



Research Paper

Signaling Versus Substance: Contextualizing Recent India–China Diplomatic Gestures (2024–2025)

Sabba Choudhary

PhD Scholar, Department of Political Science,
Panjab University, Chandigarh

Abstract

Following the 2020 Galwan clashes, India–China relations have fluctuated between suspicion and measured engagement characterised by selective diplomatic initiatives including the partial reinstatement of patrolling rights at Depsang and Demchok, the resumption of direct flights, and Prime Minister Modi's participation at the 2025 SCO summit in China. Although these efforts indicate a cautious recalibration, they also highlight the dual nature of bilateral relations where symbolic gestures intended for perception control coexist with minimal substantive initiatives. Current scholarship frequently addresses such gestures in a descriptive manner, conflating optics with authentic convictions. This work fills the gap by employing a five-criterion credibility rubric: costliness, reversibility, verifiability, material impact, and institutional embedding based on signaling theory and institutional views. The research indicates that while many efforts had considerable substantive significance, the majority are reversible and largely symbolic, functioning as tactical stabilisers rather than enduring conflict resolution mechanisms, hence distinguishing signaling from substantive action.

Key words: India–China relations, Diplomatic gestures, Signaling, Substantive action, Strategic communication

Received 12 Nov., 2025; Revised 22 Nov., 2025; Accepted 24 Nov., 2025 © The author(s) 2025.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. Introduction

India and China appear to temporarily reset their strained bilateral relations since the Galwan clashes in 2020, marked by the recent high-profile diplomatic gestures. In August 2025, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited New Delhi for the 24th round of border talks with India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval (MEA, 2025). Following years of restricted travel, agreements were reached to resume direct flights, reduce visa restrictions and explore indicators of improving bilateral relations. The two governments also went to revive the border trade and institutionalize the dialogue mechanism to address the disputes going on along the line of real control. In September 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in China, marking his first visit there in seven years. This engagement carried considerable symbolic and strategic significance (Rao, 2025). This evolving phase reveals a duality within India-China relations, wherein symbolic diplomatic gestures like high-level visits and resumed multilateral engagements coexist with cautious policy reversals and sustained strategic vigilance. While India has lifted some restrictions, including partial easing of bans on Chinese apps and resumption of border trade, it maintains stringent controls in key sectors like telecommunication, information technology and defence manufacturing (Le, 2024). This coexistence of signaling and substantive caution highlights the pivotal role of perception-building where each side crafts narratives to both reassure domestic and external audiences about intentions while underlying mistrust and strategic competition persist.

The present state of India-China ties is, therefore, anything but uncomplicated. It is defined by an intricate amalgamation of diplomatic, institutional, economic, and geopolitical factors. Although prominent diplomatic meetings attract public interest, it is the gradual institutional modifications, such as the partial reinstatement of patrolling rights in disputed areas like Depsang and Demchok, that are significantly more revealing. These quiet, confidence-building measures may be limited in scope but they reflect a deliberate effort from both nations to manage ongoing border tensions, even though the core disputes remain unresolved. On the economic front, developments have become even more intricate. The introduction of fresh U.S. tariffs in early

2024 targeting goods from both India and China under the banner of national security and unfair trade practices has added another layer of complexity. In response, China's decision to ease export restrictions on essential materials like rare earth elements and fertilizers marks a significant policy shift. For India, these changes help address longstanding vulnerabilities in its critical supply chains, especially given the heightened global instability in recent years. Altogether, these moves are not merely symbolic; they carry substantial strategic implications that go well beyond surface-level gestures.

