Analyzing The Militarization Of Ladakh And Mapping Its Environmental Implications For The Region

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Abstract
Since Xi Jinping became the president of the People's Republic of China (PRC), India-China relations have incrementally developed an increasing perception of distrust. This perception has notably risen due to the militarization of the India-China border in Western Ladakh. Using discourse and development in Chinese official documents, Chinese leaders' speeches, and media in addition to the material developments in the border, particularly in the context of the militarization in Western Ladakh, the article analyses China's militarization process in the Western Himalayan region. The article argues that the accelerated militarization of the India-China border in Western Ladakh has implications for the region's environmental security.
Keywords- Himalayas, India, China, Militarization, Ladakh, Environmental Security

INTRODUCTION

Since 1949, India-China relations have gone through ups and downs in its evolution. The 1962 war was the lowest point in the bilateral ties as armed forces were engaged in a limited war in the Western and Eastern sectors of the India-China border. However, after a long period of détente, initial border agreements were signed in the mid-1990s, creating a framework to deal with the border issue. The framework gave some stability to the relations and was followed by growing trade and commerce. But in the 2010s, the border again became an irk in the broader relations even though the bureaucracy and the political leadership had tried to manage it. But since President Xi assumed office, the border conflict has only become more serious, starting with the Doklam Standoff in 2017. Following the Doklam standoff, the relations became soured. Two consecutive political summits between the leaders were undertaken to ease the tension. Soon pandemic caught on, and the progress in ties was paused until May 2020, when Chinese and Indian soldiers again clashed in Galwan—a remote location in western Ladakh that led to the first reported causality by India in four decades. Following the Galwan clashes, both countries' armed forces increased their troops and assets in the Western Himalayan region, specifically Ladakh. This led to the region's militarization, after which the building of strategic infrastructures like bridges, roads, helipads, advanced landing grounds (ALH), and permanent structures to support the armed forces has been given prominence. The militarization of the Indo-China border has led to securitization, which has essentially prioritized the border issue. But both countries have reacted; differently; China's militarization capturing strategic points in the region and stopping India's infrastructure development, and India's 'reactive-militarization' or 'counter-militarization' objective is to counter China's strategic superiority in the region and return to the status quo ante. However, the militarization of the border has severe implications for the Environmental security of the WHR. Due to constraints, the paper limits the analysis to China's militarization in the western border sector and its implications for India's environmental security. The study will be undertaken in four sections, and the first elaborates on the Militarization of the Ladakh region and provides a brief overview of the historical relations focusing on the Ladakh region. This is followed by understanding the manifestation of Militarization through analyzing two lenses of development and discourse. In the third section, the paper traces the implications of militarization on the environmental security of the region. In the concluding section, the paper expands on the effects of environmental security for India in the Ladakh region.

Conceptualising Militarization in the context of India-China border in the Western Ladakh

Scholars have defined Militarization in different ways taking in different contexts and levels of analysis. The militarization literature can be traced to anthropology, feminism, political science, and international relations. (Lutz 2018; Enloe 2000) Critical theory scholars have extensively explored militarization and its impact on society, communities, and humans. Militarization is interpreted by scholars like Lutz (2018) as

