. Ganguly and Pardesi 2009, 7; Maxwell 2013, 255–59).

Unfortunately for Nehru, and the Indian border troops, he had based his calculations on the efficacy of the Forward Policy on two erroneous premises. The first was that the Chinese would be unwilling to risk sparking a major war over the issue and would likely only react to the establishment of border posts with diplomatic protests. The second was that the Indian military was capable of operating at the high altitudes and rugged terrain despite the serious logistical obstacles and supply shortages that it faced by 1960 as a result of Nehru’s earlier policies (Dalvi 1969, 67–70; Henderson Brooks 1963, 8–10; Maxwell 2013, 248–54). Despite several signs that these assumptions were flawed, efforts to implement this policy continued unabated for nearly a year until the Chinese forces attacked and dealt a comprehensive defeat to the Indian forces.
Following the 1962 border war, India’s evident military weakness vis-à-vis China precluded any further escalation strategies. Any efforts at compromise were also precluded as India’s humiliating military defeat created a sense of shock and outrage throughout India, guaranteeing that any efforts to negotiate with China would prompt a serious backlash against the government. Moreover, Nehru himself, though retaining office, was politically weakened and personally demoralised to see his grand strategy ruined ensuring that he was in no mood to negotiate (Edwardes 1971, 311–14; Kennedy 2012, 235–36; Maxwell 2013, 500–504). Thus, the Nehru government adopted a meek status quo policy involving the effective severing of diplomatic relations with China that was maintained well after his death in 1964. Indeed, there was no significant change in Indian policy towards the border dispute until the early 1980s.

**Indira Gandhi**

Nehru was initially succeeded by Lal Bahadur Shastri, who died in 1966 after only a year and a half in office, ensuring that he had little to no impact on Sino-Indian relations during his brief term (H. Kapur 1994, 184–85; Sikri 2009, 261). However, Nehru had been clearly grooming Indira Gandhi, his only child, to play an prominent role in the INC, making her a natural selection to be the leader after Shastri’s death (Edwardes 1971, 297; Ogden 2014, 128). It also appears as though that the syndicate of Congress Party bosses, unable to select a leader from amongst themselves, chose Indira believing that, as a political novice, she would be easy to control. However, Indira proved to be a pragmatic but ruthless political operator with an authoritarian streak. After several clashes with the party bosses in 1969,

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75 In an angry retort to Zhou’s 1963 letter calling for resumed talks, Nehru repeated his demands that China accept in toto the Colombo proposals, accused China of duplicity in its dealings and took umbrage at the suggestion that he was facing political difficulties (MEA 1963b, 14–20). This was the last letter exchanged between the two heads of governments until relations had normalised 15 years later. All subsequent communications between China and India between 1963 and 1975 were conducted through usually terse and acrimonious notes exchanged between the two countries’ Foreign Services.
Indira split the INC by leaving with her supporters to form the INC (Indira). Indira stacked her new party with loyal supporters, ensuring that she was effectively without any internal challengers for her position as party leader and potential prime minister after 1969 (Maiorano 2015, 24–26).

Regarding foreign policy, Indira maintained the NAM rhetoric of self-reliance and anti-colonialism, declaring “…we [NAM countries] must reduce dependence on old metropolitan powers and the advanced countries in general, not only for goods but for ideas and methods” (Gandhi 1983, 29–30). However, under Indira, these ideas manifested themselves as autarkic and realpolitik policies instead of her father’s idealism and international coalition building efforts (S. Ganguly and Pardesi 2009, 9–10; Mansingh 1984, 19–27; Narang and Staniland 2012, 84–85). Although she was able to dominate the bureaucracy and her political party, Indira faced mounting internal unrest stemming from the growth of Hindu nationalism, rampant corruption, numerous regional insurgencies and communal rioting. These issues all destabilised Indira’s administration, often prompting her to indulge her autocratic impulses and implement repressive policies. Ultimately, these policies proved to be Indira’s downfall, not only contributing to her electoral loss to a loose coalition of opposition parties in 1977 but also proving the catalyst for her assassination in 1984 (Maiorano 2015, 207–13).

The original INC quickly withered into a minor party before finally dissolving, with most of its members joining other political parties. As such, in to avoid confusion, the INC (Indira) and its successors will continue to be referred to as the INC from here on.

Indira suffered electoral defeat in 1977 in the wake of widespread dissatisfaction with her following the imposition of the State of Emergency between 1975 and 1977. The Janata Party, led by a former original INC member and Indira’s main rival Morarji Dasai, was able to cobble together a number of opposition parties to form India’s first non-INC government. This coalition proved highly fractious, ensuring that Dasai predominantly relied on his Foreign Minister, Atal Vajpayee, to conduct foreign affairs whilst he sought to maintain his position and pursue his reforms. Though there were some tentative efforts to explore resolution options with China (see Chapter Two), the Dasai government contributed little to the Sino-Indian border dispute or foreign policy more generally and thus is not addressed here.
Beset by these internal problems, Indira was forced to prioritise policy areas not related to the Sino-Indian border dispute, compelling her to adopt *status quoist* policies towards it throughout her terms in office. In addition, Indira’s realist grand strategy ensured that she had no interest in improving Sino-Indian relations at the expense of consolidating India’s power in other areas. Hence, Indira engaged in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war over East Pakistan/Bangladesh, pursued an alliance between the Soviet Union and India and incorporated Sikkim into India in 1975 in full knowledge that they would be irritants in Sino-Indian relations (S. Ganguly 2004, 120; Mansingh 1984, 204–5). Yet Indira still clearly believed that normalising Sino-Indian relations and engaging in border talks was in India’s interest.

As the number of domestic pressures made any serious concessions untenable by the time border negotiations commenced in the 1980s, Indira was compelled to dismiss cooperation/compromise policies and adopt a hard-line position during the talks (S. Ganguly 1989, 1125–27; Kalha 2014, 190–95). Interestingly Indira sought to combine these negotiations with a mild escalation policy by launching of Operation Falcon in 1980. Operation Falcon involved deploying the Indian Army up the Indian interpretation of the McMahon Line, establishing forward posts and patrolling the disputed areas in a bid to ‘eliminate any misunderstanding’ and strengthen India’s negotiation position (Deepak 2005, 321; Kalha 2014, 199–200; H. Kapur 1994, 196). Nonetheless, Indira mostly followed a *status quo* policy and remained committed to continuing negotiations. Indeed, shortly before her assassination, there were several reports that Indira was exploring alternative solutions via backchannels, hinting that she was in favour of compromise policy once she felt the domestic situation had stabilised (B. M. Jain 2008, 138–39; H. Kapur 1994, 191–92).
Despite his linage, Rajiv Gandhi was a relative newcomer to Indian politics, only groomed as a political successor of his mother after his more ambitious younger brother Sanjay died in an aeroplane crash in 1980. Rapidly promoted through the ranks to become President of the INC, Rajiv was the obvious choice after the assassination of his mother in October 1984. Rajiv promptly won office in his own right, leading the INC to a landslide victory in the December 1984 elections (Deepak 2005, 316–17; H. Kapur 1994, 193). In part because of this origin, Rajiv was a pragmatist by nature and seemingly lacked any serious ideological convictions beyond his pursuit of the technological modernisation of India (Garewal 2012; Ogden 2014, 143). Rajiv’s relatively late entry into politics meant that he was effectively constrained in his pursuit of domestic policy by more senior, and often rapacious, INC ministers. Yet, Rajiv was able to consolidate near complete personal control over the less lucrative foreign policy, allowing him to pursue an active engagement with the world at will (H. Kapur 1994, 193–95; Narang and Staniland 2012, 86).

At first, Rajiv paid little attention and showed no initiative in the ongoing negotiations over the Sino-Indian border dispute. Instead Rajiv evidently perceived that a more beneficial foreign policy lay with reinvigorating India’s relations with the USA and USSR as well as seeking to boost India’s global profile (B. M. Jain 2008, 28–29; H. Kapur 1994, 196). However, this status quoist policy changed in the face of the 1986 Sumdorong Chu Valley incident when Chinese and Indian forces began to confront each other over a disputed section of the eastern sector. Rajiv’s initial response the Chinese takeover of the Indian observation post was to escalate by dispatching a large number of soldiers to the border after military officers persuaded him that a decisive show of force was necessary. The subsequent troop surge in the region did successfully prevent any further Chinese consolidation. Yet this escalation resulted in the sharp rise of cross border tensions to the

By 1988, Rajiv had decided that change in policy was necessary and opted to deescalate the tensions by exploring what concessions were acceptable to both sides. This change in the Rajiv Gandhi government’s stance towards the Sino-Indian border dispute from a policy of mild escalation to a policy of mild cooperation/compromise was likely based on several factors. By the end of the 1980s, Rajiv was under heavy criticism for his frequent taxpayer-funded trips abroad which brought few tangible benefits (Deepak 2005, 328). This waste of resources fed into the growing public outrage over the numerous financial and corruption scandals under Rajiv’s tenure. The most dramatic of these was the Bofors scandal, which saw multiple government officials accepting kickbacks from a Swedish arms manufacturer to secure a contract to supply howitzer artillery to the Indian Army (H. Kapur 1994, 196; Maiorano 2015, 210). The Bofors scandal was only exposed in mid-1987, ensuring Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his Ministers faced increasing public outrage and pressure over their conduct.

Thus Rajiv calculated that unless the Sino-Indian border crisis precipitated by the 1986 Sumdorong Chu Valley incident was dealt with soon, it could become another controversial issue for his scandal-prone government before the 1989 general elections. This meant, though, that in order to get some results, Rajiv had to move away from his confrontational policy vis-à-vis the Sino-Indian border dispute. Further escalation policies were recognised as untenable due to their low probability of success. Offering some form of territorial concession was also unacceptable, as it would likely prompt further backlash against the government owing to the salience that the Sino-Indian border dispute had amongst the Indian electorate. Rajiv therefore decided that reinstating the status quo along the Sino-Indian border would not only reduce bilateral tensions but also offer the best
chance to achieve a major foreign policy success needed to help bolster his flagging domestic popularity and legitimacy (S. Ganguly 1989, 1132).

Thus, Rajiv personally visited China between 19-24 December 1988, declaring that he had come to ‘restore an old friendship’ and put Sino-Indian relations back on the track of ‘good neighbourliness’ (Deepak 2005, 329–30; Kalha 2014, 206). In order to convince the Chinese to agree to the de-escalation policy and return to the status quo, Rajiv offered two key political concessions. Firstly, Rajiv dropped India’s demand that the Sino-Indian border dispute be resolved before bilateral relations could be further developed. Secondly, Rajiv reaffirmed that Tibet was part of China and officially admitted for the first time that some Tibetan émigrés based in India had been conducting anti-Chinese operations in the past (S. Ganguly 2004, 122; Acharya 2011, 163). This policy did succeed in re-establishing the status quo but ultimately failed to prevent the Rajiv government’s defeat in the 1989 elections. However, it did revitalise the Sino-Indian border negotiations process while opening the way for increased mutually beneficial bilateral trade and investment.

*The minority governments: 1989-2014*

Following the fall of Rajiv Gandhi’s government, a number of unstable minority governments were formed between 1989 and 2014, some lasting mere weeks whilst others managed to complete the full five-year term in office. Needless to say, this volatility in the political landscape fundamentally altered the priorities of Indian Prime Ministers of the period. The INC’s dominance over the Indian political system was well and truly broken, allowing regional and Hindu nationalist parties to gain increasing political prominence in national politics. This ultimately resulted in most Indian Prime Ministers during this period becoming fixated on balancing their coalition partners’ parochial
demands and their own party platform, leaving little time or incentive for foreign policy initiatives (Chiriyankandath 2004, 202–3; Narang and Staniland 2012, 86–87).

Narasimaha Rao was the first notable Prime Minister of this period, rising to the head of the INC after Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated during the 1991 Parliamentary election campaign (Deepak 2005, 339; J. Singh 2007, 96). Though Rao managed to establish a minority government, additional difficulties quickly arose in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the European communist bloc. This sudden shift in the geopolitical environment simultaneously deprived India of both its key ally and market whilst making India’s longstanding NAM policy redundant (Chiriyankandath 2004, 201; Dixit 2004, 236–47; S. Ganguly and Pardesi 2009, 11–13). Rao responded to this turbulence with comprehensive economic liberalisation reforms and quietly discarding out-dated foreign policies, such as the NAM, and instead pursued narrower strategic objectives.

The most notable of Rao’s foreign policy initiatives was the ‘Look East’ policy that shifted India’s focus beyond South Asia to engage economically and strategically with Southeast Asian countries that it had previously largely neglected (Malik 1995, 138–39; Sikri 2009, 113–14). Though ostensibly these reforms could have provided the impetus necessary for a breakthrough in the Sino-Indian border dispute, there was little practical change to India’s stance (S. Ganguly and Pardesi 2009, 14). Whilst keen to remove any points of contention in the Sino-Indian bilateral relationship, Rao was constrained in his options by the necessity to hold his minority government together within the atmosphere of general distrust most of the Indian electorate felt towards China.

These domestic pressures, coupled with his cautious and occasionally vacillating temperament, ensured that Rao considered any compromise over the Sino-Indian border to be politically infeasible (B. M. Jain 2008, 32). Nonetheless, Rao’s reformist agenda
drove him to pursue a more constructive relationship with China ensuring that escalation strategies were equally infeasible. Hence, Rao decided to embrace the status quo and continue the process of neutralising the Sino-Indian border dispute as an issue by signing the 1993 ‘Agreement on Maintaining Peace and Tranquillity’ (Malik 1995, 121; Menon 2016, 18–19). Though Rao’s government ultimately fell in the 1996 elections, he effectively set the diplomatic agenda that was followed by the other minority governments throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the next notable Prime Minister of this period. Vajpayee had long been a leading figure in the main opposition party, the Hindu nationalist BJP, and had briefly been Prime Minister in 1996. Following the 1998 elections Vajpayee finally managed to forge an unwieldy coalition known as the ‘National Democratic Alliance’ (NDA). Having finally secured the Prime Ministership, Vajpayee thus began to implement several policies of BJP’s longstanding agenda. The most notable of these policies was the overt testing of Indian nuclear weapons in May 1998 to demonstrate its capabilities (Chiriyankandath 2004, 203–6; S. Ganguly and Pardesi 2009, 14–16). Needless to say, this policy was widely considered by security pundits ideologically cathartic but unnecessarily provocative to the international community (Garver 2016, 743–46; Ogden 2014, 122–23; Pant 2016, 213–16).

In response to the Indian nuclear weapons test, the international community roundly criticised India, passing Security Council resolution 1172 calling for a cessation of nuclear weapons tests in South Asia with several states, most significantly the USA, also imposing economic sanctions (Deepak 2005, 376–77; B. M. Jain 2008, 140–41).

78 The BJP had been formed in 1980 in the aftermath of the Janata Party’s collapse, which itself had been result of the fusing of several Hindu nationalist parties and Congress defectors. Vajpayee had been a long-term member of several of these various Hindu nationalist parties and was in the Cabinet of the Janata Government. The ideology of BJP and the Hindu nationalists is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.
Matters were not helped when Vajpayee’s letter to US President Bill Clinton was leaked, in which he obliquely cited the threat from China as a justification for testing India’s nuclear weapons. An irate China promptly cancelled the scheduled border talks in protest over the tests and the insinuation that it was enough of a threat to justify Indian nuclearization (Acharya 2011, 164; Fang 2002, 166; Garver 2001, 336–39).

Nonetheless, Prime Minister Vajpayee saw no benefit in aggravating the situation further. He was aware that full-fledged animosity and hostility with China would create numerous difficulties in implementing his government’s domestic agenda of expanding India’s infrastructure and economic development. Vajpayee therefore sought to repair the damage with China, discarding any further escalatory policies vis-à-vis the disputed Sino-Indian border and initiating several high profile meetings with the Chinese government to reassure Beijing that India did not perceive China as a strategic threat (Guruswamy and Singh 2009, 99–101; Pant 2011, 234–35; J. Singh 2007, 154–56). However, the NDA’s tenuous hold on power, reliant on several regional and far right parties disinclined to compromises, ensured that any significant form of concession to China was also politically untenable. Thus, the only approach left for Vajpayee was to embrace the status quo policy, albeit by efforts to reinvigorate the Sino-Indian border negotiations. During Vajpayee’s visit to China in 2003, India also agreed to the establishment of the Special Representative Meetings (SRMs) to design an ‘agreed framework’ for border resolution (Acharya 2011, 166–67; Smith 2014, 36–38).

Manmohan Singh was the final Prime Minister of note during this period, forming the long-lived but scandal plagued United Progressive Alliance (UPA) coalition government between 2004 and 2014. Though an experienced former Finance Minister having served in Rao’s administration, Singh led the UPA government only at the
discretion of the INC leader, Sonia Gandhi.\textsuperscript{79} This factor coupled with his mild temperament and evident unease with policy areas beyond economics ensured that his position was even weaker than most of his predecessors (B. M. Jain 2008, 36; Price 2015, 76–77). Nonetheless, Singh sought to implement a remarkably clear grand strategy of turning India into an emerging economic power by accelerating the economic liberalisation reforms whilst maintaining India’s ‘strategic autonomy’ (Narang and Staniland 2012, 88–89; Ogden 2014, 60). This grand strategy plus Singh’s tenuous grip on power encouraged little to no initiative, let alone compromises, towards the Sino-Indian border dispute (Sikri 2009, 94).

However, tensions over the Sino-Indian border dispute began to flare up in 2006 as China engaged in more aggressive patrolling as part of President Hu Jintao’s strategy to keep India ‘sober and cautious’. As a result, Singh started feeling pressure from public opinion and key advisors to engage in a more combative stance. Singh responded by authorising the construction of a number of roads along the border and increased troop deployment along the border for the first time in decades to address India’s inferior military position (Z. D. Singh 2011, 90–92; Smith 2014, 39–42). However, Singh shied away from engaging in an outright escalatory policy, realising that such policies were unlikely to succeed owing to China’s superior position. With Singh forced to discard compromise policies and unwilling to engage in escalation, he decided that the optimum approach towards the border issue was to retain the proactive status quo policy of engaging China diplomatically but offering no territorial concessions. Hence, under Singh, the SRMs become an annual event and the tensions were eventually defused in

\textsuperscript{79} The Italian-born widow of Rajiv Gandhi and current matriarch of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. As a foreigner, it was widely considered that her accession to the office of Prime Minister would have been too controversial and her son, Raul Gandhi, was too young and inexperienced to take the office at the time. Unable to realistically put a Gandhi forward as the Prime Minister, Sonia was content to remain the power behind the throne and let Singh govern until Raul was old enough to take charge.
2012 and 2013 with the signing of two agreements intended to strengthen the management mechanisms along the disputed border.

*Narendra Modi*

Narendra Modi was swept into power in May 2014 at the head of the first government to win an outright majority in the Lok Sabha since Rajiv Gandhi’s government was elected in 1984. Tapping into the national mood for change, Modi largely ran on a policy of tackling corruption and promoting rapid economic development based upon his experience as the Chief Minister of Gujarat80 (Hall 2015, 247; Price 2015, 35–50). Since taking office, Modi has rapidly consolidated power to become India’s most dominant and secure Prime Minister since Nehru in the 1950s. Any potential rivals of Modi in the BJP have been either been transformed into loyal lieutenants or cowed by his dominant performance, allowing him to rise precipitously above the rest of his cabinet (Chandra 2016; Pant 2014).

Reflecting the national election, the BJP has secured dominant spots in regional elections held in 2015 and 2016, with no other political party able to mount a coherent challenge (Ramachandran 2015).81 Though his agenda for India is predominately domestic, Modi has sought to marry his signature ‘Make in India’ campaign, designed to boost India’s manufacturing sector, with a proactive extra-regional engagement. It is also evident that Modi envisions India as a rising great power and has therefore been engaging in pragmatic steps to bolster the country’s military and prestige. The most notable efforts towards these goals have been Modi’s moves to revitalise the ‘look east’ policy into a

80 Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat between 2001 and 2014, gaining widespread support due to his far-reaching and successful economic reforms but notoriety because of his alleged complicity in or negligence towards the 2002 communal riots.

81 The INC appears to be in a terminal decline from its once prominent position while other political parties have had difficulty gaining traction beyond their regional or class/caste bases.
more proactive engagement known as ‘act east’ and the significant increase in weapons and equipment procurement for the Indian Armed Forces (Pant 2015; Tandon 2016, 349–50; Virmani 2014).

Initially there was hope that Modi’s strong domestic position and economic focus might provide the necessary conditions for a breakthrough on resolving the Sino-Indian border dispute. Indeed Modi himself emphasised the importance of a resolution by stating that “a little toothache can paralyse the whole body” in response to the 2014 Sino-Indian border confrontations during Xi Jinping’s state visit (TNN 2014c). There was also much speculation that some form of deal was due to be announced during Modi’s 2015 state visit to China after his Foreign Minister, Sushma Swaraj, hinted in a preparatory visit that an ‘out of the box solution’ could be in the works (Chaulia 2015; Dasgupta 2015a). Yet, it appears Modi decided to maintain the status quo approach; seemingly offering no concessions or otherwise seeking to compromise with China. Instead Modi simply reiterated India’s commitment to achieving a ‘fair deal’ whilst demanding that China ‘reconsider its approach’ (Raghuvsanshi 2015; Varadarajan 2015). Since Modi’s visit, there has been no significant change in policy regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute. Thus, despite earlier rhetoric, Modi appears to have decided to let the issue lie fallow and retain the status quo policy of engaging in annual SRMs whilst Indian border forces stand their ground.

One possible exception to this has been the Doklam standoff in which Indian soldiers crossed into territory disputed by Bhutan and China to prevent the PLA from constructing a road (Fravel 2017; Lau 2017; Panda 2017a). Yet, Modi has had little motivation to pursue escalatory strategies making it unlikely that he instigated this standoff to further any of his own interests. Though Modi continues to face pressure from nationalist segments to maintain an unyielding stance in the face of frequent border
confrontations, his personal popularity ensures that there is no visible threat to his position. In addition, any escalatory strategies would likely only detract from Modi’s prioritised economic policies. Indeed, Modi did not seek to capitalise on the standoff or even publicly comment on it, save for a passing mention in a speech in October after the resolution had been negotiated. Modi also apparently sought to deescalate tensions, engaging in negotiations behind the scenes and signalling to China that India would be satisfied with a return to the status quo ante (Mitra 2017; Smith 2017). Thus, it is much more likely that overzealous officers seeking to check a PLA operation, rather than a deliberate escalatory policy devised by Modi, was the cause of the Doklam standoff.

Whilst Modi’s first three years in office does represent something of missed opportunity for a breakthrough, polihueristic choice theory reveals the logic of his calculus. Modi clearly views strong border defence as pivotal to his great power vision of India, ensuring that any significant concessions would be contrary to his grand strategy. Furthermore Modi has been able to secure significant trade deals with China and maintains a general sense of bonhomie in the formal Sino-Indian bilateral relations, removing any impetus to pursue an imminent resolution of the border dispute (Pant 2015; TNN 2014d). Hence Modi has maintained the previous Singh government’s policy, albeit with more zeal, of seeking to match the Chinese forces via improving the infrastructure and troop presence whilst simultaneously maintaining diplomatic and economic links (P. Gupta 2016; Patranabis 2016; PTI 2016b).

**Concluding remarks**

According to Shivshankar Menon, India’s former National Security Advisor and representative during the Sino-Indian border negotiations, “all the technical work has been done and it is for the leaders of both countries to make a call” (PTI 2014, 2016a). However,
as polihueristic choice theory shows, it has proven difficult for leaders’ interests to align so that they could agree to make the necessary but likely unpopular compromises implicit within this call. Even when one leader considers it within his/her interests to seek a compromise in order to resolve the Sino-Indian border dispute, it has often been in his/her counterpart’s interest to take a harder stance. Obviously, it is not impossible for such a confluence of interests to occur. Nonetheless, the recent efforts by both sides to neutralise the Sino-Indian border dispute as an issue in the face of their inability to agree on an acceptable compromise have further removed incentives for a resolution.

It is important to note that while the chief executives do have significant agency in making policy decisions based upon their interests and perspectives, they do not make their decisions in situations entirely of their own making. Various actors, namely political parties and state bureaucracies, seek to influence the leader’s policy decision and have some sway over its implementation. The broader geopolitical situation often also further limits the options available to a leader. As these two constraining factors play such a prominent causal role in the intractability of the Sino-Indian border dispute, they will be investigated in detail within the next two chapters.
Chapter Four:
The Second Level of Analysis: Interests of the Domestic Governing Institutions and the Sino-Indian Border Dispute
Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that in formulating state policy towards an interstate border dispute, such as the Sino-Indian border dispute, the state’s chief executive has a significant degree of agency. Yet, in exercising their agency and making policy choices, the state leader is usually constrained or influenced by domestic governing institutions that act as institutional pressure groups in the policymaking process. In this Chapter, I explore how these governing institutions shape their state’s response to interstate border disputes through the provision of information or professional advice during policy deliberations and/or by controlling the means of implementing the decision. Specifically, I argue that these governing institutions are not simply passive tools or agents for the chief executive, but rather they seek to influence the policy decision to maximise their own parochial interests (Halperin 1971, 90; Kunz and Saltzman 2012, 104; Reichwein 2012, 43–44). The specific interests of the governing institutions vary depending on their mission and organisational culture. Nonetheless, all domestic governing institutions seek to maximise their influence over the decision maker so as to maintain their autonomy and retain or expand their operational capacities (Halperin and Clapp 2006, 25–26).

Concerning interstate border disputes, there are three main governing institutions that affect policymaking: the governing political party; the civilian bureaucracy; and the military. The Ministers, civilian officials and military officers working in these institutions are usually tasked with formulating and presenting policy to the chief executive and overseeing policy implementation once a decision has been made (Lobell 2009, 56–57; Reichwein 2012, 44; Ripsman 2009, 171). Thus, the institutions that these officials represent often seek to lobby for a policy that bests suits their interests, especially if it allows them to secure their autonomy or gain further resources. Generally, this means that governing institutions are unwilling to pursue the more adventurous or controversial
policies involved in compromise or escalation strategies. This is not to say that some institutions may be inclined towards policies such as accepting territorial adjustments or seizing and holding the disputed land by force. However, other priorities and the competition between the governing institutions over state resources often compels them to accept the lower-risk status quoist policies towards interstate border disputes.

To illustrate the logic behind this state of affairs, and how it manifests itself in the case of the Sino-Indian border dispute, this chapter is organised as follows. The first section outlines the governmental politics model of policy making and implementation to explain how various governing institutions pursue their interests and constrain or influence the top leader and his/her government’s policy decisions and policies implementation. Although similar institutions are involved in the formulation of border policy in both China and India, the two countries have fundamentally different regime structures and thus the various institutions’ influence on border policy operates differently. Hence, the second section outlines the government policymaking process in China and India before identifying how various governing institutions have exerted influence over policymaking and implementation. In applying the governmental politics model to China and India, it becomes apparent how the machinations and competition between domestic governing institutions within the two states creates an environment that encourages maintaining the status quo towards the Sino-Indian border dispute, thereby ensuring its intractability.

**Governmental politics model of foreign policy formation and implementation**

When neoclassical realist scholars seek to open the ‘black box’ of the state, it quickly becomes apparent that governments are not monolithic entities or even the purview of the chief executive. Instead, states are more accurately described as being a constellation of different semi-autonomous fiefdoms vying for power and influence over policy in
numerous meetings at various administrative levels (Cantir and Kaarbo 2012; Hilsman 1993, 60–61; Reichwein 2012). One of the most influential theoretical approaches developed for understanding how government policy is made is the ‘governmental politics model’, also known as the ‘bureaucratic politics model’. This model was first outlined by Graham Allison (Allison 1969; Allison and Halperin 1972; Allison and Zelikow 1999) but has since been expanded and been refined by other scholars (see Drezner 2000; Halperin and Clapp 2006; Hilsman 1993; Sagan 1996; Welch 1992). Initially, the governmental politics model was developed to discuss US foreign policy and has been predominantly used to explore this topic. Nonetheless, scholars agree that the same logic also applies to other states from both democratic and autocratic political systems (Allison and Zelikow 1999, 256; Hilsman 1993, 60–63).

The governmental politics model argues that foreign policy is made in three distinct phases. In the first ‘pre-decision’ phase, the various interested institutions seek to gather or disseminate information about the situation and make assessments as to what, if any, threats to their interest exist or how they can benefit from it (Allison 1969, 709–10; Saunders and Scobell 2015, 10–12). In the second ‘decision games’ phase, the various interested institutions indulge in bargaining interactions in order to maximise their own institution’s interests by influencing the chief executive’s choice of policy of policy (Holland 1999, 220–21; Redd and Mintz 2013, 22–23). In the final ‘action games’ phase, those institutions assigned to implement the government policy decide how best to carry out the decision. During this phase, the institutions in question may decide to ignore, reinterpret or otherwise skew a non-specific policy directive should they believe it to be in their institution’s interest (Allison and Zelikow 1999, 303–4; Hilsman 1993, 62).
The governing institutions and their interests

The players usually involved in government policymaking are those state officials who represent a specific governing institution and have the ability to affect the outcome of the policy decision, typically with the aim to maximise their institution’s interests (Allison and Zelikow 1999, 272–73). A governing institution’s primary interest is to acquire and maintain the capabilities and resources required to carry out its mission. Of course, not all governing institutions and their representatives are equally important in every policy making area; their influence may even wax and wane depending on the situation (Hilsman 1993, 86). Even when there exists a strong chief executive who dominates the decision making process, government policies or behaviour is still basically the result of interactions between a number of institutions representing different sections of the state (Halperin and Clapp 2006, 16; Holland 1999, 221–22).

Officials representing a specific governing institution are able to make an impact on government policymaking through one of the state’s ‘action channels’ (Allison 1969, 710). Action channels are defined as a regularised process of taking government action which works in two directions: top-down and bottom-up. The top-down process involves political leaders and senior officials issuing policy directives to be implemented down the channel by various departments and their officials. The bottom-up process involves the various departments and junior officials seeking to influence the policy decision or how it should be implemented. Action channels are therefore comprised of those institutions and departments that have the capability and resources to implement or obstruct a policy decision, or are able to otherwise influence the policy (Allison and Zelikow 1999, 300–301; Sagan 1996, 63–64).
Regarding interstate border disputes, there are typically multiple governing institutions across different action channels seeking to influence the decision or at least resisting any encroachment onto their jurisdictional turf. In order to identify the salient institutions and what their stance on a particular policy will be, the governmental politics model uses the maxim: ‘where you stand depends upon where you sit’. In other words, officials’ stance on any given policy will most likely be shaped by their place within the state hierarchy and their institution’s core mission and wider interests (Allison and Zelikow 1999, 307; Hilsman 1993, 61). The hierarchy of institutions within the state is best conceptualised as forming concentric circles of influence around the state leader.

The central circle consists of the senior officials or ‘chiefs’ who occupy critical posts in the state’s administration or have otherwise close proximity to the chief executive. Since these senior officials represent different key governing institutions and power centres within the state’s administration, their advice and interests cannot be ignored by the chief executive, or each other, without consequence. Hence, for a policy to be adopted by government, there must be consensus or at least acquiescence amongst these central circle members (Hilsman 1993, 87–88; Holland 1999, 221).