II. Literature Review

The competition for narrative supremacy has emerged as a pivotal aspect of global politics. In the international arena, political entities increasingly formulate and employ strategic narratives to mould public perception, legitimise policies, and affect the global order. These narratives frequently amplify political influence beyond the capabilities of conventional hard power, such as military or economic force (Miskimmon et al., 2014). This paper analyses recent diplomatic gestures in India-China relations, highlighting perception management as a key characteristic. Scholarly research on India-China relations underscores a persistent dichotomy between the pursuit of meaningful conflict resolution and superficial diplomatic engagements, particularly concerning their contested border (Panda, 2016; Pant, 2017). Research indicates that both countries have historically addressed rivalry through diplomatic protocols and confidence-building measures, rather than resolving underlying issues (Scott, 2007). Scholars assert that signaling often functions as a mechanism for maintaining strategic uncertainty within broader strategic assessments shaped by asymmetrical power relations and reciprocal distrust (Mohan, 2019). The theory of international relations offers significant insights into this phenomenon. The concept of "costly signaling," as articulated by scholars like Schelling (1966) and Fearon (1997), elucidates how nations can authentically communicate their intentions through actions that yield measurable outcomes. While these costly signals diminish uncertainty, they may not consistently reflect a willingness to make full concessions. Kinne (2013) assert that research on diplomatic signaling highlights the significance of observability and institutionalisation in differentiating genuine commitments from merely performative actions. The current literature on India-China typically analyses diplomatic gestures through broad concepts of "confidence-building measures" or characterises them descriptively, failing to systematically differentiate between symbolic actions and substantive commitments. While signaling theory in international relations provides a conceptual framework, its application to the dynamics between China and India remains largely anecdotal and underdeveloped. The majority of research either neglects the gradational nature of diplomatic credibility or solely concentrates on crisis events, conflating appearances with outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

Viewing international relations as a series of strategic interactions complicated by incomplete information has fundamentally reshaped the field in recent decades. States, uncertain about others intentions or resolve, engage in signaling essentially. They send messages meant to either warn or reassure. This signaling plays a pivotal role not only in fostering cooperation and peace where clear intentions and credible commitments are essential but also in high-stakes bargaining scenarios. In these situations, states aim to communicate their willingness to stand firm or to collaborate despite the persistent uncertainty that defines international politics (Keohane, 1984). However, there remains a significant distinction between signaling and genuine substance in international relations. Signaling is the process by which governments convey their intentions or strengths without making significant commitments. This signaling frequently takes place in uncertain situations where credibility and trust are low (Spence, 1973; Fearon, 1997). To overcome this credibility deficit the fundamental problem of "cheap talk" scholarly attention has rightly shifted to the dynamics of costly signaling.

The costliness of the signals naturally separates genuine intentions from meaningless rhetoric, allowing analysts to revise assumptions and lessen doubt regarding an actor's true motivations (Kertzer et al., 2019). Costly signals, as opposed to cheap communication eliminate misunderstandings allowing viewers to revise assumptions and lessen doubt regarding an actor's genuine motivations. Symbolic gestures like public speeches, orchestrated photo opportunities, or cultural showcases rarely suffice to convey genuine intent as they lack substantive commitment. In contrast, actions such as troop movements, strategic withdrawals or the lifting of trade restrictions serve as costly signals that showcase seriousness. Nonetheless, the efficacy of signaling depends on how it is interpreted by the recipient, a process heavily shaped by domestic politics, cognitive biases and collective identities. There is a substantial body of scholarship on cognition in IR and it is fundamentally grounded on the belief that perceptions cannot just be assumed. Scholars do not treat it as something straightforward or automatic it is always up for debate, always more complicated than it looks. Misreading these signals can foster mistrust or even provoke escalation, undermining the intended purpose. Consider Russia's military exercises prior to the 2008 conflict with Georgia. The manoeuvres essentially signaled intent, yet both Georgian authorities and Western analysts underestimated Moscow's resolve and what followed was a rapid

escalation. Ultimately, the process of signaling in international relations remains fraught with uncertainty and complexity.

Analysing modern India-China relations requires an understanding of the difference between signaling and substantive action. While some diplomatic actions reflect real changes in intent or policy, others are primarily performative and meant for public consumption. Analysts and decision-makers can more precisely evaluate the importance and possible results of diplomatic contacts when they are able to differentiate between them. Take the U.S.-North Korea negotiations in 2018 and 2019. The summits lacked tangible, verifiable moves towards denuclearisation despite having conspicuous demonstrations and public declarations. Policymakers remained suitably cautious as a result of this distinction between symbolic actions and real commitments.