a 'historical, social process' while Enloe (2000) has looked at it as 'a step by step process.' Militarization of the India-China border has been an undergoing process that started in the mid-1950s leading to the 1962 war, followed by a conflict and cooling down phase that began in the 1990s with the building of political agreements between the two sides. The trend first started in 1957 when the news of the Xinjiang-Tibet highway construction came forth and alarmed New Delhi. Following this in 1961, the militarization of the India-China border in Ladakh was institutionalized by India when policies and practices were brought in to elevate the threat as an existential one through Nehru's Forward Policy (Singh 2020). This led to the securitization of the border issue which allowed the application of justifiable means to deal with it as it manifested into a national security issue(Peoples 2010). With the forward policy, what was essentially a political issue became a security issue for both states, putting the military in the primary decision-making position. Securitization for India, in this case, is about prioritizing the Chinese threat in the Ladakh region to protect itself from the increasing militarization, and for China, it entails the breakdown of agreements that ensure the stability of the border, which was responsible for normal relations with India. It becomes critical to understand the interconnection with the Chinese securitization strategy, which manifests through the 'militarization' of the region. Militarization becomes an essential variable through which the objective of maintaining one's supremacy can be analyzed. China's militarization strategy is to achieve strategic superiority in two ways—occupying the strategic position in the region to normalize the status quo and establishing new norms and rules to dictate border engagement. As the securitization theory does not hold explanatory power and casualty with Militarization, we are focusing on the latter to analyze its relations with the Environmental security of Ladakh. Here we will be analyzing the Militarization manifesting through development and discourse. The first consists of tracing the material aspect of development, such as increased troops building roads, bridges, and military equipment in the Western sector. The second follows the change in discursive language to analyze the application of militarised text in a government document and Chinese media. This paper will be driven by mixed methodology—content and discourse analysis. Undertaking mixed-method research allows us to combine each section's strengths. We will be focusing on the manifestation of Militarization. In other words, 'draw[ing] attention to the concurrently material and discursive nature of military power.' (Lutz 2018) We will use an Explanatory sequential mixed method design for our research as the Qualitative findings build on the quantitative results providing more depth to the research (Creswell 2014). This approach will be taken in three steps—data collection, interpretation, and analysis.

Militarising Ladakh's strategic landscape

'Militarization is the measure of the extent of use of military structures and procedures in a state's decision-making process' (Svofield 2007). In this context, the Militarization of the India-China border has been a repetitive phenomenon in India-China relations and has taken place in limited time and space. India-China border relations have been like a hanging pendulum (pendulum referring to the status of the border situation) with the difference that the pendulum remains static here. India wants to push for a de-jure agreement, and China seems to be content with the de-facto situation, and in between, there is a strive to maintain the status-quo by both sides(Narayanan and Yonghui 2020: 69). Scholars like Brahma Chellany have argued that China's strategy is to 'hold off indefinitely on a border settlement with India' neglecting the 'territorial status-quo'(Chellaney 1993: 51). Why has it become more important to understand this phenomenon? This is to understand the impact of the Militarization linkage and its implication for the Environmental Security of Ladakh. The Ladakh region becomes important as there is no treaty between India and China, and it has not discussed any kind of delimitation of the Western sector, unlike the Eastern, where a treaty exists but no formal recognition. (Singh 2020: 67) In addition, the sector's strategic importance is closely linked to China's national and foreign policy interests. The western (Ladakh) sector covers 1597 Km out of 4057 Km of the Sino-India boundary and remains critical for India due to strategic concerns (J. T. Brethouwer et al. 2022).

The Application of the militarization framework to understand the India-China border issue through material developments and discursive construction helps in analyzing the situation holistically. The militarization phenomenon can be interpreted from the status of the border relations by understanding the role of Confidence building measures (CBM) agreements. These CBMs include '[m]utually agreed treaties with provisioned clauses for disclosing troop movements, exercise schedules, and even supervision

in certain cases' (Directorate of Doctrine 2017). Like the ones that resulted from the outcomes of the Joint Working Group (JWG) between 1988 and 2013 (Singh 2020: 68). These CBM agreements of 1993, 1996, and 2013 are established mechanisms to stabilize the relation on boundary questions, delinking it with the overall relations and de-risking the possibility of conflict by creating avenues for new interaction approaches. With time these CBMs become 'a learning process where … security dialogue with an adversary [and] a defense establishment becomes receptive to new approaches to security and … sensitive to the concerns of other states' (Mcintosh 1993 and Kriesberg 1986 as cited in Svofield 2007:16). The stability of the relations between India and China has always been linked to the border question by India, as stated by Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, who said that '…making efforts to strengthen contacts and implement various Confidence Building Measures … will help to promote peace and tranquility in the India-China border areas which is an important prerequisite for smooth development of our bilateral relations', linking the stability at the border with overall relations but also putting border as the priority in the ties (Ministry of External Affairs, 2018). Table 1 shows the number of transgressions in the western sector, which have varied yearly with increasing numbers since 2017 when the doklam standoff happened between the two countries near the Siliguri Corridor. J. T. Brethouwer et al. (2022) confirms this increasing trend by comparing the number of transgression incidents reported by media and government documents. In addition, they also emphasized the importance of the western sector, which reported the highest number of incursions, particularly six red zones in the western sector, implying that the sector is 'strategically targeted' by China.

