
Adithi Sanjay

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About the Author

Adithi Sanjay (Class of 2021) is a senior at GU-Q majoring in International Politics. She spent two years at Georgetown University’s Washington, DC campus, where she was part of the Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, GU India Ink, Zeeba Investment Group, and Georgetown Global Consulting. Adithi has a particular interest in regional security architecture, border tensions in South Asia, as well as India’s foreign policy strategy in the context of both contemporary security issues and the nation’s diplomatic history.

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Introduction

Between 1950 and the present day, Sino–Indian diplomatic relations have been through significant ebbs and flows. In the years following India's independence from British colonialism in 1947, the phrase “Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai” (India and China are brothers) was often used to describe the relationship between the two nations. India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, romanticized and admired China, claiming that India and China were “two great Asian civilizations” that would forge a common destiny. From a strategic perspective, Nehru believed that the cultivation of strong ties with China would best serve Indian national security interests, given that Tibet was under heavy Chinese influence and could not effectively serve as a geostrategic buffer between India and China.

Despite efforts to maintain friendly Sino-Indian relations in India’s early years as an independent nation, a general sense of apprehension, rooted in the unresolved Indo-China border issue, was exacerbated in the late 1950s.

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* An earlier version of this paper was originally submitted by the author as an assignment for the Krogh Honors Seminar at the Edmund E. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University in Washington, DC.


2 Sikri, “The Tibet Factor in India-China Relations,” 57.

with more frequent Chinese incursions into Indian territory. For example, in a note given to the Chinese Charge d’Affaires on September 9, 1956, India reported that Chinese troops crossed the Shipki La mountain pass into Indian territory and threatened to use grenades against the Indian Border Police forces. Furthermore, in 1957, China constructed a road connecting Tibet and Xinjiang in the Aksai Chin region; this road passed through the Yanggpa, Khitai Dawan, and Haji Langer areas in Indian-controlled Ladakh. The infrastructure project significantly heightened the existing sense of distrust of China among segments of the Indian population, as it was perceived as a threat to India’s territorial sovereignty. Additionally, new political maps published by China in the 1950s also threatened Indian sovereignty. They highlighted China’s efforts to tighten its grip on Tibet as the state claimed large swaths of territory in the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA), in present-day Arunachal Pradesh.

Over the decades, Sino–Indian relations underwent several transformations, and these shifts have affected the ways in which China is perceived by regional and national political parties, as well as the public, in India. This paper presents a case study of the mobilization of anti-China sentiment in India by constructing and analyzing a unique dataset on the issues driving anti-China protests in India, based on reports in national- and regional-level Indian newspaper articles published between 2012 and 2018. This period was chosen primarily because it covers the leadership of two Indian prime ministers, Manmohan Singh and Narendra Modi; is characterized by fluctuations in the Sino–Indian relationship; and saw two major military standoffs at the Indo–China border in 2013 and 2017 that were triggered by escalations in unresolved territorial disputes between the two nations.

In 2017, the Pew Global Attitudes Survey reported that only 26 percent of Indians viewed China as “favorable,” while 56 percent saw China’s growing military strength as bad for India. Additionally, 51 percent of Indians felt China’s growing economic strength was bad for India, and 44 percent named China’s power and influence as a top threat. The same year, the BBC World Public Opinion survey concluded that only 19 percent of Indians viewed Chinese influence as mainly positive. Existing data on anti-China sentiment in India, such as the Pew and BBC surveys, has been reported at the national-level only, which communicates anti-China sentiment in India in extremely broad terms. This generalization makes it difficult to analyze the different drivers of anti-China sentiment among various interest groups in India, such as political civil society, non-political civil society, and the Indian government. Given that each of these three stakeholder groups has different economic, political, and social interests vis-à-vis China, it is important to analyze potential variations in anti-China sentiment among these groups in order to understand the drivers of any identifiable divergences in their respective opinions.

