



Ear to Asia podcast

- Title:** India and China jousting for control on the roof of the world
- Description:** India and China have been at odds over their common border for over a century, and this year's deadly military skirmishes are further dashing hopes of a resolution. So why are there such high stakes over barren terrain high in the Himalayas? What would it take to dissolve the intransigence on both sides? Political scientist Dr Pradeep Taneja and security analyst Assoc Prof Jingdong Yuan examine the high-altitude acrimony with presenter Ali Moore. An Asia Institute podcast.
- Listen:** <https://player.whooshkaa.com/episode?id=734703>
- Voiceover:** The Ear to Asia podcast is made available on the Jakarta Post platform under agreement between the Jakarta Post and the University of Melbourne.
- Ali Moore:** Hello, I'm Ali Moore. This is Ear to Asia.
- Pradeep Taneja:** We find ourselves in this position now where China and India have got to a stage where their relationship has deteriorated to such an extent that a whole generation of Indians now have a very negative view of China. And that's not going to help in developing a positive relationship between these two countries.
- Jingdong Yuan:** China, I think, needs to re-evaluate its own foreign policy and its relationship with India. In the current situation, especially when the US is imposing sanctions, and this new what is called cold war between China and the US, continuing to engage in the very confrontational posture with India, it doesn't help China.
- Ali Moore:** In this episode, India and China trading blows on the roof of the world.
- Ear to Asia is the podcast from Asia Institute, the Asia research specialists at the University of Melbourne.
- The high altitude skirmish between Chinese and Indian troops in the Galwan Valley on June the 15th this year, was the deadliest clash between the two nuclear armed neighbours in decades. The two giants have never agreed on just where their more than three and a half thousand kilometre border actually lies, and while their armies literally face off at varying points across the disputed and inhospitable territory, there's been little prospect of resolution. So why are there such high stakes over what amounts to barren territory in Himalayas? Why do both sides remain so intransigent, and what will it take to find a more permanent resolution? And is there a risk that if there is no agreement, the border battle spills over into a bigger regional conflict?



With me in our virtual studio to discuss the seemingly intractable Sino-India border dispute, are Asia Pacific security expert, Associate Professor Jingdong Yuan from the University of Sydney, and University of Melbourne expert in Asian Geopolitics, Dr. Pradeep Taneja, a frequent guest on this programme. Jingdong welcome to Ear to Asia, and Pradeep it's terrific to have you back on the show.

Pradeep Taneja: Thank you, Ali.

Jingdong Yuan: Thank you, Ali.

Ali Moore: Before we look at the specifics of this border dispute, can we just step back a little to get a bit of a broader context? Before the events of June this year Pradeep, what were relations like between India and China? Because as we've discussed on this podcast before, the two Presidents, Modi and Xi, they've had a number of summits, both formal and informal haven't they?

Pradeep Taneja: They have indeed. Over the last three decades, particularly since 1988 when then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China and met with Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese leaders. Generally speaking relations had been on the upswing. I mean there were, from time to time, clashes on the border, that's been going on for a while. But not until 2017 when there was a rather longish standoff that continued for nearly two months, but then the two leaders, Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi of India, agreed that they need to talk about these issues and that they need to develop a new mechanism where they can raise some of these issues at the political level. So we saw two so called informal summits between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi. One in Wuhan in 2018 and then it was followed up by a second informal summit in near Chennai in South India last year.

Until this recent episode, relations were generally improving and trade between these two countries was growing. The trade was roughly close to \$100 billion US dollars. There were about 20,000 Indian students studying in China, there were at least 1,000 plus Chinese students studying in India. The businessmen from both the countries were frequently travelling to each others cities and doing business. There were a significant number of Chinese companies who had invested in India, famous brand names like Alibaba had invested in India and a number of startups. But also many Chinese engineering companies were building infrastructure projects in India from solar power stations to drilling tunnels, etc., for metro construction and different parts of India. Until this year the relations weren't really all that bad.

Ali Moore: Jingdong would you agree with that assessment?