Beyond this central circle are further circles comprised of lower ranking or junior officials who may seek to shape policy decisions by influencing senior officials within their institutions. These junior officials, such as heads of specific departments or specialists, often have expert knowledge in the area where policy is being debated and may assist senior officials in drafting their institution’s response to the issue at hand. Other ‘ad hoc players’ such as members of the legislature, leaders of key interest groups and media representatives may occasionally become part of the wider circle of the decision making process depending on the issues, situation and their particular interests (Allison 1969, 709; Allison and Halperin 1972, 47).
Whereas state officials could be driven by interests such as personal advancement or national security when considering a policy, their position is much more likely to be conditioned by the governing institution that they represent (Allison and Zelikow 1999, 307; Holland 1999, 221). Additionally, career civil servants often consider the health of their institution to be vital to both the national interest and their own personal interests. Consequently officials seek to champion their institutional interests whenever policy is being decided upon (Allison and Halperin 1972, 48; Halperin 1971, 73). There are effectively two types of governing institutions in the governmental politics model: state bureaucracies and political parties. State bureaucracies are professionalised hierarchical institutions which operate in accordance to regulations or standard procedures that have been established so their members can perform the required functions to fulfil the institution’s mission (Allison and Zelikow 1999, 143–46; Hilsman 1993, 205–6). Political parties are organisations formed around some basic understandings of how to politically, socially and economically structure the state which they seek to implement by acquiring and exercising executive and legislative power (Merle 1978, 74).

A state bureaucracy’s mission, whether it is civilian or military, is to draft policy proposals and oversee policy implementation in the specific area or areas that it was established to administer. This mission can be focused domestically (such as the Treasury department’s budget management) internationally (such as the military’s efforts to deter external attacks on the state) or some mix of the two (such as customs and border guards’ monitoring of the state’s frontier or various intelligence agencies gathering of information) (Halperin 1971, 75). In order to fulfil its specific mission, a state bureaucracy must acquire influence to maintain or improve its capabilities to deliver outcomes (Halperin and Clapp 2006, 25–26). In vital policy areas, a single bureaucracy rarely has a monopoly, with policy responses instead debated between several ‘stakeholder’ bureaucracies.
When it comes to formulating and implementing policy for an interstate border dispute, several government bureaucracies could be important stakeholders: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Finance, and several national security bureaucracies such as the intelligence agencies, the army, border security and so on. These institutions are required to work in conjunction with each other in order to produce the desired policy outcomes (Drezner 2000, 735). However, this process often generates major overlaps of roles of the various institutions. Consequently, this generates competition between different institutions over the allocation of the finite resources of the state and jurisdictional control necessary to implement policy decisions (Halperin and Clapp 2006, 40–48).

Beyond the struggle to secure capacities to accomplish their missions, the institution’s positions towards policies are also shaped by its organisational culture or ‘essence’. Organisational culture refers a set of established beliefs that members generally hold about what their institution’s primary role is or should be (Allison and Zelikow 1999, 153–54; Halperin 1971, 78). Thus, bureaucrats representing an institution will typically fight hard to resist any other organisation infringing upon these core jurisdictions. Additionally, institutional bureaucracies will strive to maintain their autonomy over their own internal affairs so as to protect those aspects that they consider vital to their mission (Drezner 2000, 735–36). Thus, officials often accept aspects of a policy that are in line with the institution’s self-identity, whilst remaining indifferent over those aspects it has been tasked to implement but considers unessential. For example, an air force will typically consider air combat to be its main role and will therefore advocate policies such as bombing campaigns, but remain unenthusiastic about providing logistical support or transportation for the army (Halperin and Clapp 2006, 38–40; Redd and Mintz 2013, 23–24).
In sum, the combination of the bureaucracy’s mission and its organisation culture ensures that they resist any effort to dilute or remove resources and are ambivalent to the policy areas they do not consider vital to their mission (Halperin and Clapp 2006, 38–39). Concerning interstate border disputes, these interests generally ensure most governing bureaucracies will support a status quo policy. This is in large part because few bureaucracies consider the border an essential part of their mission and therefore are sceptical of pursuing risky compromise or escalation strategies. Additionally, the sheer number of governmental bureaucracies who are stakeholders in the foreign policy decisions may result in conflicting policy positions (Drezner 2000, 735–36). For instance, whilst most bureaucracies may be ambivalent to the exact stance their state takes towards a border dispute, the state’s military and diplomatic corps will often take contrary positions. The military typically considers it part of their mission to protect the territorial integrity of their state and often opposes compromise solutions involving territorial concessions. In contrast, the state’s diplomatic corps considers its mission to represent their state abroad and typically favours finding a territorial compromise, often leading to robust policy deliberations (Halperin and Clapp 2006, 58).

In contrast to state bureaucracies, a governing political party’s main interest, whether in an authoritarian or a democratic political system, is to remain in power so that it can implement its vision of how to govern the state. As such, the governing political party acts as both a medium through which public opinion can reach the state elites and state elites communicate with the public (Merle 1978, 74–75; Ripsman 2009, 181–83). As such, governing political parties are generally unwilling to pursue controversial policies towards an interstate border dispute lest it destabilise their hold on power. Foreign policy, especially towards interstate border disputes, is typically considered to be a niche domain that generates little public interest, ensuring there is little incentive for political parties to
focus on the issues (Drezner 2000, 735; Merle 1978, 76–80). Nonetheless, governing political parties have to remain vigilant that a particular policy does not generate too much controversy and public anger. Thus, unpopular policy options such as territorial concessions or war are generally resisted, with the governing political party preferring to maintain the status quo and focus on other areas where it can win domestic support.

Governing political parties try to control the policy process and reduce the backlash from any unpopular or controversial foreign policy decisions in two key ways: by inserting political appointees into policy debates and by influencing public opinion. Political appointees, sometimes referred to as ‘in-and-outers’, are those officials who are appointed to an executive role owing to their allegiance or usefulness to the governing political party. Though they typically have some competency in whichever role they have been appointed to, their party loyalty ensures that they consider it their primary mission to advance the party’s position rather than their assigned institution’s during policy debates (Halperin and Clapp 2006, 89; Hilsman 1993, 166–75).

Regarding public opinion, governing political parties are unlikely to support policies that are highly controversial or unpopular with the public lest the backlash destabilise their hold on power. Though the general public seldom demonstrates much interest in foreign policy, public anger and backlash towards the government may result from controversial decisions, such as major territorial concessions in order to resolve an interstate border dispute. As governing political parties act as a medium between the public and the governing elite, they may try to explain the government’s thinking and policy to the public and help develop public opinion favourable towards the government and its preferred policy. Alternatively, the governing political party may also convey to the state leader and other elites how a particular policy is likely to be received by the
public to try to shift their stance to align with public sentiments (Fewsmith and Rosen 2001, 153–55; Risse-Kappen 1991, 482–83).

The decision game

Government decision-making regarding any policy, including interstate border disputes, is largely conducted by the central circle players, though lower circle officials can play a pivotal role in certain circumstances. The aim of the decision-making process is to determine what policy towards any given issue should be adopted and which action channel it should be implemented through. Yet, before the relevant officials can deliberate a policy decision, they first need to determine what their stance is. The first and foremost determinant of a relevant official’s stance is the position he/she holds within the state apparatus. Typically, the higher up within the institutional and state hierarchy the relevant official is, the more different perspectives on an issue that he/she is exposed to (Allison 1969, 711; Holland 1999, 221). These perspectives help the official to calculate, consciously or not, how the various policy permutations will affect his/her institution’s interests and what policies are likely to produce results. In other words, the official’s position will help him/her identify what is at stake when deciding to support or oppose certain policies (Allison and Halperin 1972, 48–50; Allison and Zelikow 1999, 299–300).

An official’s stance is also informed by his/her professional background, which has conditioned his/her thought processes and priorities. Career officials, such as soldiers or civil servants, tend to exhibit ‘grooved thinking’ towards addressing a problem, perceiving the issue through the lens of their institution’s standard operating procedures and their professional training. Thus, when it comes to deliberating on interstate border disputes, career officials tend to simply adopt their institution’s preferred policy stance towards it. In contrast, party appointees or representatives from ‘missionary’ institutions
that have become dedicated to a singular goal will likely exhibit ideologically informed thinking, viewing the problem through one particular doctrine or value set (Drezner 2000, 735–36; Halperin and Clapp 2006, 22–23). When these more ideologically motivated officials consider interstate border disputes, they are more likely to take a contrarian stance. As such, these officials would be more inclined to accept controversial policies such as territorial compromises or a show of force if compatible with their institution’s vision. These differences of approach may reinforce the sentiment amongst the central circle officials that the others are simply ‘do not see my problem’ or that ‘the others need to look at the problem from a less parochial position’ (Allison and Zelikow 1999, 303).

Once the various officials have determined their stance, they engage in the decision-making game in earnest. The aim of this process is for the various officials to convince other officials and the chief executive of the benefits of their preferred policy, or at least obstruct any policy options that negatively impact their institution’s interests. In order to do so, all players must engage in bargaining and coalition building amongst themselves in order to maximise their influence over policy direction (Allison and Halperin 1972, 50–51; Hilsman 1993, 87; Redd and Mintz 2013, 22–23). Of course, these policy deliberations seldom proceed randomly or necessarily involve all relevant officials. Typically a state would have a number of unique written rules, unspoken understandings and shared values governing who should be consulted and how to guide the deliberations (Allison and Zelikow 1999, 302; Halperin and Clapp 2006, 105).

In addition, interstate border policy deliberations are rarely made in isolation from other areas, with numerous different policy deliberations often occurring simultaneously within the state (Allison 1969, 710). Hence, officials must be wary of where they seek to invest their political capital, or the finite resources that each official can use to impact the policy decision. The rewards for successful investment, namely increased reputation and
influence over the outcomes, typically encourage most officials to participate actively in the policy deliberations. However, unsuccessful investment can diminish an official’s influence and the resources available to his/her institution. Repeated underperformance by an official can lead to his/her demotion or potentially the restructuring of his/her institution if it is also seen as ineffective. Hence, officials must be careful in their selection of policy fights, only choosing the policy debates that they believe they can win (Allison 1969, 710; Allison and Zelikow 1999, 300).

Regarding interstate border dispute policy, these deliberations often have a mollifying effect on any enthusiasm for the more adventurous compromise or escalation policies. Civilian officials and political appointees in particular are usually reluctant to embrace suggested territorial concessions or aggressive moves to acquire territory, fearing that they and their institution could become a scapegoat should the policy fail. For military officials, their institution’s mission typically makes them reluctant to accept any compromise proposals, believing such policies contrary to the national security. Yet, most officers are reluctant to openly endorse major escalatory options, aware that failed operations often result in a collapse of soldiers’ morale and likely a loss of valuable equipment and personnel. Additionally, all officials contemplating supporting an adventurous policy are aware that, should it fail, their institutions would likely lose influence and capacities as resources are diverted to other institutions in its aftermath. In light of such concerns, the various officials are likely to want to seek safer or more conservative policies, preferring to use their political capital to influence policies of more importance to their institution (Allison and Halperin 1972, 48; Drezner 2000, 734-36). Thus, senior officials tend to default to policies that uphold the status quo.

Yet, the status quo approach still leaves open a wide range of potential policies, ranging from maintaining soldiers in the disputed territory to continuing negotiations
without a change of stance to pursuing confidence building measures. The ability an official has to try to influence his/her counterparts towards his/her preferred interstate border dispute policy depends upon three primary components: the official’s bargaining position; the official’s own personal reputation and negotiation skill; and the clout of the official’s institution, both with the chief executive and with other officials. An official’s bargaining position can come in many forms: their formal position in the state’s hierarchy; their institution’s control over the resources necessary to implement policy; their institution’s ability to impact other key policy agendas; and their control over the information available to the chief executive and other officials\(^\text{82}\) (Allison and Halperin 1972, 50; Allison and Zelikow 1999, 300).

Policy deliberations are heavily influenced by officials’ personal abilities, priorities and resolve. These personal attributes affect what the official can or is willing to do to influence the policy decision (Allison 1969, 709–10; Welch 1992, 121–22). An official and his/her institution’s reputation is based upon a track record of effectiveness, specifically at delivering outcomes. This ultimately determines how other seriously the chief executive and the other officials will take their policy proposals (Allison and Halperin 1972, 50; Halperin and Clapp 2006, 89–91). For officials, the art of the decision game is to bring to bear these three elements to outmanoeuvre rival policy positions during the deliberations without overcommitting their institution (Allison 1969, 710; Redd and Mintz 2013, 23).

\(^{\text{82}}\) The manipulation of information by players can take many forms ranging from reporting only information that supports their position to outright distortion of the facts (Halperin and Clapp 2006, 141–76). Welch (1992, 138–39) notes that misinformation may even be unconsciously produced as officials from the various organisations tend to use language or terminology specific to their institution that is not necessarily understood by outsiders.
Once a decision as to what policy and through what action channel it should be implemented has been reached, the implementation or ‘action game’ begins. During this stage, a new round of political manoeuvres begins as the lower circle officials in the governing institutions tasked with implementing the decision seek to imprint the policy with their own stamp (Allison and Zelikow 1999, 306–8). In this effort, lower circle officials are often helped by the fact that policy directives often lack the specifics regarding its implementation. This is because the top decision makers, including the chief executive, are often ignorant of the minutiae of how to implement a policy decision, or are too preoccupied with other concerns to provide nuanced details. This ambiguity then allows lower circle officials a fair degree of leeway as to how the policy decision is to be actually implemented, allowing them to follow their preferred interpretation of the directive (Allison and Halperin 1972, 51–53; Halperin and Clapp 2006, 247–54). Even should the low-level officials seek to faithfully implement the decision, there is a high likelihood that a policy directive will become altered as it is filtered down through the various levels of government bureaucracy. This commonly occurs as various junior officials in the field often feel it necessary to make changes to either the letter or the spirit of the order so it better suits the situation on the ground or existing procedures (Allison and Zelikow 1999, 177–79; Halperin and Clapp 2006, 273–91).

However, the lower circle officials do not necessarily, or even frequently, attempt to carry out the decisions as intended, seeking instead to subvert or avoid implementing the policy decision. Governing institutions themselves are effectively microcosms of the state. Junior officials from different departments or internal factions within the institution often debate how to address problems, seek to influence their chief and compete over the scarce resources available (Allison and Zelikow 1999, 308). Additionally, there are often
significant sections of the institution that are dissatisfied with the task assigned to them, believing that the directive is the wrong policy and that their approach is superior. Therefore, it is common for institutions to resist policy decisions by ignoring them, delaying their implementation or warping them by reinterpreting their spirit or letter. This behaviour is most commonly found in lower circle officials who were not part of the policy deliberations. However, if the chief official in charge of the institution preferred a different policy solution during the decision stage themselves, they may turn a blind eye to such activities undertaken by their staff (Allison and Zelikow 1999, 308–9; Halperin and Clapp 2006, 254–64).

**China’s governmental politics**

China’s policymaking process towards interstate border disputes is notoriously convoluted, opaque and continuously shifting as officials and governing institutions rise and fall in power. This confusion of the bureaucratic system is compounded by the fact that China functions as a one-party-state. As such, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) controls the official organs of the state through a *nomenklature*\(^83\) style system of appointments (Dillon 2009, 137; Zheng and Weng 2016, 34). As a result, state officials typically have two or three overlapping roles, often making it difficult to pinpoint their primary institutional allegiance. In addition, as policymaking has become increasingly professionalised in the post-Mao period, it has also become increasingly fragmented and beyond even the paramount leader’s ability to control. David Lampton (2015, 764) aptly summarised the state of Chinese policymaking towards diplomatic and security issues when he remarked:

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83 Russian for ‘list of names’, the term refers to the common practice amongst Marxist-Leninist regimes of appointing officials to administrative or bureaucratic positions based on their Party allegiance or connections. In China this process is overseen by the CCP organisation Department.
both foreign and domestic observers have noted that sometimes China’s bureaucratic left hand does not know what the right hand is doing – that one ministry or organisation does not know about another’s activities, one province or locality competes with others, and that often the Center is surprised to learn what its local agents are up to. Senior Chinese leaders do not always receive accurate and/or timely information from below and faithful implementation is not always the norm. There has been a particularly obvious disjuncture between the military and diplomatic bureaucracies over time, but the incongruities have not been limited to this realm.

Owing to this disjuncture, there exists a large degree of vertical and horizontal competition for influence over policy both within the CCP and between various Ministries. Indeed, Chinese officials are often described as facing “omnidirectional influences … [as] everyone seeks to influence everyone else” (Jakobson 2016, 139). In regards to the Sino-Indian border dispute, there are often appears to be debate within the state over whether China should adopt a compromises, escalate or maintain the status quo towards the border. These efforts appear in China’s opaque system via numerous subtle maneuverers, such as public statements or dispatching forward patrols, as officials jostle to ensure that their institution’s policy and action channel is favoured. There are numerous organisations involved in China’s policymaking action channels vis-à-vis the Sino-Indian border dispute, as illustrated in figure 4.1 below. However, there are primarily three key institutions that constantly vie for influence: the CCP itself, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Before we can analyse the missions, dynamics and key officials that determine these three institutions’ preferences on Sino-Indian border strategy, we first need to have a sound understanding of the action channels in the policymaking process regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute within China.
Figure 4.1: China’s current IBD policymaking action channels (author’s own composition)
The Chinese policymaking process towards the Sino-Indian border dispute

Although China has formal legislative bodies in the National People’s Council and the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, the executives who make up the central players in China’s decision games are drawn from the ranks of the CCP. At the apex of China’s foreign policy elite are the CCP Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) members who are drawn from a large group of Politburo members who rank immediately below them. The Politburo has no fixed number of members, although its typical size is somewhere in the mid-twenties, often with two or three alternate members. The Politburo Standing Committee similarly fluctuates in size, consisting of somewhere between five and nine of the top officials in China. Both bodies are formally selected from the ranks of the approximately 200 members of the CCP Central Committee during its first annual plenum, held immediately after every CCP Congress. The CCP Central Committee itself is elected through ‘semi-competitive elections’\(^8^4\) from the approximately 2200 delegates of the Party Congress that is held every five years (Dillon 2009, 143–44; Lai and Kang 2014, 298–99).\(^8^5\)

The PSC members typically meet weekly to deliberate policy proposals and directions. The full Politburo, which usually convenes monthly except in emergencies, is privy to these deliberations through briefing bulletins circulated amongst them. However, for major policy decisions or shifts, such as altering China’s borders, a meeting of the full Politburo is required. In both bodies, policy decisions are ostensibly reached by establishing consensus amongst its members. In practice, though, it appears that most of the Politburo simply accepts the results from deliberations of smaller committees

\(^8^4\) Meaning that there are more members contesting for positions then there are seats, though the key members of the government or a political faction are effectively guaranteed a seat.  
\(^8^5\) As of the Nineteenth Party Congress that was held between 18 and 24 October 2017, the Central Committee has 204 members with 172 alternate members, the Politburo consists of 25 members and the Standing Committee has seven members.
comprising of officials with expertise in foreign or security affairs (Cabestan 2009, 64–65; Lai 2010, 137–38; Yun 2013, 5–6). Typically, the most prominent officials at this level of the foreign policy decision-making process, apart from the paramount leader, include: the Premier, as the second in charge of China’s government; the PSC and/or Politburo members responsible for the CCP’s propaganda efforts; the Vice-President who assists with foreign policy; and the two Vice-Chairmen of the Central Military Commission who represent the PLA. A list of China’s current foreign policy elite and their specific roles is provided in Annex D.

However, these CCP elites are usually drawn from backgrounds such as Party Chiefs of key provinces or heads of coordinating organisations rather than policy specialisations or formal government positions (Jakobson 2016, 143; Lawrence 2013, 8–9). As a result, when deliberating policies towards the Sino-Indian border dispute, the Politburo members typically need to engage professionals from lower echelons for expert advice. This process has been systematised since 1958 via semi-formal committees called ‘leading small groups’ (LSGs). LSGs are typically comprised of a mix between relevant Politburo members and lower ranking professional heads of applicable institutions (A. Miller 2008, 2014). The role of these LSGs is to devise policy responses for PSC approval and to monitor their implementation (Harris 2014, 27–30; Lu 2000, 116–17; Lai and Kang 2014, 299–301). The most relevant LSGs in addressing China’s current border disputes are the Foreign Affairs LSG (FALSG) and the National Security LSG (NSLSG).

At time of writing, who will fill this position is uncertain. However there has been much speculation that President Xi’s long-time ally and right-hand man, Wang Qishan, will take it even though he has had to step down from his position in the PSC (SMCP 2017).

The FALSG is one of the more venerable LSGs having been established in 1958, though it was briefly disbanded during the Cultural Revolution. The NSLSG was formed in late 2000 and is believed to have identical membership with the FALSG. As such, many analysts consider the FALSG and the NSLSG not as representing distinct groups but more different roles for the same body in order to allow for more detailed discussion or rapid responses to specific crises (A. Miller 2008; Yun 2013, 10).
paramount leader chairs these LSG’s with a mix of key CCP, diplomatic and security officials making up the rest of the committee.

Other than the Politburo and the LSGs, the foreign and security policy decision-making game has involved a few other institutions of the Chinese government. Historically, the CCP Secretariat was the institution responsible for managing the day-to-day work of the LSGs and other ‘socialist political institutions’. Hence, it is likely that the CCP Secretariat, rather than the Politburo, held the key policy deliberations regarding the Sino-Indian border during the early period of the dispute. That said, the CCP Secretariat has risen and fallen from its central position twice so far, making its impact somewhat fleeting. The first period of the CCP Secretariat’s primacy ran from 1950 to the mid-1960s when Mao abolished it, along with most other political institutions, during the Cultural Revolution. In 1980 Deng resurrected it, primarily as a means for him to circumvent more conservative Politburo members and install his allies in key policymaking positions. However, the CCP Secretariat’s second decline in influence began in 1987 following the dismissal of the reformist Hu Yaobang, who had been using it as the organisational base of his power (Lu 2001, 42–44). Today the CCP Secretariat is primarily relegated to overseeing the PSC’s decisions regarding the CCP’s internal organisation or governance and it has negligible influence over foreign and security policy (Lai 2010, 144–45; A. Miller 2015, 70).

In contrast, the Central Military Commission (CMC) is one of the most venerable and enduring Chinese political institutions, having been founded in 1926 to help organise the CCP’s armed struggle against the Kuomintang. Since 1926, the CMC has undergone several organisational restructurings, the most recent being in 2016 when its General

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88 Technically there is a CMC for both the state and the CCP but these are effectively the same organisation with the exact same personnel, except during the brief leadership transition period when they become unaligned (Cheung 2015, 88–89; Cordesman and Colley 2015, 145–46).
Office was reformed (Saunders and Wuthnow 2016). Despite these changes, the CMC has consistently remained one of the most authoritative and influential institutions within Chinese policymaking (Cheung 2001, 62–64; Zheng and Weng 2016, 38–39). The CMC acts as the primary forum for PLA officials to influence the paramount leader, generally taking more hawkish positions over China’s security issues including territorial disputes. In turn, the CMC also serves as the primary means for the CCP to monitor the activities of the PLA as the paramount leader sits as its chair and the Politburo must formally authorise its decisions during peacetime (Cheung 2015, 89; Jakobson and Knox 2010, 12–13; Lai and Kang 2014, 305–6).

In its current manifestation, the CMC is divided into two main parts. The first part is the CMC Standing Committee where the top military commanders meet weekly to review and discuss military policies. Semi-formal meetings of sections of the Standing Committee are known to occur as well, in which the relevant members convene to plan specific current and future military policy. The second part is the CMC General Office, which provides administration and support to the CMC leadership, including drafting the actual policies for CMC Standing Committee deliberation (Cheung 2015, 90–95; Saunders and Scobell 2015, 12–14). However, beyond the sphere of military operations, the PLA’s influence over policy decisions is limited as it has become only one voice amongst many. Indeed, in the post-Deng era, only the two CMC vice-chairmen represent the PLA on the Politburo and the Defence Minister is the PLA’s only representative in the FALSG/NSLSG and the State Council (Heng 2012, 108–9; Swaine 2015, 143–45).

More recently, China appears to have formed the National Security Commission (NSCom) to centralise foreign and security policy decision making and oversight. Under Jiang, there were two abortive efforts to form a national security council. Both attempts were ultimately rejected by the Politburo due to concerns about concentrating too much
power into the hands of the paramount leader. Nonetheless, these efforts did provide a
catalyst for the formation of the NSLSG in late 2000. Yet professional bodies and think-
tanks throughout the 2000s called for an umbrella group to be formed to cut through the
cumbersome and often overlapping means of reporting and issuing orders on security
issues (Cabestan 2009, 75–78; You 2016b, 185–88). Xi seized the chance offered by his
new administration and established the NSCom in November 2013, ostensibly in an effort
to better coordinate and tighten CCP control over, foreign and security policy (Jakobson

Though there was much initial fanfare around the NSCom’s inaugural meeting in
April 2014, there has been no information available on its activities since. Thus, it
currently remains unclear exactly what the scope and membership of the NSCom is, how
frequently it meets and to what extent it has superseded the FALSG/NSLSG or the CMC
(Swaine 2015, 145–46; You 2016b, 193–94). This silence is not totally unexpected given
the opaque nature of Chinese government and the sensitive nature of NSCom’s
jurisdiction. That said, most other Chinese governing institutions, including the CMC,
often publish some basic information of their policy deliberations such as their schedule.
Additionally, there has been no evidence of the NSCom convening since its inaugural
meeting, despite the several high-profile events since April 2014 that should have required
its attention (Wuthnow 2016). Nonetheless, assuming the NSCom has not become
stillborn, its ability to bring together the central players in national security ensures it
would play a central role in the formulation of any Sino-Indian border policies.

In the outer ring of China’s border policymaking reside those junior officials and
institutions that are largely responsible for policy implementing, and occasionally
subverting, the central leadership’s decision. The most prominent action channel amongst
these runs through the State Council, responsible for overseeing all of China’s civilian
bureaucracies, devising bureaucratic regulations and drafting the formal legislation for the National People’s Congress to pass. The full State Council consists of the Premier, the four Vice-Premiers and five State Councillors as well as the Ministers for the 20 state ministries and the heads of some other key administrative offices such as the People’s Bank of China and the National Audit Office (Lawrence 2013, 14–15). Though occasionally the full State Council does discuss foreign and security matters, such affairs are normally handled by the State Council’s Foreign Affairs Office (SCFAO) (Jakobson and Knox 2010, 7).

The SCFAO is headed by either a Vice Premier or State Councillor and effectively plays a middleman role between the decision-making bodies and the foreign policy practitioners. Specifically, the SCFAO’s main role is to coordinate the various ministries involved and formally oversee faithful policy implementation (Zhao and Gao 2015, 40–41). In undertaking this task, the SCFAO wears many different institutional ‘hats’, including being the unofficial general office for the FALSG and having precisely the same personnel as the CCP Central Foreign Affairs Office (Harris 2014, 30; Lai 2010, 141). Though it is formally above the MFA, the SCFMO is mostly staffed by former MFA officials, including the State Councillor appointed to run it. Hence, when Jiang had the SCFAO dismembered in 1998 in order to strip power away from a factional rival, he did so by merging it with the MFA (Lu 2000, 117). However, the SCFAO appears to have been quietly reinstated sometime during Hu’s early administration and continues to play an influential role.

Under the auspices of the State Council, three specific ministries can be said to have regular input on Chinese border policy, including towards the Sino-Indian border. The largest and most influential of these ministries is the MFA, which appears to take a predominantly take a conciliatory approach towards the Sino-Indian border dispute. The
MFA is reportedly one of the largest single bureaucracies in China and is the primary organisation that interprets and implements the central leadership’s foreign policy decisions. Organisationally, the MFA contains seven divisions that address specific regional or bilateral relations as well as a number of administrative or specialty departments, including one dedicated to managing border and oceanic affairs (Lai and Kang 2014, 302; Lu 2000, 25–27). Additionally, the MFA also has significant influence over decision-making as both the head of the SCFAO, who typically has risen through the ranks of the MFA, and the Foreign Minister are known to sit on the FPLSG/NSLSG (Jakobson and Knox 2010, 5–7; Lai 2010, 139–41). The MFA also has the power to call ad hoc meetings and assemble groups of relevant players to address a crisis and to distil the information on foreign situations to be provided to other central players or bureaucracies (Lu 2000, 34–39; Swaine 2015, 152).

However, traditionally the MFA suffers from the stigma of being considered a relatively low-ranking bureaucratic organisation, especially vis-à-vis the security agencies. As such, the MFA has often been involved in interagency competition for resources that has seen its power perceptibly constricted over the past few decades (Jakobson and Knox 2010, 8; Swaine 2015, 153–54). This trend does seem to have been reversed in recent years owing to the strong performance of several MFA officials. The most notable of these officials has been Yang Jiechi, the former MFA Minister and State Councillor responsible for the SCFAO who was recently elevated to the Politburo in the 2017 CCP National Conference. This has made Yang the first professional diplomat in the CCP upper echelons since the late Vice-Premier Qian Qichen retired in 2003 (Chung-yan 2017).89

89 Interestingly the 19 CCP Politburo and PSC has the most foreign policy experts included since the revolution. Apart from Yang, another notable member is Wang Huning, an academic and long-time advisor to the paramount leaders of China over foreign affairs who was promoted straight to the PSC.
Nonetheless, several more hawkish rival governing institutions with China continue to constrain the role of the MFA in policymaking, often criticising it as being too ‘soft’ when defending Chinese interests. In regard to China’s interstate border dispute policies, two of the MFA’s most prominent bureaucratic rivals are the Ministry of State Security (MSS) and the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) (Jakobson 2016, 140–43; Jakobson and Knox 2010, 8–12). The MSS is China’s primary intelligence organisation and is a relative newcomer by Chinese bureaucratic terms. Established in 1983, the MSS was created by the merging of the Central Investigation Department, which was responsible for foreign intelligence, with the counterintelligence operations of the MPS to centralise civilian intelligence. Since the 1990s, the MSS has become a highly professional organisation and has been gaining influence, partly due to its assistance in tackling internal corruption and partly by producing high-quality information on foreign events and personalities (Eftimiaded 1992; X. Guo 2012, 363–68; Mattis 2011, 2012, 51–52).

The MPS has been a notable player in China’s border policies mostly due to its joint control with the PLA over the People’s Armed Police (PAP) border force (X. Guo 2012, 235–37). Additionally, the MPS chief is consistently appointed to the Politburo, thereby outranking any MFA member. Recently the MPS has been showing a willingness to cause headaches for the MFA by intervening in regional affairs and disrupting its efforts to promote its conciliatory policies. One notable incident occurred in 2012 when the MPS unilaterally issued new maps on Chinese passports showing China’s maximum territorial claims as its borders. This evidently caused much chagrin within the MFA, with many of its officials needing to deal with China’s irate neighbours (Jakobson 2016, 141–42).

The CCP itself maintains some direct influence over border policy implementation via the CCP Central Propaganda Department (CPD), also referred to as the CCP Publicity
Department. Concerned with both propagating the CCP’s perspectives and censoring alternatives, the CPD oversees a sprawling bureaucratic network with fronts in every major Chinese organisation (Shambaugh 2007, 27–30). Concerning China’s interstate border disputes, this institution has mostly adopted a status quo approach by downplaying both hawkish and dovish policies, although it does occasionally champion more escalatory policies during crises. The two most important CPD fronts are the Information Office of the State Council (IOSC) and the Xinhua News Agency. The IOSC officially has overall authority for monitoring news content but operationally is mostly active in external propaganda. Regarding China’s border disputes, the IOSC has been involved in the publication of Chinese government policies and statements for foreign consumption and ‘clarifying’ or ‘refuting’ foreign reports (Brady 2015, 52; Shambaugh 2007, 48).

