



Wuhan Summit

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping held their first ‘informal summit’ on April 27-28, 2018 in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei province in China. The objective of the Summit was “to exchange views on overarching issues of bilateral and global importance, and to elaborate their respective visions and priorities for national development in the context of the current and future international situation”¹. Both the leaders participated in six events and a restricted meeting over the span of two days. Out of the seven events, four of them were one-to-one meetings. Although no agreement/MOU was signed during the visit as this was an informal summit, official documents/statements issued by the two sides suggest that substantive dialogues were held between the two leaders on the bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest and concern.

This paper analyzes the documents/statements released by both sides following the summit. In doing so, it identifies important themes of discussion and tries to understand each side’s position by analysing text of the documents in terms of identical/similar positions, differences of opinions and important missing aspects on any particular theme.

Following documents from the Indian side are consulted:

- (a) “English Translation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Speech during Delegation Level Talks in Wuhan” released by Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), April 27, 2018 (hereafter PM Modi’s speech)
- (b) “Press Release on India-China Informal Summit at Wuhan”, released by MEA, April 28, 2018 (hereafter Press Release by MEA)
- (c) “Transcript of Media Briefing by Foreign Secretary of India during visit of Prime Minister to China”, April 28, 2018 (hereafter Media Briefing by FS)

The documents from the Chinese side include:

- (a) “Leaders of China and India Reach Broad Consensus in Informal Meeting”, released by Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), PRC, April 28, 2018 (hereafter MOFA statement I)
- (b) “China, India Reach Broad Consensus in Informal Summit”, released by MOFA, PRC, April 30, 2018 (hereafter MOFA statement II)
- (c) “Xi Jinping Holds Informal Meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India in Wuhan”, released by MOFA, PRC, April 28, 2018 (hereafter MOFA statement III)
- (d) “Xi-Modi Informal Meeting Underscores Mutual Trust, Cooperation” by Xinhua, April 28, 2018 (hereafter Xinhua statement)

Note: The Chinese versions of the documents released by Xinhua and MOFA have been referred to. No discrepancies were found in Chinese and English documents.

Themes	Indian Documents	Chinese Documents
<p>Strategic autonomy and factor of stability</p>	<p>Press release by MEA terms India and China as “two large economies and major powers with <i>strategic and decisional autonomy</i>” and notes that “peaceful, stable and balanced relations between India and China will be a <i>positive factor for stability</i> amidst current global uncertainties”. Media Briefing by FS says the same.</p> <p>In addition, the two sides agreed that “proper management of the bilateral relationship will be conducive for the development and prosperity of the region, and will create the conditions for the <i>Asian Century</i>”.</p> <p>The two sides agreed that both India and China have made separate contributions to “global peace and prosperity through their respective growth and economic development, and would continue to act as <i>engines for global growth</i> in the future”.</p>	<p>MOFA statement I and II: “China and India, as celebrated civilisations, the two biggest developing countries and two emerging economies each with a population of over one billion, are important countries with <i>strategic autonomy</i>”... “A peaceful, stable and balanced relationship between China and India is an important <i>positive factor for the stability</i> of the world”.</p> <p>MOFA statement III and Chinese version of the statement (released by MOFA): “When dealing with relationship between major countries, China <i>insists on strategic autonomy</i>...”</p> <p>The statements also emphasise the importance of working together to “enhance stable and balanced development of major-country relations, advance stability, development and <i>prosperity of Asia in the 21st century</i>, promote the rejuvenation of the oriental civilisation and make a <i>positive contribution to global peace and development</i>”.</p>