III. Methodology

To assess the credibility of the recent India–China diplomatic gestures, this paper adopts a five-criterion analytical rubric: *Costliness*, *Reversibility*, *Verifiability*, *Institutional Embedment* and *Material Impact*. These criteria were selected based on established theoretical frameworks, including Fearon's (1997) costly signaling theory, Jervis's (1970) concept of irreversibility, and Keohane's (1984) institutionalist insights, providing a comprehensive lens to distinguish genuine commitments from symbolic acts. While the rubric allows systematic comparison across diverse diplomatic actions, subjective interpretation remains a limitation, mitigated by coder triangulation and transparent criteria definitions. Furthermore, some gestures' outcomes remain evolving; therefore, assessments reflect the most current information at the time of analysis.

Criteria for Assessing Signaling and Substance

To assess whether recent India–China diplomatic gestures constitute genuine progress or mere symbolic signaling, this study employs a composite credibility–substance evaluation Framework, drawing on Fearon's (1997) Costly Signaling Theory, Jervis' (1970) credibility logic, and institutionalist perspectives (Keohane, 1984). These theoretical foundations are operationalized into five measurable dimensions:

Costliness:

Following Fearon, costly signals are more credible because they impose significant economic, political, or military burdens that cannot be easily reversed without incurring reputational loss. For example, cultural exchanges or photo ops reflect low-cost gestures, whereas troop relocations or tariff reductions signal high-cost commitments.

Irreversibility:

This criterion, which builds on Jervis' concept of entrapment, assesses whether acts are solidified by structural or legal modifications. Treaties, the permanent disposal of military installations, or legally binding economic agreements exhibit high irreversibility, whereas executive orders or rhetorical declarations receive poor marks.

Verifiability and Transparency:

Credible commitments require observable evidence. This dimension assesses whether third-party actors, independent media, or satellite imagery can verify compliance. Resumed flights, troop withdrawals, and published trade statistics indicate high verifiability, contrasting with ambiguous communiqués and transparency

Material Impact:

Only when quantifiable results, like improved commerce flows, reinstated patrolling rights, or the resumption of consular services, are achieved does symbolism become tangible. This parameter looks at each gesture's real-world, practical effects.

Institutional Embedding:

According to Keohane, institutionalisation guarantees continuity and reduces uncertainty. Hence, established procedures such as working groups, systematic conversations, or treaty-based monitoring are more important than ad-hoc summits or one-time gatherings.

Each diplomatic gesture (e.g., restoration of patrolling rights at Depsang, resumption of direct flights, SCO summit-level engagements) will be scored on these dimensions using a High–Medium–Low scale, enabling systematic comparison. Primary sources include official communiqués, MEA and MFA statements, multilateral forum documents, and verified trade and movement data, supplemented by credible secondary reporting. This structured rubric allows for distinguishing between cheap talk optics and costly, institutionalized commitments, providing a rigorous basis for evaluating signaling versus substantive change in India–China relations during 2024–2025.

Symbolism and Policy Actions in Historical Context

The diplomatic gestures between India and China have historically oscillated between cooperation and conflict. In the period immediately after India's independence, both nations projected an image of Asian solidarity, anchored in the 1954 Panchsheel Agreement. This accord set forth foundational principles such as mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression, and the like. Such ideals mirrored shared anti-colonial

aspirations and a sense of regional partnership. Yet, this spirit of cooperation was short-lived. Disputes over borders soon escalated, culminating in the 1962 war a conflict that effectively halted diplomatic momentum. In the aftermath, both nations made intermittent efforts to restore trust, engaging in official visits and cultural exchanges as symbolic gestures. The 1970s and 1980s saw leaders like Deng Xiaoping and Indira Gandhi renew attempts at dialogue, focusing on border negotiations and frameworks for communication. The idea that the border dispute would be "ring-fenced" was more widely accepted during this time, enabling the two nations to work together in other areas while the boundary dispute remained unresolved (Hall, 2025). These initiatives yielded mixed outcomes, reflecting persistent complexities in the relationship. For instance, diplomatic ties and trade agreements were revived, yet incidents like the Sumdorong Chu standoff (1987) underscored lingering mistrust.