Jingdong Yuan: Yes I would agree. When the Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang administration came into power in late 2012 and early 2013, one of the first country that the two leader choose to visit was India. So Li Yuanchao went through India in 2013

and then Xi Jinping followed suit in 2014. What was significant was that Prime Minister Modi hosted Xi Jinping in his hometown, in the home state, and China at the time promised a massive investment to the tune of \$20, \$25 billion dollars in India. And the year after that Prime Minister Modi visit China and Xi Jinping returned the favour and hosted him in his hometown, and so you could see, at least from the beginning of both administration, the Modi administration and Xi Jinping, Li Yuanchao administration, both sides had intended to get the relationship to a higher level. There's a positive trend.

I think in particular in the trade investment area programmes has been quite significant, especially when you think about in late 80s and early 90s, bilateral trade, two-way trade was only about \$110 million and then towards the last few years of the Congress Party government of Manmohan Singh, it was about \$70 billion. And the last two years have seen as finally got over to the \$90 billion, very close to \$100 billion mark.

Ali Moore: So against that background, as you said, education, cultural exchanges, political exchanges, growing economic ties, against that background, Pradeep what happened on June the 15th this year along that disputed western border region between China and India?

Pradeep Taneja: Well it's not just on June 15th, but this whole sort of disturbance or skirmish, if we can call it, started a few weeks earlier. There had been going since April. It's not uncommon for Indian and Chinese soldiers to push and shove each other along the Line of Actual Control, but this was going on since April. Indian media was reporting that these clashes were happening. Chinese media had been fairly silent on this, and one assumed that these would be resolved the way they have been because both the countries have developed both diplomatic and military dialogue mechanisms for dealing with these issues. So for example, there is a working mechanism where the diplomats from the two sides meet if there is an incident on the border to talk about the border issues, but there are also provisions for the military commanders on the ground from both the Chinese and Indian militaries to talk to each other and resolve these disputes.

There was an expectation that the most recent incidents would also be resolved through both the diplomatic and the military dialogue. But unfortunately they escalated into a conflict on the night of the 15th of June where the Indian media reported the following day, on the 16th of June, that up to 20 Indian soldiers were killed in this encounter. According to the Indian media, a party of Indian soldiers, with their commander, had gone over to check were there an agreement that had been reached between the two military commanders on the ground that the Chinese forces were going to withdraw from an area where apparently there had setup some sort of posts. And when they went to check, according to the Indian media, then they were attacked, they were set upon, and Chinese soldiers apparently used clubs studded with nails. So no guns were used, no firearms were used,



but they used rather primitive weapons, and as a result 20 Indian soldiers were killed.

Some of these soldiers were killed as a result of directly their injuries, others died as a result of of course a very inhospitable climate. We are talking about very high mountain areas where this conflict took place.

Ali Moore: You say no guns were used, in fact guns are carried but banned, is that correct?

Pradeep Taneja: That's right. There's an understanding between the two militaries that they will not resort to the use of gun, and one of the reasons why the India China border, or the Line of Actual Control, has remained peaceful, relatively speaking, is because the two sides have agreed not to use firearms. When you compare the India China border with the India Pakistan border, where there's frequent shelling and firing almost on a weekly basis, but the India China border had remained peaceful because of this important understanding that the soldiers from the two sides will not use firearms.

Even on the 15th of June, the soldiers on both sides did not use firearms. And in fact in India there have been calls since this incident for this policy to be reviewed.

Ali Moore: So what Pradeep, what actually changed? You said in the past there's been skirmishes but they've managed to resolve them, there are military and diplomatic mechanisms in place. Why did it escalate this time?

Pradeep Taneja: Well according to the reports in the Indian media and interviews I've read with the Indian officials, particularly former officials who are in the know, on this evening, on the 15th of June, the actions that took place on the Line of Actual Control were premeditated. That unlike many past such incidents, this incident was premeditated. Chinese soldiers were prepared for it, and in fact there had been a large movement of Chinese troops along the Line of Actual Control on the Chinese side of the border for weeks before that. And in fact this was mirrored by deployments, of course, by the Indian military also over the preceding weeks. So according to the Indian government and Indian media, this was a premeditated step. In fact a former Indian ambassador to China, Gautam Bambawale, recently wrote in the Hindustan Times newspaper that the main difference between the past such incidents and this one was that this was a deliberate and premeditated action. Now I'm not sure exactly what motivated it. Perhaps Jingdong can help us with a version from the Chinese side.