		Xinhua statement: Xi Jinping called on the two sides to “create an Asia featuring stability, development and prosperity in the 21 st century”
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chinese documents refer to “strategic autonomy” while the Indian documents use “strategic and decisional autonomy”. The documents from both the countries acknowledge that India-China relationship is important for global stability, economic growth and for realising the Asian Century. 	
Strategic communication	<p>Press release by MEA: “They agreed on their need to strengthen <i>strategic communication</i> through greater consultation on all matters of common interest. They believe that such <i>strategic communication</i> will have a positive influence on enhancing mutual understanding and will contribute to regional and global stability”.</p> <p>Media Briefing by FS: The two leaders “had some discussion on regional and global issues ...that there was a need to strengthen <i>strategic communication</i> between two countries through greater consultation on such matters...it would contribute to regional and global stability.”</p>	<p>MOFA statement I and II: “Both sides agree that the leaders of the two countries will continue to maintain <i>strategic communication</i> in various forms”. Further, the statement added “guided by the leaders of the two countries, they will strengthen dialogue in political, security and other areas to have full and timely <i>communication on major issues of mutual interest</i> to enhance understanding and expand consensus ... relationship will always keep to the right direction.”</p> <p>MOFA statement III and Xinhua statement: Xi emphasised/stressed that in the next stage, “China and India ...carry out <i>close strategic communication</i> and conduct timely consultation on major issues of common concern... and ensure the effective operation of dialogue mechanism.”</p> <p>Xinhua statement: PM Modi also agreed to maintain <i>high-level strategic communication</i> with China.</p>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both sides have emphasised the need for maintaining strategic communication with each other. 	
Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence	Indian documents do not mention the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence or Panchsheel.	MOFA statement I and II: “Both sides agree that the two countries will continuously enhance mutual trust, carry forward the fine norms enshrined in the <i>Five Principles of</i>

		<p><i>Peaceful Co-existence</i>".</p> <p>MOFA statement III and Xinhua statement also mention the <i>Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence</i>.</p>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlike the Chinese documents, the Indian documents do not mention the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. • The context of Five Principles or Panchsheel in the 21st century is different from that in 1954 when the principles were promulgated in a bilateral document for the first time. Five Principles actually fits the needs of Chinese strategy for a rising country against allegations related to 'China Threat'. 	
Major countries relations	<p>Press release by MEA: "They believe that the simultaneous emergence of India and China as two large economies and <i>major powers</i> with strategic and decisional autonomy, has implications of regional and global significance."</p> <p>"Prime Minister Modi...underlined that as <i>two major countries</i> India and China have wider and overlapping regional and global interests."</p> <p>"The two leaders agreed that as <i>two major countries</i> and emerging economies, India and China, given their vast developmental experiences ...to challenges faced by humankind in the 21st century".</p> <p>Media Briefing by FS: "The two leaders therefore agreed that India and China as <i>major powers</i> with strategic and decisional autonomy will pursue peaceful, stable and balanced relations and such a relationship will be a positive factor of stability amidst the current global uncertainties".</p>	<p>MOFA statement I and II: "The two countries will work together to enhance stable and balanced development of <i>major-country relations</i>, advance stability, development and prosperity of Asia in the 21st Century, promote the rejuvenation of the oriental civilisation and make a positive contribution to global peace and development."</p> <p>"As two <i>major countries</i> in Asia, China and India will use their political influence and economic power to reinvigorate regional economic development".</p> <p>Both MOFA statement III and Xinhua statement elaborate on how China deal with <i>major countries</i> and "insists on strategic autonomy, non-conflict and non-confrontation" to build a new-type of international relations.</p>