Understanding the dynamics of anti-China sentiment in India is particularly important due to the salience of China-related issues in domestic Indian politics, and their implications for cooperation between India and China on economic, sociocultural, and political bases. Given India’s large population of 1.3 billion, as well as the diversity of social, cultural, and economic exchanges and interactions between China and different subgroups across various regions of India, the generalization of anti-China sentiment at the national level is problematic in that it glosses over the nuances of the issues driving public opinion of China in India.

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5 Ibid., 26.

Furthermore, survey data published by organizations such as the Pew Research Center plays an influential role in shaping global narratives and informing policy decisions at the national level; therefore, it is crucial that the nuances of issues such as anti-China sentiment are analyzed in detail. The objective of this study is to fill this gap by conducting an analysis of factors that yield insights into the mobilization of anti-China sentiment by three different stakeholder groups in India: non-political civil society organizations, political parties and affiliated organizations, and the Indian central government.

This paper begins by outlining the historical progression of Sino–Indian ties to provide context for the main issues driving anti-China sentiment in India today, followed by the methodology and research design used in the study. This investigation found that six major issues led the aforementioned three interest groups to mobilize anti-China sentiment: 1) border tensions, 2) economic tensions, 3) religious tensions, 4) historical and current oppression of Tibetans, 5) Chinese support for Pakistan, and 6) visits by Chinese ministers to India. This paper argues that levels of anti-China sentiment mobilization were dependent on the relative salience of each issue to the advancement of each group’s interests. Finally, this paper raises the implications of the findings regarding anti-China sentiment in India for the Sino–Indian relationship. It is important to note that the scope of this paper is limited to a micro-level analysis focused on the creation and mobilization of anti-China sentiment among three stakeholder interest groups within Indian society—non-political civil society organizations, political parties and affiliated organizations, and the Indian central government—and does not aim to generalize the prevalence of anti-China sentiment across the general population as a whole.

A Brief History of Sino–Indian Relations

The first major inflection point in Sino–Indian relations came in 1959 during the Lhasa uprising in Tibet. Chinese agricultural collectivization efforts, implemented as part of Chairman Mao Zedong’s Great Leap Forward campaign, resulted in large-scale rebellions in Kham and Amdo, two of the three regions of Tibet. Large-scale destruction of monasteries and the murder of monks by Chinese authorities led to an eruption of violence and caused thousands of individuals to flee into central Tibet and India. Due in part to strong sympathy for the plight of Tibetans by the Indian public, the Indian government granted asylum to 120,000 Tibetan refugees and to the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. This decision has been a point of contention in Sino–Indian relations, as China has remained wary of India’s ability to leverage its Tibetan refugee population to stoke instability and unrest in Tibet—now considered an autonomous region of China.

In October 1962, tensions surrounding the territorial dispute between India and China escalated significantly. China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA), the armed forces of the People’s Republic of China and the Communist Party of China, invaded India on two fronts: one was the Aksai Chin region—claimed by India as Jammu and Kashmir and claimed by China as part of Xinjiang province—and the other was the NEFA region, claimed as Arunachal Pradesh by India and claimed as South Tibet by China. China’s incursions marked the beginning of the Sino–Indian War, which continued for approximately one month, after which the Chinese military prevailed and a ceasefire was declared. The war represented a new low in Sino–
Indian relations and resulted in an augmentation of the Indian government’s support of exiled Tibetans who sought asylum in India.\textsuperscript{13}

One of the most important consequences of the war was the strengthening of Sino–Pakistan ties. This development was perceived as a significant threat to Indian sovereignty, given that China’s cultivation of a stronger relationship with Pakistan was a means of “block[ing] Indian ambitions in the region and counter[ing] Soviet and US influence.”\textsuperscript{14} The Sino–Pakistan relationship has endured to this day and remains a point of contention between India and China. Further issues that have contributed to unfavorable views of China by Indians include the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and—until its coalescence in March 2019—China’s efforts to stonewall India in its attempts to list Masood Azhar, leader of the Pakistani Islamic jihadist organization Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), as a global terrorist.\textsuperscript{15}

