

# The Doklam standoff

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The Doklam standoff between India and China is the worst crisis faced by the Modi government ever since the NDA alliance was voted to power in 2014. The present crisis has its origin in an international conference of Chinese dissidents from across the world held at Dharmasala in Himachal Pradesh in the last week of April, 2016, which was presided over by the Dalai Lama. The conference was aimed to discuss about the ways and means to restore democratic rule in China. In other words, the agenda of the conference was to discuss about toppling the Communist regime and restoring democratic rule in China. The Chinese government had lodged a strong protest with India for its decision to allow such a meeting to be held in India, especially against the participation of dissident Chinese terrorists like Dolkun Isa from Germany. Following the Chinese protest, government of India had cancelled the visa granted to Dolkun Isa and eight other Chinese dissidents. However, the conference was allowed to be held as scheduled, but in a smaller scale as a closed-door meeting.

The conference was organized mainly by 'Citizen Power for China', a CIA-linked organization based in the USA. It was co-sponsored by two other CIA-linked organizations, namely 'Initiatives for China' and 'US Institute for Peace'. The conference was attended by 69 delegates, mainly Chinese dissidents, Uyghur rebels and some foreign delegates. By organizing such a meeting at Dharmasala, the Dalai Lama had violated the asylum rules, and by allowing the Dalai Lama to hold such a CIA-sponsored anti-China conference in Dharmasala, India played into the hands of CIA, causing grave provocation to China. After the Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to India in 2014, India's relations with China were on an upswing. Why did then India allow the Dalai Lama to hold an anti-China meeting in Dharmasala aimed only at spoiling our relations with China? The US may have its own interests in creating a deeper rift between India and China. But, why did India allow itself to be used by the US to serve the US interests at India's cost? Holding a conference of Chinese dissidents from across the world in India is akin to China allowing one of its state-sponsored agencies to hold a conference of anti-India dissidents like Kashmiri separatists, Khalistani activists, northeastern insurgents and Maoist rebels in China. Despite such a grave provocation given by India to China, our pro-American media largely kept a steady silence over the gravity of the anti-China conference held at Dharmasala.

In yet another provocative act against China, in the second week of April this year, Indian government allowed the Dalai Lama to go on a ten-day tour to Arunachal Pradesh and spend four days in Tawang, a Tibetan dominated town located very close to the Chinese border. His proposed visit to Arunachal Pradesh, especially to Tawang had evoked very strong protest from China, because of the Dalai Lama's relentless campaign against the Communist rule in China among the Tibetan population in India. China was also worried about the Dalai Lama's suspected move to name his successor-Dalai Lama from Tawang as against the wishes of the Chinese authorities who want to

see that the next Dalai Lama should be someone from Tibet. China had repeatedly warned India against allowing the Dalai Lama to conduct anti-China activities in Tawang. Even after the visit of Dalai Lama to Tawang, China had warned that his visit will have serious repercussions on bilateral ties between the two countries.

The Doklam development may be a retaliatory provocation from China. Doklam is a Bhutanese territory which is not only claimed by China, but also kept under its effective control. Doklam plateau is an area where the boundaries of Bhutan, China and India meet. This area has been a grazing land for the past many years, frequented mainly by only herdsmen from Bhutan and Tibet. Bhutan claims that the tri-junction is at a place called Doklam which is located in the middle of the Doklam plateau. China contends that the tri-junction is at a place called Gamochen, a few km south of Doklam. China already has a motorable road up to Doklam and wants to extend it further south to Gamochen which is the starting point of Jampheri Ridge in Bhutan. China's efforts to extend this road to Gamochen will not only amount to an intrusion into Bhutanese territory, but will also pose a grave security threat to India, as it will help China to bring more troops and armaments closer to the Siliguri Corridor in India, a vulnerable point for enemy attack.

India's northeast is geographically isolated from rest of India and is connected with the mainland by a narrow strip of land called Siliguri Corridor which is about 200 km long and 60 km wide. At its narrowest point, it is only just 17 km wide. The corridor extends from Darjeeling and Jaipalguri in West Bengal to the Northeastern region of India. All land trade between the Northeast and mainland India takes place through the Siliguri corridor. This corridor is squeezed between Bangladesh in the south and Nepal in the north.