<p>Assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Chinese documents, only “major countries” is used while in the Indian documents “major powers” and “major countries” are used interchangeably. • Both MOFA statement III and Xinhua statement carry instructive notes of the major countries relations between India and China.
<p>Boundary Question and Border Management</p>	<p>Press release by MEA and Media Briefing by FS: “They also agreed that both sides have the <i>maturity and wisdom</i> to handle the differences through peaceful discussion within the context of the overall relationship, bearing in mind the importance of respecting each other’s <i>sensitivities, concerns and aspirations</i>”.</p> <p>“Expressed their support for the work of the Special Representatives on the India-China Boundary Question and urged them <i>to intensify</i> their efforts to seek a <i>fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement</i>”.</p> <p>The two sides underscored the “importance of maintaining <i>peace and tranquillity</i>” in the border region and “issued strategic guidance to their respective militaries to strengthen communication in order to build trust and mutual understanding” for effective management of border affairs.</p> <p>The Indian document noted: The two leaders further directed their militaries to earnestly implement various confidence building measures agreed upon between the two sides, including the <i>principle of mutual and equal security</i>, and strengthen existing institutional arrangements and information sharing mechanisms to prevent incidents in border regions.</p> <p>MOFA statement I and II: The two sides have agreed to “properly manage and control their differences” and they have the “<i>maturity and wisdom</i> to handle their differences through peaceful discussion and by respecting each other’s <i>concerns and aspirations</i>”.</p> <p>The statements said that they agree to “use the Special Representatives’ Meeting on the Boundary Question to seek a <i>fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement</i>” and the “two militaries will strengthen confidence-building measures and enhance communication and cooperation” for maintaining <i>peace and tranquillity</i> along the border.</p> <p>MOFA statement III and Xinhua statement: Xi expressed the need to “well deal with differences in a more mature manner” and PM Modi urged the two sides to “properly handle and control differences”.</p>

	<p>Media Briefing by FS referred to 2005 agreement between India and China on political parameters and guiding principles for the settlement of boundary question and said that that the discussion will take place on the second stage on those parameters.</p>	
<p>Assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The documents cited above categorically mention the need for strengthening communication and enhance confidence building to deal with the boundary question and border region stability. • The Indian documents are more elaborate in terms of boundary and border issues. • MOFA statement III and Xinhua statement do not mention the boundary question and border management issue. • According to the Indian statement, the leaders urged the Special Representatives on the India-China Boundary Question to intensify their efforts. However the Chinese statement is silent on intensifying the efforts. • The Indian statement underscores the importance of maintaining peace and tranquillity in all areas of the India-China border region. This has been India’s consistent position as it can affect overall development of bilateral relations. • It is important to note that Foreign Secretary of India referred to 2005 Agreement on the “Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question”. This is an extremely important document setting guidelines for resolution of boundary issue. • There is no reference to “mutual and equal security” in the Chinese statements. There is need to build consensus on such concepts in the context of India and China bilateral relations. • However, both sides have given similar statements to provide strategic guidance and strengthen communication between the two militaries. 	
<p>Closer Development Partnership</p>	<p>Press release by MEA: “They decided to strengthen the <i>Closer Development Partnership</i> in a mutually beneficial and sustainable manner, in pursuit of national modernization and greater prosperity for their peoples.”</p>	<p>MOFA statement I and II: “Both sides agree to advance all-round cooperation and strengthen the <i>China-India Closer Developmental Partnership</i> in an equal-footed, mutually beneficial and sustainable manner to support their national modernisation”.</p> <p>MOFA statement III and Xinhua statement: The two sides have established/forged “a</p>

		<i>closer development partnership</i> and made positive progress in communication and cooperation across all fields.”
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both sides used similar statements to highlight importance of India-China closer development partnership. However, the Chinese side used the term equal-footed in English and 平等 (Píngděng) in Chinese version of statement released by MOFA. It may be noted that during President Xi Jinping’s visit to India in September 2014, both countries agreed on building a “Closer Developmental Partnership”. This was strengthened during PM Modi’s visit to China in May 2015. Closer Developmental Partnership has been recognised as a core element of strategic and cooperative partnership between the two countries. 	
Trade and investment	<p>Press release by MEA: “The two leaders agreed to push forward bilateral trade and investment in a <i>balanced and sustainable manner</i> by taking advantage of complementarities between their two economies”.</p> <p>Media Briefing by FS: “The two leaders underlined that the <i>trade should be balanced, it should be sustainable</i> and that we should take advantage of the complementarities between the two economies to enhance the trade and investment”.</p> <p>PM Modi also mentioned the importance of balance in trade and “spoke about few possibilities of Agricultural exports and Pharmaceutical exports to China” and it was decided to discuss the matters through the existing institutional mechanisms.</p>	<p>MOFA statement I and II: “They will tap into the full potential of business and investment cooperation, set new targets, harness positive forces, and explores new ways of cooperation to achieve win-win results”.</p> <p>MOFA statement III and Xinhua statement do not categorically mention issues relating to bilateral trade and investment.</p>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India has expressed concerns about balance of trade and sustainability of China’s investment policy. It is clearly highlighted in the Media Briefing by FS. 	