Ali Moore: Jingdong indeed, how does China see what happened in June and why this time it escalated?

Jingdong Yuan: Well I think I would agree with Pradeep's assessment and also because we don't have Chinese media reporting on the event, except at very general and

political diplomatic level. As both sides have built up their infrastructure to the border area and the both sides are able now to mobilise troops to where the Line of Actual Control lies, so you could imagine from Chinese perspective they built up the infrastructure, they set up the post, and then in April and May there were some encounters and conflict and dispute. Then the local commanders apparently had meetings and they agreed to somewhat serve as detachment, disengagement. And then the Chinese side probably, knowing that India would challenge or on-site inspection and then just to inspect whether the actual withdrawal had taken place, so probably they did not really want to withdraw or maybe delay the withdrawal process. So in a way they were prepared and anticipating Indian side to come to check upon them.

Jingdong Yuan: So that start the scuffle and conflict. And interestingly we've heard a lot about the casualties on the Indian side, but we only have speculated casualties on the Chinese side, there's certainly no official Chinese report, but some other western media, India media reports, have pointed out Chinese casualty were about twice the size of Indian casualty. And in recent weeks or months there were also reports about somehow Chinese defence suppliers to armour vehicles to the Chinese troops are really in a very low quality, so that also exposed some of the vulnerability and a weakness in Chinese troops.

Ali Moore: And Jingdong you mentioned they had a Line of Actual Control, which I want to get back to in a minute, but you also talked about the building of infrastructure. Pradeep in some ways have the two sides been trying to out-build each other because there's been enormous infrastructure development, hasn't there, on both sides of the border.

Pradeep Taneja: As everybody knows, Chinese government has accumulated considerable experience in building infrastructure. On the Chinese side, for example, now there's a train, a good quality train that goes all the way to Lhasa, and in fact beyond Lhasa now. And the Chinese government even plans to extend the railway line all the way to Nepal. So on the Chinese side there has been large scale infrastructure construction for many years now. Indian side had neglected the development of infrastructure on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control, and it's only over the last 15 years or so that Indian government began to pay serious attention, and particularly after Prime Minister Modi came to power in 2014, India has further accelerated the development of road infrastructure on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control.

And it's been said that one of the triggers for this conflict could have been the completion of a road, over a 200 kilometre long road that India has built in Ladakh, which connects an advanced air field on a very high, in fact its known as the world's highest elevation air field called Daulat Beg Oldi. This was an air field which was built after the 1962 India China War, then it fell into disuse, and in 2008 the Indian Air Force decided to reopen it. So they



reopened it but there was no road, there was no road connectivity between this air field and the rest of the Ladakh region.

Pradeep Taneja: So Indian government began, nearly 20 years ago, they began building a road in Ladakh and this road was only opened recently. It gives Indian military, and Indian civilian population in the area, access to some of the inaccessible parts of the state. But perhaps the Chinese military seeing this as losing some of the competitive advantages they had had in the border areas, and therefore the moves by the Chinese military, by the People's Federation Army, may have been motivated by trying to regain that advantage by moving closer to this new Indian road. And the Indian military, of course, has objected to that. So in fact the attempts by the Indian government to at least attain some level of parity in infrastructure, and border infrastructure, may in fact have been a trigger for this conflict.

Ali Moore: You mentioned the China India War of 1962, Jingdong can you tell us a little about what happened in 1962, and indeed about the Line of Actual Control, what it actually is?