The present crisis at Doklam started on June 1, 2017 when the PLA asked the Indian troops to demolish two bunkers that Indian Army had set up at Doklam in 2012. On June 4, there was a minor scuffle between Indian army personnel and Chinese workers when some Indian army personnel prevented the Chinese workers engaged by the PLA from constructing a motorable road from Doklam towards Gamochen. On June 6, some PLA personnel came and destroyed the two bunkers set up by the Indian Army at Lalten in Doklam plateau in 2012. On June 16, a bigger PLA team with earth movers, bulldozers, etc, came to the spot and started constructing a new motorable road capable of transporting vehicles, tanks and artillery guns from Doklam to Gyamochen on Jampheri Ridge in Bhutan. Though the Royal Bhutanese Army personnel tried to stop them, they were pushed back. On getting a distress call for help from Bhutan, Indian troops trespassed into the disputed land and stopped the construction of the new road as it violated a pact signed in 2012 by China and India agreeing to maintain the status quo in the area. The Indian troops numbering about 400 personnel since then are camping in the area. The Chinese troops, also consisting of about 400 personnel, are also camping in the same area, but without any physical confrontation with the Indian troops. Though, India has offered to settle the dispute through a friendly dialogue, China is insisting that India, which is a third party, should first withdraw its troops from the Chinese territory before starting any dialogue. Meanwhile on 20th June,

China barred the entry of Indian pilgrims going on Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra through the Nathu La pass in Sikkim. The Doklam face-off still continues and China has now started threatening to evict the Indian troops by force any time now.

The construction of the new road will allow the PLA to bring more troops, arms and equipment to Doklam at short notice. This scenario poses a great security threat to India as the strategically sensitive Siliguri corridor, also known as the 'chicken's neck', which connects all the north-eastern states with the mainland India will become more vulnerable to Chinese attacks from this point. Thus, more than Bhutan, it is India which is worried about the construction of the new road by China. India is thus in a difficult situation, as It cannot withdraw its troops from Doklam because of the threat from Chinese troops to the Siliguri corridor. But if the situation escalates, it will be difficult for India to justify the continued presence of Indian troops in a disputed land claimed by both China and Bhutan. India does not have a defence treaty with Bhutan stipulating any obligatory commitment by India to rush in troops for Bhutan's rescue in case of any security threat faced by Bhutan. More over, Bhutan has repeatedly stated in the past that it is not a protectorate of India. We only have a friendship treaty with Bhutan.

China's attempt to construct a motorable road from Doklam to Gamochen indicates that China now wants to shift the tri-junction from Doklam to Gamochen. China lays claim to strategic Doklam plateau only to threaten Indian defences in Sikkim and also to deter a possible Indian foray into the Chumbi valley adjoining the Doklam plateau. China's refusal now to admit Doklam as a disputed land and its insistence on building a motorable road to Gamochen in violation of an agreement with both Bhuan and India to maintain the status quo in the area, shows that China is planning and making preparation for a major operation aimed to target and choke the Siliguri corridor and cut off the entire northeastern region from mainland India. This will also lead to cutting off three primary Indian military formations and their units based in the northeast, thus drastically reducing India's capacity to maintain the supply-line to send equipment and reinforcements to them.

China's claim that Doklam plateau is an undisputed Chinese territory is a blatant lie. China and Bhutan have conducted 24 rounds of talks so far to settle their border disputes. If there is no dispute, what were they discussing about, during their 24 rounds of talks? The importance that China attaches to the Doklam plateau can be judged from the fact that in 1996 China had offered a package deal to Bhutan agreeing to give up its claim on 495 sq km land in the Pasunlung and Jakarlung valley areas in Bhutan's north central sector in return for Bhutan giving up its claim on 269 km in Doklam plateau. If Doklam is a Chinese land, why should China offer double the area in some other sector to Bhutan in exchange for the Doklam land. Similarly, the PLA which demolished two bunkers at Lalten on sixth June, 2012 had not raised any objection when the said bunkers were built by Indian Army in 2012. The fact of the matter is that China desperately needs this land now as its own, as Doklam plateau will be an ideal launchpad for China for undertaking an offensive operation against India targeting the Siliguri corridor. The question naturally arises as to why is China so much annoyed with

India all of a sudden and why does China plan to undertake an offensive operation against India?

