

GLIMMER OF HOPE: ON INDIA-CHINA FIVE-POINT CONSENSUS

India and China have taken the first step to begin real disengagement at the border

The “five-point consensus” reached by the Foreign Ministers of India and China in Moscow on Thursday provides a glimmer of hope of a diplomatic solution, while thousands of troops from both countries remain deployed along the border. It is, however, only a glimmer. Each point, outlined in a joint statement, has been affirmed previously by the two neighbours, both in past boundary agreements and in talks held since June that have failed to de-escalate tensions. The LAC remains tense, facing its worst crisis since 1962. Both sides have agreed to take guidance from previous understandings, including on “not allowing differences to become disputes”, a formulation of 2017 that has not lived up to its promise. They agreed the current situation suits neither side, troops should quickly disengage, maintain proper distance, and ease tensions. Both sides said they would abide by all existing agreements, continue dialogue, and expedite work on finding confidence building measures to maintain peace.

At the same time, stark differences remain, including on the key question of whether both sides will return to the status quo ante prior to China’s transgressions. The issuing of the joint statement was somewhat unusually accompanied by separate press statements, which struck discordant notes on key issues. India stressed that peace on the boundary was essential for ties, and that recent incidents had impacted the broader relationship. The Chinese statement, on the other hand, sought to emphasise the importance of “moving the relationship in the right direction” and to put the border “in a proper context”. China’s statement also quoted India’s Foreign Minister as saying India believed China’s policy toward India had not changed and that it did not consider relations to be dependent on the settlement of the boundary question. This characterisation of India’s stand was a sharp contrast from Delhi’s recent public statements, which have emphasised border peace as a prerequisite to taking forward the broader relationship. Moreover, a day before the talks, China’s official news agency issued a commentary placing the onus entirely on India to defuse tensions, accusing India of “reckless provocations”, telling India “to learn from history”, and reiterating that China “will not lose an inch of territory”. It is welcome that India and China have finally found something to agree on. Thursday’s consensus, however, is only the first step of a long road ahead. The continuing rounds of talks should be aimed sincerely at disengagement, and not at presenting a veneer of diplomatic engagement even while China strengthens its hold along the LAC. India will need to verify before it can trust each of China’s steps from now on.

Meanings of Difficult Words:

- ❖ **glimmer** (noun) – (a faint) sign, trace/ray, hint (of light/hope).
- ❖ **consensus** (noun) – an idea or opinion that is shared by all the people in a group, agreement, concurrence.
- ❖ **disengagement** (noun) – withdrawal, departure, retreat (of military troops from an area of conflict).
- ❖ **diplomatic** (adjective) – (delicate & sensitive) consular, foreign-policy.
- ❖ **deploy** (verb) – move (military troops) into position for military action.
- ❖ **outline** (verb) – indicate, summarize, draft, sketch out.
- ❖ **affirm** (verb) – confirm, ratify, endorse, uphold.
- ❖ **neighbour** (noun) – adjacent/bordering country.
- ❖ **de-escalate** (verb) – diminish, lessen/ decrease, dwindle (the intensity of a conflict).
- ❖ **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** (noun) – the de-facto (effective) border between India and China. The LAC is a 4,057-km border running through three areas-Western (Ladakh, Ladakh (Kashmir)), middle (Uttarakhand, Himachal) and eastern (Sikkim, Arunachal).
- ❖ **tense** (adjective) – agitated, disturbed, panicky, in a state of agitation.
- ❖ **understanding** (noun) – agreement, settlement, deal/treaty.
- ❖ **difference** (noun) – disagreement, difference of opinion, misunderstanding.
- ❖ **formulation** (noun) – creation, origination, arrangement.
- ❖ **live up to** (phrasal verb) – satisfy, fulfil, achieve.