Jingdong Yuan: Well 1962 war occurred against the background of failed negotiation or discussion between India and China in the mid and late 50s. At the time obviously India gained independence in 1947 and China was in 1949, and after the PRC was setup the Chinese government obviously wanted to negotiate the border with India based on some line between the two countries, traditionally and certainly between India and Tibet. And India, under the Nehru government, considered the border sealed and settled while the Chinese wanted to engage in some negotiations, especially the eastern sector of McMahon Line, which was what the Chinese considered to be imposed on them during the 1913, '14 Shimla conference. But they failed to reach any agreement and then 1959 of course there's the uprising in Tibet and the 14th Dalai Lama fled Tibet and when into India and India obviously allowed him to stay there. Then so basically situation deteriorated rapidly with both sides start to amass troops along the border area and the Indian troops also setup a lot of outposts very close or behind what China considered to be within their side of the boundary.

Jingdong Yuan: And then the larger international environment was the US and the Soviet Union were entangled in the Cuban Missile Crisis, while in China domestically after the breakup between China and Soviet Union, and then was the natural disasters, so domestic situation was also really severe. This was obviously a good opportunity for China to, what they considered to be teaching India a lesson. They start the war by surprise, there's a very short duration, about a month, between late October to late November. And after significant Chinese pushes into the Indian territory, and the Chinese troops withdraw 20 kilometres from what was effectively the Line of Actual Control in 1959. And the Chinese government unilaterally declare a ceasefire.



So the war was quite dramatic and traumatic as well for India because the Nehru government and the Indian military appeared to be not well prepared. For China, serve political purposes of certainly, I would say, aversion from domestic difficulties, but also using this window of opportunity where the United States and the Soviet Union were entangled in the Cuban Missile Crisis and neither power seemed to be very keen in coming to the assistance of India. India was very isolated at the time.

Pradeep Taneja:

Ali, if I can just clarify to your question about the LAC, the Line of Actual Control. The Line of Actual Control is really the demarkation that separates the Chinese controlled territory from the Indian controlled territory. But the reality that the two sides don't even agree on how long the LAC actually is. From the Indian perspective the Line of Actual Control is 3,488 kilometres long. From the Chinese perspective it is only 2,000 kilometre long, and the Line of Actual Control is really split into three sectors and Jingdong mentioned earlier the eastern sector, the McMahon Line, which was drawn up at the 1913, '14 Shimla Conference, that's the eastern sector. There is a middle sector, which lies between Tibet and the Indian state of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh and then there is the western sector in Ladakh and this is where we have seen the recent clashes in the western sector.

The middle sector is the least disputed, so there is some dispute but it's marginal in the middle sector. But the real differences are between the eastern sector, particularly the state of Arunachal Pradesh in India, which China claims as southern Tibet and in Ladakh particularly in area called Aksai Chin, which is under Chinese control, but is claimed by India.

Ali Moore:

You're listening to Ear to Asia from Asia Institute at the University of Melbourne. And just a reminder to listeners about Asia Institute's recently launched online publication on Asia and its societies politics and cultures. It's called the Melbourne Asia Review. It's free to read and it's open access at melbourneasiareview.edu.au. You'll find articles by some of our regular Ear to Asia guests and by many others, plus you can catch recent episodes of Ear to Asia at the Melbourne Asia Review website, which again you can find at melbourneasiareview.edu.au. I'm Ali Moore and I'm joined by longtime watcher of China and India, Dr. Pradeep Taneja from the University of Melbourne, and by Asia Pacific security expert, Associate Professor Jingdong Yuan from the University of Sydney. We're talking about the border dispute between China and India. What about what's happened since June? Again, looking at those diplomatic and military dialogue mechanisms. How many rounds of talks have there been, Jingdong, and has any progress been made since June?

Jingdong Yuan:

Well there was immediately a foreign ministers meeting between Wang Yi and his Indian counterpart, this is a couple of days after June 15th. Then the military meetings, the local commanders meeting, what is called the Army Corp Level meetings also took place. We have been told that the disengagement will be taking place, but apparently if you follow reports that

has not taken place and you have several IT images showing that the Chinese side and Indian sides are continuing their military troop activities in the region. But I think for both sides there's a clear awareness that they don't like, they don't want to have a similar reoccurrence of the Galwan Valley clashes to take place again and very soon, but they have no intention of backing down.