The evolution of India-China relations throughout the 1990s offers a compelling case study in the relationship between diplomatic signaling and concrete policy measures. During this era, both nations engaged in highly visible diplomatic gestures such as Premier Li Peng's 1991 visit to India and the mutual reopening of consulates which signaled a renewed willingness to move past decades of estrangement. These symbolic acts established an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual respect at the diplomatic level. Substantively, these signals were reinforced through the 1993 Border Peace and Tranquillity Agreement. Following the agreement, relations between India and China entered a period of notable stability along their contested border. This agreement facilitated a reduction in troop deployments in several sectors, and both sides established regular mechanisms such as flag meetings, direct telephone hotlines, and structured interactions between border personnel. Bilateral trade saw dramatic growth, rising from approximately \$200 million in 1990 to over \$5 billion by 2002. This surge in economic exchange reflected a broader commitment to engagement. Diplomatic activity likewise intensified, as evidenced by increased high-level visits, most notably Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's official trip to China in 1993. Despite incremental improvements in bilateral relations, periodic tensions along the border persisted, and settlement of territorial disputes remained elusive. For instance, China routinely dispatched patrols south of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) actions India characterized as unauthorized incursions. Typically, these patrols withdrew without escalating into open conflict, yet the incidents underscored ongoing mistrust. In 1996, both nations signed a supplementary agreement aimed at strengthening confidence-building measures, in part as a response to the recurrent friction caused by such patrols. On the other hand, India grew increasingly concerned over China's military aid to Burma in the 1990s, which included tanks, aircraft, and naval vessels. This support helped the Burmese military consolidate power amid Western sanctions and deepened China's strategic presence near India's eastern borders. These cycles suggest that the nations manage their rivalry rather than truly settle their differences.

High-level interactions persisted, with officials from both nations continuing regular exchanges in the years following P.V. Narasimha Rao's 1993 visit, and this pattern extended well into the 2000s. Notably, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visited India in 2005. Diplomatic engagements also remained steady, exemplified by the 2003 "Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation," that broadened collaboration across bilateral, regional, and global issues. For instance, direct air connectivity was established through the launch of the Air India-Beijing route in 2006. Both sides also enhanced cooperation on hydrological data sharing during flood seasons and appointed Special Representatives in 2003 to address boundary discussions. Bilateral trade surged from approximately \$2.9 billion in 2000 to over \$61.7 billion by 2010, with China becoming India's largest trading partner in goods. Institutional mechanisms like the India-China Joint Economic Group and Strategic Economic Dialogue were established to deepen cooperation (*Embassy of India, Beijing*, n.d.).

Against this backdrop, the years between 2010 and 2020 witnessed a progression from momentary optimism to renewed confrontation. High-profile diplomatic engagements marked this period, including Xi Jinping's 2014 visit to India and Narendra Modi's 2015 trip to China, followed by informal summits in Wuhan (2018) and Mamallapuram (2019). Despite bilateral trade reaching a substantial \$92 billion by 2019, the border remained a persistent source of tension. This was underscored by the 2017 Doklam standoff and, more acutely, by the deadly Galwan Valley clash in 2020, which resulted in the loss of 20 Indian soldiers. These events highlighted the enduring volatility in the relationship, despite increasing economic interdependence. The continuation of border conflicts, economic disparities, and strategic mistrust exposed the limitations of signaling without equivalent substantive policy alignment, even though high-profile summits and public statements as key diplomatic signals projected collaboration and goodwill. This disparity was brought to light by the 2020 Galwan conflict, which led India to abandon symbolic participation in favour of legally binding policies like economic sanctions and military posture. In managing complicated bilateral rivalries, the decade thus provides a case study of how diplomatic signaling can facilitate communication but cannot replace concrete policy action.

Key Diplomatic Gestures in 2024–2025

Date	Diplomatic Gesture	Description	Primary Domain	Symbolism vs Substance
Oct 2024	Border Patrol Agreement	Agreement to partially restore patrolling rights at Depsang and Demchok sectors; incremental CBM after 2020 standoff.	Security / Border Management	Medium Substantive (limited restoration; no final resolution)
Nov 2024	Announcement to Resume Direct Flights	India and China announced steps to restart direct flights suspended since COVID-19, aimed at improving connectivity and business links.	Connectivity / Transport	Mixed (symbolic until flights actually resume)
Jan 2025	High-Level Military Talks (Corps Commander Meeting)	Senior military commanders from both sides held talks to operationalize border disengagement measures under existing agreements.	Security / Military	Mixed (talks continue; substantive only if implemented)
Feb 2025	Wang Yi Visit to New Delhi	Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met Indian counterparts, including NSA and EAM, signaling intent to reset ties and resume SR dialogue.	Diplomatic / Political	High symbolic (depends on outcomes, not announcements)
Aug 18-19 2025	China Eases Rare Earth & Fertilizer Export Curbs	China relaxed export restrictions on rare earth magnets and fertilizers, reducing India's strategic trade vulnerabilities.	Trade / Economic	High Substantive (material impact on supply chains)
Sept 2025	PM Modi's Expected Attendance at SCO Summit (China)	Prime Minister Narendra Modi participation in SCO summit in China after seven years, signals political engagement.	Diplomatic Multilateral /	

