



From Wuhan to Qingdao: An Update on Recent Developments in India-China Ties

*Dr. Sanjeev Kumar**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with President Xi Jinping in the Chinese port city of Qingdao on June 9, 2018, prior to the 18th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit on 10-11 June 2018. This was second meeting of the two leaders in just over a month, following the informal summit in Wuhan on April 27-28, 2018.

It is noteworthy that the two countries had reached broad consensus on various issues during the Wuhan summit, which indicated a forward-looking approach of the two leaders.¹ This paper analyzes the documents/statements released by the two sides following their bilateral meeting in Qingdao. In doing so, it identifies important themes of discussion and tries to understand the positions of both sides by analysing texts of their documents.

Following documents from the Indian side are consulted:

- (a) “Press Briefing by Foreign Secretary on PM visit to Qingdao”, June 10, 2018 (hereafter Press Briefing by FS)

The documents from the Chinese side include:

- (a) “习近平会见印度总理莫迪 (Xi Jinping Meets with Indian Prime Minister Modi) released by Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), PRC, June 9, 2018 (hereafter MOFA statement)
- (b) “China, India to promote bilateral ties from new starting point” by Xinhua, June 9, 2018 (hereafter Xinhua statement)

¹ For details see, ICWA’s Issue Brief titled “Wuhan Summit” by Dr. Sanjeev Kumar and Dr. Puyam Rakesh Singh available at <https://icwa.in/pdfs/IB/2014/WuhanSummitIB24052018.pdf>

Themes	Indian Document	Chinese Documents
<p>Description of the Wuhan Summit</p>	<p>Press Briefing by FS:</p> <p>Both leaders began the meeting “by making a very positive assessment of the Wuhan Summit”.</p> <p>PM Modi described the Wuhan summit “as a milestone”.</p> <p>President Xi described the Wuhan summit as “a new starting point in our bilateral relationship”.</p> <p>“Throughout the meeting there was a very positive forward looking momentum and it was very evident that the entire meeting was sort of underpinned by the spirit of the Wuhan Summit”.</p> <p>The Chinese side accepted Prime Minister Modi’s invitation to President Xi to have informal summit in India in 2019.</p>	<p>MOFA statement:</p> <p>Xinhua statement:</p> <p>Both the statements from China highlighted that China is willing to work with India to make the Wuhan meeting as “a new starting point” in bilateral relations</p> <p>PM Modi described the informal meeting in Wuhan as “very successful and very important... it has further strengthened his confidence in the development of India-China relations, and will certainly be a milestone in the history of the bilateral ties”</p>
<p>Assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both the leaders attached great importance to the Wuhan Summit and it is significant to note that the bilateral dialogue at Qingdao was underpinned by 	

	<p>the spirit of the Wuhan summit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The informal summit has worked as a new model of political engagement at the highest level between India and China. Therefore, both countries have agreed to hold next round of informal summit in India. 	
Implementation of consensus reached at the Wuhan summit	<p>Press Briefing by FS:</p> <p>“Both leaders expressed satisfaction at the follow up that had taken place since Wuhan and both the leaders have asked their teams to continue to ensure that the decisions that are taken and understandings that are reached are translated on ground”.</p>	<p>MOFA statement:</p> <p>Xinhua statement:</p> <p>Noting that “China and India have reaped quite a few early-harvest outcomes in implementing the consensus reached at the Wuhan meeting”, Xi said “the two sides should make persistent efforts to accelerate the implementation...”</p>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both sides emphasised on implementation of consensus reached at the Wuhan meeting to strengthen the bilateral relationship by expanding areas of cooperation. President Xi noted that the two sides should make persistent efforts to accelerate the implementation of understanding reached at Wuhan Summit and talked about ‘early harvest outcomes’. FS’s statement also speaks of the latter. It may be noted that Foreign Secretary Mr. Vijay Gokhale and Vice Foreign Minister of China, Mr. Kong Xuanyou held consultations in New Delhi on June 5, 2018. Both sides reviewed the follow-up action on the understandings reached at the Wuhan Summit and also discussed the agenda for bilateral engagements in the coming months. Both sides seek early implementation of the understandings reached at Wuhan Summit. The Chinese statement suggests that process of implementation may be accelerated further. 	
Strategic communication	<p>Press Briefing by FS:</p>	<p>MOFA and Xinhua statement:</p>