Ali Moore: It does raise interesting questions though. If there's no intention of backing down from either side, what a resolution might look like and I'll get to that in a minute, but in the interim India has retaliated haven't they, Pradeep? Largely with economic sanctions.

Pradeep Taneja: Since the 15th of June clash Indian government has taken a number of actions, although there has been dialogue at Jingdong mentioned, the foreign ministers of India and China have spoken online, in a virtual world of course in this COVID era, and not only that, even at the high level the Chinese Communist Party's main leader who handles foreign policy, Yang Jiechi, and the Indian National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval, have also spoken. So there has been high level discussions on this, but there is still no resolution. In the meantime the Indian government has decided, as you said Ali, to take actions, particularly in the economic domain. Indian government initially banned nearly 100, initially it was 55 and then they increased the number, of Chinese mobile phone apps which were used very widely. Apps like TikTok and WeChat. They have been banned by the Indian government. Indian government says that this is related to national security, although it's been interpreted in the Indian media as an economic action because some of the Chinese companies who own these apps are also significant investors in India, or at least some of them wanted to invest in India in the future.

This is seen as an economic step by the Indian government to try and modify the Chinese behaviour. Indian government has also essentially banned Chinese companies from participating in major infrastructure projects in India. There was, for example, a tender notice put out by the Indian railways for construction of railway coaches and when they discovered that the top bidder was actually a joint venture with a Chinese company CRRC, they decided to cancel the tender and they said they are going to invite fresh tenders with new conditions which will prevent Chinese companies from bidding. So essentially the Indian government has decided that we cannot allow China to accumulate a trade surplus with Chinese companies to benefit from opportunities which are presented by the Indian market unless there is a return to the status quo ante. In other words, unless the Chinese troops withdraw to the positions they were at before these skirmishes started in April and May.

Ali Moore: And how Jingdong, how has China responded to those sanctions?

Jingdong Yuan: There's not a lot of media report from China about the actual Indian sanctions on Chinese companies and investments, so there's really limited

reactions. I would imagine in the large scheme of things, since China has invested more in India and has accumulated a significant trade surplus over the years, the impact and the cost would probably be born by the individual Chinese enterprises and the companies. So China as a whole wouldn't be effected by the Indian actions. But normally the economy sanctions, unless and until it's very targeted, say for national security reasons, largely send the political message to your target. There's no cost free sanctions because the end result would be you also inflict some economic costs of your own. You can imagine with the sanctions on investments, sanction on these apps, the Indian consumers, they would need to have alternative to those applications and then they need alternative to the bidder, the foreign investment. I would say the impact on China would be rather limited and the Chinese government tries to separate the two areas, and so the trade area, economic area, and then the border dispute.

Ali Moore: Pradeep, if we look at the question of resolution today in 2020, strategically, how important is this border to India?

Pradeep Taneja: Well the border issue has really been the main point of friction between China and India, both from a nationalist point of view, but also from a realistic point of view. You cannot really have an undefined border with your largest neighbour. It's been the case now for 70 years, so people in India want clarity on the border. I think the Indian government also wants clarity on the border, but unfortunately I'm not very optimistic that we are actually going to have a clear demarcation of the border. In fact, it's going to take a long time before we can have clarity on the Line of Actual Control itself because there are differences of where the Line of Actual Control lies.

Until recently, it had been assumed that the border negotiations can continue. Both the governments had setup mechanism for negotiating on the border issues. At the highest level, in fact, India's National Security Advisor was the main interlocutor from the Indian side. On the Chinese side now the Foreign Minister Wang Yi has been the chief negotiator. So the negotiations have been going on for more than 30 years now. In fact I remember I was in Beijing as a student in the 1980s and border negotiations began then, and they picked up speed, they decided to create this mechanism in 2003 where the negotiations were taken up at the political level. But I'm not optimistic that we are going to see any resolution, but this is why the leaders from both sides have agreed that the negotiators can do their job, they can continue to negotiate on the border as long as they maintain peace and tranquillity on the border. Then we can continue to engage in commerce and trade and investment and people to people exchanges.