Xinhua, as China’s official news service, is technically an organ of the State Council but in practice is controlled directly by the CPD. As the CCP’s news agency, Xinhua is primarily responsible for disseminating approved information to the Chinese public and to a lesser extent the rest of the world. Regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute, Xinhua has been utilised by the Chinese government to manipulate or placate the growing national sentiment within Chinese public opinion. This control of the message available to the public has allowed the CCP the freedom to contemplate pursuing controversial policies, such as offering territorial concessions or increasing PLA deployments along the LAC. In addition, Xinhua also compiles classified reference material and briefings for the high ranking CCP and state officials (Lu 2001, 53–54; Shambaugh 2007, 44–45).

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90 The Chinese word xuanchuan is usually translated as propaganda but does not have the same negative connotations as it does in English, instead referring a legitimate tool for disseminating information and shaping society. Nonetheless the Chinese government, ever conscious of its image, has officially changed the English transition of the CPD to ‘Publicity Department’ (Brady 2015, 51; Shambaugh 2007, 29).

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Apart from controlling the information available both externally and internally, the CPD holds sway over state officials through its Party schools and cadre training courses. Though today these schools teach cadres more management than Marxism, they do act as a mechanism through which the CCP operates a number of research institutions (Shambaugh 2007, 51). These research institutions have increasingly been utilised by Chinese elites to access non-government specialists by conducting study sessions or lecture series attended by Politburo and key State Council members. These institutes also operate as a platform for the foreign policymaking elite to float or promote new policies in order to gauge public reaction. This provides the CCP a degree of plausible deniability, allowing it to test the reaction that more controversial policies, such as compromise or escalation approaches, will receive before completely embracing them (Jakobson and Knox 2010, 34–40; Shambaugh 2007, 50–52).

The final and arguably most significant action channel to consider when assessing China’s border policies, especially towards the Sino-Indian border dispute, is the one dominated by the PLA. Historically, the PLA has had control over all border operations. However, in 2003, the Politburo divided responsibility for frontier defence between the PLA and the PAP Border Defence Corps (Fravel 2007, 728–29; X. Guo 2012, 185–87). This division of labour sees the PLA provide the frontline troops to patrol the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and the McMahon Line whilst the PAP is responsible for maintaining public order and conducting security and customs checks at entrance points (Cordesman 2016, 29; IOSC 2013; You 2016a, 104–5).

Yet the PAP continues to occupy a unique position within the organisational structure of China by being jointly responsible to both the State Council via the MPS and the CMC via the PLA’s Joint Staff Department (JSD). Adding to the confusion, the MPS maintains the ability to deploy and issue direct orders to the PAP Border Defence Guards,
but operationally they are subordinate to the PAP division that is controlled by the PLA (X. Guo 2012, 235–37). Though this seemingly would indicate that the PAP would have a strong degree of autonomy, there is little evidence to indicate that it has ever advocated for a specific approach or deviated from the intended implementation of border policy along the Sino-Indian LAC.

Throughout much of the PLA’s history, frontline troops patrolling the Sino-Indian LAC would have come from one of the two separate military regions or districts that covered the Sino-Indian border. First was the Lanzhou Region which was comprised most of the Xingjian province and encompassed parts of Tibet including the Aksai Chin. The second was the Chengdu Region which mostly covered Tibet, including the eastern sector and most of the minor sections of the Sino-Indian border dispute (Cordesman and Colley 2015, 150–51; Fravel 2007, 722–24). However, in January 2016, Xi Jinping launched the most significant structural reforms of the PLA since its founding aimed at streamlining it into a better-organised and more professional fighting force. One of the major changes was the restructuring of the operational commands of the PLA Army from the seven military regions into five theatre commands (Garafola 2016; C. Li 2016, 5; Cordesman 2016, 4–15). The most prominent of these is the Western Theatre Command, which encompasses both Xingjian and Tibet and therefore is responsible for the defence of the entirety of the Sino-Indian border. The estimated deployment of China’s frontier forces along the Sino-Indian border can be seen in Map 2.7 in annex B.

However, the PLA’s involvement in the making of China’s border policy goes beyond simply patrolling the border. Since the successful Sino-Russian military exercises

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91 According to M. Taylor Fravel (2007, 729), a coordinating body called the State Frontier Defence Commission was established in the early 2000s to facilitate the smooth implementation of policies across these organisations. However, I have found no further reference or information from other sources to corroborate this.
in 2005, the PLA has been increasingly keen to engage in joint military exercises and other forms of military diplomacy with several countries within China’s neighbourhood. Prior to the recent structural reforms, the primary PLA department responsible for engaging in military diplomacy was the General Staff Department’s (GSD) Foreign Affairs Office (FAO). The FAO also shared much of the same duties and personnel of the Ministry of Defence (Hagt 2015, 223–33). During the January 2016 PLA reforms, the GSD FAO was formally disbanded and reconstituted as one of the fifteen CMC’s functional offices, the International Military Cooperation Office (IMCO) (Allen, Blasko, and Corbett 2016; Saunders and Wuthnow 2016). Both the IMCO and its predecessor have been pivotal in recent diplomatic efforts which have taken much of the tension out of China’s relations with India. Specifically, these bodies have been responsible for coordinating the joint military exercises or ‘confidence building measures’, military liaisons and official/ceremonial functions attended by high ranking officers of the IMCO. However, these efforts have proven to be no substitute for actual Sino-Indian border negotiations and have created institutional rivalries, most notably with the MFA (Hagt 2015, 237–38; B. K. Singh 2008, 11–12).

One final means through which the PLA impacts upon policy decision-making and implementation has been via its three military intelligence departments; human, signals and electronic/cyber intelligence (Groffman 2016, 149–51; Mattis 2015). Tasked with securing information over other states’ military movements and intents, especially those with whom China has border disputes, these intelligence organisations have had a huge influence over foreign policy making. Indeed, until the 1990s, the PLA’s intelligence and its affiliated organs were the primary intelligence information source for the central leadership. This position has been eroded somewhat in recent decades by an increasingly professional and active MSS. Yet the PLA military intelligence remains of high quality.
and is still considered highly reputable, especially regarding defence-related issues and the status of the China’s border disputes (Mattis 2016; Swaine 2015, 153–55).

Prior to the recent PLA reforms, military intelligence was collected from technical reconnaissance bureaus imbedded in the military regions or via defence attachés in embassies. This raw information was then forwarded to one of the three intelligence divisions of the GSD for either further analysis or immediate forwarding to the CMC or PSC as the deputy chief for military intelligence decided (Mattis 2015; Swaine 2015, 153).\footnote{Specifically, the three intelligence departments of the GSD were the Second Department which handled Human Intelligence, the Third Department which handled Signals Intelligence and the Fourth Department which handled electronic intelligence and warfare (Mattis 2015).} At the time of writing, it is not clear how the military intelligence apparatus has been reorganised following the recent PLA structural reforms. However, it is believed to have been split between the Joint Staff Department (JSD),\footnote{The GSD was broken up in the reform with many of its responsibilities going to different offices in the CMC Subsidiary Organs. The JSD is one of these Organs, taking over taken over a lot of the command and control duties (Saunders and Wuthnow 2016, 2–3).} which oversees human intelligence, and the Strategic Support Force, which oversees technical intelligence (Allen, Blasko, and Corbett 2016; Mattis 2016). The PLA intelligence also has several associated ‘research institutions’, the most prominent being the China Institute for International and Strategic Studies. These institutes traditionally have been, and ostensibly remain, headed by the chief of PLA’s human intelligence. These research institutions allow the military intelligence divisions to ensure quality control over the analysis provided to the central leadership by soliciting ‘out-of-house’ national security experts for their perspectives (Mattis 2016; Yun 2013, 21–23).

The Chinese Communist Party and the Sino-Indian border dispute

Like the proverbial grandfather’s axe or family watch, the CCP has had its various components replaced, reformed or reinvented since its founding, yet it remains
conceptually the same institution. This is because since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the CCP has had one primary mission: the preservation of the Chinese political system led by the Communist Party (Dillon 2009, 142; Lai 2010, 20). As such, CCP loyalists and the organisations it directly controls are highly focused on securing the regime’s security first and foremost. Thus far, the CCP has proven itself adept at quashing any potential alternatives, from the Kuomintang in the late 1940s to pro-democracy movements in the 1980s to the Falun Gong sect in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Sandby-Thomas 2011).

Nonetheless, the CCP elite are conscious of the need to legitimise its control through means other than pure violence to prevent mass unrest or the ossification of their regime. Initially during the Maoist period, the CCP sought its legitimacy through the ideology of communism and the Party’s efforts to move towards a socialist society. Slowly the ideological allure of communism began to lose its lustre after Deng’s economic reforms in the 1980s and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Though the CCP officially maintains socialism as the state ideology, it has had to search for new sources of legitimacy. In recent years, these have included the CCP’s claim to good economic management, provision of professional governance and upholding of national pride, especially by safeguarding China’s borders (Edney and He 2012, 78–82; Fewsmith 2016, 96–107; Pei 2016, 29–30).

This prioritising of regime security and legitimacy ensures that CCP officials consider all foreign and security policies through the lens of these internal concerns, judging the impact that various strategies will likely have on the domestic order and economic stability. Consequentially, CCP officials have generally embraced more conservative policies towards interstate border dispute, or at least have been opposed to more adventurist policies, lest they detract from more important internal priorities.
Regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute specifically, this stance has resulted in most CCP aligned officials embracing status quo policies such as establishing crisis response mechanisms and pacifying the border. This is in large part because CCP officials are concerned that compromise strategies are too risky especially as they would likely raise the ire of nationalists and could destabilise the restive Tibetan province adjacent to the disputed territories. Escalation policies are equally unacceptable for the CCP, as they would disrupt the economic stability it needs for its legitimacy at best and could drive India into an alliance to contain China or worse result in an embarrassing defeat (Garver 2016, 747–57).

Recently there have been many other factors contributing to CCP officials’ preference for status quo policies towards the Sino-Indian border dispute. The first and foremost of the these is been public opinion. Traditionally, the CCP’s Propaganda Department maintained a stranglehold over the Chinese media, ensuring that the CCP has historically been able to politicise the Sino-Indian dispute at will. Occasionally this allowed the CCP to support more controversial topics such as escalating or offering concessions. For example, during the early 1960s during the height of Chinese-Indian tensions, the Chinese media effectively ignored the Sino-Indian border dispute until the Sino-Indian border war actually broke out in October 1962. Instead, the Chinese media focused mostly on a possible collaboration between the United States and Chang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang regime in Taiwan to invade China, allowing China’s foreign policy elite to discreetly attempt negotiations (Chung 2004, 108).

However, despite rigorous censorship there has been a boom in ‘netizens’ sharing news and opinions about Chinese policy since the 2000s. As a result, the CCP has been facing growing pressure from an increasingly popular and vocal national sentiment that frequently calls for a more hawkish foreign policy especially towards China’s territorial
disputes with its neighbours (Harris 2014, 43; Jakobson 2016, 145–46). This has fed concerns within the CCP that nationalist public opinion could quickly grow out of the Propaganda Department’s ability to control (Jakobson and Knox 2010, 41–43). As such, the CCP focus on internal issues usually ensures that it publicly downplays or simply ignores the Sino-Indian border dispute lest it creates backlashes against the Party (Smith 2014, 4–10).

The Sino-Indian border dispute poses a particular problem to the CCP owing to its proximity to Tibet. Additionally, any significant concession to India would inevitably raise the ire of the nationalists, damaging its legitimacy and potentially even prompting dangerous mass unrest akin to the 2005 and 2012 anti-Japanese riots (Fewsmith 2016, 106–7). Yet any serious escalation policies would likely disrupt China’s international trade, at least within South Asia, which would have significant ramifications over its economic development. As a result, CCP officials frequently are torn between balancing between the nationalistic demands of the public that helps legitimate the CCP and seeking pragmatic concessions policies that are likely to yield results (Malik 2011, 88–106; Smith 2014, 63–66). With the benefits of compromise and escalation policies typically outweighed by the domestic costs, the CCP predominantly aims to maintain the status quo towards the Sino-Indian border.

Beyond concerns for regime security, the CCP influences Sino-Indian border policies through its factional politics. Although the CCP puts a lot of effort into maintaining the appearance of unity within the Party, it is far from a monolithic entity

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94 Whilst Chinese nationalists do not approach India with the same degree of hatred as the Japanese, they do largely hold India in some degree of contempt. This would likely make any compromise difficult as, unless the CCP leadership provides a convincing counter narrative, it would likely be considered to be a humiliating and unacceptable loss of face by many nationalists (Mulik 2011, 101-04; Smith 2014, 63-64). Indeed, such aversion to surrendering territory to India can be seen in the Chinese media and public reactions to the Doklam standoff.
(Harris 2014, 25–26). Rather it is more accurately described as being comprised of several informal competing factions that are based loosely upon personal allegiances, ideological preferences and organisational backgrounds. During Mao’s reign and the immediate interregnum following his death the factions often sought to destroy each other to attain power. However, since 1978, after Deng’s reformist faction consolidated control, the standard pattern of elite behaviour has been to balance power amongst these factions (Rosa 2014, 235). Interestingly, though several factions throughout the CCP’s history have been engaged in bitter rivalries, their membership is not necessarily mutually exclusive. Indeed, many Chinese officials are considered to be ‘members’ of multiple factions and these officials can seemingly can move with ease between them depending on the circumstances (Bo 2004, 239).

Historically, there have been numerous factions of varying strength and cohesion vying for power within the CCP’s history. However, since the 1990s, there have been four major factions competing for power over policy within the Party. The faction that currently holds most of the prominent leadership positions, including the paramount leader Xi Jinping, is the elitist ‘Princelings’ faction. The Princelings are officials who typically have received better education and opportunities as children of former CCP officials and they generally favour conservative policies. Another elitist faction is the ‘Shanghai Gang’ formed out of the lieutenants and protégées of Jiang Zaimin. The Shanghai Gang appears to be waning in strength since Jiang’s retirement but still holds significant power and influence and is often considered to be in coalition with the Princelings (Bo 2010; Rosa 2014). Some China observers believe a new ‘Shaanxi Faction’ is forming due to Xi’s preference for promoting friends and officials that have ties to the province of Shaanxi in

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95 Some notable examples include the pragmatist clique that mobilised around Liu Shaoqi and Lin Bao’s ‘Cult of Mao’ during Mao’s reign, the ‘Gang of Four’, Deng’s ‘Reformists’ and the ‘Whatever’ faction during the interregnum and the ‘Eight Elders of the CCP’, the ‘Old Maoists’ and ‘Reformists’ under Zhou Ziyang during the 1980s. For brevity’s sake, only the more recent factions are covered here.
some way (Lam 2015, 60–61). Owing to the similarities in origin between the Shanghai Gang and Xi’s Shaanxi Faction, it is likely the latter will supplant the former sometime in the near future.

The most prominent populist and reformist orientated faction is the Communist Youth League alumni, often referred to by the Chinese word for the group, *tuanpai*. The *tuanpai* are most commonly associated with Hu Jintao and currently hold the largest number of seats in the Central Committee but, apart from the Premier Li Keqiang, have few of the central leadership positions. The final major faction is the ‘New Left’ comprising of an eclectic mix of orthodox communists through to social democrats that critique China’s market economy and favour state planning policies. However, the New Left’s cohesion is unclear at the time of writing following the fall of their titular leader, Bo Xilai (Bo 2010, 131–65; Fewsmith and Rosen 2001, 165–71; Garnaut 2012; Rosa 2014).\(^6\)

These factional allegiances typically shape the Sino-Indian border dispute policymaking by encouraging more conservative policymaking favouring *status quo* approaches lest a factional rival gain an opening to exploit. Though addressing the Sino-Indian border dispute is not a policy priority for any of the factions, the factional composition of the key decision making bodies can turn the issue into ammunition for the wider political machinations (Rosa 2014, 242). Additionally, the factional disputes over policy and the appointment of personnel frequently exacerbates the jurisdictional turf wars amongst Chinese officials. Indeed, several scholars of Chinese politics consider that many

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\(^6\) The case of Bo Xilai illustrates how fluid and difficult to categorise CCP factions are. Bo is often also identified as a ‘Princeling’ owing to his father’s role in Chinese politics in the 1980s but when Bo was the governor of Chongqing he started actively championing some of the New Left’s ideas. The strength of these factional connections is illustrated by the fact that Bo rose to be a member of the Politburo before he was purged in 2012 in the wake of a political scandal (Garnaut 2012). Bo Zhiyue (Bo 2004, 2010) and Paolo Rosa (2014) also identify a final faction comprising of graduates from China’s elite Tsinghua University. However, as this faction seems to only contain ten members of the Central Committee, most of whom are also associated with other factions, I have omitted it here.

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of the provocative or controversial gestures out of China that often spoil rapprochement efforts are more to do with sectarian infighting rather than deliberate policymaking (Dillon 2009, 145–46; Zheng and Weng 2016, 38). One potential example of such factional spoiling affecting the Sino-Indian border dispute occurred in 2006 when China’s ambassador to India, Sun Yuxi, publicly asserted China’s claims over Arunachal Pradesh. As these statements occurred on the eve of President Hu Jintao’s state visit, were unrepeated by Hu and Sun was reassigned to Europe not long after, they seemed more timed to embarrass Hu and thwart any initiatives rather than provide a statement of China’s official policy (Smith 2014, 39–40).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Sino-Indian border dispute

Throughout much of its history the MFA has had limited authority, expected simply to discreetly carry out its mission: to implement the PSC’s foreign policies and manage the day-to-day conduct of China’s diplomatic relations. In theory and often in practice, this leaves Chinese diplomats with little room to manoeuvre when engaging their foreign counterparts. Thus, the MFA is often typified as having a high degree of bureaucratic inertia or paralysis, unwilling to change policy to address a changing situation without the central leadership’s approval (Cabestan 2009, 82; Zhao and Gao 2015, 41–42).

Nonetheless, the MFA actually has more room for initiative than a first glance would suggest. This is mostly because the Politburo and the PSC typically avoid micromanaging foreign affairs. Instead, the Politburo relegates itself to simply making the strategic decisions over policy direction, intervening only if it is unsatisfied with the pace of implementation or a sensitive issue arises. This ensures that the MFA, and the SCFAO, are entrusted with determining the timing and pace of the decision’s implementation (Lai 2010, 145; Lu 2001, 50–51).
Additionally, it is apparent that MFA officials consider themselves to be the stewards of China’s reputation, often striving against prevailing moods in the country to seek ‘win-win’ situations and amiable relations with other states. In addressing interstate border disputes, this has ensured that MFA officials have been the foremost advocates in China urging for more concessionary or at least conciliatory policies towards the Sino-Indian border dispute. These dynamics are evident in the MFA’s moderate postures in its communiqués and white papers, which typically emphasize priorities such as regional stability in contrast to the more belligerent tones often taken by other ministries (MFA 2017a; Swaine 2014, 5–6). Indeed, the MFA has recently staked its claim to lead the Sino-Indian border negotiation process by identifying it as one of the ways that it has been contributing the CCP’s ‘win-win’ and ‘peace and tranquillity’ objectives (MFA 2017a; Swaine 2014, 5).

One key source of the MFA’s ability to punch above its weight in the hierarchic order is that the heads of the MFA and SCFAO have consistently been key players in China’s border policy decision-making. Formally this is an oddity given that the head of the MFA or the SCFAO have rarely held a seat on the Politburo (Jakobson 2016, 142–45; Zhao and Gao 2015, 44). Yet, the State Councillor’s and the Foreign Minister’s position is augmented both by their role in advising the paramount leader in foreign policy and having at least two representatives in the FALSG/NSLSG where China’s border policies are actually deliberated. Additionally the MFA and SCFAO officials are China’s representatives in negotiations with India over the border, giving them a large degree of control over policy implementation (Swaine 2015, 152; Zhao and Gao 2015, 54–55). Finally, the MFA is not immune from the factional politics of the CCP but in general
appears to have been able to exploit these to its advantage by providing a direct line to the paramount leader and other members of the PSC.\(^{97}\)

The MFA has also managed to mitigate any potential intradepartmental turf wars by grouping all relevant departments under one Foreign Vice-Minister or Assistant Minister portfolio. Specifically, this portfolio is responsible for the Asia, Boundary and Oceanic Affairs, and International Treaties and Laws departments.\(^{98}\) Additionally the MFA’s cadres tend to be career officials who have risen through the organisation’s ranks ensuring that they are dedicated to its mission. Even CCP or faction-aligned officials who have been provided positions in the MFA appear to have all quickly become co-opted by the organisation’s professional ethos (Lu 2000, 59–71). This has ensured that the Foreign Minister and State Councillor have consistently advocated the MFA’s moderate perspective on the Sino-Indian border dispute in the central level deliberations over IBD policy.

However, as alluded to above, the MFA’s jurisdiction is increasingly being encroached upon by rival departments who seek to use China’s territorial border disputes as means to gain more influence over policy. As such the MFA has expended a significant degree of its political capital seeking to enforce its mission to enact Chinese foreign policy, especially in relation to sensitive and peripheral states (Jakobson 2016, 140–42; Zhao and Gao 2015, 44–47). Specifically, the MFA and SCFAO appear to have fought hard to retain the explicit remit to address the Sino-Indian border dispute. For example, the MFA fended

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\(^{97}\) One notable example of CCP factionalism in the MFA was the disproportionate influence that Dia Bingguo had throughout the 2000s due to his \textit{tuanpai} factional connections allowing greater connection with Hu Jintao and ensuring his rapid promotion through MFA to become the State Councillor (Lai 2010, 145).

\(^{98}\) The incumbent is Assistant Minister Kong Xuanyou after his predecessor, Vice-Minister Liu Zhenmin, was appointed Under-Secretary-General of the UN for Economic and Social Affairs in June 2017.
off a challenge to its exclusive power to negotiate with India by the PLA and possibly the MPS in 2012.

In the late 2000s, the PLA began to push for a greater role in the Sino-Indian border negotiations. Though the MFA ultimately had to acquiesce, it did manage to relegate direct PLA representation to the separate ‘Working Mechanism’ established in the 2012 Treaty of Consultation and Cooperation (Hagt 2015, 237; Parameswaran 2012). The MFA also managed to ensure that it retained control over the Working Mechanism, with Article II stipulating that China’s leading representative to this Working Mechanism is a Director-General of the MFA. Additionally the Working Mechanism is explicitly forbidden by Article V of the treaty to discuss “the resolution of the Boundary Question”, which remained the domain of the MFA controlled SRM (MEA 2012).

Thus, the MFA has proven itself strong enough to consolidate its purview over the negotiations in the face of a rival institution’s bids, ensuring that it controls all of the formal mechanisms to engage with India over their disputed border. Nonetheless, the MFA’s ability to sway the indifferent or more hawkish majority in the central leadership remains limited, ensuring that its ability to negotiate a territorial compromise with India remains hobbled. Indeed, exasperated MFA officials reportedly admitted in private to their Indian counterparts during one round of SRM that they had no leeway to negotiate on clarifications to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as the PLA was firmly opposed (Menon 2016, 19). As a result, the MFA often has had to simply accept and implement a status quo policy towards the Sino-India border dispute.

The People’s Liberation Army and the Sino-Indian border dispute

From the early 1980s to today, the PLA has been formally tasked with consolidating national unity and deterring foreign aggression, with its primary mission is
to safeguard China’s sovereign territory (IOSC 2013, 2015). Naturally this mission has imbued the PLA with more hawkish sentiments than its civilian counterparts, especially towards China’s interstate border disputes (Swaine 2014, 6). Interestingly, this has not translated into a culture of irredentism within the PLA ranks. Indeed, the PLA has shown a high degree of respect for China’s current border alignments with most officers showing little interest in seeking to recover ‘lost’ territories (Fravel 2007, 713–14). Instead, PLA doctrine identifies that its primary duty in border defence is to remain vigilant against gradual creeping forward or ‘nibbling’ along China’s frontier from its territorial rivals. In the case of the Sino-Indian border dispute, this has largely resulted in active patrolling that deliberately avoids going beyond China’s perception of the LAC (Joshi 2011, 562–63; Smith 2014, 49).

This position is has been adopted because the PLA shares the strategic vision of the CCP leadership; namely upholding the policy of maintaining the status quo and avoiding active conflicts over Sino-Indian border dispute so as not to damage China’s rise (You 2014, 241–42). One of the clearest expression of the PLA’s willingness to maintain the status quo occurred in the aftermath of the 2017 Doklam standoff. In September 2017, after a mutual withdrawal had been negotiated, the prominent PLA strategist Major General Qiao Liang rebuked the more hawkish sectors of the Chinese commentariat for calling for war. Specifically, Qiao argued that “China and India are both neighbors and competitors, but not all competitors must be treated in the toughest way…with this principle in mind, one can understand that the Doklam confrontation was solved in the way it should have been” (Dasgupta 2017; Qiao 2017).
Yet the CCP and PLA are not necessarily in lockstep on policy. Though reports of tension between the PLA and the CCP are often greatly exaggerated, many PLA officials nonetheless have different priorities to the civilian wing of the Party (Heng 2012, 108; Saunders and Scobell 2015, 1–6; Yun 2013, 19–21). Whereas the CCP wish to downplay the Sino-Indian border dispute, the PLA has consistently advocated for mild escalatory, or at least assertive *status quo*, policies to allow it to carry out its mission more effectively. One of the clearest examples of this gulf of interests between the civilian and military branches occurred early in the Sino-Indian border dispute. Throughout late 1959, several PLA frontier commanders and generals lobbied Mao and other CCP leaders for permission to ‘rebuff’ Indian forces along the disputed border and clashed with some Indian patrols. Initially the CCP was reluctant to embrace the PLA’s escalation to escalate the dispute and instead ordered them to withdraw 20 kilometres from the frontier. It was only after negotiations with India failed and Indian forces began to implement the Forward Policy that the CCP and MFA agreed with the PLA that a more escalatory policy was needed (Fravel 2008, 176–77; Garver 2006, 106–10).

The PLA’s control over the forces deployed along the border has also allowed it to reinterpret the leadership’s policy towards the Sino-Indian border dispute, even under Mao, if it believes that doing so would better suit its mission. One notable example of this occurred in July 1962 when General Luo Ruiqing issued a directive authorising PLA troops to open fire if Indian forces were advancing on their position and it was deemed

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99 Although the paramount leader often needs to curry favour with the PLA officers, they all have been able to exert their will over the PLA’s actions and ensure its continuing subservience to the Party. Even Hu Jintao, widely considered the paramount leader with the weakest control over PLA affairs, moved quickly to discipline dissenting officers and restrain the military when it was in contradiction with his grand strategy (Cabestan 2009, 72–74; N. Li 2015).

100 In 1962, General Luo was a veteran CCP, member the PLA Chief of the Joint Staff, CMC member and a Vice Premier. He was purged in 1965 during the early days of the Cultural Revolution and persecuted throughout, eventually losing one of his legs from injuries sustained. Luo was ultimately rehabilitated by Mao himself in 1975 on the grounds that Lin Biao had fabricated evidence against him, though he died a few years later in 1978.
necessary for self-defence. This order was in direct contradiction to Mao’s explicit earlier directives that the PLA was not to fire under any circumstance. General Luo’s order also appears to have been given without any consultation with the rest of the central leadership (Fravel 2008, 186; Garver 2006, 112). A similar situation appears to have occurred during some skirmishes in late 1967 when local Chinese commanders authorised border troops to fire on Indian positions without seeking permission from the CMC (Fravel 2015, 254).

These early manoeuvres by the PLA were clear efforts to push for a more escalatory policy towards the Sino-Indian dispute in order to secure the border. However, in the post Mao era, many of the PLA’s activities appear to be testing the boundaries of the status quo policy rather than engaging in any deliberate escalation. For example, most of the confrontations along the Sino-Indian border since the late 2000s were prompted by PLA patrols intended simply to probe Indian positions in disputed areas of the LAC (Smith 2014, 49). Many of these patrols appear to have been unilateral actions taken by local PLA commanders, taken without central CCP authorisation and potentially even without their regional theatre HQ’s approval (Swaine 2015, 155–56). However, such liberties taken by the PLA on the border appear to have prompted some pushback from the CCP and may have been the catalyst for the recent restructuring. Indeed, Xi issued a thinly veiled rebuke to PLA generals at a 2014 summit, reminding them that they owed ‘absolute loyalty’ to the CCP shortly after returning from his state visit to India that was overshadowed by a border incursion (Dasgupta 2014; Medcalf 2014).

Deng’s modernisation reforms in the mid-1980s furthered the PLA’s tendency for self-management, prompting it to become increasingly disengaged from the wider political game and concentrated solely on its national security mission. However, these reforms also led to a significant shift in the balance of power both within the central policymaking circles and within the PLA itself. Whereas under Mao the PLA and the CCP
were effectively intertwined, today the PLA still remains an influential group but it is only one of many institutional interests represented amongst the central players (N. Li 2015, 120–21; A. Miller 2015, 59–61; You 2016a, 26–37). One result of this has been the evident lack of communication or coordination between the civilian and military branches of government. As the PLA considers the management of the Sino-Indian border dispute a vital part of its mission, this has inevitably created a number of interdepartmental disputes and tensions over jurisdictions, most notably with the MFA but likely also with the MSS and the MPS. Indeed, it has been speculated that some of the recent Chinese incursions along the Sino-Indian border were designed to secure the PLA’s Foreign Affairs Office a spot in the border negotiations run by the MFA (Hagt 2015, 237; Swaine 2015, 153).

It is also likely that inter-service rivalries, especially between the PLA Army and Navy branches, have contributed to many of the recent confrontations along the Sino-Indian border. The Army has long dominated the PLA and hence has resisted the move towards the military becoming a joint operational command, largely because it was concerned that cooperation would lessen its control over intelligence gathering and frontline operations. However, it appears that the Army’s resistance was finally been overcome by Xi, with the PLA moving towards a joint command system in recent years (Cheung 2015, 113–14). Additionally, the past decade has seen the PLA Navy grow in strength and influence due to its recent expansion and handling of China’s offshore territorial disputes. Hence, the Army has increasingly needed to justify their larger budget share relative to its rival services.

The Sino-Indian border dispute has therefore provided the perfect theatre for PLA Army commanders to demonstrate their importance to fulfilling the PLA’s mission by engaging in active patrolling and occasional standoffs with India’s border guards. Additionally it is suspected that PLA intelligence, which largely are staffed by Army
personnel, often exaggerates activities on the border in order to acquire more finances and influence over policymaking for the Army (Swaine 2014, 153–55; Yun 2013, 21–23). These manoeuvres fall short of deliberate or outright escalation policies, instead simply pushing the limits of the status quo. Yet, by raising border tensions and bilateral mistrust, the PLA have frequently spoiled efforts by the MFA or the CCP leadership to negotiate a compromise with India, thereby perpetuating the status quo on the disputed border.

