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## The Big Picture - India, China Ties - Marching on

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In a recent visit to China, the Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar told his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi that, India's decisions on Jammu and Kashmir are the country's internal matter and have no implication for either the external boundaries of India or the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, amidst the Beijing's objection to the formation of Ladakh as a Union Territory. Emphasis was also laid on the fact that the future ties between the two nations will depend on the mutual sensitivity to each other's core concerns.

Mr. Wang in response reasserted the ***Panchsheel policy- The Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence*** deeming it necessary and beneficial for the mutual progress and world peace.

The two countries stepped back from allowing the Kashmir issue to become a hindrance in the progress of the future ties and agreed to sign 4 MoUs and to organize around 100 activities in the coming months.

## Key Takeaways from the Visit

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- The visit took place on the lines of Wuhan Summit and can be perceived as a much-needed one to clearly and properly channelize the current happenings taking place in India, which in the future may not lead to any conflict.
- In the backdrop of recent abrogation of certain provisions of Art. 370 & entire Art. 35A of the Indian Constitution, the reorganization of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, and Pakistan's claim that China will help them in raising this issue in the UNSC, the visit was a timely move.
- Indian Foreign Minister made the Indian stance clear by proclaiming that abrogating the provisions of Art. 370 was India's internal matter & India has all the sovereign authority to make a decision on it.

Also, the decision was made for improving the governance & the socio-economic advancement of the region.
- The main purpose of the visit was to reassure China that nothing should change the status quo between the two nations and both hold a responsible position in South Asia. And that in India, a particular procedure is followed to resolve any issue.
- China's objection to the formation of Ladakh as a separate Union territory was because of their concern in Aksai Chin, which was occupied by them in the 1950s & currently forms the part of Xinjiang province.

## The Progressing Relations

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After the Doklam issue of 2017 & the Chumar issue of 2014 the relationship between the two countries suffered from mistrust and border issues, but the Astana Consensus and the Wuhan spirit changed the entire chemistry between the two nations.

### Astana Consensus

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- In June 2017, on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit, India & China interacted in Astana.
- The two countries agreed upon the fact that their differences should not be allowed to become disputes, & if these disputes were handled carefully they may even turn into opportunities.

### Wuhan Summit

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- The Wuhan meeting of April 2018, an informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping opened a new chapter in the relations of the two countries as they engaged in the wake of post-Doklam rhetoric.
- Earlier the summit was perceived as a window dressing over deeper frictions, but in reality, it proved to be a crucial rapprochement policy.
- It was a form of cultural integration & people to people interaction program, which gave impetus to the cordial relations between the two countries.

The enhanced interaction between the two nations in the past 5 years, in the form of 9-10 bilateral meetings has paved the way in eliminating their differences and clearing the misgivings & doubts.

## Present Persisting Challenges in the Path of Progress

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- **China's Aggression:** China has been following a rather assertive-rather aggressive policy, which was clearly visible in its past actions like entering into the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Vietnam and Philippines. This made other ASEAN nations wary of its intentions.  
*China's Chumar & Doklam fiasco, & the Salami-slicing (the process of gradually reducing the size of something by a series of small incremental steps) that keeps on happening on our 4000 km long border, forces us to be on our guard & improve our military infrastructure and readiness.*
- **South Asian Angle:** The dramatic shift of economic growth from West to East demands our focus and concern on the enhanced role in the Indo-Pacific region.
  - By 2020, more than 50% of the world's economy will be in Asia, i.e, dealing with China, Japan, India, and the ASEAN nations. So we need to play the cards cautiously & take the positive lead in the region in order to balance China's aggression.
  - Also, China's aggressive policy and our Act East Policy demands timely intervention in South Asia so that it could be seen as assertive rather than coming late on the issue.
- **Global Issues:** Changing US-China relations and related trade conflicts, Asia's growing self-reliance on its own produced goods, & enhanced dependence of nations on the role of multilateral institutions like the UN for peace-keeping and not one single power in the West, demands the amicable Sino-Indian relations.
- **Pakistan's Angle:** Pakistan's assertion on China to raise the issue of abrogating provisions of Art. 370 in the UNSC. The CPEC, BRI and other China Pakistan initiatives expect China to take the side of its strategic partner on multinational platforms, and act against Indian interests.

## Way Forward

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- **The need for the positive role of the two nations:** The geo-political dynamics have changed in the recent past. It has been said that this century is Asia's century, so in the light of this perception, both countries need to focus their energies more on domestic socio-economic development rather than frittering it away militarily.
- Past has revealed that whenever the global opportunities have demanded the positive Sino-Indian relations, both the nations have tried to tackle their problems in a mature fashion and leave aside the differences. The best example of this could be seen in China's recognition of bottom-up cultural people to people interaction while granting visas to Indian Mansarovar pilgrims.

- China needs to take into consideration the ground realities while looking at India-Pakistan relations in order to bring regional peace.
- The balance of power is changing both domestically & regionally, the world in general and China in specific needs to understand that India has a cartographic position along Line of Actual Control & there are disputes still in place, but that all forms the part of internal matters of India.
- During this period of economic slowdown, India can bring more structural reforms in order to attract and enhance foreign Chinese capital inflow.
- The greater responsibility lies on China's shoulder to engineer greater trust and to stop creating obstacles in the path of progress on India, be it on India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), or designating Masood Azhar as the global terrorist.
- China's dominating role simultaneously demands India to stay prepared on all fronts, i.e, militarily, economically, or diplomatically.
- The reorganization of the state of J&K opens the door for resolving the border dispute along LAC with China.

Synergizing the efforts in order to resolve the existing conflicts is the need of the hour for mutual progress and harmony.