	<p>Strategic communications to be maintained through various channels including through telephone calls and through frequent meetings including on the sidelines of multilateral events.</p> <p>Both leaders will meet in the BRICS Summit in South Africa in July 2018.</p> <p>Defence Minister and Minister of Public Security of China will visit India in 2018.</p>	<p>President Xi referred to maintaining strategic communications between the two countries.</p>
<p>Assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wuhan consensus to maintain strategic communication has borne fruit. • Prime Minister Modi and President Xi will meet again on the sidelines of BRICS Summit in South Africa. • Two important ministerial visits from China to India are expected to contribute towards building consensus and taking the relationship forward in the security dimension. 	
<p>Boundary question and SR talks</p>	<p>Press Briefing by FS:</p> <p>“There was a brief mention that the militaries on the two sides will continue to talk to each other in an effort to maintain peace and tranquillity”</p> <p>The next round of the Special Representative (SR) Talks on the boundary question will be held in the</p>	<p>MOFA and Xinhua statements make no reference to boundary question and SR Talks.</p>

	second half 2018.	
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the Wuhan Summit both sides categorically mentioned the need for strengthening communication and enhance confidence building to deal with the boundary question. • Although Chinese side has not referred to the boundary question in the statements released after Qingdao bilateral meeting, it may be presumed that their emphasis on implementation of the Wuhan consensus includes maintaining peace and tranquillity in the India-China border areas. 	
Economic cooperation	<p>Press Briefing by FS:</p> <p>President Xi suggested that the two countries should set a new trade target of US \$100 billion by 2020.</p> <p>“China is looking at enhancing agriculture exports from India including non-basmati rice and sugar”</p> <p>China would encourage Indian pharmaceutical companies to “register for high quality Indian pharmaceutical products in the Chinese market”.</p>	<p>MOFA statement:</p> <p>Xinhua statement:</p> <p>Both the statements from China referred to “expand economic and trade cooperation” between the two countries</p>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Indian briefing is more specific on bilateral trade issues. • Both the leaders witnessed signing of the Protocol between General Administration of Customs of the PRC and the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare of the Republic of India on Phytosanitary requirements for Exporting rice from India to China. • Press Briefing by FS referred to some encouraging statements from the 	

	<p>Chinese side related to agriculture products and pharmaceuticals. However, more needs to be done to ensure a broad-based and sustainable economic partnership between the two countries. Issues related to market access and non-tariff barrier need to be resolved for Indian companies/products in China.</p>	
<p>Water issues</p>	<p>Press Briefing by FS makes no reference to the water issues between India and China.</p>	<p>MOFA statement: Xinhua statement:</p> <p>Statements from China make no reference to the water issues between India and China.</p>
<p>Assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both the leaders witnessed signing of MoU between Ministry of Water Resources, PRC, and Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, India upon provision of hydrological information of the Brahmaputra river in flood season by China to India. • The MoU enables the Chinese side to provide hydrological data in flood season from 15th May to 15th October every year. It also enables the Chinese side to provide hydrological data if water level exceeds mutually agreed level during non-flood season • It is revival and expansion of earlier MoU between the Ministry of Water Resources, India and the Ministry of Water Resources, the PRC on Strengthening Cooperation on Trans-border Rivers signed on October 23, 2013. 	
<p>People-to-people exchanges</p>	<p>Press Briefing by FS:</p> <p>A new people-to-people mechanism will be set up. The Indian side will be headed by the External Affairs Minister and the Chinese side by the State Councilor and</p>	<p>MOFA statement: Xinhua statement:</p> <p>Both the statements from China referred to President Xi's statement on promoting people-to-people exchanges</p>