China's disenchantment and annoyance with India is not a sudden development. China had shown its willingness to have close and friendly relations with India during Chinese president Xi Jinping's visit to Gujarat and Delhi in 2014. But, unnerved by the bonhomie developed between Modi and Xi Jinping witnessed during Jinping's visit to India, the US intelligence had worked overtime to arrest this new-found bonhomie developed between the two leaders and win over Modi to their side by using their assets in Sangh Parivar and Indian bureaucrats. The Madison Square meeting of Modi and Obama's visit to India as chief guest at the Republic Day function on January 26, 2015 were all part of a sinister plot by the CIA to win over Modi. The holding of CIA-sponsored anti-China conference at Dharmasala with the consent of Modi government in the last week of April, 2016 and the signing of the Logistics Exchange Memorandum Agreement with the US on August 29, 2016 allowing each other's military bases for repair and refueling purpose had convinced China that not only the Modi government was successfully won over by the US, but India had become a submissive military ally of the US. The international conference of Chinese dissidents held at Dharmasala in April, 2016 to discuss about toppling the Communist regime in China, also showed that India was ready to undertake any hostile activities against China if prompted by the US. India's refusal to block the ten-day tour of the Dalai Lama to Arunachal Pradesh and his decision to spend four days in Tibetan-dominated border town of Tawang only to incite the local Tibetans against the Communist regime in China, despite strong protest and warnings by China, further antagonized Chinese authorities prompting them to teach a lesson to India. China knows that the narrow Siliguri Corridor is the most vulnerable part of India for an enemy attack. They have now decided that in case of a conflict with India, they should attack and choke the Siliguri Corridor and separate the northeastern region from India and to bring a permanent solution to the menace called the Dalai Lama. They now badly need the Doklam plateau exclusively as their own, for using it as a launchpad for their planned attack on India targeting the Siliguri Corridor.

India's problems with China started with India giving political asylum to the Dalai Lama in the last week of March, 1959, despite strong protests from China. The Dalai Lama is a US stooge, who won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1989. Another Chinese national by name Liu Xiaobo, who had rebelled against the Communist regime in China, had also won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2010. The only contribution of both these leaders for world peace is that they both had rebelled against the Communist rule in China. It is a known fact that without the approval of the US, nobody can win a Nobel Prize, especially in the fields of Peace and literature. Besides giving asylum to Dalai Lama and his supporters, who enjoyed the patronage of the US, the Indian government had also allowed the Dalai Lama to establish a government in exile in India with Dharmasala as its headquarters. The Tibetan refugees were also allowed by the Indian government to conduct protest rallies and demonstrations in India against the Chinese occupation of Tibet. The anti-China activities of the Dalai Lama and his supporters with the support and patronage of both India and the US and the ill-advised 'forward policy'

followed by India on the border areas with China were responsible for the border conflict with China in 1962.

History seems to be repeating itself in India. The present situation in India's northern borders is similar to the situation prevailing in India before the conflict with China in 1962. As in 1962, the US and its stooge the Dalai Lama are responsible for creating the present tension between India and China by first holding a CIA-sponsored international conference of Chinese dissidents at Dharmasala in April, 2016 and then sending the Dalai Lama on a ten-day tour to Arunachal Pradesh with a four day halt in Tawang to conduct anti-China activities among the Tibetans in Tawang. Both these events were planned by the US intelligence to give a deliberate provocation to China, so as to force China to take a hostile stand against India again and thereby sabotaging any chance of India and China getting closer. The Modi government has committed a grave mistake by allowing the US to use the Dalai Lama to provoke and annoy China and create a deeper rift between India and China. Having an emerging super power as an enemy in our neighbourhood is definitely not in the interest of India. The Doklam standoff may be the result of a retaliatory provocation from China. It is difficult to say as to how and when the Doklam issue will be resolved. Whether the Doklam standoff leads to another border war with China or not, the US has already succeeded in creating a deeper rift between India and China, as desired by the US.

The Modi government's pro-American tilt in our policy matters is matter of grave concern. It is not clear as to whether Prime Minister Modi decided to toe the pro-American line willingly or he was forced to take such a line by the RSS think tank. The US is not a natural partner or a reliable ally of India. Ever since independence, the US had always taken a hostile stand against India on various issues, especially on Kashmir dispute. The US had sent its Navy's seventh fleet to Bay of Bengal to prevent India from liberating East Pakistan during the 1971 war with Pakistan and it is only due to the timely intervention by the Soviet Union that helped India to achieve its goal. The US had tried everything possible to stop India from producing a nuclear bomb and testing a long range missile. The anti-development lobby in India that tries to stall or delay all mega development projects in India are supported and funded by the various agencies of the US and its NATO allies to prevent India from making any further economic progress. The Indian intelligence agencies have all the evidence to prove the role of the US and its allies in promoting and funding various secessionist and anti-national movements in India. If the Doklam standoff leads to a war between India and China, the US will be the happiest country on this planet, as it will have very adverse impact on the economic progress of both China and India, and the US will be the sole beneficiary from such a confrontation. It is such a country that India is treating as our close partner.

Despite all the sound and fury displayed by the Chinese media over the Doklam issue, China definitely will not be interested in a full-fledged war with India. China is trying to catch up with the US in both economic and military power and China knows how a war with India will adversely affect its ambitious goals. Unlike the US, China is not known to be helping any insurgent group in India. Hence, it will be in the fitness of things for India to have a fresh look into its decision to become a minor ally of an

unreliable friend like the US. India's problems like the unrest in Kashmir and the Maoist menace will only further worsen by having a partner like the US.