Perhaps the most significant, lasting consequence of the 1962 Sino–Indian War, however, was that a “festering wound [was] left on India’s security psyche,” as the conflict brought a “radical change in Indian perceptions of China.”\textsuperscript{16} Specifically, the humiliation associated with India’s loss during the war was internalized in the collective and institutional memories of the Indian population. Notably, the territorial disputes that prompted an escalation in Sino–Indian bilateral tensions and sparked the 1962 war remain unresolved. China continues to claim approximately 92,000 sq. km of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh as part of Tibet, and India still claims 40,000 sq. km of the Chinese-controlled Aksai Chin territory as part of Jammu and Kashmir.\textsuperscript{17} As such, there still exists a great deal of distrust between the two nations, and a general sense of wariness regarding potential Chinese aggression continues to permeate certain segments of Indian society to different degrees, as will be discussed in this paper.

\textbf{Data and Method}

In order to analyze the creation and mobilization of anti-China sentiment by the three different subgroups in India, this study examines a unique dataset compiled using Factiva, the Dow Jones global news monitoring and aggregation database, to identify and collect news reports of anti-China protests at city and state levels across India between January 2012 and December 2018. Examples of news articles analyzed in this study include “Muslims protest against China’s ban on Ramadan fasting,” published in the \textit{Business Standard} in 2016; “BJP protests against China’s renaming of Arunachal places,” in \textit{The Times of India} in 2017; and “Candlelight procession against China’s aggressive policy,” in \textit{The Sentinel} in 2017. The search terms “re=india AND (protest OR strike OR resist OR oppose OR sit-in OR demonstration) and (anti-China OR against China)” were used within Factiva; the search included all 33,000 news sources offered by the database and yielded 2,223 results. Figure 1 contains the list of regional, national, and international newspapers used to compile the unique dataset referenced in this study. Katrin Uba adopted a similar approach to analyze patterns of protests against privatization at the national and state levels in India between 1991 and 2003.\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Sikri, “The Tibet Factor in India-China Relations,” 62.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 250.
\end{itemize}
Protest Event Analysis

Protest Event Analysis (PEA) was identified as the most appropriate framework of analysis, given that it is primarily used to analyze social movements. As discussed by Koopmans and Dieter, PEA can provide a “detailed map of the occurrence and patterns of large numbers of protest events that can be analyzed in their own right,” but can also be used for linking protests to other structures and developments, such as highs and lows in the Sino–Indian relationship over time. The unit of analysis of this study is an Anti-China Protest Event (ACPE). Based on the Fillieule and Jiménez operational definition of Environment Protest Events (EPEs) in Europe, protests reported in newspaper articles were classified as ACPEs if they were: 1) a call to action, 2) activities that express societal and/or political anti-China related concerns or demands, 3) incidents that took place in a physical public space, and 4) initially instigated by non-state activists in a collective manner.

PEA identified 78 ACPEs in India between 2012 and 2018. Each of those news articles was coded for key variables including the date of the ACPE, the city and state in which the event occurred, and the specific issues that were the focus of the ACPE. Figure 2 provides a full delineation of the coding scheme used in the study. Specifically, the analysis focused on the six major drivers of anti-China sentiment that emerged as recurring themes across the ACPEs: anti-China sentiment: 1) border tensions, 2) economic tensions, 3) religious tensions, 4) historical and current oppression of Tibetans, 5) Chinese support for Pakistan, and 6) visits by Chinese ministers to India. However, it is important to note that these variables are not mutually exclusive; i.e., a single ACPE could be driven by both border tensions and economic tensions.

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Limitations of the Study

Although the Dow Jones Factiva database includes over 30,000 different news sources, reliance on only one database may have limited this study’s access to other regional and non-English news sources in which additional ACPEs in India were reported. Furthermore, as noted by Koopmans and Rucht, with the use of media-based protest data come description bias, qualitative source bias, and selection bias, given that “the probability of press coverage is the function of protest size,” and protests that are not reported in the media are considered “non-existent.” Therefore, further research could involve the triangulation of data collected in this study with other sources, such as police reports, to ensure that smaller-scale ACPEs that would otherwise go unnoticed by the media could also be analyzed.