	<p>Foreign Minister Wang Yi</p> <p>The first meeting of this P2P mechanism will be held in 2018.</p> <p>President Xi referred to the growing popularity of Indian films in China</p>	
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New P2P mechanism headed by Foreign Ministers of both sides is certainly a welcome step. • Both countries are expected to base the relationship by building greater synergies between the people of two countries through various means as envisioned in the Wuhan summit. 	
International and regional affairs	<p>Press Briefing by FS:</p> <p>Both sides will move forward in identifying specific projects in Afghanistan initially in the area of capacity building.</p>	<p>MOFA and Xinhua statements referred to enhancing coordination and cooperation on international and regional affairs</p> <p>Chinese documents do not make reference to identifying joint projects in Afghanistan.</p>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint projects in Afghanistan is an important area of cooperation which has potential to contribute to peace, stability and economic development of Afghanistan and the region. It is significant that both sides have agreed to begin with joint projects in the area of capacity building. 	
SCO	<p>The Press Briefing by FS does not specifically refer to talk on SCO</p>	<p>MOFA statement:</p> <p>Xinhua statement:</p>

		<p>President Xi welcomed India's participation at the SCO summit as a full member for the first time.</p> <p>Chinese side stands ready to work with India and other member states to carry forward the 'Shanghai Spirit' and promote the sound and stable development of the SCO.</p>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCO provides a useful platform for enhancing cooperation between India and China. 	
Future of bilateral relations	<p>Press Briefing by FS:</p> <p>Referred to developing mutual understanding, enhancing mutual trust and taking the relationship in a forward direction.</p>	<p>Xinhua statement:</p> <p>"Continuously enhance political mutual trust and engage in mutually beneficial cooperation across the board, so as to push forward China-India relations in a better, faster and steadier manner".</p>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements from both sides highlighted need to enhance mutual trust and take the relationship forward. • Chinese statements noted need to push forward the relationship in a 'better, faster and steadier manner' 	

Conclusion:

The bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi in Qingdao proved to be an important exercise to take forward the consensus reached at the Wuhan summit. The analysis of official statements suggests that both countries primarily discussed implementation of the consensus reached by the two leaders at Wuhan. The Chinese statements broadly referred to some of the major issues facing bilateral relations and noted to “make persistent efforts to accelerate the implementation” of Wuhan consensus. The Indian statement is more elaborate and referred to many of the major issues facing both countries including peace and tranquility along the boundary.

The journey from informal summit in Wuhan to bilateral meeting in Qingdao has certainly created a positive and forward looking momentum in India-China bilateral relations. Moreover, it suggests that there has already been progress in implementation of the Wuhan consensus. Both the top leaders from India and China have taken interest to see follow up work on the ground.

Nevertheless, it is also noteworthy that the meeting at Wuhan had brought out differences between the two countries on some issues, and some of these issues were not reportedly discussed at Qingdao.

There is a need is to build consensus on all issues of mutual interest and concern in future. Both sides should be sensitive to the other country’s aspirations and interests. Hopefully, the consensus on expanding cooperation in various fields will bear more fruit during the upcoming BRICS summit in South Africa and the informal summit in India in 2019 when the two countries will find opportunities to continue their bilateral dialogue.

** Dr. Sanjeev Kumar, Research Fellow, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi.
Disclaimer: The views expressed are that of the Researcher and not of the Council.*

References:

“Press Briefing by Foreign Secretary on PM visit to Qingdao”, June 10, 2018 available at <http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/29967/Press+Briefing+by+Foreign+Secretary+on+PM+visit+to+Qingdao>, Accessed on June 11, 2018

“India-China Bilateral Agreements signed in Qingdao, China” June 09, 2018, available [http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29966/IndiaChina Bilateral Agreements signed in Qingdao China](http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29966/IndiaChina+Bilateral+Agreements+signed+in+Qingdao+China), Accessed on June 11, 2018

“习近平会见印度总理莫迪”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, June 9, 2018 available at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zyxw/t1567377.shtml>. Accessed on June 11, 2018

“China, India to promote bilateral ties from new starting point” by Xinhua, June 9, 2018 available at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/09/c_137242968.htm, Accessed on June 11, 2018

Ananth Krishnan, “Modi to host Xi for second summit in 2019; India, China firm up new blueprint for ties” June 9, 2018, available at <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/modi-xi-sign-agreements-on-brahmaputra-data-rice-exports-1256156-2018-06-09>, Accessed on June 11, 2018

Sanjeev Kumar and Puyam Rakesh Singh titled “Wuhan Summit” ICWA’s Issue Brief, available at <https://icwa.in/pdfs/IB/2014/WuhanSummitIB24052018.pdf>