Analysing Symbolism and Substantive Outcomes

Diplomacy frequently takes place on a spectrum that extends from gestures that are solely symbolic to acts that have real substance. While symbolism is an important tool for signaling to control narratives, influence perceptions, and keep lines of communication open, substantive measures involve concrete promises that come with prices, lower uncertainty, and result in measurable change. This divide has taken on greater significance in the context of India-China relations after the 2020 Galwan conflict, which drastically changed the equation of strategic confidence. A rich empirical canvas for examining this continuum is provided by recent events that occurred between 2024 and 2025. India and China have participated in a range of diplomatic actions that differ in scope and longevity, from high-profile summit summits and cultural exchanges to sector-specific trade adjustments and security-related confidence-building initiatives. It is pertinent to know where these gestures fall on the signal-substance spectrum for two reasons. It allows policymakers and academics to determine if the current level of participation is a result of tactical manoeuvring or true conflict management. The logic of these acts is shaped by deeper structural forces, such as global strategic realignments, domestic political imperatives, security concerns, and economic interconnectedness. By applying a strict set of evaluation criteria: costliness, reversibility, verifiability, material impact, and institutionalization to recent diplomatic efforts, the analysis that follows shows how China and India strike a careful balance between expressing their intentions and making a commitment to significant change.

India–China Border Patrol Agreement (Depsang & Demchok)

In October 2024, India and China reached a significant understanding regarding renewed patrolling rights in the Depsang and Demchok areas—arguably one of the most consequential steps towards de-escalation in recent years. The partial restoration of access to previously contested zones indicates a tentative, yet meaningful, softening of the entrenched positions that have defined bilateral relations since 2020. From a cost perspective, the implications are considerable. Both nations have invested substantial resources, both militarily and politically, involving troop repositioning, dismantling of temporary infrastructure, and the initiation of confidence-building measures. While the understanding is institutionalized at the operational level, its irreversibility remains moderate; it does not carry the binding force of a formal treaty. Verification mechanisms are robust, with satellite imagery and ground reports providing tangible evidence of infrastructure removal and renewed patrolling activity. The material impact of this development is substantial as well, reducing the likelihood of inadvertent conflict and partially restoring the pre-2020 status quo. Institutionally, the process relies on the existing WMCC (Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination) framework, without introducing new treaty-based mechanisms. In sum, this development is grounded in genuine substance: verifiable actions, strategic significance, and considerable de-escalatory value.

Resumption of Direct Flights & Pilgrimage (2025)

In early 2025, India and China mutually agreed to restart direct flights, facilitate tourism visas, and resume the Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage, signaling a tentative step towards normalizing bilateral relations. This initiative involves moderate costs due to the necessary coordination but imposes limited financial burden. Given the fragile nature of political ties, these measures remain reversible, as services can be suspended if tensions escalate. However, these arrangements are highly transparent and verifiable, with schedules and visa processes readily observable. The material outcomes mainly benefit travellers and specific tourism sectors, while institutionalized mechanisms remain minimal, relying largely on existing protocols. Thus, the agreement represents a symbolic yet practical gesture, offering visible but transient benefits without deep structural change.

China's Easing of Rare-Earth Export Restrictions (Mid-2025)

Symbolically, it signals China's openness to negotiate amid recent trade tensions, while maintaining strategic control. The move reassures trading partners but is designed more for statecraft than genuine market liberalization, preserving China's image as a pivotal global supplier. Based on stringent licensing and quota procedures that China may quickly tighten or loosen based on geopolitics, the gesture is essentially inexpensive and extremely reversible. Despite a brief increase in export volumes, delays and limited approvals mean global sectors—especially automotive and electronics—face ongoing vulnerability and uncertainty, with only partial and conditional material impact. The regulations are based on domestic administrative procedures rather than international treaties, maintaining a low level of institutional embedding and centrally managed, opaque decision-making.