Table 1: Figures of Transgressions at the India-China border

Year	Number of Transgressions	Number of Aerial Transgressions (western sector)
2011	213	-
2012	426	-
2013	411	-
2014	-	-
2015	342*	19*
2016	208*	17*
2017	337*	27*
2018	284*	31*
2019	497*	32*

* This represents the number specific to the western sector.

Source: Created by Author from the Ministry of Home Affairs. 2020. "UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3776 TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 13TH AUGUST, 2014/SRAVANA 22, 1936 (SAKA)." Press release. May 22, 2020. https://www.mha.gov.in/MHA1/Par2017/pdfs/par2014-pdfs/rs-130814/RS%203776.pdf.

;Singh, Sushant. 2020. "Big Surge in Chinese Transgressions, Most of Them in Ladakh." *The Indian Express*, May 22, 2020. Accessed August 10, 2023. https://indianexpress.com/article/india/aksai-chin-army-big-surge-in-chinese-transgressions-most-of-them-in-ladakh-6421674/.

Figure1: Comparison of number of incursion reported by Media and Government figures
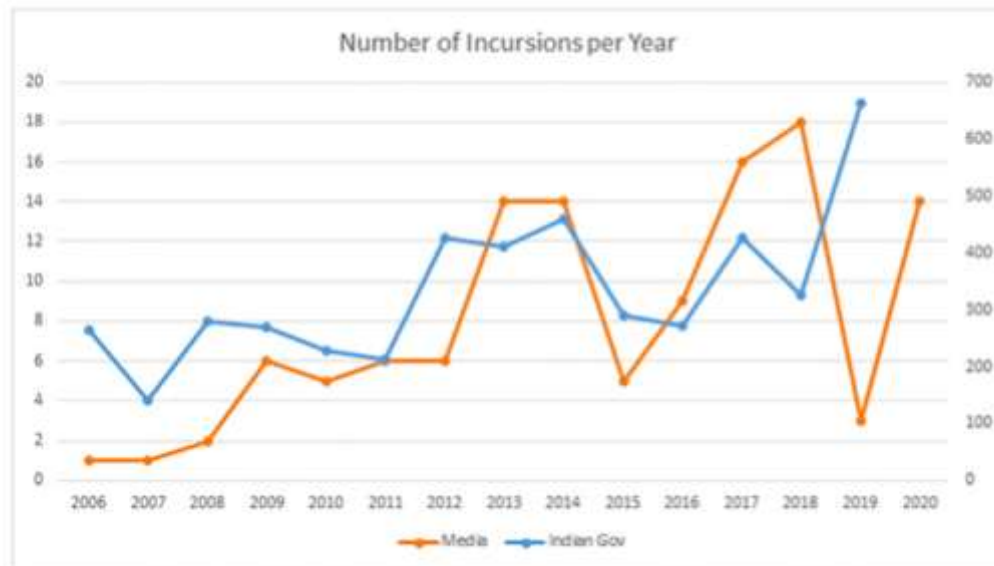
Source: Brethouwer, Jan Tino, Robbert Fokkink, Kevin Greene, Roy Lindelauf, Caroline Tornquist, and V. S. Subrahmanian. 2022. "Rising Tension in the Himalayas: A Geospatial Analysis of Chinese Border Incursions into India." *PLOS ONE* 17 (11): e0274999. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0274999. Militarization can be interpreted here as the attempt by China to break the existing agreements that ensured the stability of the border, which in effect, led to normal relations with India. We can see the increasing number of incursions in Figure 1(J. T. Brethouwer et al. 2022). Successful securitization in the India-China case is linked directly with militarization; here, it would mean violating the existing framework that maintained stability across the border. This would mean breaking the essential agreements for reducing the scope and avenue of cooperation and negotiations and empowering the military's role compared to governments to deal with broader issues. By not adhering to the agreements, the military again becomes the prominent actor on both sides in maintaining stability along the border, furthering the process of militarization.