India’s governmental politics

In contrast to China, the border policymaking process in India is more centralised with only a handful of key political and bureaucratic elites involved in policy deliberations. Once a policy towards the Sino-Indian border dispute has been decided, it is then implemented by governing institutions that enjoy a high degree of operational autonomy. During the Nehruvian era, Prime Minister Nehru himself effectively ran India’s foreign policy. Holding both the positions of Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Nehru micromanaged foreign policy making and conducted India’s international affairs through ad hoc meetings with key advisors, most of whom were either family, such as his nephew Braj Nehru, or close friends, such as Krishna Menon and N.D. Mullik (Dixit 2004, 151–58; Ogden 2014, 20–21). After Nehru’s death and the disgrace of most of his advisors in the wake of the 1962 Sino-Indian border war, successor Prime Ministers began to systematise the policymaking process.

During the late 1960s, India established a number of specific offices or semi-official forums for relevant bureaucrats and ministers to deliberate on policy options,
although the current action channels were not developed until the late-1990s/early-2000s (Dixit 1998, 326–27; Sikri 2009, 261–62). While India’s action channels are simpler than China’s, they do have the additional complexity of having to operate in an electoral democracy. Thus, even though many top bureaucrats often play more powerful roles than the elected Ministers do, India’s key policymakers must be conscious of what policies are politically possible for the government.

In practice, power over foreign policy decision making remains centralised in a handful of senior officials close to the Prime Minister, who comprise the senior players in Indian policy making. Specifically, in dealing with Sino-Indian border policy, the central decision making circle is often made up of those senior officials who hold positions in the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), National Security Council (NSCil) and the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) (Pant 2016, 17–18; Sikri 2009, 264–65). A list of India’s contemporary key officials and their specific roles is provided in Annex E. Interestingly, despite the centralisation of policy decision making into only a handful of political and bureaucratic elites, the action games in India are often pivotal in establishing the overall border policies. Regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute, there are a myriad of different institutions that typically contribute to the policy process, as illustrated in Figure 4.2.

Outside the PMO, the NSCil and the CCS, the two most influential governing institutions that dominate foreign and security policymaking vis-à-vis the Sino-Indian border dispute are the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Indian Armed Forces (IAF). Both of these institutions have a strong degree of control over their policy action channels, able to implement. However, the MEA’s and IAF’s ability to shape actual Sino-Indian border dispute policy deliberations is often limited by intra- and interdepartmental

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102 There is occasionally some overlap in these roles as individuals can hold multiple key offices. For example, during Prime Minister Vajpayee’s term, Brajesh Mashra held both the office of National Security Advisor and Principle Secretary of the PMO (Mazumdar 2011, 176).
Figure 4.2: India’s current IBD action channels
(author’s own compilation)
competition for resources and inefficiencies caused by overly ambitious tasks and/or political interference (Cohen and Dasgupta 2010, 150–63; Mazumdar 2011, 176–77).

A potential third institution are India’s Houses of Parliament, the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, as the Indian Cabinet is drawn from their members and holds office only as long as it enjoys the confidence of the majority. As the Cabinet forms from the party or coalition that enjoys the majority support in at least the lower house, the Lok Sabha, the Parliament generally does not play an active role in the deliberation or implementation of foreign policy. Nonetheless, any diplomatically negotiated bilateral agreement between India and China to resolve the Sino-Indian border dispute would need to be ratified by the Indian Parliament, which traditionally has been hesitant to pass anything sensitive or controversial (Andersen 2011, 266–70; Mazumdar 2011, 171–72; M. P. Singh 2015). Consequently, most Indian governing institutions err on the side of caution, calculating that the safest policy option is to maintain the status quo along the Sino-Indian border lest they overstretch their resources or risk being blamed for poor performances.

The Indian Policymaking Process towards the Sino-Indian border dispute

At the apex of India’s formal policy decision making process with regard to the Sino-Indian border dispute is the CCS, which consists of the Prime Minister and the Ministers for Defence, External Affairs, Home Affairs and Finance. This body meets weekly under normal circumstances to deliberate and come to a consensus over policy decisions pertaining to foreign affairs and national security (Pant 2016, 17; Sikri 2009, 265). However, as with the Politburo in China, the Ministers heading these Indian ministries are normally appointed more for their party or factional loyalties rather than policy expertise.

103 Originally Indian interstate border dispute policy decisions were deliberated by the larger Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs. This committee is still used occasionally when the Prime Minister wants to include more opinions. Each of these Ministers are also assisted by one or two Ministers of State who occasionally also sit in on the Cabinet Committee meetings (Sikri 2009, 265).
Hence, these Ministers are often reliant on information and policies drawn up by their Secretariats, ensuring it is often India’s chief bureaucrats who have more sway over Indian foreign policy than elected officials.

Reflecting the Prime Minister’s central role in all foreign and security policy making, the PMO is the most important policymaking body in Indian foreign policy. The PMO comprises of a number of the top advisors and assistants led by the Principal Secretary who arranges the Prime Minister’s policy agenda and draws up the formal orders for policy decisions. The PMO also works closely with the Cabinet Secretariat, which is tasked with coordinating between the key ministries in order to expedite policy implementation as seamlessly as possible (Government of India 2017; Ogden 2014, 21). While the Cabinet Secretary and Principal Secretary are influential players in the decision games owing to their control of procedures, the PMO and the Cabinet Secretariat are technically not decision-making forums. Instead, these institutions play more of a facilitating role, liaising with the relevant bodies to get policy options or information before convening the relevant committees that make the decisions.

One of the decision-making bodies of note is the Committee of Secretaries, called and chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, though similar meetings are known to be called by the National Security Advisor (NSA) or the Principal Secretary as required. These committees are held periodically either to address a specific policy issue, to coordinate the actions necessary for implementation and/or ensure that all relevant departments have some input into policy decisions (Government of India 2017; Sikri 2009, 266). One of the most important of these committees for deliberating policy towards interstate border disputes, including the Sino-Indian dispute, is the Defence Planning Committee (DPC).
The DPC consists of the Army, Air Force and Navy Chiefs,\textsuperscript{104} the Cabinet Secretary, the Primary Secretary, the Secretaries for External Affairs, Defence, Finance and Research and Development (Cohen and Dasgupta 2010, 5; Ray 2016, 48). Though this committee used to be one of the main means for the bureaucrats to directly shape foreign policy and national security, it appears to have been slowly superseded by the NSCil that was established in 1998. Nonetheless the DPC still plays a pivotal role in the decision making process as a means “for harmonising the positions of different stakeholders in the government before formal decisions are taken” (Sikri 2009, 266).

The NSCil is an adjunct body of the PMO and currently the primary forum for discussing issues of national security, including India’s border disputes with neighbouring states. The NSCil itself includes of the members of the CCS plus the National Security Advisor (NSA) and any other Ministers or advisors that the Prime Minister deems necessary to consult (Babu 2003; Ogden 2014, 22).\textsuperscript{105} In the years following Prime Minister Nehru’s death, the primary policy decision-making body regarding border disputes was the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). The primary role of the JIC was to deliberate upon all security matters affecting India, though it reported directly to the Committee of Secretaries (Dixit 1998, 326). Upon the NSCil’s formation, the JIC organisation was incorporated into the new institution as its Secretariat, although it retained oversight of the intelligence organisations and responsibility to conduct separate intelligence analysis and draw up policy proposals (Babu 2003, 225; P. Kumar 1999, 7).

\textsuperscript{104} In 1955 India abolished the position of Commander in Chief and made the positions of Chief of Army Staff, Chief of Navy Staff and Chief of Air Staff formally equal (Wilkinson 2015, 104–5).

\textsuperscript{105} Originally, the Deputy Chair of the Planning Commission also sat on the NSCil (the chair of the Planning Commission being the Prime Minister). However, in 2014 Narendra Modi dissolved this institution and established the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI), which fulfils similar duties albeit with a focus on local/provincial initiatives rather than centralised planning. It is currently unclear whether the Vice-Chairperson of the NITI has taken the Planning Commission’s seat on the NSCil or whether it was dissolved along with the institution.
Apart from its Secretariat, the NSCil is supported in its deliberations by the Strategic Policy Group (SPC) and the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB). The SPC comprises seventeen heads or representatives of the relevant civilian, military and intelligence agencies that make policy recommendations to the NSCil and conducts periodic reviews of specific security threats. The NSAB in contrast consists of a number of retired officials or otherwise non-government security or foreign policy specialists. The purpose of the NSAB is to provide more general advice, situate the policy discussion with the wider strategic picture and make prognoses on likely future security threats for the NSCil (P. Kumar 1999, 6–8; Ogden 2014, 22). The deliberations of the NSCil and its advice to the Prime Minister are closely guarded state secrets in India. However, as it is primarily staffed by experienced civilian security officials and former military personal, it is highly likely that it champions more hard-line views and rejects making significant compromises.

The first policy action channel towards the Sino-Indian border dispute is India’s legislative system. India is governed as a Westminster style bicameral parliamentary democracy, with the Lok Sabha as the directly elected lower house and the Rajya Sabha being an indirectly elected upper house consisting of members appointed to represent the various states, territories and notable intellectual pursuits. A party or coalition needs to achieve a voting majority in the Lok Sabha to form government. This ensures that when a single party controls at least the Lok Sabha, the legislature has little impact on foreign or border policy, instead acting as more of a public showcase for the government’s policy initiatives (Sikri 2009, 267). The only notable exception to this pattern occurred during the 1962 Sino-Indian border war when Nehru, despite his party having a majority, recalled Parliament for an emergency session to formulate a response to China’s offensive (Chung 2004, 106–7).
However, this dynamic changes significantly when the government is formed from a minority party that relies on its coalition partners to stay in office. In these situations, the debates in the two Houses over foreign policy become more serious as any defections from the governing coalition over policy differences could topple the administration. As such, governments formed in such parliaments are hesitant to embrace any controversial policies towards interstate border disputes, tending to prefer the relatively safer option of maintaining the status quo (Mazumdar 2011, 172). Additionally, as the Indian Parliament is the forum for public deliberation on policy, it has proven to be a perfect arena for opposition parties and critics of the government to pressure the Cabinet. Particularly obstreperous charges over adopting too soft or reckless border strategies can affect public opinion toward the government, forcing them to drop any efforts to compromise or escalate the border dispute (D. Kapur 2009, 289–90; M. P. Singh 2015, 367–68; Smith 2014, 63).

The legislature can potentially also play a more significant role in foreign policy as India’s bureaucratic institutions are formally answerable to a number of parliamentary oversight committees. These committees consist of between 31 and 45 members from a representative spectrum across both Houses of Parliament, excluding Cabinet members, in theory ensuring that they can hold the executive and public service to account (M. P. Singh 2015, 359–60). However, according to the testimonies of several former Indian career officials, most of these parliamentary oversight committees are largely ineffectual. Most parliamentarians are uninterested in foreign affairs and use the committees as arenas to engage in political point scoring or championing their own pet projects (Dixit 1998, 328–31; Menon 2016, 128–30; Sikri 2009, 266–67). Additionally, the defence and external affairs oversight committees appear to be some of the more poorly attended and
unproductive, further sapping their ability to impact policy (Sanyal 2011; M. P. Singh 2015, 360–61).

When formulating a policy towards the Sino-Indian border dispute, Indian decision makers have to keep in mind that ceding of territory and border re-adjustment require amending the Indian Constitution, specifically Part One and Schedule Five that deals with the extent and definition of Indian territory. A constitutional amendment requires a two-thirds majority vote in both chambers of the Indian Parliament (Smith 2014, 62). This may prove difficult for the government, particularly if it is a minority or coalition government. Even a single party majority government may not have the necessary parliamentary strength to push a Constitutional amendment bill through, especially if they do not have majority support in the Rajya Sabha. However, such a task is not impossible and has occurred numerous times throughout India’s history, including the passing bills to resolve interstate border disputes. For example, the Indo-Bangladesh Land Border Agreement was finally ratified in 2015, making it the 119th Amendment Bill the Indian Parliament has passed since the Constitution was adopted in 1950 (Bagchi and TNN 2015).

As most of India’s political parties represent specific regions or parochial interests, only the main national parties, such as the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have comprehensive foreign and security policy platforms.106 The INC originally was, and to a certain extent still remains, a loose alliance of centre-left politicians. However, under Indira Gandhi’s leadership, the INC transformed into a party that was as loyal to the Gandhi dynasty as to its ideals. Indeed, the Gandhi dynasty has remains at the centre of the Congress political machine to today. Though it

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106 The Indian Communist Party has also a developed foreign policy platform that is basically anti-USA and pro-China. However, as it has had negligible impact on the Sino-Indian border dispute, its platform is not discussed here.
still ostensibly champions the concerns of the rural and minority communities, the INC has become primarily associated with corruption, cronyism and ineffective governance, leading to its gradual erosion of electoral success (Maiorano 2015, 48–84; Price 2015, 69–76). The main opposition to the INC has come from the BJP, guided by a centre-right Indian nationalist ideology known as Hindutva. Though BJP opponents consider Hindutva to be mix between religious zealotry and fascism, its proponents argue that it simply champions the consolidation and strengthening of the ‘diverse and multi-faith’ Hindu civilisation (see J. Singh 2007, 67–78 for a more detailed discussion).

Regardless of their ideological differences and agreements, both the Congress and the BJP, as the main national parties, face the pressure of national and provincial elections at regular intervals. Hence, both parties are highly sensitive to the reception that their policies will have amongst the Indian electorate and in the Indian Parliament. While foreign policy issues such as the Sino-Indian border dispute are unlikely to be major issues in elections, political parties are unlikely publicly to support any policy or agreement that could involve humiliating territorial concessions, lest it inflame public opinion and damage their electoral prospects (D. Kapur 2009; Ogden 2014, 27–31). Consequently, a governing party, whether INC or BJP, has proven highly reluctant to table unpopular issues such as territorial concessions, preferring to avoid the issue or maintaining the status quo policies if pressed.

At times, the Indian government’s room to maneuver on sensitive border policy issues is restricted by India’s often sensationalist and jingoistic media outlets (Andersen 2011, 273–74; Baru 2009, 278–82). Concerning the Sino-Indian border dispute, the Indian press and electronic media outlets frequently report PLA activity along the LAC and perceived slights to India from Chinese officials as serious threats to national security. Though Indian officials are typically quick to downplay events and provide carefully
worded press releases, India’s print and electronic media analyses frequently inspire protests from nationalists or posturing from opportunistic politicians. This puts pressure upon government, especially the politicians, making it hard for them to propagate alternative messages and sell more cooperative policies (Chakrabarti 2017; Chowdhury 2016; Jayachandran 2016).

Additionally, such media coverage is clearly having an impact upon the Indian public’s perception of China. Poling throughout the 2000s showed that Indians’ favourable opinion of China rapidly slid from a high of 56% in 2005 to 34% in 2010. Simultaneously there was an increase in Indians’ perception of China as a serious threat to national security (D. Kapur 2009, 291; Pant 2016, 45). This fall in the public perception of China and influence from the media has seen India’s elected officials increasingly signalling that there are limits to what is negotiable with China over the border issue. In sum the various political pressures from the various actors along the legislative action channel has the tendency to make Cabinet instinctively cautious, hesitant to embrace any concessionary policy over contentious issues such as the Sino-Indian border dispute.

The second action channel of note is that of the civilian bureaucracy, headed by the NSCil with a number of different Ministries potentially having input into or otherwise influencing border policy implementation. In regard to border policy implementation, the most prominent and influential institution undoubtedly is the MEA. Although the NSA, not the Foreign Secretary, is the main dignitary that negotiates with the Chinese during SRMs, MEA officials maintain a significant degree of influence over the talks and overall bilateral relations (Routray 2013, 29–30). The Foreign Secretary is also one of the few bureaucrats in India who can expect to have regular direct contact with and influence over the Indian Prime Minister (Dixit 2004, 275–91; Sikri 2009, 269).
Organisationally, the MEA is divided into numerous different divisions or cells mostly relating to regions or special interests. Specifically, the East Asian Desk, headed by a Joint Secretary, and the Boundary Cell have the most impact on India’s Sino-Indian border dispute policies (Ogden 2014, 24; MEA 2016; Routray 2013, 29). By and large, MEA officials have a high degree of autonomy to devise policy, with little effective oversight from Parliament and typically only vague directives from the Prime Minister or the NSCII, unless their specific division is a pet favourite of a central player (M. C. Miller 2013). However, the MEA has been visibly understaffed and often mismanaged, with some estimates putting it at approximately seven times smaller than China’s MFA with most of the staff being allocated to inane tasks or dealing disproportionately with Western countries (Mazumdar 2011, 177; Sikri 2009, 272–73). This lack of resources has intensified intradepartmental competition, which, in turn, has hobbled the MEA’s ability and interest to advocate for more proactive policies vis-à-vis China border dispute (Ogden 2014, 23–25; Sikri 2009, 271–74).

Though it remains the primary institution for dealing with China, MEA has a degree of competition on its action channel from several other civilian bureaucracies for influence and resources. The most notable of these rival institutions are India’s intelligence agencies, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). These organisations are technically overseen by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the PMO respectively, but in practice have a significant degree of autonomy (V. K. Singh 2015; Yadav 2014). However, it is widely recognised that India’s intelligence establishment, despite having sophisticated equipment and many tactical successes, has consistently performed poorly at operational and strategic levels (Ball 1995, 394; Yadav

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107 Sometimes also written as R&AW, which reportedly is the preferred abbreviation of the organisation itself (Shaffer 2015, 252, f.n.1).
Nevertheless, intelligence chiefs have often played a significant role in devising and implementing policy towards the Sino-Indian border dispute. (Hoffmann 1990, 118–19; Maxwell 2013). For instance, the IB Director in the early-1960s, B. N. Mullik, was one of the key central government officials who supported the implementation of Nehru’s Forward Policy. Indeed, Mullik is specifically identified as the one who advised that China was unlikely to use force against Indian positions (Henderson Brooks 1963, 8).

Specifically, the IB had agents participating in India’s border patrols until the 1959 clashes, and was responsible for conducting military intelligence during the Forward Policy and 1962 Sino-Indian border war (Mullik 1971; Shaffer 2015, 257; Yadav 2014, 127–68). The IB still operates closely with the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), conducting surveillance of the border areas and establishing a number of observation posts along the LAC to monitor Chinese operations. Some sources even identify the IB, not the Indian Army, as being responsible for establishing the post in the disputed Thag La region that sparked the 1986-7 border crisis (Deepak 2005, 320). As such, it is likely that the IB typically pushed for more escalatory policies or at least more assertive status quo strategies. However, the IB no longer holds the influence or even monopoly on intelligence gathering that it once did. Following a number of other intelligence debacles, most notably failing to detect Pakistan’s infiltration of fighters into Kashmir before the 1965 War, the RAW was split off from the Intelligence Bureau in September 1968.

The RAW is India’s dedicated external intelligence agency and has taken a greater but more secretive role in India’s border policy vis-à-vis China. Specifically, the RAW has been known to conduct covert operations and operate listening posts in India’s border regions, although their effectiveness can be questioned (Ball 1995, 388; V. K. Singh 2015, 74–80). While RAW’s signals intelligence work along the LAC still continues, it appears that the covert operations were discontinued sometime in the 1990s and have not resumed.
despite requests from the RAW Chief. However, the RAW has continued to maintain the
paramilitary Special Frontier Force (SFF), comprising of mostly ethnic Tibetans, to
conduct surveillance and sabotage behind the LAC. The SSF was active against China
during the 1960s and 1970s, but reportedly has continued to conduct cross-border
operations against China as recently as 2012 (Groffman 2016, 153). Yet, the SSF is also
known to have had its focus increasingly shifted to operations in other neighbouring
countries and internal counter-terrorism operations. Therefore, it is unclear what role, if
any, the SSF plays in India’s policy implementation in the Sino-Indian border dispute
(Rehman 2017, 123–24; Shaffer 2015, 259–61). Nevertheless, the Chiefs of IB and RAW
remain powerful players in the decision game, although the intelligence agencies are
often at loggerheads with their counterparts in the MEA and the Indian military, in part
due to their preference for escalatory policies.

The final significant action channel within the Indian policymaking process
towards the Sino-Indian border dispute is the IAF, in particular the Indian Army. While
the IAF leaders work alongside civilians in the DPC in deliberating border policy, the
military has generally remained aloof from the decision-making process. However, the
IAF has maintained a significant degree of autonomy over policy implementation or
operational matters (Raghavan 2012; Ray 2016). Organisationally, the role of the military
in policymaking is bifurcated between the civilian Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the
military Chiefs of Staff Committee (CSC), the main body through which the three service
chiefs and their assistants coordinate policy implementation (Cohen and Dasgupta 2010,
5; Pant 2016, 18). Of these two sections, the MoD is the more senior, acting as the primary
intermediary between the IAF and the rest of the government. Yet the MoD is staffed

\[^{108}\text{Indeed, Ajit Doval, the recent NSA, was previously the head of the Intelligence Bureau and a long serving member of the organisation. Some commentators believe it is his influence that is responsible for India’s more invigorated intelligence operations in recent years (Groffman 2016, 152–54).}\]
largely by public servants with little direct experience with military affairs and who are mostly concerned with weapons procurement rather than direct oversight of military operations.

Hence, with the exception of the Forward Policy adopted between 1961 and 1962, the IAF personnel have had a fair degree of leeway in implementing the directives from the central leadership bodies (Raghavan 2012, 122–24). In addressing the Sino-Indian border dispute, the primary sections of the IAF currently responsible for implementing the border policies are the Indian Army and the paramilitary ITBP. The ITBP was established in the aftermath of the 1962 Border War to man the frontier check posts and conduct the day-to-day patrolling of the LAC. Though the ITBP was the primary organisation involved in patrolling the LAC during the 1960s and 1970s, it demonstrated little interest in trying to shape Indian border policies. This is in part due to the fact that the ITBP has been under-resourced but also in part because its mission has gradually become more constabulary in nature. Specifically, the ITBP’s primary duties have gradually turned into customs control and the protection of political or government officials in the northern frontier provinces, most of which have rebel insurgencies (Cohen and Dasgupta 2010, 129).

Since Operation Falcon was launched in 1980, the larger and institutionally dominant Indian Army has been forward deploying troops along LAC (Cohen and Dasgupta 2010, 129; TNN 2014b). Wary of a potential repeat of India’s comprehensive defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian border war, the Indian Army has sought to maintain conventional superiority of approximately 3:1 vis-à-vis the PLA along the LAC (Rehman

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109 The Air Force has several air bases in the frontier regions but appears to have had little involvement in Sino-Indian border policy implementation after the 1962 Border War. The Navy does have a detachment of its Marine Commando Force stationed in Jammu and Kashmir but it too has played no noticeable role in implementing Sino-Indian border policies (Rehman 2017, 118).
These Indian soldiers are divided between Northern Command that covers Jammu and Kashmir and Eastern Command that covers Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The current deployment of IAF forces is illustrated in Map 2.7 in Annex B. Additionally, the IAF is engaged in military intelligence gathering along the LAC under the auspices of the multiservice Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA). Unfortunately, little is known about the exact functions and procedures of the DIA, but its main task is most likely to acquire tactical intelligence for the local field commanders and battalion headquarters (Groffman 2016, 151).

The Ministry of External Affairs and the Sino-Indian border dispute

The MEA’s mission, to implement India’s foreign policy abroad, has obviously ensured that it is at the forefront of India’s engagement with China. Owing to its centrality to the negotiating process, the MEA has generally been an advocate for exploring compromises with China or adopting conciliatory policies such as developing confidence building measures or crisis resolution mechanisms (Menon 2016, 7–30).

Initially the MEA was a passive institution dedicated to carrying out Nehru’s policies and visions (Dixit 1998, 322–26; Ogden 2014, 23). However, after the 1962 Sino-Indian border war, the MEA began acquiring increasing autonomy to draft and conduct foreign policy as it saw fit. Additionally the Foreign Secretary became an important player in the policy making process in their own right (Dixit 1998, 325–26; Hoffmann 1990). Today, the MEA stands as one of the most independent and prestigious organisations within the Indian bureaucracy. Indeed, its’ staff professionalism is highly respected and its’ leadership posts coveted, especially the position of Foreign Secretary (Sikri 2009, 269–70).
The MEA maintains direct influence over India’s China border policies decisions by providing central players with raw information as well as a selection of different policy options and analyses. The MEA also has a more passive form of influence through its staff, many of whom go on to serve in the secretariats of the PMO and NSCil as advisors or higher-ranking officials. As such, the MEA’s professionalism and more conciliatory, negotiation focused ethos have become prevalent in the upper echelons of Indian civilian bureaucracy (Malone 2011, 6–7; M. C. Miller 2013; Ogden 2014, 23–24). Yet the MEA’s influence remains at the mercy of the Prime Minister and her/his inner circle. It is not uncommon for MEA’s concerns and propositions to become sidelined should the Prime Minister lack interest in foreign affairs or rely on other advisors (Mazumdar 2011, 176; Pant 2016, 18). The MEA has lost some of its influence over Sino-Indian border policies since the 2003 inception of the SRMs as they propelled the NSCil into becoming the lead agency in conducting border negotiations with the Chinese. Nonetheless, a number of diplomats or border experts from the MEA accompany and advise the NSA during the SRMs, and the MEA still remains the primary facilitator of discussions between the two countries over the disputed border.

Another serious handicap on its ability to influence and implement policy regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute is that the MEA has two basic schools of thought on how to engage with China. The more dovish or cooperatively inclined officials argue that India should try harder to come to an accommodation with China and finalise the border dispute along the lines of the original package deal, often expressing regret that it has been frequently rejected (Garver 2011, 101; Gonsalves 2015, 289). In contrast, more hawkish or nationalist officials view China with scepticism and are more willing to take more inflexible stances and put limits on what is negotiable over India’s claims (Menon 2016, 18). Without any clear direction from the PMO, these competing schools of thought
towards China within the MEA tend to deadlock the negotiation process. Indeed, Sumit Ganguly (1989, 1134) argues that Sino-Indian border negotiations throughout the 1980s failed in part due to this division. More recently, the former Foreign Secretary and later NSA, Shivshankar Menon, also attested that the treaties pacifying the Sino-Indian border in the 1990s were nearly scuttled due to MEA factionalism (2016, 18–33). With the MEA often torn as to what response is best towards the Sino-Indian border dispute, it often defaults to the status quo position of maintaining dialogue without offering concessions.

*The Indian Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence and the Sino-Indian border dispute*

The primary mission of the IAF in general, and the Indian Army in particular, is to defend Indian sovereignty and territorial integrity from “any type of internal and external threats/aggression” (HIDS-MoD 2017, 3). As India formally claims that the Aksai Chin is under Chinese occupation, theoretically we should expect the IAF to be the one of the institutions most in favour of escalatory policies to rectify this threat to territorial control. Additionally, one would expect the Indian military should be one of the prominent policymaking institutions concerning India’s border disputes, having a role at both the decision-making and implantation phase. To a certain extent this is true. The IAF, as a professional military organisation, holds a significant degree of influence in policy deliberations over matters of national security and Indian Prime Ministers typically follow the advice provided by their generals (Raghavan 2012, 127–30). The IAF is able to coordinate policy through the CSC and has representatives on several key decision making bodies, namely the DPC and the NSCil, which generally are believed to advocate for an assertive/firm stance towards India’s rivals (Cohen and Dasgupta 2010, 5–8).

In practice, however, the IAF’s influence over India’s Sino-Indian border policy deliberations is limited and it has developed a more cautious ethos, preferring to maintain
the *status quo* towards the LAC. This is due to the deliberate efforts by the civilian authorities of India since independence to weaken the IAF as an independent body in order to ‘coup proof’ the country. Originally, this was achieved through letting the IAF atrophy in terms of its capabilities whilst keeping its leadership, in the words of Krishna Menon, ‘on a tight leash’.\(^{110}\) In essence, this policy involved favouring political servility over independent thinking and competence for promotions, maintaining strong paramilitary forces as a potential counter and keeping existing and retired officers under surveillance (Wilkinson 2015, 138–43). The civilian control over the armed forces was cemented in 1953 when the Indian government conducted significant organisational reforms of the IAF command structure. The most significant of these reforms was the abolition of the position of Commander in Chief of the IAF. Without a strong leader of the IAF, all three services were to operate independently on an organisationally equal footing allowing the civilian government to adopt a ‘divide and rule’ approach to keep the military in line (Ray 2016, 48–49; Wilkinson 2015, 19–26, 101–6).

This civilian control over the IAF reached its apex between 1959 and 1962. During this period Nehru and Menon widely interfered in military affairs, promoting politically loyal officers such as Lieutenant General B. M. Kaul\(^ {111}\) and even deciding locations for border posts during the Forward Policy (Cohen and Dasgupta 2010, 7; Maxwell 2001, 1190–91). However, with the PLA’s comprehensive victory over India in the 1962 war, the inefficacies of this approach were exposed and the military-civilian dynamics quickly

\(^{110}\) As Nehru’s close advisor, friend and a longstanding member of the Indian Congress, Menon was brought into the Cabinet as a Minister without a Portfolio in 1952 and was eventually made Minister of Defence in 1957. Menon was mostly known for his brusque manner and acerbic wit that made him many enemies. He was eventually forced to resign in late October 1962 as a result of Indian Army failures in the ongoing Sino-Indian Border War (Dixit 2004, 152–58).

\(^{111}\) Technically Kaul only rose to become Chief of General Staff of the Indian Army and was placed in command of the Fourth Corps that was garrisoned in Arunachal Pradesh. However, the Chief of Army Staff, General Thapar, often deferred to and was effectively dominated by Kaul (Maxwell 2001). See Chapter Two for more details.
changed. Specifically, the IAF has acquired more autonomy over operational matters that it uses to maintain the status quo and resist any adventurist policies from New Delhi. Indeed, signs of this new dynamic occurred as early as 1963 when Kaul’s replacements, General J.N. Chaudhuri and Lieutenant General Manekshaw, successfully ignored Nehru’s order to move the Army back into NEFA on the basis of operational concerns (Raghavan 2012, 121–22).

In spite of the IAF’s growing autonomy, India’s civilian authorities have managed to maintain their authority over the IAF, ensuring that Indian officers remain loyal to the civilian government and at least no general ‘gets ideas above their station’ (Wilkinson 2015, 130). The main institution used to ensure the IAF’s obedience to the civilian government is the MoD. The MoD mostly oversees logistical support and weapons procurement efforts but also ensures that the IAF remains divided enough not to pose a threat to Indian democracy (Cohen and Dasgupta 2010, 5). The clearest manifestation of this mission is the MoD’s consistent rejection of calls from the military or hawkish politicians to establish more unified military command, especially initiatives to re-establish the post of Commander in Chief (Ray 2016, 57–58; Wilkinson 2015, 154–55). This loss of having a powerful player directly representing the IAF’s interest during policy deliberations notably constrains the military’s influence over policy. Additionally, the MoD often seeks to compel the IAF to adhere to government policy, especially the longstanding stance of ‘strategic constraint’, whenever it considers the military to be drifting out of line.

One notable example of the MoD’s check on IAF ambitions regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute is its refusal to officially sanction Operation Falcon, during which the Indian Army redeployed along the LAC in 1980. The MoD argues that it was not a formally declared operation and that the LAC is “not a live border”. Yet the unspoken
concern appears to be the potential for Army adventurism should it sanction the operation and give the troops ‘operational cover’ (TNN 2014a). The Defence Secretary is also involved in a lot of the military-to-military negotiations or dialogues including officially overseeing the ‘Hand-in-Hand’ Joint Military Exercises that have become an important confidence building measure between the Chinese and Indian forces (MEA 2016; B. K. Singh 2008, 10–11). On the IAF’s part, all of its services have considered it within their interest to reduce the oversight of the MoD and other civilian bodies to a minimum lest they begin to interfere in military operations again. For instance, the IAF has resisted several efforts to merge the Joint Services Committee into the MoD and frequently seeks to expose the civilians’ lack of interest in and knowledge of military matters (Raghavan 2012, 127–29). This allows the Army to directly argue for or against those policies that challenge their preferred policy of maintaining the status quo along the LAC.