Summit-Level Symbolism

The informal interactions between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi Jinping at the 2024 SCO summit exemplify largely symbolic diplomatic gestures. These engagements involve minimal costs and resource commitments, primarily serving media and public relations purposes without leading to binding policy actions. Their reversibility is high, as they do not generate lasting commitments. Verification beyond public appearances tends to be limited, and substantive material impact is generally absent. Institutionalization is minimal since such gestures are rarely integrated into formal dialogue mechanisms or treaty frameworks. While these appearances help maintain communication channels and narrative control, their role in resolving core bilateral disputes remains modest (Panda, 2025).

Locating India–China Gestures on the Spectrum

The application of the rubric reveals a clear gradation from symbolism to substance in recent India–China diplomatic practices. Security-oriented confidence-building measures, such as the Depsang and Demchok agreement, display the strongest substantive characteristics due to their costliness, verifiability, and material implications, even if reversibility risks persist. Economic and connectivity measures, including flight resumption and rare-earth export easing, occupy a middle ground by delivering observable benefits while remaining contingent and partially reversible. Summit optics and cultural exchanges, in contrast, exemplify pure signaling with little beyond atmospherics. This pattern reinforces the theoretical proposition that substance in diplomacy arises not from rhetorical overtures but from commitments that entail real costs, generate verifiable change, and institutionalize future cooperation. Notably, historical patterns also reinforce the persistence of this approach. The 1993 and 1996 Border Peace and Tranquillity Agreements emerged from similar cost-risk calculations in the aftermath of the 1987 Sumdorong Chu standoff, when both sides acknowledged the dangers of escalation without resolution. Today's initiatives echo that logic but under vastly altered geopolitical and economic

circumstances. As C. Raja Mohan aptly observes, these measures are “tactical firebreaks, not structural settlements” temporary stabilizers designed to contain volatility rather than resolve fundamental disputes. Their primary purpose remains risk management, buying time while larger strategic contradictions endure. (Subramanian, 2024).

IV. Conclusion

Examining the dynamics of India–China diplomacy through the lens of signaling theory, it becomes clear that there is a notable gap between symbolic gestures and meaningful policy shifts. Drawing on Fearon’s concept of “costly signaling,” credibility in international relations is not established through rhetoric or superficial displays, but rather through concrete actions that involve genuine risk, irreversible commitments, and robust institutional mechanisms. While recent measures such as the partial restoration of patrolling rights in areas like Depsang and Demchok appear to fit some of these criteria, they largely remain limited in scope and easily reversible, underscoring their primarily symbolic function. This pattern supports the theoretical perspective that, in contexts marked by uncertainty and deep-seated mistrust, states often default to ambiguous signals intended more to shape perceptions than to resolve core disputes. In sum, the India–China relationship highlights the limitations of signaling in the absence of binding institutional frameworks and genuine strategic compromise. Without these foundations, symbolic gestures may preserve lines of communication, but they are unlikely to fundamentally transform the competitive dynamics at the heart of the bilateral relationship.

Policy Recommendations

Moving forward, if India and China genuinely hope to stabilize their relationship, the most pragmatic course is to pursue modest, incremental confidence-building measures nothing so dramatic as to force either side into territorial backpedalling or public embarrassment. Initiatives like quiet diplomatic exchanges, measured troop reductions, and regular, institutionalized military dialogue can help defuse tension. These steps function as tactical safeguards crucial in a relationship marked by persistent structural imbalances. Still, the real challenge lies in translating symbolic gestures into genuine progress. Without durable institutional frameworks and authentic political commitment from both governments, any improvements risk being short-lived, leaving the relationship stuck in its familiar cycle of occasional cooperation overshadowed by deep-seated rivalry.