Understanding militarization of the Ladakh region through the lens of Development and Discourse
Analyzing material development in the Ladakh region
Scholars have defined Militarization in different ways taking in different contexts and levels of analysis. The militarization literature can be traced to anthropology, feminism, political science, and international relations (Lutz 2018; Enloe 2000). Critical theory scholars have extensively explored militarization and its impact on society, communities, and humans. Militarization is interpreted by scholars like Lutz (2018) as a 'historical, social process' while Enloe (2000) has looked at it as 'a step by step process.' Militarization of the India-China border has been an undergoing process that started in the mid-1950s leading to the 1962 war, followed by a conflict and cooling down phase that began in 19the 90s with the creation of political agreements between the two sides. The first trend started in 1957 when the news of the Xinjiang-Tibet highway construction came forth and alarmed New Delhi. Following this in 1961, the militarization of the India-China border in Ladakh was institutionalized by India when policies and practices were brought in to elevate the threat as an existential one through Nehru's Forward Policy (Daulat, 2020) This led to the securitization of the border issue which allowed the application of justifiable means to deal with it as it manifested into a national security issue (Peoples, 2010). With the forward policy, what was essentially a political issue became a security issue for both states, putting the military in the primary decision-making position. Securitization for India, in this case, is about prioritizing the Chinese threat in

the Ladakh region to protect itself from the increasing militarization, and for China, it entails the breakdown of agreements that ensure the stability of the border, which was responsible for normal relations with India. It becomes critical to understand the interconnection with the Chinese securitization strategy, which manifests through the 'militarization' of the region. Militarization becomes an essential variable through which the objective of maintaining one's supremacy can be analyzed. China's militarization strategy is to achieve strategic superiority in two ways—occupying the strategic position in the region to normalize the status quo and establishing new norms and rules to dictate border engagement. As the securitization theory does not hold explanatory power and casualty with Militarization, we are focusing on the latter to analyze its relations with the Environmental security of Ladakh. Here we will be analyzing the Militarization manifesting through development and discourse. The first consists of tracing the material aspect of development, such as increased troops building roads, bridges, and military equipment in the Western sector. The second follows the change in discursive language to analyze the application of militarised text in a government document and Chinese media. This paper will be driven by mixed methodology—content and discourse analysis. Undertaking mixed-method research allows us to combine each section's strengths. We will be focusing on the manifestation of Militarization. In other words, 'draw[ing] attention to the concurrently material and discursive nature of military power.' (Lutz, 2018) We will use an Explanatory sequential mixed method design for our research as the Qualitative findings build on the quantitative results providing more depth to the research (Creswell, 2014). This approach will be taken in three steps—data collection, interpretation, and analysis.

Decoding the Militarization of the Ladakh region through Discourse analysis

Chinese Official Discourse on India from Pre to Post Doklam

At the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, it was decided that one of China's primary foreign policy priorities was strengthening relations with all its neighbors, especially with India (China.org 2012). However, within the Chinese strategic community, there has always been disagreement regarding how China should cooperate with India. Some community members believe that China must push India to cooperate, particularly by offering India non-core economic incentives and concessions. In contrast, others believe that cooperation is achieved through struggle, according to the Maoist philosophy (毛派思想). Due to the lack of agreement among Chinese strategic circles, China's engagement with India has, at best, been episodic, alternating between times of cooperation and conflict as well as hope and despair. For instance, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang made a symbolic decision to visit India on his first trip abroad in 2013, but a three-week-long standoff between Chinese and Indian forces on the western side of the border overshadowed the potentially historic visit (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013). Even China's 12th Five-Year Plan says that 226 major projects with an investment of 28 billion yuan ($ 4.49 billion) were started in 2012 by the Chinese government in Tibet. As China-India relations gained prominence and significance over the years, border confrontations intensified and lasted longer, showing that China's policy toward India is dominated by two distinct but contradictory schools of thought. Our analysis found that China wanted to improve its relations with India to boost its trade and investment and reset the often troubled relations between the two countries. The year 2014 was hailed as the 'China-India Friendly Exchange Year' in the official discourse, as President Xi Jinping visited India and Vice President Li Yuanchao said "Beijing is committed to advancing the strategic partnership with India," showing the interest in the consolidation of ties with India. Furthermore, when Chinese President Xi Jinping planned his first visit to India in September 2014. Writing in an editorial article ahead of his visit, Xi said:

"My first visit to this ancient and magical land was 17 years ago...Now 17 years later, I am about to once again visit India, an enchanting and beautiful land that has captured world attention...The "Story of India" has spread far and wide.

Xi's visit, together with his wife, erased the negative image of India that had previously been promoted by China and delivered a wave of positivity, portraying India as a crucial partner in international collaboration. When in 2015 Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited China (BBC News 2015), it was regarded by the Chinese government and public through a multi-faceted lens that encapsulated various dimensions of bilateral relations, regional dynamics, and strategic interests. From the Chinese perspective, Modi's visit was an opportunity to enhance diplomatic engagement and economic collaboration. (The

Global Times 2015) The Chinese leadership also saw the visit as a means to consolidate ties with India, to expand avenues for trade, investment, and technological cooperation. However, beneath the veneer of cooperation, the Chinese government also assessed the visit within the broader context of their regional strategic interests. Concerns arose over India's active participation in the U.S.-led rebalance to the Asia-Pacific and its engagements with regional actors in the South China Sea. When Chinese President Xi visited India in 2016 for the BRICS summit (TOI 2016), terror was the main topic of discussion (India Today 2016). China also reaffirmed that its position on India's ambitions to join the NSG and designate JeM chief Masood Azhar as a terrorist had not changed.

Furthermore, the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) by China found India among its founding members, suggesting an inclination toward cooperative ventures in regional development. The relations deteriorated when the Chinese side was found beefing up its military presence in the disputed Doklam region. The reason for the Doklam standoff is the Chinese commenced constructing a road on the disputed plateau to provide access to the southern end of the Chumbi Valley (Hasnain 2017). While analysts around the world, including in India, debated China's militarization, some Chinese strategists attempted to craft a propaganda counter-narrative, disregarding and decoupling Chinese actions from the current situation on the border with India, providing academic support to the Chinese government's official stance on the issue. What was remarkable in the discourse analysis during the standoff is how quickly the Chinese government reversed its earlier position of 'Carefrontational' to 'Confrontational'. For example, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi took no time to say that he hoped 'India would learn some lessons from the border standoff' (CTV News 2017). After a few days, China's defence ministry spokesperson Wu Qian even warned India not to "harbour any illusions" he even said rhetorically that 'it is easier to shake the mountains than to shake the PLA' (China Daily 2017). Furthermore, using a hawkish tone, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said 'India 'slapping own face' on border standoff' (The Global Times 2017c). In Chinese official discourse, 'the only clearly defined border between China and India is in Sikkim' as stated by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang (The Global Times 2017a). Following negotiations for several weeks, China and India withdrew their soldiers to their previous posts in August 2017 (The Global Times 2017b). But since then, China has subtly stationed troops and developed new regional infrastructure. In other words, China's tactical retreat during the crisis did not signify that it had given up on its wider goals to settle the conflict amicably and gain a military edge over India. China has become more assertive in its territorial claims over Indian territory in the last few years. Building roads close to the border, using the civilian population as an asset, and repeatedly having the PLA cross the LAC into Indian territory are just a few of the previous actions China has taken to further its claims on disputed territories. In 2021 China passed a new Land Border Law. The law is a straightforward legislation of what China was already doing prior to its implementation. China is attempting to unilaterally define and demarcate its borders with India. The law gives the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and People's Armed Police (PAP) the authority to protect the border and take offensive measures against 'invasion, cannibalization, infiltration, and provocation' (Advocatetanmoy Law Library 2021). The CCP has set the stage for a militarised solution to the boundary dispute by enacting such a law and speeding up the construction of 624 Xiaokong villages (FreeTibet.org 2020) along and inside the disputed land boundaries with India. In a lot of ways, China's perspectives on India are formed by its Tibet policy. Among the projects in Tibetan areas that were undertaken during the 13th Five-year plan (2016-2020) were the Construction of the Himalaya Economic Cooperation Belt and the Kyirong Cross-border Economic Cooperation Zone. Creating these will give the Chinese direct access to the Indian border via Tibet. To commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Tibetan uprising in 2019, Beijing released a White Paper that revealed a shift in China's stance on the Dalai Lama, from one of engagement with the spiritual leader to one of 'a great leap to socialist system' (White Paper on Tibet 2019) under the Chinese Communist Party. According to the paper's explanation, the Dalai Lama and some Western elements have supported malevolent forces that have sought to obstruct Tibet's development. Another White Paper on Tibet was published in 2021, emphasizing the need to maintain control over the region, ensuring Chinese authority over the selection of the successor to the Dalai Lama, and emphasizing border management and development. Furthermore, during the Galwan issue, China drafted its 14th Five-year plan (2021-2025) , which intends to invest more than RMB 190 billion (about