	<p>The Chinese side is focussed on scaling up the volume of trade and investment considering India as a market with huge opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a consensus that efforts need to be made to develop a more broad-based and sustainable economic partnership between India and China. However, India has suffered huge trade deficit with China. Therefore, issues related to market access and non tariff barrier need to be resolved.
<p>Cultural and people-to-people exchanges</p>	<p>Press release by MEA: “They also discussed ways to promote greater cultural and people-to-people exchanges and agreed to explore establishing new mechanisms in this direction”. Media Briefing by FS also acknowledged that the present exchanges were “still fragmented to some extent”.</p> <p>PM Modi’s speech included a proposal on STRENGTH, where ‘S’ stands for Spirituality, ‘T’ stands for Tradition, Trade and Technology, ‘R’ for Relationship, ‘E’ for Entertainment like Movies, Dance, Music and Art, ‘N’ stands for Nature, ‘G’ for Games, ‘T’ for Tourism and ‘H’ for Health and Healing.</p> <p>MOFA statement I and II: “Two sides will work to create a new boom in cultural exchanges by promoting people-to-people links” and agreed to “establish a high-level cultural and people-to-people exchange mechanism”. The same is stated in the MOFA statement III.</p> <p>MOFA statement III and Xinhua statement: There are passing references to “extensive cultural and people-to-people exchanges” and “people-to-people friendship”.</p>
<p>Assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The two sides have agreed to establish new mechanisms to facilitate strengthening of cultural and people-to-people exchanges during the summit. Prime Minister Modi made a proposal termed ‘STRENGTH’ to enhance these exchanges between the two countries. PM Modi’s speech and Media Briefing by FS extensively cover the proposal. The Chinese documents reviewed here do not mention the new proposal.
<p>Global challenges including terrorism</p>	<p>Press release by MEA: “They agreed to jointly contribute in a positive and constructive way in facilitating sustainable solutions for <i>global challenges</i> including climate change, sustainable development, food security etc”. These include combating diseases, coordinating action for disaster risk reduction and mitigation, addressing climate change</p> <p>MOFA statement I and II: “They agree to join hands in offering innovative and sustainable solutions to <i>global challenges</i> such as epidemics, natural disasters, climate change and <i>terrorism</i>”.</p> <p>MOFA statement III and Xinhua statement do not mention these challenges.</p>

	<p>and ushering digital empowerment.</p> <p>Media Briefing by FS also includes these global challenges.</p> <p>Press release by MEA noted “Prime Minister Modi and President Xi recognized the common threat posed by terrorism, and <i>reiterated their strong condemnation of and resolute opposition to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.</i>”</p>	
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food security, sustainable development and digital empowerment are not among the global challenges mentioned in the Chinese documents. But these are included in the Indian documents. Moreover, the Indian document emphasised on cooperation on counter-terrorism. • Terrorism has become a big challenge for humankind. However, the Chinese statement on terrorism is not enough. It does not condemn all forms of terrorism in contrast to the Indian statement. Thus, it can be said that differences on the issue of countering terrorism are yet to be resolved. 	
Global economic situation	<p>Press release by MEA: “They underscored the importance of <i>reform of multilateral financial and political institutions</i> to make them representative and responsive to the needs of developing countries”.</p> <p>The press release reiterated the “importance of building an <i>open, multipolar, pluralist and participatory global economic order</i>”.</p>	<p>MOFA statement I and II: “The two countries will work together to make international relations more <i>democratic, increase the representation and say of developing countries and emerging markets, support the multilateral trading regime, oppose protectionism</i> and work for an <i>open, inclusive, balanced and win-win economic globalisation</i> that benefits all.</p> <p>Xinhua statement: Xi said, “The two sides should uphold the <i>global governance concept of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefit</i> to promote the construction of an open world economy support the multilateral trading system, actively carry out international cooperation and jointly cope with global challenges”.</p> <p>MOFA statement III: both countries are “forces for promoting multipolarisation and economic globalisation...”</p>