Apart from civilian-military tensions, there are a number of other interests conflicting within the IAF that have detracted from its ability and willingness to contemplate compromise or escalation policies towards the Sino-Indian border dispute. First and foremost is the focus on Pakistan as the primary threat by the IAF and the Indian Army in particular. Although power asymmetries between China and India clearly worry military officials, a large part of their modernisation efforts and operational planning is dedicated to finding ways to deter or counter threats from Pakistan. Indeed, in comparison with the development of strategies such as ‘Cold Start’ and ‘Massive Retaliation’ to deal with threats from Pakistan, the IAF has ostensibly not engaged in sophisticated strategic planning in the event of hostilities with China (Cohen and Dasgupta 2010, 68; R. Ganguly 2015, 197–98). Until recently, the Indian Army assumed that any Chinese attack would utilise a massed infantry offensive that would push to the heart of India despite evident changes in PLA doctrine (see Fravel 2007). Thus, the Army deliberately avoided
constructing infrastructure near the LAC in a bid to hamper any Chinese assault and buy time for the Army to develop defensive positions and mobilise a strike force (A. Bhalla 2016; Scott 2008a, 8).

This doctrine appears to have been rethought sometime in the mid-2000s after IAF officers recognised that any conflict with China would likely be limited to the border regions and at least involve the PLA Air Force alongside the PLA infantry. In response, the IAF has begun to explore more assertive ways to maintain the status quo; experimenting with an ‘offensive defence’ doctrine, also known as the ‘cross-border riposte’ strategy. This strategy requires the Indian Army to avoid efforts to dislodge Chinese forces from their gains and instead to make rapid countermoves to seize sections of Chinese territory in order to threaten the PLA’s supply lines (Rehman 2017, 112–14). A sign of this change in thinking is evidenced by the Indian Army’s lobbying for improvements to the infrastructure leading up to the LAC and the formation of a Mountain Strike Corps tasked with proactively engaging Chinese forces. However, these innovations still appear to be in the conceptual phase as other priorities and financial constraints remain a distraction (Rehman 2017, 115). The recent IAF doctrinal white paper has done little to illuminate or expound upon Indian military thinking in this area, simply stating that “the philosophy of pro-active defence is most suited for India” (HIDS-MoD 2017, 19–20).

A second factor is the various inter-service and factional rivalries within the IAF. The Indian Army, which is responsible for the securing the LAC, comprises over 50 per cent of the IAF’s size. Yet, as mentioned above, the Army remains formally equal to the Air Force and Navy in decision-making authority. Even with the marked increase in military spending following the 1962 Border War, the Indian Air Force and Navy inherently require significant funds to acquire and operate their combat platforms. As a

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result, the Indian Army is often short of finances and materials, needing to compete bitterly with the other services for more resources (Cohen and Dasgupta 2010, 150-152). One notable recent casualty of financial constraints has been the Army’s Mountain Strike Corps, which was formed and began training recruits in 2013 but by 2015 was halved in size to cut expenditure (Rehman 2017, 115).

Additionally, despite the existence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee meant to oversee IAF coordination, the various services have developed increasingly different ethos. These divergences in understanding of their role in the IAF mission has impaired the three services’ ability to cooperate effectively and sparked several operational turf wars. Of particular concern for an Sino-Indian border policy, the Indian Air Force’s focus on establishing air defence and conducting strategic strikes clashes with the Army’s increasing doctrinal turn towards fighting limited wars and use of special forces (Cohen and Dasgupta 2010, 151; Ray 2016, 58). Indeed, the consequence of a lack of inter-service cooperation was demonstrated in the implementation of the Forward Policy in 1962. According to Brigadier Delvi, a field commander during the war, a leading cause of the Army’s undersupply was the farcical miscommunications between an Air Force reluctant to airlift equipment and an Army determined to man remote locations (Dalvi 1969, 81–82, 98–100). Such interoperability difficulties have further hampered the IAF’s enthusiasm for any significant escalatory policies by ensuring that they remain cognisant of the severe logistical difficulties involved in such an approach.

Concluding remarks

As the above analysis reveals, even in states with highly centralised policymaking procedures, such as China and India, governing institutions play a big role in interstate border dispute policies. In particular, intra- and inter-institutional rivalries and struggles
over the limited resources of the state often influence the formation and implementation of border policies. The various institutions’ differing missions and cultures often engenders a bitter competition over power, influence and jurisdictional turf as each institution or section advocates for policies that pose the least risk to its own interests. Thus, for completely different reasons, these governing institutions often either paralyse policy decision-making or implementation towards the Sino-Indian border dispute or actively favour status quo policies over compromising or escalating.

Both within China and India, the major governing institutions that have been able to influence border policy have included the civilian diplomatic and security bureaucracy, governing political parties, and the armed forces. For China, although the CCP effectively permeates the state’s governing apparatus, it is usually focused on the domestic and economic policies it needs to legitimise its rule. These concerns, coupled with factional rivalry within the Party often spoiling initiatives, ensure that CCP typically avoids adopting overly adventurist foreign policies including towards the Sino-Indian border dispute. The MFA, as China’s main diplomatic institution, is typically in favour of compromise policies regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute. However, numerous other priorities and challenges from other institutions have ensured that the MFA’s influence over policy decisions has been limited. For its part, the PLA typically prefers more assertive policies as the best way to ensure China’s territorial integrity. However, the Sino-Indian border dispute specifically is relatively low on its priorities list. As no institution in China is willing or able to expend the political capital to push for more assertive or conciliatory policies, maintaining the status quo along the border is the default policy.

On the Indian side, the CCS and NSCil are the forums where the foreign and security policies, including towards the Sino-Indian border dispute, are deliberated. Though most Indian institutions have little direct input into the policy deliberations, the
central institutions are influenced by the domestic legislature, civilian bureaucracies and Indian military, all of which are needed to some degree to implement the policies. The boisterous and occasionally obstructive legislative process in India often ensures that the Cabinet remains conscious of the political ramifications, making officials instinctively cautious regarding contentious policy. The MEA for its part is typically weakened by official neglect and remains divided as to whether India should adopt conciliatory or hard-line policies towards the Sino-Indian border dispute. The IAF remains generally in favour of maintaining the status quo along the LAC, albeit with increasing assertiveness. With no governing institution considering it worthwhile insisting in a compromise or escalation policy, India also retains the status quo as its default policy towards the Sino-Indian border dispute.

Yet, despite all of the differences of opinion that the various governing institutions and their officials hold, they still share some common values and a consensus of what is in their state’s national interest. Indeed, many of these internal disagreements over which policy towards an interstate border dispute to adopt are typically over competing views on how best to accomplish the national interest (Hilsman 1993, 86–87; Ripsman 2009, 172–73). It is important to note too that the state officials deliberating on policies towards the Sino-Indian border dispute are not doing so in an information vacuum but are aware of other international considerations. As these factors provide the framework for foreign policy elites of what is possible, they are effectively the last piece of the puzzle behind the Sino-Indian border dispute’s intractability and hence will be investigated in detail in the next chapter.
Chapter Five:

The Third Level of Analysis: The Interests of the State and the Sino-Indian Border Dispute
Introduction

In Chapters Three and Four, I have highlighted how top state leaders and governing institutions, acting to protect their own interests, use their significant agency in shaping a state’s border policy. I have argued essentially that top state leaders and governing institutions prefer to support maintaining the status quo when confronted with an interstate border dispute because the other two options, compromise and escalation, are deemed to be a hindrance to their interests. In this chapter, I argue that the core interests of the State, operating as an autonomous actor in an anarchical and self-help international system, militate against following policies of compromise or escalation towards interstate border disputes. In other words, I will argue that the State’s core interests are best protected by following a policy of status quo maintenance vis-à-vis an interstate border dispute. The core interests of the State largely revolve around the state’s survival as a territorial and political community and its freedom to operate within the international system. As the international system functions under conditions of anarchy, no state is safe from potential predation from other states ensuring that all interactions with other states involve a significant degree of risk, especially if they share a border dispute.

The State as an independent actor in international relations has several core interests that will shape its behaviour towards any interstate border dispute with a neighbouring state. The most important core interest of the State is its security, specifically protection from physical attack or territorial encroachment so it can survive as a territorial and political entity. Beyond survival, a State’s core interests may also encompass broader concerns such as maintaining its autonomy or protecting and enhancing its prestige in international relations relative to other states. A State’s involvement in an interstate border dispute may become intrinsically entwined with its core interests.
In order to explore these state interests in the context of international relations, this chapter is broken down into the two sections. The first section uses realist theory to explore the national interests that states may consider when formulating a policy response to an interstate border dispute. These national interests may include the disputed territory’s tangible and intangible value, the geopolitical environment within which the State has to operate, and the potential impact of the border dispute upon international norms that states hold dear. The second section addresses the specific national interests of China and India and how the Sino-Indian border dispute fits into their national interest calculations. Highlighting China and India’s specific situation and concerns reveals why it is not in either state’s interest to resolve the Sino-Indian border dispute lest it inadvertently give away some advantage needed to maintain its national interest.

**Systemic factors and intractable interstate border disputes:**

As argued in Chapter One, the most effective realist approach for discussing interstate border disputes is neoclassical realism. While neoclassical realism does recognise the importance of the state leader and other domestic actors in shaping foreign policy, it is acknowledged that they do so within the framework of international system constraints (Kunz and Saltzman 2012, 97–98; Rathbun 2008, 304–11). The structural constraints facing the State primarily stem from the fact that the international system operates under conditions of anarchy. This anarchic environment generates two crucial concerns of which the State must always remain cognisant. The first is that, without any higher authority to protect it, the State must provide its own security by accruing the power to defend itself and its interests. The second is that, as there is no higher authority to restrain other states from seizing what they need, the State faces threats to its security potentially from all of its neighbours. These structural conditions influence the way states understand their
national interests, specifically driving them to be eternally alert for dangers and pursuing power as a means to counteract them (Reichwein 2012, 38–39; Waltz 2008, 59).

These structural conditions pressure the State to focus on protecting its territorial integrity, which it considers to be second only to its continued political survival. Thus with such a premium on territorial integrity, an interstate border dispute is guaranteed to be considered a serious threat (Huth 1996, 40–41; Mearsheimer 2014, 31). In theory, this should ensure that the State has little incentive to compromise over its border disputes and would be reluctant to surrender its territorial claims unless other circumstances compel it to. This is true to a certain extent as is discussed below. Yet several studies have also shown that the incessantly shifting balance of power in international relations has often encouraged territorial settlements, either by exchanging territory or trading the disputed territory for some other political or security gains (Gibler 1999, 187–95; Huth 1996, 154–55).

Another logical assumption is that a State can resolve a border dispute by simply forcing its rival to cede the disputed territory via escalation tactics as the only constraints on a State’s actions are what it calculates it can accomplish. However, studies have shown that escalation strategies are actually rare. While approximately a third of all disputes will involve some form of escalatory behaviour, most of these will be threats or propaganda with only between 6 and 11 percent actually involving militarised activity (Huth 1996, 103; Vasquez 2009, 343–46, 423–26; Wiegand 2011, 13).

The answers to why the State often finds status quo maintenance policies preferable are suggested by neoclassical realism’s understanding of the international system itself. A neoclassical realist understanding of the international system’s constraints of the system differs from other realist, especially structural or neo-realist, understandings in two key ways. The first is on how the State assesses threats. Structural realists especially
primarily focus on great power politics and assume that States are relatively clear as to where threats to their security emanate. In contrast, neoclassical realists argue that the State is actually far more uncertain about the current international situation and therefore it mostly seeks to control or shape its immediate environment, also known as the sub-system level (Lobell 2009, 49–50; Reichwein 2012, 40–41; Rose 1998, 151–52). This logic is reinforced for those states with interstate border disputes. The threat to the State’s territorial integrity ensures that it remains focused on the sub-system and will look for means to ensure its security. However, the uncertain international environment makes the State naturally hesitant to escalate in most situations as it cannot be sure of its ability to control events and is concerned it could be defeated or otherwise weaken its overall geopolitical position (Huth 1996, 35–41, 119–22; Vasquez 1995).

The second key understanding is how neoclassical realists assess power in the international system. Structural realists understand power to be nearly exclusively concerned with material capabilities, measured in military and economic terms. In contrast, neoclassical realists recognise these material capabilities are a central factor of power but acknowledge that there are other forms of power that are just as effective and sought after (Schmidt and Juneau 2012, 67–68; Sherrill and Hough 2015, 256). Material capabilities are of particular use in ensuring the State’s continued survival and therefore cannot be neglected. Yet most states, including those with interstate border disputes, at any given time are not exposed to a direct existential threat. Hence the State is able to devote some energy pursuing other interests, such as enhancing national prestige or striving to achieve some ideological goals (Brown 2012, 860–61; Onea 2012, 145–46). The number of different national interest considerations that a State takes into account when it considers action towards an interstate border dispute often ensures that
compromise and escalation options are considered unacceptable as they will unacceptably affect one or more of these interests.

Ultimately, with the international environment and its various national interests usually ruling out compromise or escalation strategies towards an interstate border dispute, maintaining the status quo becomes the State’s default position. Specifically, there are three, often interconnected, considerations that influence the State’s calculations on interstate border disputes: the value of the disputed territory, the geopolitical environment within which the state has to operate, and the norms of operation within the international system particularly surrounding the state’s prestige and sovereignty.

*The value of the territory*

The disputed territory itself effectively has two types of value or salience: tangible and/or intangible. The tangible value of the disputed territory involves the physical utility of the land itself, especially in terms of its strategic/military value and economic value (Newman 1999, 5–11; Wiegand 2011, 23–24). Such territory provides the raw resources that the State can draw upon to defend itself or supplement its military. Hence, tangibly valuable territory is usually considered a vital national security asset by the State. Typical examples of economically valuable territory include factors such as an abundance of arable land, exploitable resources such as iron ore, oil or timber, and its proximity to important trade/transportation routes. Regarding militarily/strategically valuable territory, examples would include tactically useful terrain such as hills, forests mountain passes and/or other natural pathways that can be used to disrupt enemy armies or otherwise provide an advantage to the State’s own forces. Strategically valuable territory can also include areas that provide a ‘buffer’ or ‘strategic depth’ for the State. Such territory is valuable as increases the distance between a state’s borders and sensitive regions, such as key
population centres and/or economically vital areas, thereby allowing the State more time to react (Gibler 2012, 14; Goertz and Diehl 1992, 14–20; Hensel and Mitchell 2005, 275–77).

Theoretically, territory with tangible value can be equitably divided or jointly administered as a condominium. However, in practice, states are normally loath to share with any other state an advantage, ensuring that any question over the control of the territory becomes a zero-sum game. Economically valuable territory has proven the easiest over which states may negotiate a compromise but only when the border dispute has no other values or interests associated with it (Huth 1996, 153–54; Wiegand 2011, 27–30). In contrast, states especially covet defensively or offensively useful terrain that can be used to protect their heartlands or project their military power. As such, states have proven to be particularly sensitive and highly reluctant to compromise over interstate border disputes that include such militarily/strategically valuable territory (Huth 1996, 146–47; Toft 2014, 187–88).

In contrast, a disputed territory has intangible value when the land itself is valued by the State for some sentimental reason. There are two prominent types of intangible value identified within the literature on border disputes, both of which may create powerful irredentist claims. The first type occurs when the disputed territory is inhabited by an ethnic group whose members share kinship affinity with one of the challenging states. The challenging state may then develop irredentist sentiments towards the disputed territory based on these ethnic kinship ties. The second type of intangible value occurs when one of the challenging states regards the disputed territory as a ‘lost part’ of its

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112 Indeed, most condominiums historically have been short lived with at least one side seeking to expel the other once the events that compelled them to accept a joint sovereignty has passed. Most condominiums in existence today are in Europe and typically involving non-salient territory such as remote river sections or uninhabited islands (Jacobs 2012).

These intangible claims are often hard to prove empirically as they are typically based upon national myths or a selective reading of history. Nonetheless, irredentist claims based on sentimental or emotional arguments often find resonance with the public, which can constrain the State’s ability to compromise. Specifically, any State with a strong sentimental attachment to a specific disputed territory finds it difficult to contemplate relinquishing its claim or dividing the territory with a rival as this would likely ruin what makes the territory sacred to it (Hensel and Mitchell 2005, 277; Newman 1999, 13–14). With territorial adjustments unacceptable to at least one state and the rival claimant likely unwilling to relinquish its own claim to control the entire territory, compromise solutions regarding disputed territory with intangible value become nearly impossible (Huth 1996, 78–79; Toft 2014, 189–90).

*The geopolitical environment*

Concerns over a rival’s encroachment onto valuable territory aside, the State also needs to be alert to the broader strategic picture so as to be aware of other threats to which it may need to respond. Whether on a global or regional scale, states involved in interstate border disputes are affected by a number of other national interest concerns ranging from arms races to alliance politics to interstate rivalries to trade imbalances. Within this milieu of national interests, the state’s border policy simply becomes one concern amongst many and likely not the most salient issue. Thus, it is rare for an interstate border dispute to be dealt with independent from the wider context. As argued above, the geopolitical environment generally has a mollifying effect on State behaviour towards interstate border disputes, lest adventurous policies endanger national interests elsewhere. Hence,
compromise and especially escalation policies tend to be ruled out, leaving the State with maintaining the status quo as the safest option.

Specifically, a State can associate its border dispute with its geopolitical situation in two ways: by linking the interstate border dispute to the State’s geopolitical situation or by linking some other national interest concerns to it. When an interstate border dispute is linked to the greater geopolitical situation, the states in question look for whether a ‘window of opportunity’ for certain action is opening or closing. Without such a window, or should action still be judged too risky, the default policy is to retain the status quo (Fravel 2008, 30–35). When other issues of national interest are linked to the interstate border dispute, the dispute becomes a tool for the state to use as leverage, typically via coercive diplomacy (Wiegand 2011).

**Windows of Opportunity**

A window of opportunity ‘opens’ when a number of factors converge to create a temporary advantage that a disputant can exploit. Such an opening is normally caused by a perceived or actual fluctuation in the balance of power, whether short and localised or longer and more system wide (Lebow 1984, 147; Van Evera 1999, 5). Concerning an interstate border dispute, there are two types of windows of opportunity that a State can use to alter the status quo and convince or compel its rival to compromise or acquiesce to the State’s position. The first is a window for escalatory policies, which may open for a disputant if the rival state’s military capacity to defend its territorial claims is reduced somehow. In such situations, the disputing state may try to achieve a fait accompli by seizing the disputed territory, consolidate its hold over the disputed territory it controls or otherwise engage in actions to undermine the rival state’s claim/hold over the area (Fravel 2008, 30–31; Van Evera 1998, 9–10).
The second is a window for compromise, which may open when extenuating circumstances prompt a shift in a State’s border negotiating position or approach, making it more amenable to concessions. Such situations provide an opportunity to reinvigorate border negotiations and open up opportunities for the rival states to quietly resolve their border dispute. Indeed, as a number of studies have shown, such shifts in the geopolitical situation tend to incentivise disputing states to recalibrate their territorial claims or alter their negotiating position to gain international support or focus resources on some more pressing problem facing the State and its leadership (Fravel 2008, 20–24; Huth 1996, 154–59).

Although windows of opportunity offer a potential way to resolve a dispute, the linking of an interstate border dispute with wider national interests more frequently ensures that the status quo is maintained and that the dispute will in fact remain intractable. Three reasons can be put forward for this argument. Firstly, when a state is contemplating whether to take advantage of a window of opportunity, it may seek to weigh the costs and benefits of action in light of its broader national interests. Should a State calculate that expending the resources necessary to take advantage of an opportunity would not be cost effective or would weigh too heavily on other, more vital, interests, then it will neglect to act, ensuring that the border dispute remains frozen (Lebow 1984). Secondly, should a window open to resolve the border dispute, then both states’ interests need to align for the window to be exploited. Should one state calculate that it could get a better deal in the future or that the offer is otherwise not in its interests, then it will seek to delay an agreement and obfuscate the negotiations, thereby keeping the interstate border dispute intractable (Van Evera 1999, 80–81).

Finally, if a State uses a window of opportunity to pursue an escalatory policy towards the border dispute, it may be able to seize and consolidate control over the
disputed territory it desires. However, such actions will typically come at the cost of antagonising the rival state. The rival state will likely become less inclined to agree to negotiations, let alone agree to compromises, thereby ensuring that the border dispute becomes intractable at least for the immediate future (Zacher 2001). Additionally, states trying to take advantage of a window of opportunity for escalatory action may end up actually generating a security dilemma. By attempting to secure its territory, a state would not only prompt its rival to dig in its heels during negotiations but also similarly attempt to strengthen its own grip on the territory it holds before the opportunity to do so passes (Garver 2002; Joshi 2011).

**Diplomatic leverage**

A state can also explicitly or implicitly link another national interest concern to the resolution of the interstate border dispute. The logic behind this strategy is that the State can effectively use one issue, in this case the border dispute, as leverage in order to gain concessions in areas where it otherwise would have difficulty gaining traction (Leebron 2002, 11–14). As Krista Wiegand (2009, 173–75, 2011, 41–68) notes, this strategy of utilising an interstate border dispute for diplomatic leverage has both positive and negative manifestations. The positive manifestation is to utilise the border dispute as a bargaining chip, trading territorial concessions in order to acquire some benefits or privileges in another arena. However, the key issue with using territorial claims as a bargaining chip in negotiations is that if the rival claimant is not willing to engage in a *quid pro quo* compromise, then the negotiations become deadlocked. In such cases, the resolution of the border dispute until both sides are ready to make a deal or the issue otherwise becomes irrelevant and the territorial claim is dropped (Leebron 2002; Wiegand 2011, 48–49).

In contrast, the negative manifestations occur when the State utilises the border as a tool for coercive diplomacy. This involves a State conducting low-level escalation
policies regarding the border dispute in order to needle its rival and increase the pressure on it. However, the aim of coercive diplomacy is not to force the rival state to cede territory but to compel it to change its policy in some other area (Lauren 1994; Schelling 1966, 70–73). Examples of coercive diplomacy may include a State dispatching patrols into the disputed territory, closing the disputed area to civilian traffic or publicly pressing claims at sensitive times for the rival state (Wiegand 2009, 174). Although examples of coercive diplomacy are easy to identify, tangible positive gains by the coercer are often hard to demonstrate. Rival states may not comply, at least publicly, with the coercer’s demands for a number of reasons. One reason may be that the coerced state may have a high threshold for suffering the pressure. Another is that the coercer’s desired outcomes may be too ambiguous or ambitious, ensuring that the target state cannot comply even if it wanted to. Alternatively the rival state may consider compliance will result in an unacceptable loss of reputation or face (S. Ganguly and Kraig 2005, 294–95; Sechser 2010).

Should the target refuse to comply with the coercion efforts and stand firm, then the negotiations over the issue will become stalemated. As the coercing state has no reason to pursue further escalation and the targeted state is unlikely to want to risk significant conflict, status quoist policies will resume, albeit with higher bilateral tensions (Huth and Allee 2002, 53–54). Nonetheless, the coercing state may find that the interstate border dispute simply provides too useful a platform to apply pressure at will, thereby allowing it to manipulate its rival into adopting a desirable policy. Should this strategy prove effective, the coercing state would naturally be reluctant to relinquish the border dispute as a diplomatic tool, short of complete acquiesce to its territorial claims (Wiegand 2011, 63). Thus, should the rival state appear willing to compromise or otherwise make a deal,
the coercing state would seek some further demands to ensure that negotiations reach an impasse and the *status quo* is maintained lest it lose its diplomatic leverage.

*Normative factors*

The final international factor is one that is often overlooked in analyses of interstate border disputes: the state’s normative concerns, especially regarding its national prestige and sovereignty. Owing to this neglect, both the definition of these international norms and an understanding of how they influence state behaviour towards interstate border disputes remain unclear in the literature. Hence, a clear definition of what national prestige and sovereignty entails is needed before the logic of their impact on interstate border disputes can understood.

**National prestige**

National prestige is defined here as the public recognition of, and respect for, a state’s importance within the international sphere, as reflected in its achievements, qualities, capacities or character. Hence, national prestige is closely linked, if not synonymous, with concepts such as eminence, grandeur and status\(^{113}\) as well as having a strong symbiotic relationship with a state’s honour, respect, reputation and pride (Renshon 2015, 662–63; Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth 2014, 7–17; Markey 1999, 133–36). In other words, national prestige is a complex psychological phenomenon that is cultivated in and derived from a state’s political relationships with other states (Freedman 2016, 800; Van Dyke 1969, 160–61; Wood 2013, 388).

\(^{113}\) Some scholars identify conceptual distinctions between prestige and status (Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth 2014, 7–17). However, I side with those scholars who consider the two as effectively synonymous as there is little to no difference in how the two concepts function in practice (Mercer 2017, 136; Renshon 2015, 663). I have deliberately chosen the term ‘national prestige’ here instead of the more popular term ‘status’ in order to avoid any confusion as the word status has several meanings whilst prestige has only one.
National prestige primarily appears in the diplomatic arena when it is used to establish an informal hierarchy amongst the states and allow governments to identify their ‘peer group’, or those states to which they consider themselves equal (Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth 2014, 376–79; Larson and Shevchenko 2010, 68–70; Morgenthau 1973, 75–81). Hence, states attempting to enhance or maintain their prestige will consciously seek status symbols or behave in a certain manner they believe will enhance their esteem in the eyes of others. The sources of national prestige are highly varied, ranging from military strength to intellectual achievements to diplomatic or economic acumen. For example, states may acquire major military assets such as aircraft carriers or nuclear weapons that go beyond what is required to meet their security needs, launch space programmes, host major international events, encourage and promote the intellectual and cultural/artistic pursuits of their citizens or conduct proactive foreign policies such as foreign aid projects and advocating certain norms (Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth 2014, 20–23; O’Neill 1999, 195; Van Dyke 1969, 161–63).

When national prestige becomes a factor in an interstate border dispute, the dispute becomes not so much about the territory in question but about how the state is being treated by its rival claimant. The degree to which national prestige will become an issue in an interstate border dispute, or any other issue for that matter, can be loosely measured in terms of ‘face’. In essence, face is the public treatment or deference a state can expect based upon its position within the hierarchy of states. A state’s face is generally considered to be lost when a state is publicly forced to accede to another’s will or is otherwise humiliated, especially by a state that is considered inferior in rank. Face is saved or gained when a state is able at least publicly to appear to have negotiated a good deal for itself or successfully demonstrated resolve when confronted with a threat (O’Neill 1999, 139–40; Schelling 1966, 116–24).
Scholars disagree as to the extent that a setback or slight will actually damage a state’s overall prestige or affect other states’ decision making (Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth 2014, 382–85; Mearsheimer 2014, 82–86). Nonetheless, it is clear that most states are concerned with saving face, believing that a loss of face will affect their ability to influence international affairs and potentially invite other tests of their resolve or strength. Hence, in border negotiations, when at least one side believes that accepting a deal will result in an avoidable loss of face, it will tend to insist unflinchingly upon its own incompatible positions, thus ensuring a deadlock (Hensel and Mitchell 2005, 276).

This situation often becomes exacerbated should at least one party in an interstate border dispute believe that there is an imbalance between its self-perceived national prestige and the deference or respect shown by its rival claimant. While many states feel that there is degree of disparity in this regard, some appear to be perennially dissatisfied or overly sensitive with the level of respect that they receive. Such states, especially if they are rising or declining great powers, typically have a strong sense of entitlement and are often a destabilising influence on international affairs as they seek to address this perceived imbalance (Volgy et al. 2014, 60–64; Wallace 1973). This situation most frequently occurs when one of the states in question considers itself equal to its higher ranked rival. As William Wohlforth explains:

relative status concerns will come to the fore when status hierarchy is ambiguous…the more closely matched actors are [in capabilities], the more likely they are to experience uncertainty about relative rank…Since both high- and low-status actors are biased towards higher status, uncertainty fosters conflict as the same evidence feeds contradictory expectations and claims (2009, 38–39).
When a state experiencing such dissonance is involved in an interstate border dispute, it tends to obstinately stand its ground in negotiations, believing that any compromise will diminish its national prestige and that its rival’s claim is primarily derived from disrespect. This typically results the state demanding that its own territorial claims be recognised, at least in principle, and taking umbrage at otherwise innocuous behaviour, including seemingly reasonable compromise offers (Larson, Paul, and Wohlfforth 2014, 24–25). For the rival claimant, this stance is often unacceptable, potentially even insulting, encouraging it to establish firmer non-negotiable positions of its own in order to avoid losing face (Morgenthau 1973, 76–81; Wallace 1973; Wood 2013, 403–4).

**National Sovereignty**

What exactly national sovereignty entails has been the subject of prominent debate for centuries. In essence, national sovereignty, also known as Westphalian sovereignty, refers to the claim by a state, recognised by other sovereign states, to be the exclusive political authority within a specific territory (Hayman and Williams 2006; Krasner 1999, 20–21). In other words, a sovereign state should expect its laws to be adhered to within its territorial bounds by its citizens and that its internal affairs are free from external interference. This norm effectively underpins the current international system, providing the understanding that every state, regardless of its place in the informal hierarchy established by prestige, is formally equal (Jackson 1999, 10–11; Lapidoth 1992, 329–31).

This is not to suggest that national sovereignty is universally adhered to or has been the basis for international relations from time immemorial. Indeed, many scholars argue that the norm of national sovereignty articulated above is simply the understanding of sovereignty that emerged in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century and it is likely undergoing another metamorphosis (Jackson 1999, 13–22; Lapidoth 1992, 335–36;
Makinda 1998). Additionally, it is especially important to recognise that national sovereignty as a norm has been embraced in principle by the international community but frequently violated in practice (Glanville 2013). Indeed, this fact has led one of the most prolific scholars on sovereignty, Stephen Krasner (1999), to famously declare that sovereignty should be considered to be ‘organised hypocrisy’ rather than a set of binding principles.

The sovereignty norm factors into interstate border disputes for the simple reason that a state’s international border literally indicates where its sovereignty ends and relations with other sovereign states begin. Hence the border’s location is a matter of extreme importance for states, even if they are incapable of extending their physical control or presence to the area, as states are typically unwilling to alter or tolerate challenges to their areas of jurisdiction. This situation has been exacerbated by the development of the related ‘border fixity’ norm in the latter half of the twentieth century. In essence, the border fixity norm delegitimises the use of force and conquest as a means to change borders (Atzili 2012, 16; Zacher 2001, 215).

The border fixity norm is based upon the principle of *uti possidetis*[^114] which stipulates that when a former colony or province secedes from an empire or state, the new state’s borders should match their former administrative boundaries (Atzili 2012, 19; Jackson 1999, 24–26). *Uti possidetis* has been a diplomatic staple since the collapse of the Spanish Empire in the Americas, where it was first used as a convenient means of delimiting the borders between the new states. After the Second World War, the principle was expanded upon in several UN General Assembly Declarations and the 1975 Helsinki Final Act[^115] that established that a state’s borders are sacrosanct, unable to be altered.