Additionally, although a data-driven approach was applied to the analysis of ACPEs between 2012 and 2018 in this study, it must be acknowledged that the conclusions drawn from this micro-level analysis cannot be generalized to represent the prevalence or characteristics of anti-China sentiment among the entire Indian population. This paper aims to yield insights into the analysis of anti-China sentiment in India by focusing on the creation and mobilization of anti-China sentiment among the three prominent subgroups within different states and administrative regions of the country.

Research Findings

Aggregate APCE Observations (2012–2018)

The annual frequency of ACPEs during 2012–2018 (see Figure 3), suggests that while there is no aggregate trend showing a gradual, continuous increase or decrease in anti-China sentiment, the years with the highest number of

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recorded ACPEs were those with a significant escalation in military tensions at the Indo–China border. The high frequency of ACPEs in 2013 reflects the Daulat Beg Oldi incident, when Chinese troops encroached 19km into the Indian side of the Aksai Chin–Ladakh Line of Actual Control (LAC). Following that Chinese incursion, the two nations engaged in a three-week military standoff at the Doklam Plateau, which is located at a trijunct between China, Bhutan, and the Indian state of Sikkim (see Figure 4).

A high number of protests in 2017 is reflective of a second Doklam standoff after the PLA “entered the Doklam area and attempted to construct a road” on June 16 that year. China’s road construction in Doklam was a strategic concern to India, given that such an infrastructure project would allow China easy access to the Siliguri Corridor, a narrow passage that connects India’s northeastern states to the rest of India. It is important to note that official visits by Chinese ministers to India also resulted in an elevation in the number of ACPEs recorded in a given year, even during times of relative peace at the Indo–China border. In 2012, despite the relative calm at the border, a high number of protests were precipitated by the visit of a Chinese delegation to New Delhi for the Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) Summit, an annual conference convening the heads of state of these countries. In 2016, India hosted the BRICS Summit in Goa, which again stoked protests against the Chinese delegation, and partially explains the elevated number of ACPEs that year, despite moderate Sino–Indian border relations.

Figure 5 shows that 67.95 percent of total ACPEs identified in news stories were related to the issue of Tibet, and 55.13 percent were related to military tensions at the Indo–China border. Thus, it is clear that anti-China sentiment in India is in large part driven by the view that China represents a threat to Indian territorial sovereignty. As will be discussed in more detail below, political parties and their affiliates as well as the Indian government have expressed great concern over this issue. Official visits by Chinese ministers to India represented an important driver of aggregate anti-China sentiment between 2012 and 2018, accounting for 25.64 percent of total ACPEs. Another non-national security-related driver of anti-China sentiment was the visit of Chinese delegations to India.

Figure 3: Anti-China Protest Event (ACPE) Occurrences by Year (2012–2018)

Source: ACPE dataset compiled by the author, using the Factiva database.


sentiment was religious tensions, which accounted for 23.08 percent of total ACPEs. Considering India’s large Buddhist and Muslim populations, anti-China protests driven by religious tensions largely aimed to express criticism of either China’s treatment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang province, or restrictions by the Chinese government limiting the ability of Tibetan Buddhists to freely practice their religion.

In 2017, China’s decision to suspend India’s access to the Nathu La pass was a source of ACPEs driven by religious concerns, as it prevented Indians from completing the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra religious pilgrimage to Mount Kailash in Tibet, which Hindus believe to be the birthplace of Lord Shiva. Economic tensions only represented 17.95 percent of total ACPEs identified, suggesting that, from the perspective of some sections of the Indian public, the threat of Chinese economic power is not as salient an issue as the growing threat of Chinese military strength.

Figure 4: Map of the Doklam Plateau


Figure 5: ACPE Occurrences by Issue (2012–2018)

Source: ACPE dataset compiled by the author, using the Factiva database.