References

- [1]. BBC News. (2020, June 25). *Galwan Valley: Satellite images “show China structures” on India border*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53174887>
- [2]. Das, P. & Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses. (2021). *India’s approach to Border Management: From Barriers to Bridges*. In *KNOWLEDGE WORLD*. KW Publishers Pvt Ltd. <https://www.idsa.in/system/files/book/indias-approach-to-border-management.pdf>
- [3]. *Embassy of India, Beijing*. (n.d.). https://eoibeijing.gov.in/eoibeijing_pages/MjQ
- [4]. Fearon, J. D. (1997). Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands Versus Sinking Costs. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 41(1), 68–90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002797041001004>
- [5]. Fravel, M. T. (2008). *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China’s Territorial Disputes*. Princeton University Press.
- [6]. Hall, I. (2025). India’s China strategy after Galwan: minilateral and multilateral soft balancing in the Indo-Pacific. *International Affairs*, 101(5), 1815–1832. <https://academic.oup.com/ia/article/101/5/1815/8221753?searchresult=1>
- [7]. Jervis, R. (1970). The Logic of Images in International Relations. *Princeton University Press*.
- [8]. Kantha, A. K. (2023, August 29). Expanded BRICS – Delhi must look out for geopolitical agenda with Chinese characteristics. *The Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/brics-summit-in-johannesburg-narendra-modi-president-xi-jinping-8913745/>
- [9]. Keohane, R. O. (1984). *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton University Press.
- [10]. Kertzer, J. D., Rathbun, B. C., & Rathbun, N. S. (2019). The price of peace: motivated reasoning and costly signaling in international relations. *International Organization*, 74(1), 95–118. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818319000328>
- [11]. Kinne, B.J. (2013). Dependent Diplomacy: Signaling, Strategy, and Prestige in the Diplomatic Network. *International Studies Quarterly*, 58(2), 247–259. <https://academic.oup.com/isq/article/58/2/247/1787108>
- [12]. Krepon, M. *The Stability-Instability Paradox, misperception, and escalation control in South Asia*. <https://theasiadialogue.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/stability-instability-paradox-south-asia.pdf>
- [13]. Le, V. (2024). India-China disengagement: bilateral and regional implications. *Stimson Center*. <https://www.stimson.org/2024/india-china-disengagement-bilateral-and-regional-implications/>
- [14]. Mohan, C.R. (2019). *Modi’s world: Expanding India’s global influence*. HarperCollins.
- [15]. Morgenthau, H. J. (1948). *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- [16]. MEA. (2025, August 18). Visit of China’s Foreign Minister and Special Representative on the India-China boundary question. https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/40016/Visit_of_Chinas_Foreign_Minister_and_Special_Representative_on_the_IndiaChina_boundary_question
- [17]. Miskimmon, A., O’Loughlin, B., & Roselle, L. (2014). Strategic narratives: communication power and the new world order. *Choice Reviews Online*, 52(03), 52–1665. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.185594>
- [18]. Panda, J.P. (2016). *India-China relations: Politics of resources, identity and authority in a multipolar world order*. Routledge.
- [19]. Padda, J. (2025, August 27). *Modi at SCO: The significance of China in India’s foreign Policy - Institute for Security and Development Policy*. <https://www.isdp.eu/publication/modi-at-sco-the-significance-of-china-in-indias-foreign-policy/>
- [20]. Pant, H.V. (2017). *India’s strategic choices: China and the balance of power in Asia*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

- [21]. Rao, A. (2025, August 20). *Warming Ties: India-China Signal Trade and Diplomatic Reset*. Warming Ties: India-China Signal Trade and Diplomatic Reset
- [22]. Schelling, T.C. (1966). *Arms and Influence*. Yale University Press.
- [23]. Scott, D. (2007). Strategic imperatives of India as an emerging player in Pacific Asia. *International Studies*, 44(4), 311-332.
- [24]. Singh, G. (2025, August 28). How rare earth shortages are stalling India's burgeoning EV sector. *Al Jazeera*. How rare earth shortages are stalling India's burgeoning EV sector | Trade War | Al Jazeera
- [25]. Spence, M. (1973). Job Market Signaling. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 87(3), 355–374. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1882010>
- [26]. Subramanian, B. (2024, December 21). Why Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) with China is Temporary? *Samvada World*. <https://samvadaworld.com/analysis/why-confidence-building-measures-cbms-with-china-is-temporary/>