[^114]: Latin for “as/what you possess.”
[^115]: The two key UN Declarations have been the 1960 UN Declaration Granting Independence to Colonial Territories, Countries and Peoples (General Assembly Resolution 1514) and the 1970 UN Declaration on

By and large the border fixity norm has generally acted as a disincentive for states to seek to alter their borders by force and led to a marked decrease in interstate wars over territory. However, it is recognised that the norm only delegitimises and disincentives the use of force or other non-consensual means of acquiring territory and does not prevent escalation strategies from being used in an attempt to resolve interstate border disputes. Indeed, Boaz Atzili identifies only 10 successful conquests of territory between 1951 and 2000, in contrast to the periods 1901-1950 which saw 34 and 1851-1900 which saw a peak of 57 (2012, 24). Mark Zacher provides a more comprehensive tally of territorial conflict since the Second World War, identifying 12 cases (excluding the Spratly Islands) where there was a major change in territory, five minor alterations and 23 attempts that saw no change at all (Zacher 2001, 225–28).

Additionally, the border fixity norm has had the effect of narrowing the means for legitimate resolutions to interstate border disputes to be reached, thereby entrenching the *status quo*. Hence, should force be used successfully by one of the parties in an interstate border dispute, the border fixity norm ensures that any territory captured by the state remains contentious as both sides typically harden their incompatible positions. This is because defeated states are unwilling to legitimise the victor’s *de facto* control over the disputed territory and the conqueror is equally unwilling to relinquish control over it. Such cases are exacerbated when a precursor state has neglected to establish any clear boundaries that the successor state can use to impartially apply the *uti possidetis* principle.

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Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States (General Assembly Resolution 2625). The Helsinki Final Act was the document outlining the outcomes of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Whilst not having the formal weight of a treaty, the Helsinki Final Act has nonetheless been highly influential normatively owing to its widespread acceptance.
Should one side seek to evict the other from what it believes to be its territory, then it will likely get tarred with the image of conquering the territory and thus violating the border fixity norm.

**China’s interests and the Sino-Indian border dispute**

For China, the Sino-Indian border dispute has simply been one of the many border disputes it inherited when the People’s Republic was formally declared in October 1949. Initially most of these border disputes were not recognised by China as serious national interest concerns. Indeed, until the late 1970s, China saw its national interest as primarily being to secure itself against threats posed by the defeated Kuomintang regime in Taiwan, the USA’s anti-communist manoeuvres within several periphery countries and later the Soviet Union. Hence China only established the Boundary Committee in May 1958 in order to establish where its border lay regarding its various neighbours, including India (Dai 2017, 74). Today, China’s core national interests, though also stressing its territorial integrity, largely focus on securing its continuing prosperity and ensuring that its policies cannot be compelled or dictated to by any other power.

As a result of this history, China considers its most serious security threats are located in East Asia, ranging from an unstable Korean Peninsula, primary trade transit routes, the significant regional military presence of the US and its allies including Taiwan, or the maritime territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas (Mearsheimer 2014, 370–80; Ross and Li 2016). Nonetheless, following the Tibetan uprising in 1959 and several clashes between Chinese and Indian patrols, China began to consider its southern border disputes also to be a matter of national interest. Although China was able to
negotiate a resolution to its border disputes with Burma and Nepal by 1960, a confluence of national interest considerations has ensured that the Sino-Indian border dispute has remained a live issue since its emergence in the late 1950s.

The first and foremost Chinese interest is the centrality of the disputed territory of the Aksai Chin, and to a lesser extent Tawang, to the defence of Southern China. Specifically, both the Aksai Chin and Tawang have tangible and intangible value respectively for China’s continuing control over Tibet. Beyond such territorial integrity concerns, China has frequently perceived the Sino-Indian border dispute as part of a grander geopolitical picture. In particular, China has been wary of India’s rise as a regional power and India’s attempts to become a significant player in a formal or informal anti-China coalition, with either the US or the USSR or some other grouping. This has largely resulted in China intermittently utilising the Sino-Indian border dispute as a tool for coercive diplomacy in order to manipulate Indian policy. Additionally, China has developed a notable sensitivity over sovereignty and prestige implications surrounding its behaviour towards the Sino-Indian border. Some of these factors have been constant national interests for China whilst others have been pertinent for China only during certain periods. Regardless, they have all to some degree affected Chinese policy towards the Sino-Indian border ensuring that a resolution has remained beyond reach.

Both Burma and Nepal had minor border disputes with China both of which had similar origins as the Sino-Indian border dispute, with the Sino-Burmese northern border actually a continuation of the McMahon Line. Burmese and Chinese troops clashed several times in the 1950s, in part because a large contingent of Kuomintang soldiers were operating from the northern Burmese jungle. Similar clashes occurred with Nepal over CIA supported Tibetan nationalists operating out of the country. As a result of the Tibetan uprising the Chinese were willing to compromise over their southern borders on the principle of ‘give and take’. In contrast to India, both Burma’s and Nepal’s state leaders proved willing and, with no significant domestic or international interests at stake, were able to quickly conclude border resolutions by agreeing to some minor territorial adjustments (Favel 2008, 86–93; Hyer 2017, 94–95; Maxwell 2013, 235–38). Some of the more nationalist and/or paranoid Indian commentators view these efforts as a conspiracy to isolate and embarrass India (see Kalha 2014, 231–32; Mullik 1971, 268–85). In reality though, these examples show how quickly a border resolution can be reached should the interests of the leadership, domestic actors and the State be in favour of, or at least not opposed to, compromises.

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Territorial considerations

The tangible and intangible value of the disputed territory has undoubtedly played a pivotal role in China’s behaviour towards the Sino-Indian border dispute, especially during the initial years of the dispute. The disputed territory’s contiguity with the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) is the most important concern for China. Whilst much of the terrain over which China and India are in dispute is relatively barren and devoid of mineral wealth, it does cover strategic routes onto the Tibetan Plateau. The TAR is China’s second largest province, providing useful resources and a buffer to China’s heartlands from the south and east. However, the TAR also contains an occasionally restive, if not outright rebellious, population. In order to maintain control over the TAR, Beijing has been forced to spend substantial resources and manpower to incorporate it with the rest of China and to put down disturbances (Dillon 2009, 170–74; Smith 2014, 88–89). Of most concern to the Sino-Indian border dispute, China has created significant military and civilian infrastructure to tie the TAR inexorably with the rest of the country and consolidate its control over the region (Kapoor 2012, 671–72; Scott 2008a, 5).

The most notable piece of infrastructure is the Xingjian-Tibet Highway, officially known as Chinese National Highway 219, part of which crosses the disputed Aksai Chin. Between the 1950s and the early 1970s, this all-weather road though the Aksai Chin was one of China’s primary means of injecting troops and supplies into the restive Tibet province. Additionally, a number of smaller lateral roads break off from the Xingjian-Tibet Highway that lead to key passes along the LAC (Chansoria 2011, 14). The uniqueness of the Xingjian-Tibet Highway has been eroded over time as China has developed numerous other means onto the plateau, including the Qinghai-Tibet railroad, the Sichuan-Tibet Highway and numerous airfields (Garver 2001, 82–88; Rehman 2017, 108–9). Nonetheless, the Xingjian-Tibet highway remains one of China’s greatest
strategic assets in Tibet, prompting it to rule out any significant concessions over the Aksai Chin.

Apart from the Xinjiang-Tibet highway through the Aksai Chin, China has not built any strategic infrastructure through Indian disputed territory. However, the LAC’s position is of strategic significance for China primarily due to its proximity to other key routes and airfields that allow access into the TAR. The most notable of these routes is the Yunnan-Tibet Highway which, though prone to flooding and landslides in winter, is one of the main road routes into Tibet from China’s heartlands. Of concern for China is that the Yunnan-Tibet Highway passes within several kilometres of the McMahon Line in several places (Chansoria 2011, 15). These highways, along with the planned railroads and extensions to the southern border, allow China to rapidly surge troops into the TAR and along the LAC to counter any disturbances in Tibet or with India (Chansoria 2014, 2–3; Rehman 2017, 110–11).

Owing to their close proximity to the LAC, it is likely that China considers these communication lines at risk from an Indian military strike, thereby potentially cutting off access to parts of the TAR. Indeed, China has been suspicious of India’s growing ability to deploy special forces to strike facilities across international borders (Garver 2002, 6–7; Rehman 2017, 121–22). China’s border defence doctrine therefore focuses on defending such assets from attack before engaging in a counterattack to expel the opposing forces (Fravel 2007, 718–22; IOSC 2015). Therefore, it is of strategic importance for China to

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117 Between June and August 2017 a border incident flared up in the Doklam/Donglang plateau area between China and India when Indian troops crossed the Sino-Bhutanese border to prevent China’s attempted extension of road through the disputed territory (Lau 2017; Panda 2017b). Though this situation is strikingly similar to the situation in the Aksai Chin, this territory is actually disputed between Bhutan and China, with India intervening for its own geopolitical reasons (Fravel 2017; R. Kumar 2017). This is discussed in more detail in Chapter two and in the India section below.
ensure that the Sino-Indian border is pushed as far back from these assets as possible to provide the earliest possible warning should India attempt such a military strike.

For China, the intangible value of the disputed territory along the Sino-Indian border revolves mainly around its claim over Tibet. Specifically, China’s bases its claim over the eastern sector on Tibet’s historical ownership of several sections below the McMahon Line. China asserts this historical fact by formally calling Arunachal Pradesh ‘Southern Tibet’ in its maps (Joshi 2011, 563). During the initial border talks between India and China in April 1960, Premier Zhou specifically identified the Kameng area [Tawang and the territory contiguous to Bhutan] as being controlled by Tibetan authorities until 1951 and thereby legitimately belonging to China (P.N. Haksar Papers 1960, 71). Nonetheless, China indicated that it was willing to cede its claim in the east in exchange for India’s acceptance of Chinese control over the Aksai Chin. However, in the face of India’s refusal of such a deal and its own growing power, China changed its position in 1985 and insisted on concessions in the eastern sector on the basis of Tibet’s historical control (Garver 2001, 103–4; Menon 2016, 16). Indeed, China’s former chief negotiator, Dai Bingguo, stated in a recent interview that “the disputed territory in the eastern sector of the China-India boundary, including Tawang, is inalienable from China’s Tibet in terms of cultural background and administrative jurisdiction” (Wen 2017, 15).

Thus, China has demonstrated significant sensitivity to any Indian military activity or infrastructure development within Arunachal Pradesh as well as any visit to the province by Indian leaders or the Dalai Lama (Malik 2011, 145–47; Smith 2014, 39–47). While China officially claims most of Arunachal Pradesh, the monastic town of Tawang and its hinterland holds the most salience for China and is the region over which it has the strongest historical claims, as reflected in Premier Zhou’s and Councillor Dai’s statements. The town of Tawang lies just south of the McMahon Line and was effectively
seized by Indian authorities in 1951 from pre-communist Tibetan administration. Tawang has since been incorporated into the province of Arunachal Pradesh and has elected officials in state and federal parliaments in India. Therefore India will not be able to accept any compromise deal that includes ceding the town. Yet, Tawang retains its distinct Tibetan culture and its monastery remains of significant importance to the Tibetan community, both within and outside China. Hence China covets Tawang’s incorporation into the TAR as a symbol to prove that it willing and able to protect ‘Tibetan interests’ ensuring that it remains reluctant to drop its claim (Maxwell 2014, 140; Reeves 2011, 8; Smith 2014, 78–79).

Geopolitical considerations

Although clearly concerned with securing strategically and culturally significant territory, broader geopolitical interests have also shaped China’s border claims vis-à-vis India. As an aspiring great power, China has always shown an interest in power politics and has defined its national interests more along the lines of traditional neoclassical realism, seeking primarily to protect itself from any potential rival in the international system but also pursuing its broader geopolitical goals. During the early years of the Cold War, China saw its interests as being served by demonstrating that it was a loyal communist country; hence it adopted the policy of ‘leaning to one side’ by joining the USSR-led communist bloc. In the 1960s, however, China sought to become an alternative centre for the world communist movement and embraced ‘revolutionary diplomacy’. Finally, from the early 1970s, fearful of the threat posed by the USSR, China began to normalise its relations with the US/West and became part of the ‘strategic triangle’ alongside the US and the USSR (J. Chen 2001; Dillon 2009, 215–16; Garver 2016). After enduring a brief period of ostracism by the West following the end of the Cold War, China began to engage in more multilateral institutions and achieved a significant economic boom that propelled it
indisputably into the top tiers of international power (Harris 2014, 1; Kissinger 2011, 478–81).

This focus on great power politics has ensured that China has generally considered dealing with India a low priority as it perceives India to a regional power and at best a minor military threat. Thus, resolving the Sino-Indian border dispute has not been a matter of any great urgency for China. Instead, the focus has been largely on the potential threat from the militarily superior US and China’s maritime territorial disputes with its Asian neighbours which bisect major trade routes (Ross and Li 2016). It is also clear that China believes time is on its side as it continues to rise internationally, ensuring that it will likely be able to gain a better deal from India sometime in the future (Menon 2016, 30). The combination of these two factors has ensured that China has typically been unwilling to commit or divert the resources necessary to take advantage of windows of opportunity regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute when they have opened. Indeed, China typically lets India take the initiative in border negotiations, seemingly content with the current status quo and preferring to invest its energies in other bilateral or multilateral engagements especially in East Asia.

Despite China’s general disinterest in addressing the Sino-Indian border dispute, there have been a few instances where it has attempted to capitalise upon some windows of opportunity. The first notable effort was when China attempted to seize on a window of opportunity to negotiate a resolution to the border dispute in 1959 and 1960. At this time, the Sino-Indian border dispute first gained salience for both states just as China found itself increasingly isolated internationally. Its inflammatory rhetoric and behaviour was alienating it from the USSR and most of the other communist bloc countries whilst increasing the animosity of the West. Following the Tibetan uprising and the clashes on the border in 1959, and with many South Asian countries clearly being wooed by both
Cold War blocs, China perceived that the opportunity to secure its ‘soft underbelly’ was closing. Thus, facing pressure from all sides, China sought to compromise and offered reasonably generous settlement terms to India (Fravel 2008, 83–86). For example, China pulled its armed forces twenty kilometres from the LAC and actively sought to open direct border negotiations with India. However, India was not interested in any meaningful negotiations at this time, thus ensuring that this window could not be exploited (Hyer 2017, 90–92; Kissinger 2011, 189).

Apart from these attempts in the early 1960s, most of China’s efforts to capitalise on windows of opportunity have been minor localised and tactical escalations. In particular, China has made efforts to consolidate its military control over the border territories or to undermine Indian positions along the LAC. For instance, the Sumdorong Chu incident was started when the PLA seized an opportunity to capture and occupy an Indian forward seasonal outpost along the LAC before the Indian forces could return (Deepak 2005, 320–21; Kalha 2014, 200). In a more recent example, the 2017 military standoff on the Doklam/Donglang plateau was precipitated by China’s attempt to extend a road on the plateau to allow for PLA border patrols to deploy further south and to operate more easily. The catalyst for China’s move on Doklam/Donglang was the belief that India’s recent headway in infrastructure construction was changing the status quo on the ground (see MFA 2017) and thus rapidly closing an opportunity to consolidate its position further along the India-China-Bhutan tri-junction.

Though typically unwilling and neglecting to act upon windows of opportunity, China has proven keener to utilise the Sino-Indian border dispute as diplomatic leverage by linking it with other issues of Chinese national interest (Kalha 2014, 232–34). Initially these linkages were made in an effort to convince India to accept China’s preferred compromise policy. Specifically, prior to 1962, China attempted to convince India to
resolve the border dispute pragmatically by linking the border dispute to the leadership position of both countries in the international community and to pan-Asian and Afro-Asian unity. In particular, China tried to argue that it was out of character and hypocritical for the two states to become fixated on a relatively minor issue (Hyer 2017, 91–94). Specifically a senior Chinese diplomatic official, Zhang Wenji,118 argued in discussions with the Indian ambassador: “one cannot get tangled up in the details [of the Official’s Report]. The relationship between our two countries is too important; we should view [the Sino-Indian border dispute] from a greater distance…considering the big picture and seek a resolution” (PRC FMA 1961).

Since the 1962 war, however, China has not publicly attempted to engage in any form of bargaining with territorial claims. Instead, China has calculated that its interests can be more effectively advanced by utilising the border for coercive diplomacy. Specifically, China has periodically applied politico-military pressure on the border with the aim of keeping India off-balance and giving itself the capacity to respond to any Indian diplomatic or military moves it considers threatening to its other interests (Menon 2016, 30–31; Z. D. Singh 2011, 92–96). The first notable instance of China utilising the Sino-Indian border for coercive diplomacy was to assist its tacit ally, Pakistan, most notably during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan wars when it threatened to open a second front (Pardesi 2018, 202–3). At the height of the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war, China mobilised troops along the Sino-Indian border and engaged in a terse war of words with India, going as far as declaring:

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118 Then the Director of Asian Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the lead Chinese representative during the Officials Talks during 1960. Also written as Chang Wen-chin, which was the spelling used on the Official Talks publication cited elsewhere in this dissertation.
the Chinese people can deeply understand how Pakistan has been bullied by the Indian Government. The Indian Government’s expansionism has linked China with all the other neighbouring countries that India has been bullying…China gives its all-out support for Pakistan in her just struggle against Indian aggression…the Chinese government reiterates that India must dismantle all its military works for aggression…before midnight of September 22 1965…[or] bear full responsibility for all the grave consequences arising therefrom (MEA 1965, 20–21).

Although this ultimatum clearly concerned India (Garver 2001, 199–204; MEA 1965, 23–27), there is little evidence that this threat seriously affected Indian operations against Pakistan. Regardless, a ceasefire was declared before the ultimatum’s deadline expired, ensuring that China never was forced to act upon its threat (Deepak 2005, 276–77; Smith 2014, 131). Interestingly, China has also sought to use the Sino-Indian border dispute as leverage in another theatre, namely in its broader ideological struggle against the Soviet Union. Specifically, China sought to utilise the lack of Soviet support for its position vis-à-vis the Sino-Indian border dispute as another example of Soviet ‘treachery’ to the communist cause, and thus try to discredit and marginalise the USSR within the communist bloc (Dai 2017, 78; Čavoški 2017, 161–63; Kissinger 2011, 190–92).

Recently China has again sought to utilise the border as a means for coercive diplomacy, although this time driven more by geopolitical rather than regional motives. Specifically, Beijing has been increasingly concerned in recent years by the increasing

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119 Interestingly China has neglected to pursue coercive diplomacy to assist Pakistan during its other conflicts with India. Instead, China pledged its ‘firm support’ to Pakistan during the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War, providing the country with arms and finances but declined to use such vehement language and did not explicitly link its assistance to the Sino-Indian border dispute. It was similarly restrained during the 1999 Kargil War, neglecting to apply any serious pressure on India let alone threaten to open a second front as it did in 1965 (Deepak 2005, 280–81; Garver 2001, 210–13).
strategic engagement between the USA and its neighbours including India (Garver 2017; Kalha 2014, 225–26; Z. D. Singh 2011, 92–96). China is particularly concerned that India has been slowly abandoning its previous autarkic foreign policy and participating in the informal ‘Quad’ coalition,\textsuperscript{120} consisting of four Indo-Pacific countries: Australia, India, Japan and the USA. These states have been loosely coordinating their diplomatic initiatives and engaging in several overlapping military exercises since the mid-2000s. Beijing believes that this group is primarily designed to contain China’s rise and views its activities with palpable annoyance (Pant 2017; Smith 2014, 182–88). In response, in the late 2000s, China began aggressive forward patrolling along the LAC, seeking to apply pressure on India to keep it ‘sober and cautious’ (Garver 2011, 108–9).

Additionally, China has been keen to ensure that India remains cautious or at least distracted so that it is not free to cause any problems in regions such as Tibet or the South China Sea that it considers more vital for its national interest (Scott 2008b, 255–56; Z. D. Singh 2011, 95–96). Whilst China would undoubtedly like to settle the border dispute on its own terms and acquire at least Tawang, it remains content with the current status quo along the border. As such, China has avoided engaging in any serious escalation or provocations, unwilling to risk any a war over what it considers an issue of secondary or tertiary importance. Nonetheless, China appears to relish the ability to apply coercive diplomatic levers to pressure on India to ensure that New Delhi’s efforts remain focused on the Sino-Indian border rather than more sensitive geopolitical issues. Thus it is unlikely to be willing, at least in the near future, to relinquish such a useful tool without significant territorial or other concessions, something that India is unlikely to acquiesce to (Garver 2011, 109–10; Joshi 2011, 561–63).

\textsuperscript{120} Sometimes also referred to the ‘democratic diamond’.
Normative considerations

China’s understanding of the normative world in which it operates has had as much an impact upon its behaviour towards the Sino-Indian border dispute as its concerns over the territory’s value and geopolitics. Though China is currently recognised materially as a great power, it has often been frustrated with what it considers to be its inferior status in international affairs vis-à-vis other great powers. As a result, Beijing remains highly sensitive to any perceived infringements of or slights to its sovereignty (Deng 2008; Kerr 2015). Regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute, China has frequently demonstrated that it gives great importance to issues that impinge on its national prestige and sovereignty.

A key driving factor behind this sentiment is China’s desire to ‘restore’ its lost position as a great power after a century and a half of predation by imperialist countries, primarily by abrogating unequal treaties and regaining lost territories mainly from its neighbours (Freedman 2016, 809–12). Thus, China has been clearly concerned that its national prestige would suffer should it not be able to secure concessions on the Sino-Indian border dispute. In his correspondence with Prime Minister Nehru, Premier Zhou often stated that China considered the McMahon Line delimiting the eastern sector of the Sino-Indian border as an illegitimate imperial creation and therefore a stain upon China’s national prestige. Hence, he argued that China was willing to acknowledge the McMahon Line as an accomplished fact but insisted that it should be renegotiated on a more equitable basis (Garver 2001, 107–8; Maxwell 2013, 94–95). Beijing’s position has become

121 China’s general sentiment of being denied its rightful entitlements has led to China clashing over perceived slights from great powers, most notable the USSR in the Cold War. More recently, China has been highly sensitive over its treatment in international or multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organisations or the International Court of Arbitration, suspecting such organisations of having an anti-China bias. As it has grown in power China has sought to rectify such disparities by establishing its own alternative organisations such as the Asian Infrastructure Bank (Deng 2008, 54–68; Freedman 2016).

122 See also the ‘Record of the Talks Between P.M. and Premier Chou En Lai’ which records Zhou as arguing that China “could never accept” the McMahon Line and the Simla Agreement, stating that “we do not impose out maps on India and would like India to do likewise” (P.N. Haksar Papers 1960, 81).
firmer over the years with the steady growth of nationalism within China. Chinese nationalists are particularly sensitive towards issues that impinge on their state’s national prestige. They are particularly concerned that any exchange of territory would lead to “the dispossession of the national patrimony and the ruination of national dignity” (Chung 2004, 21).

Additionally, China clearly considers India to be a second-tier power within the international system and frequently shows little concern for India’s sensitivities (Chung 2004, 108; Sikri 2009, 103–4; Smith 2014, 8–10). The most notable instance of this occurred when China decided to ‘teach India a lesson’, initiating the 1962 Sino-Indian border war in part to avoid the humiliation of being outmanoeuvred by an inferior state (Garver 2016, 179). Such sensitivity about being outmanoeuvred by India has also manifested in the diplomatic front. For example, China described the decision to abandon its ‘territory swap’ proposal in 1985 as simply adding specifics to the original principle in order to save face and avoid admitting that India’s obstinate position had forced a change in policy (Garver 2001, 103–4; Z. D. Singh 2011, 87–88). This mentality has also generated the dismissive statements or assessments about India by Chinese officials to third parties. In particular, Chinese leaders bristle at comparisons between China and India and often deride India as a ‘stooge’ of the US (Malik 2011, 87–98; Smith 2014, 8–10).

A final national prestige concern driving China are the ‘China threat’ theories that have been emanating from elements within India. Beijing considers these narratives of a threatening China to effectively be slander as they run contrary to its efforts to cultivate an image of its peaceful rise (Deng 2008, 97–108). The most notable instance of this occurred in 1998 when India cited the threat of China as justification for its second round of nuclear weapons tests. China considered this to be a significant insult, prompting it to cancel the regularly scheduled border resolution negotiations for the first and, so far, only
time since their resumption. China was appeased only when Indian ministers and officials visiting Beijing in December 1998 requested that it “help India untie the knot” (Fang 2002, 166–67).

Related to China’s concerns over its national prestige has been its strong attachment to an absolutist understanding of its national sovereignty, which has frequently been linked with territorial integrity. Indeed, ‘mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity’ was the first principle of the Panchsheel Agreement between China and India that is still frequently cited by China as the basis for its regional engagement (Y. Chen 2015, 44; Deepak 2005, 153; MFA 2017a). This concern for sovereignty and territorial integrity is especially poignant in China owing to its experience with the ‘century of humiliation’ and desire never to repeat it. This epoch in Chinese history lasted approximately between 1842 and 1949 and saw China compelled to cede or lease territory to foreign powers and neighbours. This experience of being dominated, though not fully colonised, by foreign powers left successive Chinese regimes from Mao to Xi especially sensitive to any perception of foreign interference or the erosion of its borders (Dillon 2009, 214; Kissinger 2011, 57–90).

The Sino-Indian border dispute is no different. Initially, sovereignty concerns for China focused on what it believed to be Indian interference in Tibet and efforts to take advantage of a period of weakness to advance its borders (see PRC FMA 1959). China’s suspicions were confirmed when India rejected China’s package deal and adopted the Forward Policy,123 all of which “jogged China’s memory of a time when its sovereignty was violated by Western powers” (Y. Chen 2015, 45). This visibly hardened China’s perspective of India, including re-evaluating India’s credentials as an ‘anti-imperialist’

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123 See Chapter Two for details.
country. China responded to India’s perceived defection to the imperialist camp and subsequent territorial encroachments by adopting a firmer position in the subsequent negotiations before eventually launching the 1962 border war (Hyer 2017, 92–94).

Following the ‘reform and opening up’ policies of the 1980s, China has adopted a more nuanced approach to its territorial sovereignty, demonstrating a more moderate and pragmatic approach (Carlson 2010, 56–57; Y. Chen 2015, 46–47). This allowed China to resolve most of its land borders with its other neighbours and largely pacify the LAC, allowing for a more constructive relationship to develop with India after 1989 (Deepak 2005, 333–35; Fravel 2008, 168–70; Menon 2016, 10–33). However, the various border talks over the Sino-Indian border have yielded little in the way of tangible results, frequently becoming deadlocked. Hence, China has consistently maintained ‘defensive assertiveness’ towards the Sino-Indian border dispute, remaining particularly alert to what it refers to as any sign of violations or ‘nibbling’ along its borders (Y. Chen 2015, 50; IOSC 2013).

Yet curiously, and somewhat tellingly, China has not sought to articulate any of its claims in the Sino-Indian border dispute in terms of the border fixity norm or the principle of *uti possidetis*. Indeed, in comparison to India, China has typically been coy in its proclamations of sovereignty in the face of Indian operations within the disputed areas (Smith 2014, 49). This is in part because China’s southern borders were largely undelimited during the Qing or Republican periods. 124 It is also partly due to the fact that Beijing recognises that both China and India have been guilty of seeking to change the border status quo unilaterally and does not wish to draw too much attention to these instances. This may give the initial impression that national sovereignty is not considered

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124 The only notable instance of Chinese delimitation of its southern border prior to the founding of the People’s Republic was the erection of a border post in the Karakoram Pass in 1892 to demarcate the border between Imperial China and British India (Lamb 1964, 48; Maxwell 2013, 16–17).
by China to be a significant interest or that Beijing has been more pragmatic, with the Chinese seemingly willing to override or sacrifice it for the greater gains. However, a closer inspection of China’s use of sovereignty concerns shows that national sovereignty has effectively become synonymous with national prestige. Indeed, China often utilises national sovereignty concerns as an euphemism for national prestige, typically citing sovereignty concerns whenever it considers that it could lose face or otherwise be humiliated (Y. Chen 2015, 45, 50–51).

**India’s international situation and the Sino-Indian border dispute**

In contrast to China, the Sino-Indian border dispute remains a salient national interest issue for India, second only to the Indo-Pakistani border. Following the bloody partition of the British Raj in 1947, India has been particularly sensitive to its territorial integrity as well as any potential challenges to its statehood and dominance of South Asia. Initially after independence, the Sino-Indian border dispute was downplayed throughout much of the 1950s as India attempted to forge a strong relationship with China as part of its strategy to develop pan-Asian political unity. Nonetheless, even under Nehru’s administration, India still took a number of steps to consolidate its position along the northern border, especially in the eastern sector (Kalha 2014, 48–52; Lüthi 2017, 30–32).

Following the discovery that the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway crossed Indian claimed territory in 1957, repression of the Tibetan uprising and the lethal border skirmishes in 1959, the Sino-Indian border dispute became a salient issue for New Delhi. With India’s decisive defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian war, the Sino-Indian border dispute also became a focal point for the security threat posed by China (Ogden 2014, 120–21; Pant 2016, 36–37). This threat perception, alongside wider considerations such as concerns over Chinese
encroachment into South Asia, has ensured that the Sino-Indian border dispute has remained a highly salient issue that India has been determined to stand its ground on.

The salience of the Sino-Indian border to New Delhi derives first and foremost from India’s national interests in protecting its heartland. The disputed territories in the eastern and the western sections command many of the highlands that overlook the South Asian plains and offers a significant advantage for an invading army from the Tibet Plateau. Additionally, much of the territory is contiguous or close to some of India’s more sensitive restive provinces, namely Assam, Nagaland and Jammu and Kashmir. As such, India instinctively desires as much space between these regions and the Sino-Indian border as possible. Notwithstanding the strategic utility of the territory, India has been more concerned with the geopolitical and normative implications of the dispute.

Specifically, India has been concerned with the role that China has been playing in South Asia over the past three to four decades and the impact that it will have over India’s regional primacy. Additionally, India has attached much of its national prestige on not capitulating on its position on the Sino-Indian border. New Delhi considers China to be blatantly flouting both the norms of *uti possidetis* and border fixity after 1962. Hence, India has refused to contemplate, officially at least, any Chinese swap deals. Yet at the same time, India has been unable to advance the merits of its own claims vis-à-vis China, ensuring the *status quo* has remained the default policy.

*Territorial considerations*

Ostensibly, there is little of value in the territory that India disputes with China, especially in the west. In regards to tangible assets, India has no significant infrastructure or military facilities within the disputed territory, except for a minor airfield at Tawang. Only Arunachal Pradesh has any economic potential of note, with a few known minor deposits
of valuable minerals and the potential for hydroelectricity generation. However, these resources pale in comparison to what is available in Arunachal Pradesh’s neighbouring provinces and most have yet to be exploited (Garver 2001, 91–92; Reeves 2011).

Regarding intangible assets, the disputed territory has few ethnic or homeland linkages to either the eastern or the western disputed areas. Even the population of Arunachal Pradesh is primarily a mix between ethnic Tibetans and a number of different ‘Indo-Mongoloid’ tribes with distinct cultures and ethnicity that remained mostly autonomous from both China and India until the 1950s (Guruswamy and Singh 2009, 58–59; Rubin 1960; Scott 2008b, 250).