- ❖ **suit** (verb) – meet the requirements of, satisfy the demands, be acceptable.
- ❖ **disengage** (verb) – withdraw, pull out, leave, move out, retreat.
- ❖ **ease** (verb) – mitigate, soften, tone down, lessen, reduce.
- ❖ **abide by** (verb) – conform to, adhere to, comply with.
- ❖ **expedite** (verb) – accelerate, hasten, speed up, quicken.
- ❖ **confidence building measures/mechanisms** (noun) – confidence-building measures (CBMs) are planned procedures to prevent hostilities, to avert escalation, to reduce military tension, and to build mutual trust between countries.
- ❖ **stark** (adjective) – clear, distinct, evident, obvious, striking.
- ❖ **status quo ante** (phrase) – a Latin phrase meaning “the state of affairs existing before” (or) “the way things were before”.
- ❖ **transgression** (noun) – infringement, contravention, breach, violation.
- ❖ **accompany** (verb) – occur with, be present with, coincide with, coexist with.
- ❖ **strike a discordant note** (phrase) – express/communicate something conflicting/contrasting/ different/ opposite things.
- ❖ **discordant** (adjective) – contradictory, contrary, conflicting, opposite, opposing, clashing.
- ❖ **stress** (verb) – emphasize, draw attention to, highlight.
- ❖ **ties** (noun) – bond, association, relationship.
- ❖ **seek** (verb) – try, aim, attempt.
- ❖ **emphasise** (verb) – draw attention to, put stress on, underscore, highlight.
- ❖ **context** (noun) – circumstances, conditions, situation.
- ❖ **characterisation** (noun) – a description of the distinctive features of something.
- ❖ **stand** (noun) – posture, viewpoint, standpoint.
- ❖ **contrast** (verb) – differ from, be at variance with, be contrary to, go against.
- ❖ **prerequisite** (noun) – necessary condition, essential, requirement.
- ❖ **take forward** (phrasal verb) – deal with, cope with, tackle, address.
- ❖ **moreover** (adverb) – besides, furthermore, in addition.
- ❖ **commentary** (noun) – report, account, narration, explanation.
- ❖ **onus** (noun) – responsibility, duty.
- ❖ **defuse** (verb) – reduce, lessen/diminish, ease/mitigate.
- ❖ **reckless** (adjective) – careless, thoughtless, incautious/heedless.
- ❖ **provocation** (noun) – stirring, goading, instigation, agitation.
- ❖ **reiterate** (verb) – repeat, say again, restate.
- ❖ **road ahead** (phrase) – future.
- ❖ **veneer** (noun) – (outward) impression, image, posture.
- ❖ **engagement** (noun) – participation, taking part, involvement.
- ❖ **strengthen** (verb) – increase, intensify, heighten.
- ❖ **hold** (noun) – power, control, influence, authority.
- ❖ **from now on** (phrase) – henceforth, from this day on, from this time on, from this moment forth, from now and in the future.

PUSHBACK: ON U.S. REVOKING VISA TO CHINESE STUDENTS

Chinese students are caught in a broad-brush U.S. response to espionage

The Trump administration has revoked visas for more than 1,000 Chinese citizens, mainly students and researchers, deemed to be risks to national security owing to their alleged connections to Chinese military establishments and concern over industrial espionage. The White House’s latest policy action has been housed under Mr. Trump’s May 29 announcement responding to China’s curbs on democracy in Hong Kong. Among the reasons stated was the intention to block the entry of persons associated with slave labour, thought to be a reference to alleged rights violations of China’s Uighur Muslims. According to the Department of Homeland Security, the revocation is also targeting those who might engage in unjust business practices or attempt to steal coronavirus research, and, more broadly, abuse their student visa status to exploit the intellectual property of academia. This visa policy comes after measures that have tightened the screws on the U.S. immigration system, including halting the issuance of green cards and skilled worker visas and challenging the issuance of

student visas for college programmes that have migrated entirely to online mode due to the pandemic. However, in the prior cases of visa issuance bans, the nationals of a single country were not targeted in the way that Chinese citizens have been under this week's visa revocation.

The deeper context of this spat is the cycle of hostile tit-for-tat exchanges between Washington and Beijing, principally tariff wars in the realm of trade, but extending to human rights and China's COVID-19 response. On the one hand the Trump administration might have overreached in this broad-brush policy, perhaps sweeping up innocent researchers with no more than nominal association with a government-affiliated academic entity in China. However, it is more than likely, given the successive industrial espionage incidents that have been prosecuted by the U.S., that potential spies or saboteurs are facing removal proceedings too. Ultimately, countries such as China and Russia, which have arguably sought to interfere in the U.S.'s domestic affairs, could be facing a blowback. However, given the pressure-cooker conditions in U.S. politics due to an imminent election, there is a strong likelihood of a heavy-handed response to any further suspicions of foreign interference, especially because such a response would be of considerable campaign value to the incumbent. If Mr. Trump remains in the Oval Office, he will doubtless persist with his friendly approach toward Moscow, while seeking to keep Beijing on the back foot. The policies of his Democratic rival, Joe Biden, are expected to be the reverse to an extent, although Chinese President Xi Jinping would be unwise to anticipate a quick thaw in frosty bilateral ties in that case too. Either way, China's economic aggression will continue to face pushback from a wounded and angry America.

Meanings of Difficult Words:

- ❖ **pushback** (noun) – resistance, opposition, disagreement, force back, repulse drive.
- ❖ **revoke** (verb) – cancel, repeal/reverse, abrogate, nullify.
- ❖ **broad-brush** (adjective) – lacking in detail, incomplete, insufficient.
- ❖ **espionage** (noun) – the act of spying; obtaining secret or confidential (political or military) information of a country and/or disclosing it without the permission of that country; undercover work, infiltration, counter-intelligence.
- ❖ **deem** (verb) – regard as, consider; view as.
- ❖ **owing to** (phrase) – because of, as a result of, on account of.
- ❖ **alleged** (adjective) – supposed, reported, purported, unproven.
- ❖ **establishment** (noun) – organization, bureau, agency.
- ❖ **house** (verb) – contain, cover; protect, enclose, encase.
- ❖ **curb** (noun) – restraint, control/check, restriction, limitation.
- ❖ **intention** (noun) – aim, purpose, objective.
- ❖ **block** (verb) – deter, check, obstruct/restrict.
- ❖ **slave labour** (noun) – work that is done by slaves without pay or slaves who work without payment.
- ❖ **reference** (noun) – mention of, comment on, remark about.
- ❖ **revocation** (noun) – cancellation, abandonment, calling off/recall.
- ❖ **unjust** (adjective) – biased, prejudiced, inequitable.
- ❖ **broadly** (adverb) – generally, usually, mainly.
- ❖ **exploit** (verb) – take advantage of, make use of, utilize.
- ❖ **intellectual property** (noun) – a category of property that includes intangible creations of the human intellect. The most well-known types are copyrights, patents, trademarks and trade secrets.
- ❖ **academia** (noun) – the community related to the education, research, etc.
- ❖ **measure** (noun) – course of action, action, procedure.
- ❖ **tighten the screws** (phrase) – to apply more pressure on someone/something.
- ❖ **immigration** (noun) – the act of leaving one's countries and moving to another country of which they are not natives, nor citizens, to settle or reside there, especially as permanent residents or naturalized citizens.
- ❖ **issuance** (noun) – an act of issuing/providing something.
- ❖ **green card** (noun) – it is officially known as a "Permanent Resident Card" and it allows a person to live and work permanently in the United States.
- ❖ **migrate** (verb) – change.

- ❖ **pandemic** (noun) – the worldwide spread of a new disease; The illness spreads around the world and typically affects a large number of people across a wide area.
- ❖ **ban** (noun) – prohibition, bar, stoppage.
- ❖ **context** (noun) – circumstances, conditions, situation.
- ❖ **spat** (noun) – quarrel, scuffle, tussle, fight, clash.
- ❖ **hostile** (adjective) – opposed, inimical, averse, ill-disposed.
- ❖ **tit-for-tat** (phrase) – equivalent retaliation; counterattack, revenge, an eye for an eye.
- ❖ **trade/tariff war** (noun) – a condition in which a country increase tariffs on foreign goods and impose quota restrictions to restrict other countries' trade.
- ❖ **realm** (noun) – area, field, domain (of activity).
- ❖ **overreach** (verb) – try to do too much, overdo it, try to be too smart.
- ❖ **perhaps** (adverb) – maybe, possibly.
- ❖ **sweep up** (phrasal verb) – remove, clean, scrub, wipe.
- ❖ **government-affiliated** (adjective) – officially connected to the government.
- ❖ **given** (preposition) – considering, taking into account, bearing in mind.
- ❖ **successive** (adjective) – consecutive, succeeding.
- ❖ **prosecute** (verb) – take to court, institute legal action against, charge with, accuse of.
- ❖ **potential** (adjective) – possible, likely, probable.
- ❖ **spy** (noun) – secret agent.
- ❖ **saboteur** (noun) – a person who engages in sabotage (damage or destroy something deliberately).
- ❖ **proceedings** (noun) – a series of activities.
- ❖ **ultimately** (adverb) – eventually, in the end, finally.
- ❖ **arguably** (adverb) – possibly, conceivably, maybe, potentially.
- ❖ **seek** (verb) – try, attempt, aim.
- ❖ **interfere** (verb) – handle, meddle, intervene (unwantedly).
- ❖ **affairs** (noun) – concerns, matters, activities.
- ❖ **blowback** (noun) – unexpected (bad & harmful) outcomes; negative consequences/ results/reactions of an action or decision (particularly, of a political action).
- ❖ **pressure-cooker** (noun) – very stressful situation.
- ❖ **imminent** (adjective) – close/near, about to happen, approaching/impending.
- ❖ **likelihood** (noun) – probability, chance, possibility.
- ❖ **heavy-handed** (adjective) – oppressive, overbearing, highhanded, harsh.
- ❖ **suspicion** (noun) – misgiving, doubt/qualm, distrust, scepticism.
- ❖ **interference** (noun) – intervention, meddling, unwarranted involvement.
- ❖ **considerable** (adjective) – sizeable, significant, substantial; much.
- ❖ **incumbent** (noun) – the current/present holder/occupant of an office.
- ❖ **Oval office** (noun) – the office of the president of the United States, located in the White House, Washington.
- ❖ **doubtless** (adverb) – undoubtedly, definitely/surely, doubtlessly, without doubt.
- ❖ **persist** (verb) – continue, carry on, remain.
- ❖ **on the back foot** (phrase) – in a defensive position, off balance, at a disadvantage.
- ❖ **rival** (noun) – opponent, adversary, contender, competitor.
- ❖ **the reverse** (noun) – opposite, contrary, converse, counter.
- ❖ **unwise** (adjective) – injudicious, ill-advised, ill-considered.
- ❖ **anticipate** (verb) – expect, foresee, predict.
- ❖ **thaw** (noun) – an increase in friendliness.
- ❖ **frosty** (adjective) – unfriendly, inhospitable/unwelcoming, hostile.
- ❖ **bilateral** (adjective) – involving two groups or countries.
- ❖ **ties** (noun) – bond, association, relationship.
- ❖ **aggression** (noun) – hostility, belligerence, combativeness, warmongering, hawkishness.
- ❖ **wounded** (adjective) – injured.