



Isolating China, as proposition and the reality



Context:

- The latest round of talks, on 2nd August 2020, between the Military Commanders of India and China, did not produce any breakthrough.

Why breakthrough in Diplomacy was not achieved?

- China reiterated that their troops “were on its side of the traditional customary boundary line” (that India opposes)
- China also criticised what is essentially **India’s internal matter**, viz., the changes effected to the status of Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019.
- India’s MEA has promulgated that “the state of the border and the future of India’s ties with China cannot be separated”.

What does this stalemate mean?

- The situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Ladakh sector thus remains essentially unchanged.
- A return to the status quo ante prior to May 2020, is nowhere in sight.
- The tensions along the border is going to continue for a longer period of time may be not at the intense level seen during the months of April-May 2020.

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What has been global perception about recent Chinese actions?

- Beijing's virtual takeover of Hong Kong, land grab in South China Sea and adventurism along India border exposed China's 'imperialist ambitions' and President Xi Jinping's authoritarian world view.
- China's approach has been unilateralism rather than compromise, when dealing with its smaller neighbours. Taiwan, Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia and South Korea have all complained about China's menacing postures in their vicinity
- After years of cooperating with one another, the U.S. and China are currently at the stage of confrontation, with both flexing its military muscle and seeking allies to join their camps (reminiscence of Cold war era)
- A Cold war type politics places several countries, especially in Asia, in a difficult position as most of them do not wish to take sides — especially with a belligerent China as neighbor.

Despite its predatory tactics why is China far from being isolated in world affairs?

- **Realisation of being the Prisoner of Geography:** China was always known to be over-protective of the South China Sea considering it a natural shield against possible hostile intervention by outside forces inimical to it.
- Thus, China is compelled to be aggressive about protecting its frontier.
- This realpolitik of China is being understood by Asian neighbours and therefore not openly aligning with USA at this juncture.
- **Leveraging the Economic Advantage:** China seems confident that its stranglehold on the global economy ensures that it does not face any real challenge
- A majority of ASEAN countries have grave concerns about China's predatory tactics but ASEAN having become one of China's biggest trading partners, it adopts a default position. viz., "not to take sides"

Conclusion

Geo-balancing is not happening to China's disadvantage. This lesson must be well understood, when countries like India plan their future strategy.