Pradeep Taneja: But what happened on the 15th of June has changed that from the Indian point of view. That the violence that took place on the 15th of June means that we cannot continue to engage in those exchanges, economic and cultural exchanges unless we can reach not necessarily a settlement of the

border, but unless there is a retreat, there's a return to the status quo ante on the border, and there is a political sort of negotiations between the two governments. So that previous understanding where border negotiations could continue in parallel with economic and cultural exchanges, I think that is in trouble now.

Ali Moore: Do you see, Pradeep, any likelihood of a retreat and indeed if you don't, what's the risk of this escalating beyond the border?

Pradeep Taneja: One of the first things that's been talked about now is this so called, the term which is used in the US China context, economic decoupling. There is a lot of people in India and the media, some of the prominent Indian commentators who have been talking about an economic decoupling, that India needs to diversify its supply chains and decouple the Indian economy from the Chinese economy. Personally I think it's going to be very difficult. Even if India were to systematically try and do it, it will at least take a decade because there are many Indian industries which have come to rely on the supply chains from China.

Pradeep Taneja: For example, India's pharmaceuticals industry is one of India's key export industries. But many of the ingredients for the pharmaceuticals industry actually come from China. So disengaging from China, whether it is for the pharmaceuticals industry or the electronics industry in India, is going to take a long time. But certainly in India there's enough anger after the 15th of June to at least begin this process.

Ali Moore: Jingdong what about from China's perspective? How important is this border and what would be the view of the prospect for retreat?

Jingdong Yuan: I don't see a very good prospect for a settlement anytime soon. I think in recent years China also has departed from previous positions of swapping recognition of the territories and just settle the west sector and eastern sector, so China would accept India's position in the eastern sector, Arunachal Pradesh, while China would expect India to accept China's control of Aksai Chin as part of the Chinese territory. So unfortunately I think after Galwan incident, unless the leaders, Modi and Xi Jinping, come up with some new perspectives and if they are both sides are willing and able to convince their domestic constituencies and different factions, and they really have some personal stakes in resolving this border issue. I don't think that you will have the political will to impose bureaucracies on the military and on the diplomats to come to a final solution of the border issue.

This is very unfortunate because until and unless the boundary issue is resolved, you won't see a normal relationship between China and India, the two rising Asian powers, where their priorities and their interest ought to be economic development and to address the wellbeing of nearly 2.6 billion people the two countries have. But that is not going to happen in the near term.

I think what is most important at this time is for the two sides, at least, to indicate to their militaries to develop or strengthen existing measures and protocols and provisions to prevent a similar Galwan accident and certainly to prevent it from moving into armed conflict. Because in those border conflicts where nationalism is on the rise, when the military, both military have a strong mandate that they have to protect their national sovereign and territory integrity, that's very difficult for either side to back down if even a small skirmish is involving firing of arms. So that could easily escalate rapidly, and both countries are nuclear powers and you have the missiles aiming at each other, so the scenario is not very good at all. I would argue that they need to pay more attention on how they can control and deescalate any future conflict dispute and to prevent any escalation.

Ali Moore: Pradeep, if Jingdong is right I guess where could that lead and I note that India's Chief of Defence staff has talked of military options being available if talks fail. What could that look like, and indeed militarily how do the two countries compare along the border?

Pradeep Taneja: In military balance terms, obviously China has a much larger defence budget than India does. China's defence budget is now five times that of India's budget. But on the border itself, the difference is not that big because both sides have been preparing. First of all they've been building infrastructure but also a lot of their resources, particularly on the Indian side because China is seen as a bigger problem by India. India has been committing significant resources to the military in that area. If there were to be a military conflict it will not be a repeat of 1962. It will not be a walkover, that is for sure.