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**Geographic Distribution of ACPEs**

India is divided into six administrative zones, as outlined in Figure 6, and this study found that 56.4 percent of all ACPEs in the years under investigation occurred in the Northern Zonal Council (see Figure 7). The high frequency of protests in the Northern Zonal Council is likely because the states and union territories within this administrative zone are proximate to the Indo–China border and the disputed Aksai Chin territory. Furthermore, India’s capital, New Delhi, is part of the Northern Zonal Council, which explains the high frequency of protests in the region, as will be discussed in the following section.

The Central and Western Zonal Councils accounted for 14.1 percent and 11.5 percent of total ACPEs, respectively, reflecting a moderate level of anti-China sentiment. On the other hand, aggregate anti-China sentiment appears to be much lower in the Northeastern and Eastern Zonal Councils, as these zones each represented only 6.5 percent of total ACPEs. Of all six zones, anti-China sentiment appears to be the lowest in the Southern Zonal Council, which accounted for only 5.1 percent of total ACPEs identified. As discussed below, anti-China sentiment is a common feature of Hindu nationalist party agendas. Thus, one possible explanation for a lower frequency of ACPEs in the Southern Zonal Council is a relatively lower permeation of Hindu nationalist parties in comparison to states in the Northern Zonal Council, particularly notable prior to 2014, when Prime Minister Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party won an overwhelming majority in the Lok Sabha elections. A second possible explanation for a relative absence of ACPEs in the Southern Zonal Council is that they are the most geographically distant from the India–China border and therefore do not feel as direct a threat from China, in comparison to states located in the Northern Zonal Council of India.

**Figure 6: Composition of India’s Six Administrative Zones**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zonal Council</th>
<th>States and Union Territories</th>
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<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Haryana</td>
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<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
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<td>National Capital Territory of Delhi</td>
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<td>Union Territory of Chandigarh</td>
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<td>Central</td>
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<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
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<td>Southern</td>
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<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
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<td>Union Territory of Puducherry</td>
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<td>Meghalaya</td>
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<td>Nagaland</td>
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</table>

An analysis of the distribution of total ACPEs across India's 29 states and 7 union territories (see Figure 8), demonstrates that New Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, and Himachal Pradesh had the highest ACPE occurrences, with 35.9 percent, 10.26 percent, and 8.97 percent, respectively, of total ACPEs identified. Further examination of the ACPEs that occurred in New Delhi (see Figure 9), showed that of the 28 ACPEs recorded in the union territory, the issue of Tibet was the most frequent focus of the protests, though border tensions and Chinese ministers’ visits were also salient. New Delhi was the site of large numbers of ACPEs for two main reasons. First, the Chinese embassy in India is located in New Delhi, and reports of the protests noted that leadership of non-political civil society groups, such as the Tibetan Youth Congress, organized travel to the capital from across India to stage protests outside of the embassy. Second, Chinese ministers visited New Delhi far more frequently than they did other Indian states, given that it is India’s seat of government. These official ministerial visits often triggered protests outside the ministers’ hotels or meeting places.
In Jammu and Kashmir, ACPEs were most likely to be in response to rising tensions at the India–China border (see Figure 10) because the Aksai Chin territory, disputed between India and China, is in the easternmost part of the state. Figure 11 depicts the Aksai Chin territory, as well as the Aksai Chin–Ladakh LAC demarcation line that divides the Indian-controlled and Chinese-controlled portions of the disputed territory.

In Himachal Pradesh, ACPEs were most frequently held in response to the issue of Tibet and, to a lesser extent, religious and border tensions (see Figure 12). It is estimated that approximately 75 percent of Tibetan refugees in India reside in the official Tibetan settlements located in twelve Indian states. The issue of Tibet is likely more pronounced in Himachal Pradesh than in New Delhi or Jammu and Kashmir because that state has historically had a larger concentration of Tibetan refugee settlements.26

Figure 9: ACPE Occurrences in New Delhi, by Issue

Figure 10: ACPEs in Jammu and Kashmir, by Issue

Source: ACPE dataset compiled by the author, using the Factiva database.