$30 billion) in infrastructure projects in Tibet, including the construction of the first hydropower dam on the lower reaches of the Brahmaputra river near the Arunachal Pradesh border to which India had objected. It was reported that the Lhasa-Nyingchi Railway, which is an important part of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway, is now being used for the military transport mission (The Global Times 2021c). The plan also emphasized facilitating access to important border roadways, such as the G-219 national highway, which covers the entire length of the India-China border in the Xinjiang and Tibet region.

Militarization of in Ladakh and its Environmental security implications
The Hindu-Kush Himalaya (HKH) region is home to 240 million people and acts as a source of water for a quarter of the population on earth, and these mountains are spread across 3500 km and through eight countries (ICIMOD 2023). Today the HKH region is facing a serious threat from climate change, as scientists estimate that two-thirds of the glaciers will disappear in the next 70 years (ICIMOD 2023). With the increasing intensity and frequency of global warming, this region is witnessing 'record- breaking heat waves, droughts, natural disasters, unpredictable snowfall, and precipitous and largely irreversible glacial melt' (ICIMOD 2023). The Himalayan Mountain ranges are one of the youngest in the world, and due to their high altitude, they are heating up faster than other mountains, resulting in irregular rainfall patterns and water flow patterns (ICIMOD 2022). These extreme natural disasters and events, directly and indirectly, affect the sensitive ecology of Ladakh and India's environmental security. In face of these challenges, increasing *militarization* and *Counter-militarization* adds to the problem and makes it much more severe. Any additional factors would worsen the situation for India's environmental security. According to a report from ICIMOD, it is estimated that the glaciers in the HKH region may lose up to 80 percent of their volume, and the region is projected to experience more cases of 'slow-onset hazards, such as sedimentation and erosion and fast-onset hazards such as glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), occurring often concurrently in the same catchments' (Wester et al. 2023). The HKH region is divided into three categories: Western Himalayan Region, Central Himalayan Region, and Eastern Himalayan Region, among these Western Himalayan Region (WHR), which covers the Western sector, our subject of study is affected by human activities differently (Aggarwal 2020). Ladakh, which falls in the WHR, also sees different warming climatic conditions. (Chevuturi, Dimri, and Thayyen 2016:19) argues that the Ladakh region shows changing climate conditions due to 'increasing temperature and varied precipitation patterns.' Due to this changing weather, rainfall and snow patterns the daily lives of human populations are also affected. Agricultural farmers are facing water scarcity because of less snowmelt which leads to crop decline of 30 to 50 percent (Joshi 2018). It is also estimated that the temperature in Ladakh rose by 3 degree celsius between 1973 and 2008, compared to 1 degree for the rest of India (Daga 2016). The increasing temperature is expected to only make things much more difficult for the natives living in the WHR.