Nonetheless, the Sino-Indian border dispute has significant tangible and intangible value for India to make New Delhi baulk at relinquishing its territorial claims. Much of the disputed territory’s intangible significance for India comes from its association with Indian national prestige and sovereignty. As such, these issues are covered in more detail in the following section on normative considerations. The tangible value of the disputed territory for India primarily lies in its military/strategic value, especially as a means of defence for India’s heartlands (Rehman 2017, 112–13; H. Singh 2009, 8–10). This is particularly the case with the disputed eastern territory of Arunachal Pradesh. Here the terrain is notoriously difficult to cross, thereby having significant defensive utility and providing strategic depth for several militarily, economically and politically sensitive regions such as Assam (Reeves 2011, 4–5; Shankar 2015, 102). The terrain is particularly rugged in the province, consisting primarily of mountains and heavily forested regions, posing significant difficulties for any army to navigate. India has added to the obstacles by deliberately limiting the construction of infrastructure in the region so as to help slow

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125 Sections of the Aksai Chin and some of the minor pockets of dispute within the western sector are used as grazing grounds for shepherds and yak herders. However, their contribution to the material wealth is negligible and their activity has had little impact on border tensions.

This mentality has begun to change in recent years with the planned and budgeted construction of several roads along the border. However, progress in developing infrastructure has been notoriously slow, with most of the projects either little more than pipedreams or significantly behind time and over budget (Itanagar 2017; Scott 2008a, 8). Whilst it is unclear to what extent the lack of infrastructure would actually slow the modern PLA’s advance (see Frankel 2011, 4), the terrain still favours defence and should delay any advance long enough to evacuate and prepare defences of Assam. Hence, such a strategic prize, even if Arunachal Pradesh was unpopulated and not associated with Indian national prestige and sovereignty, would make the territory worth holding for India.

In contrast, the western section has little tangible value for India, as most of the disputed territory is desolate and lies north of the Karakoram Ranges, making it difficult to reach from India, let alone defend. As such, the Aksai Chin offers little in the way of material wealth or strategic depth for India. However, the western sector does have some strategic significance owing to its proximity to the restive Jammu and Kashmir province and the Line of Control between India and Pakistan. China’s strategic alliance with Pakistan fuels Indian fears that it could intervene in any future Indo-Pakistan war, thus ensuring that India is highly reluctant to accept a Chinese border so close to the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir (Frankel 2011, 2–3; H. Singh 2009, 13).

A similar concern over the border’s location close to strategically valuable territory has also affected the Sino-Indian border along Sikkim and in particular near the tri-border junction between China, India and Bhutan.126 This border is of significant importance to

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126 Technically this is not part of the Sino-Indian border dispute but it has been the site of several notable standoffs between Chinese and Indian forces. See Chapter Two for more details.
India as not only does it offer one of the easiest routes onto the Tibetan plateau but also it is in close proximity to the Siliguri corridor.\textsuperscript{127} This corridor, located between Bangladesh in the south and Nepal in the north, connects north-eastern India to the rest of the country and is only 27 kilometres wide at its thinnest point. In the event of a second Sino-Indian border war, if the PLA is able to advance into the Siliguri corridor, it could effectively cut off the Indian northeast from the rest of India (Fravel 2017; Panda 2017b).

\textit{Geopolitical considerations}

The Sino-Indian border’s situation in the broader international arena is also of great importance to New Delhi. India has long considered itself to be the ‘natural hegemon’ of South Asia, adopting an imperious attitude to its smaller neighbours and remaining highly intolerant of what it considers to be challenges from or intrusion into its region (Ayoob 1991; Ogden 2014, 74–93; Pardesi 2018, 198–99). Initially during the Cold War, India demonstrated this view by its efforts to play a leading role in global affairs by trying to chart a third way in the form of Afro-Asian solidarity and the Non-Aligned Movement. Whilst India courted China as a potential ally or at least fellow traveller in these endeavours, New Delhi had strong suspicions regarding China’s intentions towards India owing to its conquest of Tibet (Lüthi 2017, 30–32). These suspicions helped fuel the rapid breakdown of relations in 1959 following the Tibetan uprising and subsequent increase in border clashes.

Following its defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian border war, India began to focus more upon efforts to consolidate its primacy over South Asia. Most notably, India moved to bifurcate Pakistan in 1971, absorbed Sikkim in 1975 and intervened in Sri Lanka’s civil war in the 1980s (Basrur 2010, 268–69; Pardesi 2018, 206–7). During this period, India

\textsuperscript{127} Often referred to as ‘The Chicken’s Neck’ by Indian security commentators.
became especially sensitive to any sign of Chinese interference in South Asia, clearly concerned over the developing Sino-Pakistani strategic alliance and eyeing suspiciously Chinese engagement with other smaller neighbours (Garver 2002, 4–5; Joshi 2011, 564–65). In response to Chinese engagements in South Asia, India was keen to consolidate its position on the Sino-Indian border and align with the USSR, which was similarly opposed to China.

In more recent years, India has become concerned with Chinese military activity in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the maritime region that India has traditionally viewed as being exclusively its purview (Joshi 2011, 566; Pant 2016, 179–81; Pardesi 2018, 204–6). In particular, India has been disturbed by what New Delhi perceived to be China’s efforts to strategically encircle India with a ‘string of pearls’ and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The string of pearls refers to a number of Chinese-built and -operated ports and naval facilities throughout the northern IOR and surrounding India that can be used by the PLA Navy to threaten India in the event of a crisis (Brewster 2014, 138–41; Scott 2008b, 256–57).

Most strategists and commentators recognise these ‘nodes’ to be primarily for economic purposes rather than a concerted effort by China to strategically encircle India. Indeed, it is widely recognised that China’s involvement in the IOR is primarily to protect its main trade and supply routes by dispersing them and giving them alternative ports to unload. Currently most of China’s pass through a handful of chokepoints, making them vulnerable to interdiction (Khurana 2008; Pant 2016, 183–84; Smith 2014, 146–53). Nonetheless, India remains concerned that these ports and facilities provide China with the capacity to deploy its troops and navy into the region on a more permanent basis even

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128 The most notable of these is the Straits of Malacca through which passes approximately 80% of China’s oil supply on top of its other trade. The Straits of Hormuz and Aden are also key chokepoints of concern for Chinese trade.
if they currently do not have the intention of doing so (Garver 2016, 739–40; Khurana 2008, 21–22). The opening of China’s first permanent overseas ‘naval support’ base in Djibouti in July 2017 that will see PLA Navy ships stationed in the Gulf of Aden is unlikely to ease India’s suspicions (Gao 2017; Reuters 2017).

As New Delhi often perceives the border dispute as part of a broader threat from China’s international manoeuvres, India closely links these broader geopolitical concerns to the Sino-Indian border dispute. Specifically, these geopolitical concerns have added to India’s suspicions of China’s intentions and generated a ‘trust deficit’ that India has vis-à-vis China. These misgivings regarding China have reduced New Delhi’s willingness to contemplate compromise solutions as it has increasingly convinced that China would not uphold its end of any bargain (Kalha 2014, 245–46). Additionally, there are evident concerns within India that, unless the Sino-Indian border dispute is resolved overwhelmingly favourable terms, such an agreement could weaken its position in South Asia. In particular, a compromise agreement with China could set a precedent for the Indo-Pakistan disputes over Jammu and Kashmir, especially if it more or less establishes the LAC as the border (Huth 1996, 170). There has been talk recently within India of ‘theatre switching’; that is to escalate the Sino-Indian border dispute by seeking to confront China in its own sensitive areas, such as the South China Sea or the Straits of Malacca. Yet significant escalation strategies mostly remain an infeasible option owing to China’s sheer economic and military strength that India currently is unable to match (Menon 2016, 26; Scott 2008b).

For India, often outmanoeuvred and militarily weaker, there have been few windows of opportunity to exploit, ensuring that maintaining a firm inflexible stance in negotiations and retaining the status quo along the border has been its default policy. Nonetheless, there have been several periods where India sought to exploit windows of
opportunity to escalate or compromise over the Sino-Indian border, though all have been unsuccessful thus far. The first major example of this was India’s adoption of the Forward Policy in November 1961, which deployed large numbers of soldiers to the border in an attempt to consolidate its territorial claims. India pursued this escalatory policy as it perceived that its opportunity to cement its claim to the disputed territory was closing. China appeared to be recovering from the Great Leap Forward and the Tibetan uprising as well as facing international isolation after having antagonised both the USSR and the US (Fravel 2008, 177–78; Hoffmann 1990, 92–96). As it was not clear how long this period of Chinese distraction would last, India erroneously concluded that it had a chance to establish de facto control in the disputed territory and force China to drop its claim.

A similar, though less audacious, attempt to enforce India’s claims on the ground occurred in the early 1980s when India quietly began establishing military posts along the LAC under Operation Falcon. Initiated just prior to the resumption of Sino-Indian border negotiations, India calculated that this mild escalatory policy would provide it with a fait accompli, strengthening its hand before the negotiations began in earnest (Deepak 2005, 321; Menon 2016, 14–15). A potential window opened up for India to press for concessions and seek a resolution during the early 1990s as China faced internal distractions and international isolation following the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. However, India was similarly left isolated and facing turmoil following the collapse of the USSR which, coupled with concerns of appearing weak, ensured that India declined to take advantage of the opportunity to reach a compromise settlement. However, India did use this window to propose the less ambitious, but mutually acceptable, pacification of the dispute, leading to the two border agreements of 1993 and 1996 (Deepak 2005, 333–36; Menon 2016, 17–20).
India has also attempted at various stages, albeit unsuccessfully, to use the Sino-Indian border negotiations as a form of coercive diplomacy, deliberately linking other foreign policy goals of the Chinese to the successful resolution of the border dispute. One of the earliest examples of this behaviour can be seen in India’s efforts to link the early-1960s border talks with its dissatisfaction with Chinese policies towards Sikkim and Bhutan. During the negotiations, Indian officials argued that the discussions would be difficult to continue unless China halted efforts to establish relations with India’s two protectorates, Sikkim and Bhutan. However, China rejected the linkage to its relations with third parties and refused to change its policy, responding that “we cannot confuse primary issues with secondary ones” (see PRC FMA 1961).

A more explicit example of India’s attempted use of the Sino-Indian border dispute as a bargaining chip came during the initial resumption of negotiations in the 1980s. On this occasion, the Indian delegation made it clear that the normalisation and expansion of the Sino-Indian bilateral relationship, which China desired, hinged upon the successful resolution of the border dispute (S. Ganguly 1989; Kalha 2014, 192–95). This linkage was only discarded by India in 1988 during Rajiv Gandhi’s Beijing visit after it was clear that China was unfazed and would not comply with Indian demands (Deepak 2005, 328–33; Kalha 2014, 206–7). More recently, it appears that India has again tentatively sought to expand the issues linked to the Sino-Indian border dispute. Specifically, India has raised China’s activities in Pakistan and India’s growing trade deficit with China during border negotiations during the SRMs, tacitly linking the redressing of these geopolitical issues with the resolution to the Sino-Indian border dispute (Aneja 2016; Westcott 2016). It is currently unclear how China has responded to these linkages. However, owing to the lack of any development in the relevant areas, it is likely that China remains unwilling to trade.
altering its policies in other arenas for a resolution of the Sino-Indian border dispute, ensuring that negotiations remain deadlocked.

Thus, India’s lack of success in utilising geopolitics to secure an advantage or gain concessions from China over the Sino-Indian border dispute, New Delhi has calculated that its interests are best served by simply maintaining the *status quo*. This policy has largely been pursued in two key ways. The first has been to maintain the SRMs, now in their twentieth round, as a channel of communication and as a means of smoothing over tensions rather than act as a forum for serious resolution initiatives. The second has been to maintain its efforts to consolidate its position along the LAC, by building makeshift fortifications and observation posts along the LAC and in the disputed territories or forays to disrupt or destroy similar Chinese efforts before they can be completed (Dutta 2014; Itanagar 2017; Panda 2017a; Reuters 2014).

*Normative considerations*

Whilst territorial value and geopolitics are key Indian concerns regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute, normative considerations have been equally salient in shaping India’s behaviour. Like China, India is concerned over the disparity between its self-perceived national prestige and its standing in international politics, particularly in comparison with China. This has made Indian leaders particularly sensitive about the Sino-Indian border dispute. The logic behind this mentality was perhaps most eloquently articulated by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1959 when he responded to a question in the Lok Sabha regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute:

Now, it is a question of fact, whether this village or that village or this little strip of territory is on their side or our side. Normally these are relatively petty disputes … it does seem to me rather absurd for two great countries -
or two small countries - to rush at each other’s throats to decide whether
two miles of territory are on this side or that side, and especially territory in
the high mountains where nobody lives. But where national prestige and
dignity is involved, it is not the two miles of territory, but the dignity and
self-respect of the nation that becomes involved. And therefore this [Sino-
Indian border tensions] happens (Nehru 1961, 118).

In other words, India came to see its honour and self-respect as an independent nation
being directly challenged in the border dispute, ensuring that it could not back down
(Hoffmann 1990, 113–14; Scott 2008b, 251).

As Nehru’s comments indicate, India had clearly equated its national prestige with
the Sino-Indian border dispute early on, making it difficult for it to adopt the flexible and
creative stances in negotiations necessary to reach a compromise (Hoffmann 1990, 252–
56; Shankar 2015). India’s belief that its national prestige is at stake was derived from a
number of concerns. During the initial tensions over the Sino-Indian border dispute
between 1959 and 1963, New Delhi was concerned that negotiating with Beijing would
ultimately diminish India’s national prestige whilst enhancing China’s, especially within
the developing and anti-colonialist countries (Garver 2001, 121–25; Maxwell 2013, 166).
Indeed, as Nehru confided in a British diplomat at the time, the Indian government
believed that offering concessions in border negotiations with China would lead it to
consider that India was weak, thereby encouraging further claims (Kalha 2014, 133–34;
Shankar 2015, 109). On a more emotional level, India considered China’s territorial claims
to be a deliberate betrayal of India’s offer of Sino-Indian friendship and pan-Asianism
(Chung 2004, 107–8; Lüthi 2017, 34–36). Thus, to preserve face, Nehru and his
government felt compelled to reject compromise options and instead adopt an absolutist
position towards the dispute during negotiations. Inevitably, this stance led to the initial negotiations’ failure (Hoffmann 1990, 87–88; Kalha 2014, 134; Maxwell 2013, 170–72).

This mentality was reinforced following India’s quick and decisive defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian border war, which reverberated throughout the Indian national psyche. This humiliating blow to India’s identity as a world leader has fostered within India a strong degree of hostility and suspicion towards China that is still visible in official discourse. Indeed, when the Sino-Indian border negotiations finally resumed in 1981, India rejected the LAC based resolution proposed by China. The reasons behind the rejection of a seemingly fair and face saving resolution, as articulated by Foreign Minister Rao, was that it was insufficient to rectify the earlier humiliation and effectively legitimised territorial theft (S. Ganguly 1989, 1127; Garver 2001, 103). Over time, India has modified this position as much of the animosity and tension in Sino-Indian relations was removed following the signing of treaties in the 1990s that pacified the border and established confidence building exercises (Fravel 2008, 170–71; Menon 2016, 15–23).

Yet, the hard compromises necessary to settle the Sino-Indian border dispute remain unpalatable for India, lest it be perceived as losing face by capitulating to an aggressor (Chung 2004, 107–8; Scott 2008b, 251). Most recently, India’s concern over upholding national prestige has been particularly visible in its efforts to demonstrate its ability as an emerging great power and arrival as a peer of China. Regarding the Sino-Indian border dispute, India’s concern has taken two forms. The first has been India’s efforts to match China’s capabilities along the border by commissioning the construction of several large-scale infrastructure projects. This policy has included the construction and/or major upgrade of the transportation networks to facilitate the easy transportation of
troops to the frontier. The most notable examples to date are the Dhola-Sadiya Bridge and the ongoing construction of the 2000 kilometre Arunachal Frontier Highway that is planned to span the length of the McMahon Line (Itanagar 2017; Rehman 2017, 112–13).

The second is India’s outrage over much of China’s diplomatic demeanour and behaviour towards the border dispute. The first recent example of this occurring was refusal to drop its territorial claims in the eastern section following the 2005 Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question. The crux of India’s grievance is found in Article VII, which states that “In reaching a boundary settlement, the two sides shall safeguard due interests of their settled populations in the border area” (Bhasin 2006, 838; MEA 2005a, 3). India took the position that Article VII was tacit agreement by China that it would drop most of its territorial claims in the eastern section. As such, New Delhi considered it evidence of Chinese duplicity and disregard for India when China refused to do so (Z. D. Singh 2011, 90; Smith 2014, 40). This sentiment has been exacerbated by several diplomatic incidents involving Arunachal Pradesh. The most notable of these was China’s issuing ‘stapled visas’ as opposed to the common affixed visa for Indian citizens from the province on the grounds that they “did not need a visa to visit their own country” (Kalha 2014, 226; Smith 2014, 44–45). These slights to Indian national prestige, deliberate or unintentional, have only generated indignation in India, prompting it to harden its stance towards the border.

Regarding the norm of sovereignty, India’s adopted stance is similar to China’s; New Delhi typically is concerned with territorial sovereignty only when it becomes linked to India’s national prestige or esteem within the international system (Jacob 2015, 22). That said, India has clearly taken issues of sovereignty much more seriously than China.

129 The Dhola-Sadiya Bridge, opened May 2017, is currently India’s longest bridge and provides the only permanent road connection from Assam into Arunachal Pradesh.
India has effectively convinced itself that its northern frontier was inherited either from the British Raj delimitation efforts or ‘traditional boundaries’, thereby providing a clear-cut case of *uti possiditus* (Das Gupta 2017, 53–54, 58; H. Singh 2009, 13; Menon 2016, 8–11). This claim of India’s sovereign right to the disputed territory was advanced during the 1960 border talks when Nehru argued that India saw a significant difference between ‘administration’ and ‘jurisdiction’ of territory. In essence, the Indian position was that despite never having an administrative presence in the Aksai Chin, it still maintained legitimate jurisdiction over the area as indicated by the Johnson/Ardagh alinement (P.N. Haksar Papers 1960, 75–76).

Following the 1962 war, India embraced a more absolute understanding of what sovereignty entails, insisting that the Chinese vacate the Aksai Chin as a precondition for the resumption of normal relations and border negotiations. Even when this demand was eventually dropped as untenable, India has remained committed to upholding its claims to sovereign jurisdiction over the Aksai Chin (S. Ganguly 1989, 1127; Garver 2001, 102–3; Kalha 2014, 193). India has gradually come to accept a less rigid understanding of sovereignty, with several indications that New Delhi is interested in something resembling a *status quo* territorial swap. Yet, India still retains a strong attachment to concepts of absolute sovereignty, remaining sensitive to any potential violations of its territorial integrity and unwilling to seriously contemplate any significant transfer of territory in the eastern sector (Jacob 2015, 35–36; Guruswamy and Singh 2009, 125–35). This embrace of the notion that India’s borders are sacrosanct has helped convince generations of Indians that their territorial claims are manifestly correct, thereby making a mutually acceptable compromise solution even more difficult to reach.
Concluding remarks:

As the preceding analysis reveals, India and China’s interests in the international sphere have combined to ensure that the Sino-Indian border dispute remains intractable. The first and foremost interest of all states is to ensure their territorial integrity and survival in the international environment, which they achieve by acquiring power. Interstate border disputes raise considerations of the value of the territory, geopolitical concerns and normative issues. These various interests typically ensure that a State will generally be wary of adventurous escalation and compromise policies, ultimately defaulting to status quoist policies towards the border as the least risky policy. Territorial value can be tangible or intangible but in both cases, it raises the costs of concession and encourages the state to resist relinquishing the land. Geopolitical concerns tend to ensure that the State is unwilling to escalate without a clear window of opportunity lest it put more important considerations in jeopardy and offers little incentive to compromise. Similarly, normative concerns, such as national prestige and sovereignty, drive the State to reject compromise solutions on principle. Thus, with both escalation and compromise often against the State’s interests, maintaining the status quo is the only prudent policy left.

Regarding China’s specific situation, the strategic and sentimental value of the disputed territory, especially the Aksai Chin and Tawang, has proven too useful for maintaining its control over Tibet. China’s geopolitical interests have focused on trying to rise as a great power and countering potential threats from more powerful states, such as the US. This ensures that China usually avoids escalating the Sino-Indian border dispute lest it detract from its other interests. Additionally China also uses the Sino-Indian border dispute to keep India geopolitically off balance and is not likely to give up such a useful political tool by agreeing to simple territorial adjustment. Finally, Beijing realises that any
significant compromise on the border dispute would likely diminish China’s national prestige and lower its international standing.

For India’s part, the disputed territory is strategically useful at keeping China physically distant from more economically valuable and politically sensitive provinces. While China’s current superior strength has ruled out most escalation policies, India is also concerned that agreeing to any territorial concessions may only embolden potential Chinese expansion within South Asia and the IOR. Finally, India perceives the Sino-Indian border dispute as a challenge to its national prestige, sovereignty and international standing, prompting it to dismiss any compromise resolution that is not overwhelmingly in its favour. Based on these calculations, both China and India have dug in their heels and tended to maintain the status quo over the disputed border, unable reconcile their interests to resolve their decades-long border dispute.

The efforts to pacify the international border since the 1990s have undoubtedly taken a significant degree of the tension and animosity out of the bilateral relationship (Menon 2016, 30–31; Ogden 2014, 125–26). However, the prospects for a resolution of the Sino-Indian border dispute in the near future appear to be slim. As both China and India continue to harbor great power ambitions, they will inevitably continue to encroach upon each other’s spheres to secure their own interests, further raising mutual suspicions and the stakes of compromise. Hence, system level factors will ensure that the chance that the Sino-Indian border dispute will become resolved in the near future will remain low.
Chapter 6:

Conclusion.
Summary

At the close of 2017, the Sino-Indian border dispute remains as intractable as when it first emerged in the late 1950s. Faced with the ambiguous frontier between Republican China and the British Raj, both China and India initially neglected to directly address the border dispute. Instead, both states sought to quietly consolidate their positions along the salient areas of where they believed the border to lie. Once the inevitable clashes between border patrols began in the late 1950s, the stakes involved for both states and their leaders became too high to for them to reach a mutually acceptable compromise position. Following the 1962 Sino-Indian border war, tensions between China and India remained high even after bilateral relations were normalised in 1976. Negotiations over the border began in earnest only in June 1981. After numerous rounds and several iterations of border resolution talks, both sides remained committed to their irreconcilable positions.

Given the importance of the border dispute for bilateral ties, both India and China recognised that ways to pacify the Sino-Indian border must be found. Hence, two treaties were signed in the 1990s to limit the military presence along the LAC and provide a code of conduct for China and India’s border forces to follow. In the new millennium, tensions in Sino-Indian bilateral relations were eased back considerably and even hawkish voices on both sides recognised that another Sino-Indian war was unlikely. Nonetheless, lingering distrust continues to mar Sino-Indian relations and has made the implementation of confidence building and crisis management measures tricky for both sides. Indeed, since the late 2000s, vehement confrontations between the two states’ border patrols have become commonplace. Still, such incidents are not allowed to get out of hand and any serious incidents on the LAC are typically quickly defused using the established crisis resolution mechanisms.
This dissertation focused on explaining why the Sino-Indian border dispute has become and remained intractable and thereby extremely difficult to resolve. As studies of interstate border disputes have generally neglected the issue of intractability and explorations of Sino-Indian relations have mostly focused on the history of the dispute, my answer to this question has both theoretical and empirical significance. The explanation that I have provided is deceptively simple but logical. I have argued that when two states, particularly major powers, develop a border dispute, they usually find it hard to resolve the dispute through either a policy of compromise or escalation and therefore fall back upon a policy of status quo maintenance.

The logic behind this outcome is that it is often against the core interests of the state leader, the governing institutions and the State itself to adopt compromise or escalation policies, leading them to embrace status quo policies by default. Since both sides choose to maintain the status quo, the dispute festers and becomes intractable. I have further argued that while the status quo maintenance can be seen as a default policy adopted by both states, this does not mean that they remain passive towards the border dispute. Rather, both sides will be seek to consolidate their position along the disputed territories and develop serious crisis management and confidence building mechanisms whilst retaining their incompatible positions.

My thesis has been guided by neoclassical realist logic in its efforts to develop a theory as to how interstate border disputes become and remain intractable. In seeking to explain state behaviour, neoclassical realists recognise that both the pressures of the international system and those within the domestic arena shape foreign policy decisions. In other words, it is necessary to look at the interests of key actors in each of the three levels of analysis: the chief executive, key state institutions and the state itself.
A chief executive’s core interests can effectively be boiled down to his/her own political survival and the fulfilment of his/her grand strategy. The situation and temperament of the individual leader will ultimately shape which of these interests weigh more heavily upon him/her. Nonetheless when facing a choice on what policy to adopt towards the Sino-Indian border, the paramount leader of China or the Prime Minister of India, use both interests to filter out acceptable and unacceptable policy options and assist in determining which of the remaining policies is the optimum. It is rarely in the interest of a chief executive to pursue territorial adjustments or resort to efforts to annex territory, as these policies tend to cause domestic backlashes and distract from his/her grand strategy. Consequentially, Chinese Presidents and Indian Prime Ministers have tended to support the safer or less risky policy of status quo maintenance on the disputed border. This factor has been a constant irrespective of whether the Chinese President and Indian Prime Minister happened to be a strong and decisive leader, such as Mao or Modi, or politically weak or otherwise constrained, such as Jiang or Singh.

The interests of the key governing institutions within the state are typically simple to identify, though one institution’s interests are often in conflict with the others. An institution’s interests mostly centre around its drive to fulfil its specific mission or function within the state and to acquire the resources necessary to do so. To secure these interests, governing institutions engage in a three-phased ‘game’ when determining what a policy towards an interstate border dispute should be. Firstly, the different institutions attempt to gather information on the issue at hand to assess how to situation could affect their interests. Secondly, the key officials representing the relevant institutions debate policy options and try to influence the decision to maximise their interests. Finally, once a policy decision has been made, the relevant institutions move to implement it, in the process often altering the policy to meet their interests. In both China and India, the governing
political party apparatus and the military and security agencies have been staunchly opposed to a resolution of the border dispute through territorial compromise if the resolution does not favour their country significantly. The civilian bureaucracies associated with foreign policy making appear to be more in favour of a resolution of the border dispute through territorial compromise. However, their ability to influence policy concerning the Sino-Indian border dispute has and remains limited.

The primary interest of the State is always to ensure its survival as a territorial and political community in an anarchical international system. Regarding interstate border disputes, three main interest considerations shape State behaviour, including China’s and India’s. First is the value of the disputed territory, whether this be tangible (economic or strategic utility) or intangible (ethnic kinship, historical homeland or some other sentimental claim). When a State perceives the disputed territory as valuable, it covets the land and is unwilling to contemplate splitting the territory, making any compromise policy difficult to reach. Second, the geopolitical environment in which the state operates places the interstate border dispute in the perspective of the State’s other interests. This typically ensures that a State, without a window of opportunity, would be unwilling to pursue either escalation or compromise strategies lest it compromise its interests elsewhere. Additionally the geopolitical situation could encourage the State to utilise its interstate border dispute as a form of diplomatic leverage, which it is unlikely to relinquish without significant concessions from its rival.

Finally, the normative concerns of the state, specifically concerns over the state’s national prestige and sovereignty, influence state policy towards the border dispute. When states believe that one or both of these normative concerns are being challenged, they tend to insist on their position lest they lose face or invite other potential challenges. Both China’s and India’s status as rising powers ensures that they are additionally sensitive to
these national interest considerations. With escalation and compromise strategies effectively ruled out for China and India, both states tend to embrace *status quo* maintenance policies by default, significantly narrowing the scope for a resolution.

**Potential solutions and their flaws**

Though this dissertation’s aims are more diagnostic rather than prescriptive, any discussion on the Sino-Indian border dispute’s situation naturally leads to questions of how, or whether, it can be solved. Though an in-depth discussion of this nature was beyond the scope of this study, some potential solutions do appear in the literature on interstate border disputes and the Sino-Indian border dispute. Hence, a brief discussion of the major potential solutions to the Sino-Indian border dispute in light of the arguments presented above is warranted here.

The first and most plausible resolution is a mutual territorial swap along the lines of the ‘package settlement’ originally proposed by Premier Zhou. Such a territorial deal would effectively formalise the LAC as the China-India border, likely with a few minor adjustments. Indeed, there have been several indications from Indian diplomats in recent years regretting earlier Indian rejections of the ‘reasonable’ and ‘practical’ compromise (Garver 2011, 101; Gonsalves 2015, 289; Smith 2014, 59). Chinese officials have also maintained calls that both sides ‘meet halfway’ to establish a mutually acceptable resolution. However, since 1985, China has made clear that the current LAC is not an acceptable border. Instead, China maintains that a resolution would have to involve ‘mutual adjustments and concessions’. Though China is publically vague as to what exact concessions it wants to see, it is widely understood that it wants to acquire Tawang in the east in exchange for some territory in the west (Krishnan 2017; Wen 2017, 15–16). As Tawang has become a focal point for nationalists on both sides, such a deal would require...
strong leadership in both China and India to push through any deal that does not deliver the town. Yet, as Chapter Three illustrated, the core interests of the top leaders rarely lean towards offering territorial concessions. Hence, a territorial swap remains infeasible for the immediate future.

An alternative solution would be to have a third party become involved in the Sino-Indian border dispute. In essence, there are three feasible alternative routes other than bilateral negotiations that have been suggested as means to reach a resolution to an interstate border dispute (Huth, Croco, and Appel 2011; Kalha 2014, 230). The first is to have a third state mediate between the disputing parties, suggesting solutions and acting as a go-between. The second alternative is for the disputing states to submit the dispute for arbitration to some impartial third party to decide for the disputing states how the territory should be divided. The final alternative is to submit the dispute for an outright judicial settlement at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) or some similar international tribunal to establish who has the stronger claim to the disputed territories according to international law. All three types of third party interventions have the benefit of allowing the state to save face internationally and providing leaders with some cover from domestic fallout by arguing that they managed to secure the best result possible (Huth, Croco, and Appel 2011, 430–32).

Yet all three of these alternatives have proven untenable in the Sino-Indian border dispute thus far, primarily because they would require both sides to agree to the process. As this dissertation has demonstrated, any agreement on the border dispute has proven difficult to achieve due to conflicting interests from all sides. As Chapter Three illustrated, a Chinese President or an Indian Prime Minister would find it extremely difficult politically to sell this approach to his/her people. Any effort by either state’s chief executive to push this through might threaten his/her hold on power and potentially risk
his/her political survival as it would likely upset nationalist sentiment and give rivals
ground to challenge him/her. Hence, there is little motivation for a Chinese President or
Indian Prime Minister to pursue a resolution to the dispute, let alone surrender autonomy
over foreign policy decision-making. Additionally, as Chapter Four illustrated, such a
move to solicit a third party would not be in the interests of any governing institutions
within China and India, all of whom jealously guard their policy jurisdictions.