Source: ACPE dataset compiled by the author, using the Factiva database.

Variances in Incentives and Involvement: Three Stakeholders

The following analysis of ACPEs focuses on the involvement of three major stakeholder interest groups in the creation and mobilization of anti-China sentiment in India: 1) non-political civil society, comprised of members of the Indian public with no active involvement in official political parties or government; 2) political civil society, comprised of political parties and organizations directly affiliated with them; and 3) the Indian central and state governments, comprised of the judicial, legislative, and executive branches. The three All India Services (AIS); namely, the Indian Police Service (IPS), the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), and the Indian Forest Service (IFS), are part of the third stakeholder group. The Indian government was included as a separate third stakeholder in this analysis because it manages India’s relations with the international community and navigates the fine line between foreign and domestic policy. As such, the extent to which it mobilizes anti-China sentiment is influenced by vested interests that are slightly distinct from political and non-political civil society.


The purpose of distinguishing between political and non-political civil society was to identify which drivers of anti-China sentiment were more salient to political parties than members of the public who were not active in political parties or organizations closely affiliated with them, or the Indian government. An example of a non-political civil society organization analyzed in this study is the Tibetan Youth Congress, a nongovernmental advocacy organization that does not claim religious or political party identification. For comparative purposes, an example of a political civil society organization is the Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar (SCMP), a Nagaland-based organization whose mission is to raise awareness about securing India’s borders. Although SCMP is not a registered political party, it was launched by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at its founding, and its activities in the northeast region of India are closely affiliated with and supported by the BJP.

**Involvement of Non-Political Civil Society**

Of the ACPEs identified, 62.82 percent were led by non-political civil society in the absence of support from or involvement of Indian political parties. Tibet was the issue that most frequently mobilized this interest group to stage ACPEs (see Figure 13). The news reports analyzed suggest that ACPEs held by non-political civil society intended in part to express resentment rooted in historical injustices committed by China with respect to the annexation of Tibet. Thirty-five percent of ACPEs carried out by this group were in response to Chinese ministers’ visits, and 33 percent were concerned with religious tensions, suggesting that another element of anti-China sentiment among non-political civil society is resentment over current social and religious persecution and oppression of Tibetan Buddhists and Uighur Muslims by the Chinese government. Thirty-three percent of ACPEs by non-political civil society were held in response to rising border tensions, representing that for this subgroup of Indian society, anti-China protests were also a means of defending Indian nationalist sentiment and sovereignty. The least salient issues for this group were Chinese support of Pakistan and economic tensions, which represented only 2 percent and 8 percent of ACPEs, respectively.

**Figure 13: ACPEs Carried Out by Non-Political Civil Society**

- Tibet
- Religious tensions
- Pakistan
- Ministers’ visits
- Economic tensions
- Border tensions

Source: ACPE dataset compiled by the author, using the Factiva database.

**Involvement of Political Civil Society**

Of the ACPEs that were either organized or officially endorsed by Indian political parties and their affiliated organizations, 93 percent were in response to rising tensions at the India–China border (see Figure 14). This indicates that the issue of border tensions is of far greater concern to
political civil society than non-political civil society, with respect to anti-
China sentiment. Furthermore, the issues of Tibet, Pakistan, and economic
tensions were also central concerns, each representing 34 percent of ACPEs
officially endorsed by political parties. Notably, the four issues most salient
to political civil society are closely connected to Indian nationalist sentiment
and the defense of Indian sovereignty. This is attributable to the fact that Indian
political parties aim to transcend crosscutting cleavages in Indian society. By
mobilizing anti-China sentiment that is rooted in national security concerns,
the parties are able to strengthen their platforms by popularizing a broad
sense of Indian nationalism based on the notion of China as a proximate
external threat to the nation.

