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[Home](#) > China's Vital Geopolitical Stakes in Indian General Elections 2019

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## China's Vital Geopolitical Stakes in Indian General Elections 2019

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China has vital geopolitical stakes in impeding the return to power of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party in Indian General Elections 2019 as a strong Indian Government wedded to realism in foreign policy conduct endangers China's blueprint in South Asia.

China though not fully-checkmated by India geopolitically and strategically does however stand to have visibly put China on notice that India can now be expected to "Stand-Upto" to Chinese transgressions and military misadventures as was evidenced in the Dokalam Military Standoff 2017 .

This new element in India's China policy now extends farther afield than India's disputed borders with China Occupied Tibet but extend to China's doorstep in the South China Sea and forging maritime coalitions to limit China's Indian Ocean designs.

For China, not used to any Asian nation looking into its eyes on its military adventurism, India's changed stance on Dokalam should have jolted China into awakening to new realities on India's political will and its changed politico-military responses to Chinese military adventurism and brinkmanship.

China's logical policy deduction from the preceding discussion would be that it would be in China's national interests to seek a displacement of the Modi Government from power in New Delhi.

Galling for China additionally would have been that India under PM Modi has refused to buckle under pressure to join China's much vaunted

flagship project of One Belt One Road Project whose critical component is the China Pakistan Economic Corridor traversing in its Northern reaches the Indian territory of Kashmir in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

Adding the robust Indian stands against Chinese military adventurism and opposing China's flagship projects of strategically engirdling Asia under guise of economic connectivity places PM Modi and his BJP Government in China's strategic crosshairs. Pm Modi and his Government must not be allowed to return to power in New Delhi n 2019

BJP Government 2 in New Delhi under PM Narendra Modi in the last four years has not followed the policies of appeasement of China and Pakistan unlike BJP Government 1 and the ten years of Congress-led UPA Government 2004-14.

India under PM Narendra Modi's leadership in the period 2014-to date marked the advent of realism and realpolitik in the formulation and conduct of India's foreign policies. It also marked the emergence of an India not weighed down by political timidity but able to confront China and not buckle under China's military pressures as evidenced in the Doklam Military Standoff in 2017.

Combined with a robust foreign policy and strong economic growth India today under dynamic leadership of PM Modi is on an ascendant power trajectory leading to its recognition of being an Emerged Power in the global strategic calculus.

In concrete geopolitical terms what the above means in global and Asian perceptions is that India today is being perceived as an existential counterweight to China.

The most critical 'legacy issue' inherited by PM Modi's Government was a dismal level of India's 'war-preparedness' foisted on the Indian Armed Forces by Congress PM Dr Manmohan Singh and his saintly Defence Minister Antony. It was a criminal neglect reminiscent of the pre-1962 Syndrome. The present Government and Defence Minister Sitharaman have visibly put this on a fast-track by goading the Ministry of Defence bureaucracy into action.

The above will take time but at least the process has begun for India to reduce its military differential with China's military might. We should expect fast-track movements in this direction.

Having briefly laid out the pressing imperatives for China to prevent or impede the return of PM Modi and his BJP Government to power in 2019, the next step is to delineate broadly the strategies that China could possibly employ to achieve its aims. These are being discussed in brief outline covering geopolitical domains, military strategies, and economic means as in my later papers details Papers would be attempted.

Geopolitically, China has been successful in thwarting the unprecedented initiative of PM Modi during his investiture ceremony in 2014 to invite Heads of all South Asia nations for furthering relations. China has been able to wean away Nepal and the Maldives from the Indian orbit and attempting to repeat the same in Bhutan and Bangladesh. Sri Lanka has been partially affected. PM Modi's foreign policy team has

to direct focussed attention to damage control.

Chinese aim here is to generate the impressions that if India cannot control its own neighbourhood how can it emerge as the nett provider of regional security? This perception is likely to be exploited by China through Indian Opposition political parties exploiting this Chinese argument. Was not the Chinese Ambassador's meeting with Congress then VP Rahul Gandhi an attempt to do so when Doklam was on? More can be expected to follow.

In the political domains the vulnerabilities of certain sections of Indian media elites to Chinese persuasions/inducement was visible when prominent editors-in chiefs were sending 'wire despatch' arguing that China had a point on Doklam without presenting the Indian case for objective analysis. Such sections of media elites are traditionally anti-BJP and anti-Hindu and cannot stomach any worthwhile achievements of PM Modi.

Such sections of the Indian media of what many term as those of Lutyen's Delhi can be expected to discredit PM Modi on various counts in the run-up to General Elections 2019.

China's military strategies to discredit PM Modi and his Government's robust policies against China cover the entire spectrum of increased border confrontations, massing of troops on India's borders with China Occupied Tibet, contriving incidents in South China Sea and the Indian Ocean and increasing militant activity in Kashmir Valley courtesy Pakistan Army. Internal unrest within India could be generated by China through Pak ISI in the run-up to General Elections 2019.

In the economic domain China is likely to go deeper into a trade war with the United States and would have little time against India. But China with certain anti-BJP elements within trade and industry could engineer stock exchange crashes to discredit PM Modi's resurgent economic growth. A prominent Indian Columnist has hinted at such an eventuality taking place around October/November 2018. There are enough in the bureaucracy who could lend a hand to such possibilities.

Lastly, while India focusses heavily on Pakistan Army's intelligence agency the IS the same focus is not seen in terms of Chinese intelligence agencies operating within India. It also needs to be remembered that in terms of wishing to see the back of PM Modi, strong convergences exist between China and Pakistan. The Home Ministry and its agencies need to be on high alert.

Concluding, it needs to be strongly reiterated that China can be expected to strongly exert itself to use all means possible to prevent the return of PM Modi and his BJP Government to power in Indian General Elections in 2019. China's utmost aim is to down size India and it can do so now only by emergence of weak coalition government devoid of political cohesion and weighed down by compulsions of 'Coalition Dharma'

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[China & Indian Elections](#) [1]

[General Elections 2019](#) [2]

[Doklam](#) [3]

[South China Sea](#) [4]

**Category:**

[Papers](#) [5]

**Countries:**

[China](#) [6]

[India](#) [7]

**Topics:**

[Strategic Affairs & Security](#) [8]

[Political](#) [9]

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[3] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/1744>

[4] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/329>

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