To analyze the implication of militarization and counter-militarization on Ladakh and regional environmental security, we need to look at China's activities in Tibet, which share commonality with the region regarding its strategic importance. The Tibetan Plateau, considered as one of the most vital ecological zones in the world, shapes the monsoon in the subcontinent. It contains 14 high mountain ranges, complex natural systems, and is also referred as the 'third pole' or the 'water tower of Asia' (Norbu 2017: 239) The HKH as the lifeline of Asia as the ten largest rivers in the region originate from there, making the river basin of 6 million sq. km critical for human, food, environmental, and national security of the region. The TAR feeds almost half of the world's population through its water across India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Vietnam and Myanmar. In addition to being an energy and water reserve, it also contains around 130 rich minerals (Samphel 2017: 75) To understand the nature of threat that the region has sustained it is important to look at its history. The Environmental Security of the region has been under constant attack from China since the early 1950s. From 1950 to 1985, the forest cover of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) decreased from 9 percent to 5 percent (Heath 2005: 214). Due to the large-scale deforestation, downstream communities living in India and Bangladesh have suffered from flooding and silting (Heath 2005: 215). Even actions such as deforestation have correlations with climate change as it fastens the pace of melting glaciers in the Himalayas, which is likely to influence the temperature of the WHR. The WHR is considered the most sensitive area along the Himalayan range; any change in temperatures in Tibet influences the weather pattern in the Indian subcontinent as 'updraft of warm air

in the mountains of Tibet, which sucks in the moist air over India from the ocean' can delay the monsoon (Heath 2005: 215). Militarization is closely linked to increased climate change impact as it accelerates the pace of unsustainable development, which has short- and long-term consequences. As Gurung (2017) states,

'Increased militarisation and armament can be an irritant in fostering stronger ties. In addition, it requires infrastructural build-up in the form of military outposts, roads and railways. The same cycle of deforestation for military bases, missile launch sites, connectivity in the form of all weather roads and railways, permafrost-ecological-environmental degradation and CO_2 and CH_4 release is repeated. Such an arrangement increases the chances of developing mutual distrust and suspicion between India and China, which will prove detrimental to their interests.'

The problem with militarization is that it prioritizes security considerations and economic model thinking that neglects environmental implications. That was the case with China's Western Development Strategy (WDS), which focused on a top-down development economic approach in the western region, emphasizing infrastructure construction, ecological, environmental protection, and education (Golley 2007; Kong 2021). As Heath (2005: 217) emphasizes, big-ticket infrastructure projects may bring short to medium-term benefits; however, in the long term, they would be unsustainable. Similarly, Wang et al. (2022) demonstrate the negative correlation between Urbanization and Environmental degradation in Tibet. Infrastructure development has a dual-use purpose, including roads, bridges, and railway projects in the TAR (The Global Times 2021b). Railways play a role in 'national defense development' by increasing China's capabilities and capacities in the security and logistics sectors (The Global Times 2021c). Primarily trains assist in strengthening PLA capabilities in the Western sector; they 'are a key means to transport military personnel, equipment, and supplies on a large scale, as they can serve to complement road transport, which is slower but can transport more, and air, which is faster but can transport less' (The Global Times, 2021c). The objective of strategic infrastructure projects is to focus on 'the ability to bring in military personnel and weapons swiftly in case of a foreign attack, possibly attacking aggressive policies along Tibet's southern border and suppressing an internal uprising.'(Heath 2005: 219) These are also expected to play a critical role in case of faster mobilization to the India-China border. The Sichuan-Tibet Railway line, which connects Chengdu to Lhasa, reduces the trip time from 48 hours to 13 hours, making it easier for the PLA's 77th Group army based in Chongqing near Chengdu to mobilize faster (Desai 2021; The Global Times 2021a). Qian Feng, a Chinese South Asian Scholar, said that 'the railway will provide great convenience for China's delivery of strategic materials' in case of a crisis on the Indo-China border, and another expert Zhao Jian linked the railway project directly to the 'border defense.' (The Global Times 2021a) Two sections of the Sichuan Tibet line are already operational, and the construction on the third one between Ya'an and Nyingchi starts in 2020 (Luo 2022). In addition, a new railway line between Tibet and Xinjiang has also started and will be completed by 2035 (The Global Times 2023). This line is expected to go along the G219 National Highway, passing through Aksai Chin to boost border security further (Krishnan 2023). To boost further infrastructure projects, China is expected to spend $146 billion in Tibet (Reuters 2020). Militarization of a region is a continuous process that not only entails the deployment of armed personals, weapons, and military infrastructure, but it also leads to the development of extended institutions like 'large scale built and social infrastructure to sustain and support coercive power of nations' (Schofield 2016). China is implementing policies and initiatives to settle people in the border areas near the LAC to build its social infrastructure as part of the rural revitalization program. It is building 628 'well-off villages' in the border areas—427 first-line and 207 second-line villages, with a plan to move 62,000 border residents and has allocated $4.6 billion to the initiative to be completed by 2022 end (Desai 2022). To strengthen this, it also enacted 'Land Border Law' in 2021 ("Land Borders Law" n.d.). According to the Article 10 of the law, it states that