On the other hand, the issues of Chinese ministers’ visits to India and religious
tensions accounted for only 10 percent and 7 percent of ACPEs supported by
political parties, suggesting that these issues are far less salient to anti-China
sentiment in the view of political parties, compared to non-political civil
society groups. Political civil society’s relative lack of interest in mobilizing
anti-China sentiment in response to these issues is because ministerial visits
and religious tensions are less likely to effectively arouse strong nationalist
sentiment in India, as they do not present a proximate threat to its territorial
soverignty or status as a rising power in the international system.

Twelve of the nineteen political parties and politically affiliated organizations
that either supported or were involved in organizing an ACPE had far-right
Hindu nationalist platforms typically built upon the coterminous nature
of Hinduism, Indian national identity, and the physical territory of India.
Specifically, Hindu nationalist organizations are defined in this study as parties
and affiliates linked in some manner to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
(RSS), a right-wing Hindu nationalist paramilitary organization. The BJP was
the party most active in ACPEs, followed by Swadeshi Jagaran Manch (SJM),
Asom Jatiyabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), Jammu West Assembly
Movement (JWAM), and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP).

As depicted in Figure 15, political parties and their affiliates supported
ACPEs most frequently in Jammu and Kashmir and New Delhi. However,
over 90 percent of the total ACPEs involving political parties took place in
states controlled by either the BJP or other RSS-affiliates as of the 2014 Lok
Sabha elections, when the Hindu nationalist BJP party won an overwhelming
majority. The active participation of Hindu nationalist political parties and
their affiliates in ACPEs suggests that anti-China sentiment is a prominent
part of Hindu nationalist party platforms. Specifically, party narratives and
foundational stories are deeply influenced by a sense of ontological insecurity.
vis-à-vis any threats to the “integrity of the Hindu nation.”

China is viewed as a threat to India’s sovereignty and its ability to rise as a great power in the international community; therefore, the mobilization of anti-China sentiment—in response to issues such as Tibet, border tensions, and China’s support of Pakistan—serves as a mechanism by which Hindu nationalist parties can transcend competing sub-regional and ethnolinguistic forms of identity and promote a homogenous notion of Indian nationalism.

As of 2015, the Vidya Bharati Santhsan, which represents the educational wing of the RSS, has set up 40,000 schools across India, with over four million students. At these schools, the RSS circulates booklets depicting maps of India that include Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Tibet, and regions of Myanmar, describing the entire territory as Punya Bhoomi Bharat (Indian Holy Land), which further supports the conclusion that Hindu nationalist parties utilize and co-opt anti-China sentiment as a means of building a narrative based on staunch Indian nationalism. Hutter and Vliegenthart found that political parties and their affiliates, collectively referred to as political civil society in this study, often support social movements as a means of signaling a response to issue-specific demands and grievances expressed by non-political civil society at the grassroots level. Dalton and Kuechler found that this support can influence the electoral success of political parties.

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The interaction between political parties and social movements also appears to move in the opposite direction, as della Porta and Rucht argue that actions taken by institutionalized political parties in response to protests can determine the trajectory of social movements. Therefore, support for ACPEs in India by Hindu nationalist parties and affiliated political organizations is significant, in that it institutionalizes anti-China movements in India. More specifically, it creates a feedback loop in which the support of political parties...
ACPEs by Hindu nationalist parties—either directly or indirectly through affiliated organizations—influences the parties’ performance in elections. Conversely, party endorsement of certain ACPEs or simply leaving anti-China movements to the domain of non-political civil society also plays a large role in determining the degree to which anti-China sentiment is mobilized and institutionalized in non-political civil society across different administrative regions of India.

Involvement of the Indian Government

In this study, the response of the Indian government to ACPEs was measured by whether or not the Indian Police Service (IPS) intervened to suppress protests. As depicted in Figure 16, the Indian government was more likely to take action to suppress an ACPE if it was in response to the issue of Tibet. Given that the Indian central government must navigate relations with other nations on the international stage, it acts based on a different set of interests from those of political and non-political civil society. Specifically, the central government has strong incentives to quell expressions of Tibet-related anti-China sentiment in India, given that Tibet has historically been an inflammatory issue with the potential to damage Sino-Indian ties. For example, following the 2017 Doklam standoff, diplomatic relations with China were extremely fragile. In an effort to repair bilateral ties, the Indian central government banned Tibetan activists from holding anti-China protests to mark the anniversary of the 1959 Lhasa uprising. Two hundred police officers were deployed outside the Chinese embassy, and protesters who disobeyed the ban were detained. It is clear that when ACPEs were held in response to the issue of Tibet, the Indian central government was willing to make a tradeoff and limit freedom of expression in democratic India to signal and firmly express its commitment to the Sino-Indian relationship.