Finally, it would not be in China’s nor India’s interest to potentially weaken state
security by abdicating control over the negotiation process. Indeed, for a third party to
successfully mediate or adjudicate the Sino-Indian border dispute it would need to meet
the near impossible requirement of being trusted or at least respected by both China and
India. To date, the only country of any gravitas that could have played a mediation role
was the Soviet Union during the early phase of the border dispute. However, by 1960
Sino-Soviet relations were definitely showing strains, with Mao and Khrushchev even
quarrelling over China’s culpability regarding the Sino-Indian border clashes in 1959.
Additionally, even in the unlikely scenario that China would have accepted a Soviet
attempt at mediation, the Soviet Union adopted the policy that a bilateral border
negotiation was the best means for border dispute resolution (Maxwell 2013, 158–60).
Utilising international institutions, such as the ICJ, to adjudicate the dispute has also been
ruled out by both China and India, which have clearly expressed reservations about using
such bodies.\textsuperscript{130} Indeed, both China and India have taken the view that matters of territorial
sovereignty are beyond the jurisdiction of international courts and signed treaties
stipulating that the Sino-Indian border dispute should be resolved bilaterally (Kalha 2014,
230).

\textsuperscript{130} India did agree to allow the ICJ to rule on the Bangladesh-India maritime border dispute. However, there
were no significant interests tied into this dispute and India has thus far refused to acknowledge the ICJ’s
right to adjudicate land borders.
At a more theoretical/conceptual level, a potential solution to the Sino-Indian border dispute could emerge in the form of a democratic peace dividend. In essence, the democratic peace theory posits that democratic states are unlikely to sort disputes between them by force. Instead, democratic governments prefer to sort out disputes with other democracies by either negotiations or legal arbitration. Therefore, democratic states with a border dispute are likely to be more willing to negotiate a resolution on their own or accept a resolution that emerges from mediation or arbitration (Huth and Allee 2002; Simmons 1999, 216–20). Indeed, several studies have supported the claim that contiguous democracies with a territorial dispute typically engage in peaceful conduct and search for a pacific resolution of the dispute (Gibler 2012, 136; Park and James 2013, 102–3).

However, when applying the democratic peace theory to the Sino-Indian border dispute, several issues emerge. The first and most obvious problem is that China is not a democracy, nor is it likely to become one in the near future. Even assuming the unlikely event that the Communist China collapses and the country makes a democratic transition, the research on interstate border dispute resolutions between democracies is not promising. While inter-democratic state pacifism is an observable fact, this democratic peace does not easily translate into resolutions of interstate border disputes (Gibler 2012, 135–40). The reason for this largely stems from the logic outlined in both Chapters Three and Four; namely that the domestic survival of the chief executive and the policy fights between several governing institutions makes it difficult for those state officials in favour of resolution to prevail in the internal debate. Additionally, a democratically elected Chinese government would likely be even more susceptible to the growing nationalist sentiment in China than the current regime, constraining its ability to reach any compromise agreement.
Paul Huth and Todd Allee (2002), in a comprehensive study of democratic states’ behaviour towards interstate border disputes, corroborate this logic. Specifically, Huth and Allee argue that though democracies are more inclined to negotiate, the political costs to leaders perceived to have capitulated or compromised and the impact of governing institutions such as the legislature on decision making ensure that interstate border dispute resolution deals are hard to make. Of particular relevance to the Sino-Indian border dispute, they also found that:

there was no systematic evidence that democratic states are more likely to concede in the wake of previously stalemated talks. The evidence, in fact, suggests the opposite is more likely…This indicates that democratic norms do not lead democratic negotiators to concede first in difficult negotiations (Huth and Allee 2002, 292–93).

Given that the Sino-Indian border dispute has been deadlocked for several decades, it is therefore unlikely that any negotiators from India or a newly democratic China would be willing to make any concessions. In sum, it is safe to say that, even should China transform into a democratic country in the future, the Sino-Indian border dispute will likely remain intractable.

**Concluding remarks**

Since the 1970s, China and India have deftly managed to avoid the numerous incidents on disputed border to be blown out proportion or escalating into armed clashes. However, this relative pacification of the border is no substitute for a resolution. As numerous standoffs along the border from Nathu La to Sumdorong Chu to Doklam illustrate, the lack of a resolution ensures that the Sino-Indian border dispute remains an open wound between the two sides. As such, the Sino-Indian border dispute will continue to act as a
spoiler in the two states’ bilateral relations, and may even be the catalyst for future military hostilities between the two sides. Though the border dispute’s resolution will likely not lead to a dramatic improvement in the bilateral relationship, it will remove a primary obstacle and thereby allowing at least a modicum trust to develop. Frustrations with the Sino-Indian border dispute’s intractability are palpable on both sides, best reflected in former Premier Wen Jiabao’s fatalistic assessment in 2011 that “it may not be possible to ever fully solve the boundary question” (Kalha 2014, 228; Smith 2014, 65).

As this dissertation has demonstrated, the intractability of the Sino-Indian border dispute, and interstate border disputes generally, is generated by the confluence of actors’ interests at different levels of analysis. As the Sino-Indian border dispute has remained intractable, the frustrations and impatience on both sides have grown. In recent years, the pernicious side effects of the unresolved dispute, such as the periodic confrontations between Indian and Chinese border forces, have also become more visible and generated further tensions. Few, if any, of these actors consider the border dispute remaining unresolved to be in their interest. However, the calculation for most remains that a fraught status quo is a preferable alternative to having concessions or escalation policies affect more salient interests.

This is not to say that a resolution for the Sino-Indian border dispute is impossible, simply extremely difficult. In order to resolve the Sino-Indian border dispute, the interests of all prominent actors in the three levels must align or be overridden by other superordinate goals. Yet, for China and India, such a confluence of interests has proven impossible to achieve thus far. Hence, the Sino-Indian border dispute will likely remain intractable for the foreseeable future, regardless of how sensible any given solution may seem from the outside.
Annexures
Annex A: A list of current interstate land border disputes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disputing Countries</th>
<th>Disputed Issue</th>
<th>Synopsis of Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan-Pakistan</td>
<td>Border alignment (Durand Line)</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria-Libya</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria-Morocco</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>There have been several military confrontations though no serious out-break of violence. The main section of the dispute was resolved in 1970 when Morocco renounced its claim for Algerian administered territory in return for a share of the resource development in the area. However, Algeria still claims several small tracts of farmland administered by Morocco.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antarctica</td>
<td>Overlapping claims</td>
<td>Though the 1959 Antarctica Treaty has frozen all territorial claims on the continent, Argentina’s, Chile's, Norway's and the UK's formal claims overlap.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina-Chile</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>Several skirmishes fought around disputed sections until both countries ratified a 1984 treaty mediated by the Vatican that resolved most of their disputed border. The joint boundary commission established in 2001 that yet to complete its survey of the disputed territories. In 2010 another dispute flared up over a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Argentina-United Kingdom</strong></td>
<td>Sovereignty over Falkland Islands/Isla Malvinas and South Georgia Island</td>
<td>Argentina maintains its claim over the Falkland Islands/Isla Malvinas and South Georgia Island. Argentina briefly occupied them in 1982 before being evicted by a British taskforce. There have been numerous rounds of negotiations but no notable progress in resolving the dispute. Though disputed since Argentina declared independence in 1816, the claim was inherited from the Spanish Crown. Hence this is currently the longest continuous running dispute on record.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Armenia-Azerbaijan</strong></td>
<td>Sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh oblast</td>
<td>Armenia has occupied a breakaway region of Azerbaijan after the 1990-1991 war although no country recognises it having legitimate control the enclave. Several clashes between border forces have occurred since, the most recent being in 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Azerbaijan-Georgia</strong></td>
<td>Border alignment (the David Garcia monastery complex)</td>
<td>No notable escalations but no serious efforts at resolution either.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Pairs</td>
<td>Nature of Dispute</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize-Guatemala</td>
<td>Sovereignty over Belize</td>
<td>Although Guatemala has dropped its claim of sovereignty over the entirety of Belize, it still disputes approximately a third of the country. Negotiations over the dispute were suspended indefinitely in 2013.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin-Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Border alignment (focus on two border villages)</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan-People's Republic of China</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>In June 2017, India intervened ostensibly on behalf of Bhutan to prevent Chinese forces from consolidating their position in the disputed Doklam/Donglang Plateau and was involved in a standoff until August 2017. No notable efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia-Chile</td>
<td>Sovereignty over Atacama Corridor</td>
<td>Although Chile allows Bolivia access to the ports to trade its resources, Bolivia maintains a claim to the territorial corridor to the Pacific that it lost to Chile in 1884. No notable developments on the dispute have occurred since the early 1990s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia-Brazil</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Pair</td>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Description</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina-Serbia</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>Approximately half of the border has been delimited with general agreement about the rest but there remain a few minor points of contention. No serious conflict since the Yugoslav Wars during the 1990s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina-Croatia</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No clashes between border forces over the issue since the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s but both sides' parliaments have refused to ratify an agreement reached in 1999 with talks remaining deadlocked. Efforts are underway to have the dispute mediated in either the ICJ or EU courts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil-Uruguay</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No notable escalations have occurred yet sporadic efforts to negotiate a resolution quickly stall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso-Mali</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>After several military clashes the two countries agreed to have the dispute settled in the ICJ which divided the disputed territory in half. There are a few minor contested sections and significant tensions over the border remain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso-Niger</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>There were no notable developments until the dispute was referred to the ICJ for arbitration in 2010, with the Court still deliberating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma-Thailand</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No notable escalations but no serious efforts at resolution either.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Pairs</td>
<td>Issue Type</td>
<td>Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi-Rwanda</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No serious escalations or efforts at resolution, although it has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>exacerbated ethnic tensions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia-Thailand</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>Sporadic border clashes before issue was referred to ICJ which</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ruled in Cambodia's favour in December 2013. This ruling has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yet to be accepted by Thailand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia-Vietnam</td>
<td>Disputed islands</td>
<td>Most of the border was settled in the 1980s after Vietnam overthrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the Khmer Rouge and installed a friendly government in Cambodia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Still tensions over Vietnamese controlled territory and there are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>still several islands that officially remain disputed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon-Equatorial Guinea</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camaros-France</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada-Denmark/Greenland</td>
<td>Disputed islands (Hans Island)</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada-United States of America</td>
<td>Disputed islands (North Rock and Machias Seal Island)</td>
<td>No notable escalations but no serious efforts at resolution either.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic-South Sudan</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>Although South Sudan only recently became independent, the CAR and South Sudanese forces have been frequently skirmishing over sections of territory used for grazing pastures for decades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country 1</td>
<td>Country 2</td>
<td>Clashes/Escalations/Dispute Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica - Nicaragua</td>
<td>Border alignment (San Juan River and Isla Calero)</td>
<td>No military clashes but the disputes have been a key source of the long standing tensions between the two countries. Recently both countries have engaged in substantial litigation against each other in the ICJ over the issues only to appeal when one side inevitably disagrees with the ruling. No moves have yet been actively made to finally resolve the issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia - Serbia</td>
<td>Border alignment (Danube River)</td>
<td>No escalations after the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s but no notable efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia - Slovenia</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No escalations after the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s but no notable efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba - United States of America</td>
<td>Border alignment (Guantanamo Bay)</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus - Turkey/Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus</td>
<td>Sovereignty over Turkish Cyprus</td>
<td>Cyprus claims sovereignty over the TRNC, which was established after the 1974 Turkish invasion to prevent Greek Cypriot moves to unify the island with Greece. Tentative talks have taken place to resolve the dispute although strong animosity on both sides has ensured that little tangible progress has been made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border Conflict</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo- Republic of the Congo</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo- Zambia</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic People’s Republic of Korea/Republic of Korea-People's Republic of China</td>
<td>Border alignment (Mount Changbai/Paektu)</td>
<td>China and the DPRK signed an agreement on rights to the lake at the creator at Mount’s apex in 1963 but no formal resolution was reached. The RoK also claims the Mount as part of Korea and repudiates any agreements made by the DPRK. There have been no clashes over the Mount but occasionally poisons the relations between China and the two Koreas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic People’s Republic of Korea-Republic of Korea</td>
<td>Sovereignty over Korea as well as the current border alignment</td>
<td>Officially each side still claims its desire to unify the peninsula although the border has been effectively frozen at the Armistice Line. North Korea does not accept the line as its legitimate border and sporadically instigates military clashes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti-Eritrea</td>
<td>Disputed border and island (Ras Doumeira and Doumeira Island)</td>
<td>Effectively an ambiguous border that neither side had put any effort into resolving until 2008 when Eritrean troops occupied the disputed island. Tense deadlock has existed since. Although Qatar has agreed to mediate the dispute, little progress has been made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Pair</td>
<td>Disputed Area or Issue</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt-Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Disputed islands (Tiran and Sanafir Islands)</td>
<td>Egypt has controlled the uninhabited islands since 1950 although Saudi Arabia still claims sovereignty over them (Israel also occupied them between 1967 and 1982 before handing them back to Egypt). Efforts to resolve the dispute in 2016 by having Egypt cede the islands in exchange for Saudi infrastructure investment were met with a significant public backlash in Egypt and the Egyptian High Courts quashed the deal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt-Sudan</td>
<td>Border alignment (Wali Halfa/Halaib)</td>
<td>Although troops are occasionally mobilised in the disputed territory, straining bilateral relations, there has been major border incident since the 1990s. There has been no notable effort to resolve the dispute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador-Honduras</td>
<td>Disputed islands (Isla Conejo)</td>
<td>An ICJ ruling in 1992 largely resolved the dispute that had previously seen several skirmishes and the 'Football War' in 1969. A final settlement on land borders was signed after surveying was completed in 2006. However, the islands were not included in the settlement and remain disputed. Tensions occasionally flare up between the two states.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equatorial Guinea-Gabon</strong></td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>Both sides have agreed to allow the UN to mediate the dispute in 2004 but there has been little progress since.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethiopia-Eritrea</strong></td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>A border war was fought between 1998 and 2000, with occasional skirmishes between border forces since. No serious effort to negotiate a resolution has been attempted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethiopia-Somalia</strong></td>
<td>Sovereignty over Ogaden</td>
<td>Border war fought 1977-1978 with several subsequent border clashes until the central government of Somalia collapsed in 1991. Ethiopia has maintained control of disputed territory but no Somali nominal government or authority has renounced Somalia's claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>France-Madagascar</strong></td>
<td>Disputed islands</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>France-Mauritius</strong></td>
<td>Disputed islands</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>France-Vanuatu</strong></td>
<td>Disputed islands</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>French Guiana-Suriname</strong></td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Georgia-Russia/Abkhazia and South Ossetia** | Sovereignty of Abkhazia and South Ossetia | The two breakaway regions achieved *de facto* independence when the Russian Federation intervened in 2008 and ejected Georgian forces from the territory. Georgia still claims sovereignty over the regions. Only Russia and a handful of other states have
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country-Region</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghana-Togo</td>
<td>Border alignment (lands of the Ewe tribe)</td>
<td>There have been no notable resolution efforts though there have been no serious border clashes since mid-1990s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana-Ivory Coast</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece-Turkey</td>
<td>Disputed islands</td>
<td>Both sides have repeatedly escalated tensions almost to the point of war over several disputed islands, the most recent such incidence occurring in 1996. Negotiations between the two sides have continued with little progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea-Serra Leone</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>An ambiguous border evolved into a full-fledged dispute when Guinean soldiers occupied a river hamlet in 1998 prompting Sierra Leone to declare Guinea’s territorial claims excessive. An agreement was negociated in 2005 but Guinean troops only withdrew in 2013. The two countries are still negotiating remaining issues surrounding sovereignty of the hamlet’s hinterland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guyana-Suriname</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No resolution but no serious contesting of the status quo since a few border skirmishes in the late 1970s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Description</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guyana-Venezuela</strong></td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>India-Nepal</strong></td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No notable escalations or progress with the border negotiations have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>India-Pakistan</strong></td>
<td>Sovereignty over Jammu and Kashmir plus several minor border alignment issues</td>
<td>The countries have fought three major border wars and frequently exchange fire across the border. Little progress has been made in resolving the dispute after several rounds of negotiation. Remains the world's most volatile border dispute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>India-People's Republic of China</strong></td>
<td>Sovereignty over Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh/South Tibet as well as several smaller border alignment issues</td>
<td>Currently the world’s largest disputed territory per square kilometre. The two countries fought a brief war over this territory in 1962 and have been frequent skirmishes and standoffs between border forces over this issue. Several rounds of negotiations have failed to establish a resolution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indonesia-Malaysia</strong></td>
<td>Disputed islands</td>
<td>No notable escalations since 1963 but no progress with the border negotiations have occurred either.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indonesia- Timor Leste</strong></td>
<td>Disputed islands</td>
<td>Though Indonesia reluctantly allowed Timor Leste's succession, there are still some minor islands still in dispute. No progress has been made in resolving the dispute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Pairs</td>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Description</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran-Iraq</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>This dispute was a factor in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War with the <em>status quo</em> restored at the War's conclusion. No serious clashes or efforts at resolution have occurred since.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran-United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>Disputed islands (Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa Islands)</td>
<td>Iran occupied the disputed islands in 1971 and continues to do so. No progress has been made in resolving the dispute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel-Palestine</td>
<td>Sovereignty over the West Bank</td>
<td>Although Israel has never formally annexed the Palestinian territories of Gaza and the West Bank it has long occupied them and allowed settlers to establish properties on the land. Israel withdrew its military and settlers from Gaza in 2005 although it is still present in the West Bank where settlements are eroding the official border to the significant contention of the Palestinians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel-Syria</td>
<td>Border alignment (Golan Heights)</td>
<td>There have been several military clashes between the two countries with no serious effort made by either side negotiate a resolution. Lebanon also claims a small section of territory in the Golan Heights which is claimed by Syria but controlled by Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Pair</td>
<td>Disputed islands</td>
<td>Recent events and resolutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan-People's Republic of China</td>
<td>Disputed islands (Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands)</td>
<td>Recent source of tensions with several clashes between the two countries' patrol boats near the chain of islands and provocative intrusions into the disputed airspace. Though several understandings on the issues have been negotiated and the issue addressed in several talks, there has been no direct effort to resolve the dispute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan-Russia</td>
<td>Disputed islands (Kuril Islands)</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan-South Korea</td>
<td>Disputed islands</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya-Uganda</td>
<td>Disputed islands</td>
<td>A previously ambiguous border evolved into a border dispute when some Kenyan fishermen built a house on an uninhabited island in Lake Victoria in 1991. A hamlet has since been established, populated by fishermen from both states. No serious effort at resolution has taken place, but apart from both states' police forces occasionally disputing which has jurisdiction over the hamlet, no serious clashes have occurred to date either.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Issue Description</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo-Serbia</td>
<td>Sovereignty over Kosovo. Serbia has refused to recognise Kosovo's secession and there are still significant enclaves of Serbian loyalists within Kosovo. No serious efforts at negotiations have taken place so far.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan</td>
<td>Border alignment. No notable escalations have occurred though the efforts to resolve the dispute have stalled.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laos-Thailand</td>
<td>Border alignment. A low-level border war was fought between 1987 and 1988. A border commission was established in 1996 although negotiations over the disputed sections are still ongoing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi-Tanzania</td>
<td>Border alignment. No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute occurred until 2013 when Malawi started exploring for oil in the disputed zone prompting protests from Tanzania. Negotiations are currently deadlocked.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia-Philippines</td>
<td>Sovereignty over Sabah. No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshall Islands-USA</td>
<td>Disputed islands. No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius-United Kingdom</td>
<td>Disputed Islands (Diego Garcia atoll). No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Pair</td>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Description</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco-Spain</td>
<td>Border alignment (Ceuta and Melilla enclaves)</td>
<td>Several military clashes have occurred over the various disputed sections, most seriously in 2002 when Moroccan troops tried to occupy a disputed island. No serious efforts at negotiation have taken place to date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia-South Africa</td>
<td>Border alignment</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People's Republic of China-Taiwan (Republic of China)</td>
<td>Sovereignty over Taiwan</td>
<td>China officially claims the entire of Taiwan as a province and the government in Taiwan still officially claims to be the legitimate government of China. Although there has been no serious effort at reunification, China has frequently demonstrated willingness to use force to prevent Taiwan from officially seceding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People's Republic of China-Vietnam</td>
<td>Disputed islands (Paracel Islands and Spratley Islands)</td>
<td>There have been several military clashes over the disputed territories since when China seized the Paracel Islands from the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) in 1974. A dispute over the land border was also used as a pretext for the 1979 Sino-Vietnam War. In the 1990s it was agreed to divide the disputed territories on the land border equally, although the sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratley Islands is still actively disputed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Dispute/Alignment</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia-Ukraine</td>
<td>Sovereignty over Crimea as well as several minor disputed islands</td>
<td>The two countries dispute some uninhabited islands in the Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov although this dispute has been effectively superseded by Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, which Ukraine refuses to recognise. Currently there has been no serious effort to negotiate a resolution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan-Sudan</td>
<td>Border alignment (Abyei province and town of Heglig)</td>
<td>Negotiations have stalled over several disputed sections, with the occasional military clashes occurring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa-Swaziland</td>
<td>Boundary alignment (Kwa Zulu-Natal)</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain-United Kingdom</td>
<td>Border alignment (Gibraltar)</td>
<td>No notable escalations or efforts to resolve the dispute have occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spratley Islands</td>
<td>Disputed islands</td>
<td>This archipelago is disputed by five adjacent states (Malaysia, China, Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam) since about the mid-1960s although only China and Vietnam claim sovereignty over the entire area. There have been several clashes between the border forces stationed there with tensions rising in recent years as China has been attempting to consolidate its claim, most notably by constructing artificial islands large enough to establish a military presence upon throughout 2015-2018.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zambia-Zimbabwe</strong></td>
<td><strong>Border alignment</strong></td>
<td><strong>No notable escalations but no serious efforts at resolution either.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annex B: Maps of the Sino-Indian border dispute

Map 2.1: Current status of the Sino-Indian border dispute
Map 2.2: The various proposed alignments for north-western British India
Map 2.3: The approximate situation on the north-eastern border prior the 1914 Simla Conference

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Map 2.4: A copy of the original two-part map delimiting the McMahon Line
(Chou 1962; Wikimedia Commons 1914)
Map 2.5 Approximate Positions of Chinese and Indian Posts in the Western Sector 1962
Map 2.6: The McMahon Line and the Tawang Region
Map 2.7: The current military situation (not including paramilitary units) along the LAC
## Annex C: Major negotiations and treaties regarding the Sino-Indian border

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zhou Enlai’s Visit to India</td>
<td>19-25 April, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Session of the Officials’ Talks</td>
<td>15 June-6 July 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Session of the Official’s Talks</td>
<td>15 August-24 September 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Session of the Official’s Talks</td>
<td>7 November-12 December 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Colombo Conference and Proposals</td>
<td>10-12 December 1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Round of Border Talks</td>
<td>10-14 December, 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Round of Border Talks</td>
<td>17-20 May, 1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Round of Border Talks</td>
<td>28 January-2 February, 1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Round of Border Talks</td>
<td>24-30 October, 1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Round of Border Talks</td>
<td>17-22 September, 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Round of Border Talks</td>
<td>4-11 November, 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Round of Border Talks</td>
<td>21-23 July, 1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth Round of Border Talks</td>
<td>16-18 November, 1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajiv Gandhi’s Visit to China</td>
<td>19-23 December, 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Joint Working Group (JWG) Session</td>
<td>30 June-4 July, 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JWG Session</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second JWG Session</td>
<td>30-31 August, 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third JWG Session</td>
<td>13 May, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth JWG Session</td>
<td>20-21 February, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth JWG Session</td>
<td>27-29 October, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth JWG Session</td>
<td>25-26 June, 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Agreement on the</td>
<td>7 September, 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of Peace and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tranquillity Along the Line</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Actual Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh JWG session</td>
<td>6-7 July, 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth JWG session</td>
<td>18-19 August, 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth JWG session</td>
<td>October, 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Agreement on Confidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Measures in the</td>
<td>29 November, 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Field Along the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line of Actual Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenth JWG Session</td>
<td>4-5 August, 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleventh JWG Session</td>
<td>27-28 April, 1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>Twelfth JWG Session</td>
<td>26 April, 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirteenth JWG Session</td>
<td>31 July, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourteenth JWG Session</td>
<td>21 November, 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atal Vajpayee’s Visit to China</td>
<td>22-25 June, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Round of the Special Representatives Meeting (SRM)</td>
<td>26 October, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Round of the SRM</td>
<td>12-13 January, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Round of the SRM</td>
<td>26 July, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Round of the SRM</td>
<td>18-19 November, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Round of the SRM</td>
<td>10-12 March, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifteenth JWG Session</td>
<td>30-31 March, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question</td>
<td>11 April, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protocol on the Modalities for the Implementation of Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control</td>
<td>11 April, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Round of the SRM</td>
<td>26-28 September, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Round of the SRM</td>
<td>11-13 March, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth Round of the SRM</td>
<td>25-27 June, 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Round of the SRM</td>
<td>Dates</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenth Round of the SRM</td>
<td>24-27 April, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleventh Round of the SRM</td>
<td>24-28 September, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelfth Round of the SRM</td>
<td>18-19 September, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirteenth Round of the SRM</td>
<td>7-8 August, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourteenth Round of the SRM</td>
<td>29-30 November, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifteenth Round of the SRM</td>
<td>16-17 January, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixteenth Round of the SRM</td>
<td>28-29 June, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement on Border Defence Cooperation</td>
<td>23 October, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventeenth Round of the SRM</td>
<td>10-11 February, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighteenth Round of the SRM</td>
<td>23-24 March 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nineteenth Round of the SRM</td>
<td>20-21 April 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twentieth Round of the SRM</td>
<td>22 December 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Author’s own compilation)
Annex D: China’s current foreign policy elite relevant to the Sino-Indian border dispute policymaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>State Position</th>
<th>CCP Position</th>
<th>Portfolio Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xi Jinping</td>
<td>President of the PRC, Chairman of the CMC, Chairman of the NSC.</td>
<td>CCP General Secretary, Member of the Politburo Standing Committee. Chairs the FALSG/NSLSG and the NSC.</td>
<td>Paramount leader’s duties, namely leadership of foreign and national defence institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Keqiang</td>
<td>Premier, Secretary of the State Council, Vice-chairman of the NSC.</td>
<td>Member of Politburo Standing Committee, Deputy Chairman of the NSC.</td>
<td>Oversight of the economy and government administration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wang Huning</td>
<td>Director of the Central Policy Research Office.</td>
<td>Member of the Politburo Standing Committee, First Secretary of the Party Secretariat,</td>
<td>Oversight of propaganda and ideological institutions. Advisor to the paramount leader, esp. in foreign affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General (Air Force) Xu Qiliang</td>
<td>First CMC Vice-Chairman</td>
<td>Full Member of the Politburo.</td>
<td>Management of the PLA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang Jiechi</td>
<td>State Councillor for Foreign Affairs, Director of the SCFAO.</td>
<td>Full Member of the Politburo, Secretary-General</td>
<td>Oversight of foreign affairs and heads China’s delegation at the SRMs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Huang Kunming</strong></td>
<td>Executive Director of CCP Central Propaganda Department.</td>
<td>Full Member of the Politburo, member of the FALSG/NSLSG</td>
<td>Management of the media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Zhang Youxia</strong></td>
<td>Second CMC Vice-Chairman</td>
<td>Full Member of the Politburo.</td>
<td>Management of the PLA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guo Shengkun</strong></td>
<td>State Councillor for Internal Security, Minister of Public Security, Commissioner General of Police.</td>
<td>Full Member of the Politburo, member of the FALSG/NSLSG</td>
<td>Public security including civilian control of PAP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Chang Wanquan</strong></td>
<td>State Councillor for Military Affairs, Minister for National Defence, Member of the CMC.</td>
<td>Full Member of the CCP Central Committee, member of the FALSG/NSLSG</td>
<td>Military-to-Military interactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wang Yi</strong></td>
<td>Minister of Foreign Affairs.</td>
<td>Full Member of the CCP Central Committee, member of the FALSG/NSLSG</td>
<td>Overall management of Foreign Affairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Admiral Sun Jianguo</strong></td>
<td>Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff Department, Head of China Institute for International and Strategic Studies.</td>
<td>Full Member of the CCP Central Committee.</td>
<td>Military intelligence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chen Wenqing</strong></td>
<td>Minister of State Security.</td>
<td>Full Member of the CCP Central Committee, member of the FALSG/NSLSG.</td>
<td>Intelligence gathering and counter intelligence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Zhao Zongqi</strong></td>
<td>Commander of Western Theatre Command.</td>
<td>Full Member of the CCP Central Committee.</td>
<td>Military operations in the Western Theatre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rear Admiral Guan Youfei</strong></td>
<td>Director of the CMC Office for International Military Cooperation.</td>
<td>Unknown.</td>
<td>Military-to-military interactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kong Xuanyou</strong></td>
<td>Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs.</td>
<td>Unknown.</td>
<td>Oversees Asian affairs, boundary and oceanic affairs and international treaties and laws departments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(listed according to approximate position within the state/CCP hierarchy as of the 19th CCP Congress, 2017).

(Author’s own composition)
Annex E: India’s current foreign policy elite relevant to the Sino-Indian border dispute policymaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>State Position</th>
<th>Relevant Portfolio Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narendra Modi</td>
<td>Prime Minister, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) for the BJP</td>
<td>Overseeing government, especially leadership of foreign and national defence institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nripendra Misra</td>
<td>Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister</td>
<td>Provides general advice and oversees the Prime Minister’s policy agenda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajit Doval</td>
<td>National Security Advisor</td>
<td>Provides specific advice to the Prime Minister on National Security and Foreign Policy and oversees the National Security Council. Heads India’s delegation at the Special Representatives Meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pradeep Kumar Sinha</td>
<td>Cabinet Secretary</td>
<td>Coordinates between the various Ministries involved with India’s IBD management and chairs several of the bureaucratic level committees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sushma Swaraj</td>
<td>Minister for External Affairs, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) for the BJP</td>
<td>Overall supervision of foreign policy implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arun Jaitley</td>
<td>Minister of Finance and Minister of Defence, Member of Parliament</td>
<td>Overall supervision of IDF policy implementation and state finances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position/Positional Details</td>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajnath Singh</td>
<td>Minister of Home Affairs</td>
<td>Overall supervision of police and the Intelligence Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. (Retd.) V.K. Singh</td>
<td>Minister of State for External Affairs, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) for the BJP</td>
<td>Assists External Affairs Minister in overseeing policy implementation, most notably in regard to the LAC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Subhash Bhamare</td>
<td>Minister of State for Defence, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) for the BJP</td>
<td>Oversees administration and logistics of the Ministry of Defence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar</td>
<td>Foreign Secretary</td>
<td>Manages the Ministry of External Affairs and Indian Foreign Service, responsible for overseeing implementation of India’s foreign policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Mohan Kumar</td>
<td>Defence Secretary</td>
<td>Manages the Ministry of Defence and coordinates policy implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Bipin Rawat</td>
<td>Chief of Army Staff</td>
<td>Oversees Indian Army operations including along the LAC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krishna Chaudhary</td>
<td>Director General of the ITBP</td>
<td>Manages the paramilitary police force guarding the LAC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anil Dhasmana</td>
<td>PMO Secretary (Research) aka Chief of the R&amp;AW</td>
<td>Oversees foreign espionage operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajiv Jain</td>
<td>Director of the Intelligence Bureau</td>
<td>Oversees domestic intelligence operations,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Including along the Sino-Indian border.

| Pranay Verma | Joint Secretary (East Asia) | Oversees Indian foreign policy towards China and other countries in East Asia |

(listed according to approximate position within the state hierarchy in 2017)

(Author’s own composition)
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