'The state shall ... promote the action of strengthening the border and enriching the people of the border, improve the level of border public services and infrastructure construction, improve the production and living conditions of the border, and encourage and support border residents in Border production and life, and promote the coordinated development of border defense construction and border economy and society' (Advocatetanmoy Law Library 2021).

Climate Change policies and practices enacted by China manifest very differently than India due to their different political and governance systems. China is a unitary system where the power is concentrated at the center and has the supreme authority. The central environmental agency still dominates over the provincial environmental agency with the *tiao-kuai* model, which spans vertically and horizontally to decentralize governance, giving it more power (Yi and Cao 2023). Under the label of progressive environmental steps like 'environmental conservation, climate change adaptation, and mitigation,' China has systematically undertaken mass human rights violations, conveniently ignoring the consequences of its infrastructure development in Tibet (International Campaign for Tibet 2020). Ecological migration is one example under which 'involuntary resettlement of people, almost exclusively rural people and ethnic minorities, as part of state-directed efforts to conserve or restore land' has occurred in Tibet (Rodenbiker 2023). Following this trend in 2021, a law was passed to protect the ecology of Qinghai Tibet to increase its hold (The Global Times, 2021a). Rodenbiker (2023) argues that state institutions like Municipal corporations use the ecology to 'consolidate power over rural land and housing', later delegating it to state 'organizations', which he calls '*ecological territorialization.*' At the same time, the state welcomes operating mines in the sensitive region which it seeks to protect (Lafitte 2013). In 2023, China passed a 'Qinghai-Tibet Plateau Ecological Conservation Law' further adding to a series of laws (NPC Observer n.d.). However, Article 33 and 34 of the law exempts the mining industry from going soft on state organizations (Luo 2023). Article 38 states that 'Major engineering construction should avoid important habitats for wild animals, migration and migration routes, and natural concentrated distribution areas of nationally protected wild plants; If it is impossible to avoid it, measures such as building wildlife passages and ex situ protection should be taken to avoid or reduce the impact on natural ecosystems and wildlife' showing how state gives priority to the core interests rather than periphery (Wang 2023). These laws are part of many environmental laws, such as 'Yangtze River Protection Law, the Yellow River Protection Law, and the Black Soil Protection Law' (People's daily online 2023). The 1+N+4 environmental law system is completed (Mengnan 2023).

CONCLUSION

We are seeing a classic case of the Security Dilemma, where India, after feeling threatened by China's infrastructure near LAC, started focusing on strengthening its infrastructure capacity, such as bridges, roads, and military infrastructure. This seems to have threatened Beijing, which is insecure about increasing threats from the East, South, and Western commands amidst the rising geopolitical tensions with US and Japan. It has further sent reinforcement and modernized its military for future possibilities. This has accelerated Militarization and Counter militarization, a by-product of the security dilemma. However, in the India-China context, this becomes more critical due to their size, the area of conflict, and the implications it will have on the environmental security of India, particularly in the Western sector, which is one of the most eco-sensitive zones in the world. It is essential to recognize that Military Institutions are security actors, and their primary responsibility is to protect their nation/state rather than environmental security (Jorgenson et al., 2010). The securitising actions that have manifested through the incremental militarization of the border between India and China have consequences on regional and national environmental security.

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