But I think just to come back to the outlook. I agree with Jingdong that this is unlikely to be resolved anytime soon, but in the interest of I think the development objectives of both the states, China and India, one of the ways to deal with this could be for A, to agree to return to the status quo ante, in other words for the Chinese troops to move back to where they were before the recent clash started. But then also to agree to not actually have their forces facing each other. One of the reasons why this confrontation has been happening more frequently is because increasingly both sides have been patrolling very aggressively along this Line of Actual Control. So there has to be a new agreement between China and India in the interim before there can be any settlement of the border where the two sides agree that they will develop mechanism which will avoid face to face contact between the two militaries.

Ali Moore: Are you optimistic that that is a possibility from both sides, Pradeep?

Pradeep Taneja: At the moment it doesn't look like it. As Jingdong said, and I agree with him, that the political will on both sides is lacking, there is a rise of nationalism on both sides, and there was an expectation that China has a strong leader, India has a strong leader, and the two strong leaders could actually solve

this dispute. But unfortunately the two strong leaders are much more nationalistic and therefore I don't really see any rapid resolution or settlement of the boundary dispute. But there is of course the global geopolitical dimension now. We have almost the beginnings of a new cold war between China and the United States, India has developed a much closer security relationship with the United State then it has historically has, we have this new strategy of the Indo-Pacific of which India is a subscriber, India is a member of the Quad, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue among the United States, Japan, Australia, and India. China is uncomfortable about this so we have significant geopolitical developments taking place, and ultimately I think the India China dispute becomes part of the global geopolitical developments.

Jingdong Yuan:

So India has certainly benefited from the development of its bilateral relationship with the United States. That started actually back in 2000 when President Clinton visited India and then further developed during the George W. Bush administration where two countries signed nuclear deal and also defence cooperation. In recent years I think what has actually materialised is India has acquired and procured a lot of US made weapons system and strengthened the security partnership with country like Australia, like Japan. India certainly has strengthened its position. That obviously worries China, but I think at the end of the day all these other Quad members would still be very sensitive and cautious in taking actual side of a India China conflict. They will offer diplomatic support but I doubt they will land anything more concrete there.

But also China I think needs to reevaluate its own foreign policy and his relationship with India in the current situation, especially when the US is imposing sanctions and this new cold war, what is called the cold war between China and the US and alienation between China and Australia in the last few years, continuing to engage in the very confrontational path here with India it doesn't help China. With regard to the border I can think of the 1996 and '97 China Russia CBM, the confidence-building measures, so one of the provision was for both sides to put a ceiling on the number of troops to be deployed within a certain range of kilometres in the border region.

So I think that can also be applied into China Indian border area, so you set up the parameters that both sides would try to re-frame from sending troops into those agreed zone, and then along the borders both sides agree not to deploy certain weapon systems and limited number of troops. So that will avoid what we see as frequent encounters and patrols. I mean I find the patrols in particular in those areas, high altitude, severe weather conditions, they don't really help one side or the other to establish any firm control of the territory on the ground, but they expose to all sorts of risk and the potential for misunderstanding encounters, conflict, which can escalate very easily.



Ali Moore: I think we can safely assume that we will be talking about this border dispute again on Ear to Asia, but thank you so much to both of you for your insights into this well incredibly long running and complicated issue. Pradeep and Jingdong thank you so much for joining Ear to Asia.

Jingdong Yuan: Thank you Ali.

Pradeep Taneja: Thank you Ali.

Ali Moore: Our guests have been political scientist Dr. Pradeep Taneja from the University of Melbourne and Asia Pacific Security Expert Jingdong Yuan from the University of Sydney. Ear to Asia is brought to you by Asia Institute of the University of Melbourne Australia. You can find more information about this and all our other episodes at the Asia Institute website. Be sure to keep up with every episode of Ear to Asia by following us on the Apple Podcast app, Stitcher, Spotify, or SoundCloud. If you like the show please rate and review it on Apple Podcast. Every positive review helps new listeners find the show. And of course let your friends know about us on social media. This episode was recorded on the 27th of August, 2020. Producers were Eric van Bemmelen and Kelvin Param of profactual.com. Ear to Asia is licenced under Creative Commons. Copyright 2020, the University of Melbourne. I'm Ali Moore, thanks for your company.