		MOFA statement III: Modi said, “India firmly pursues an independent foreign policy and supports the globalisation, and supports safeguarding the multilateral system as well as the democratization of international relations”. Xinhua statement also carries similar statement.
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both sides have taken the position to safeguard the multilateral trading system and support globalisation. The Chinese document is more explicit in terms of opposing protectionism. What is significant in Xi Jinping’s statement is the “global governance concept of extensive consultation” which is aimed at strengthening China’s global position only. 	
Connectivity	The Indian documents do not mention connectivity.	MOFA statement III and Xinhua statement categorically mention strengthening “coordination and cooperation in international and regional affairs, and promote regional economic integration and the <i>construction of connectivity</i> ”.
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOFA statement I and II are silent on connectivity. Both India and China highlight importance of connectivity but follow different approaches to achieve it. India stresses that connectivity projects should be inclusive, sustainable, transparent and must respect sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries. 	
Joint projects in Afghanistan	No reference to joint projects in Afghanistan was found in Indian documents.	No reference to joint projects in Afghanistan was found in Chinese documents.
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media in India highlighted that both countries are likely to identify and undertake joint projects in areas of health, education and food security in Afghanistan, following discussions between the two leaders. Later Chinese Ambassador to India Luo Zhaohui in his article titled “My Interpretation of Wuhan Summit” in <i>the Tribune</i> (on May 6) confirmed that “the two sides agreed to carry out ‘China India plus’ cooperation in Afghanistan” 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This could be an important area of cooperation which has potential to significantly contribute to peace, stability and economic development of Afghanistan. 	
Future informal summits	<p>PM Modi's speech noted that "this informal summit will develop into a regular practice" and he "would be delighted to get an opportunity to host such an informative summit in 2019 on the soil of India".</p>	<p>MOFA statement I and II notes "Both sides agree to instruct their competent departments to work out specific plans and measures to implement the above consensus, and, building on the informal summit, endeavour to open new prospects in China-India relations"</p>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India has stressed on organising informal summits on regular basis. However, the Chinese side highlighted the importance of building on the Wuhan informal summit and it is yet to commit on further informal summits. 	

Conclusion

The informal summit signifies a new model of political engagement at the highest level between India and China. Certainly, it led to intensification of political, strategic, economic and cultural dialogues on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest. Both sides have highlighted important areas as well as ideas for cooperation. The analysis of official statements suggests convergence on various issues and divergence on some issues. There is a need for further debate and building consensus on all issues of mutual interest for "strategic and long term perspective". Nevertheless, the broad consensus reached on various issues during the informal summit indicates a forward looking approach of the two leaders.

It may be noted that the two leaders exchanged views on various development programmes of each country. India and China are the two most populous countries in the world. As both countries face similar challenges in pursuing their development programmes, they can benefit by sharing their experiences.

Finally, it needs to be noted that "an important principle in India-China relations is the necessity of being sensitive to the other country's aspirations and interests"ⁱⁱ. This will be a key factor in strengthening the bilateral relations as well as maximizing cooperation in various fields for mutual benefit.

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Disclaimer: The views expressed are that of the Researcher and not of the Council.

Endnotes

ⁱ “Press Release “India-China Informal Summit at Wuhan” , April 28, 2018, available at http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29853/IndiaChina_Informal_Summit_at_Wuhan

ⁱⁱ “Ambassador Gautam Bambawale’s Speech at the 8th India-China Dialogue between Ananta Aspen Centre & China Reform Forum” ,May 9, 2018, available at <http://indianembassybeijing.in/speech-09may.php>

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