The Indian government was also likely to suppress an ACPE if it was in response to Chinese ministers’ visits to India. In fact, since the early 1990s, it has been common practice for anti-China protests to be “foiled by police during the visit of any Chinese leader.” The Indian government has strong incentives to suppress protests related to this issue in order to avoid antagonizing China and to preserve diplomatic ties. For example, during the 2012 BRICS Summit held in New Delhi, the Chinese government’s Department of Asian Affairs released an official statement applauding the “effective and concrete measures taken by the Indian Government in overcoming disruptions and the disturbances and in ensuring the safe and smooth holding of the (BRICS) summit meeting.” From China’s perspective, the Indian government’s response to ACPEs was construed as a litmus test of India’s commitment to the Sino-Indian relationship.

ACPEs driven by the issues of border tensions, religious tensions, China’s support of Pakistan, and economic tensions were less likely to result in a government response (see Figure 16). This lack of suppression and implicit support for ACPEs is likely because these issues are particularly salient to the advancement of the Indian government’s stakes vis-à-vis China. More specifically, allowing the mobilization of anti-China sentiment in response to Sino-Indian border tensions or China’s support of Pakistan serves to further the central government’s political agenda by strengthening national solidarity across political and non-political civil society in India.

Although it must be noted that the size and level of violence at protests may also determine whether the IPS intervened, only 6 of the 78 ACPEs identified between 2012 and 2018 were categorized as violent, based on Chenoweth

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35 Tibet Justice Center, Tibet’s Stateless Nationals III, 30.

and Stephan’s discussion of nonviolent and violent resistance methods.\textsuperscript{37} Specifically, ACPEs were categorized as nonviolent in this study if methods such as marches, vigils, or walkouts were used; conversely, ACPEs were coded as violent if participants used violent methods of resistance, such as using weapons or throwing objects. Therefore, given that only a small proportion of ACPEs quelled by the Indian government were violent, it can be reaffirmed that influential factors extrinsic to the level of violence, such as a desire to signal a commitment to the Sino–Indian relationship, often prompted government intervention and suppression of ACPEs with a police response.

\textbf{Conclusion}

This study has demonstrated that the creation and mobilization of anti-China sentiment among the three stakeholder groups—non-political civil society, political parties and affiliated organizations, and the Indian central government—between 2012 and 2018 varied in response to different China-related issues, depending on the nature of their vested interests with respect to the Sino–Indian relationship. In other words, each of the six main drivers of anti-China sentiment—border tensions, economic tensions, religious tensions, historical and current oppression of Tibetans, Chinese support for Pakistan, and visits by Chinese ministers to India—had different degrees of salience and relative importance to the three main stakeholders under investigation.

For non-political civil society organizations, such as the Tibetan Youth Congress, Students for a Free Tibet, and the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), ACPEs demonstrated support for Indian nationalist sentiment as well as expressions of bitterness over the historical injustice of China’s annexation of Tibet and resentment of the current oppression of Tibetans in China. For political civil society, ACPEs were a means of augmenting a unifying sense of Indian nationalist sentiment by institutionalizing anti-China sentiment and signaling a response to the grievances expressed by non-political civil society. The issues of Tibet, Sino–Pakistan ties, and economic tensions were drivers of anti-China sentiment that allowed Hindu nationalist parties, in particular, to cut across cleavages and integrate those issues into their right-wing party platforms. For the Indian central government, the mobilization of anti-China sentiment represented a trade-off between the preservation of Sino–Indian relations and the preservation of freedom of expression in democratic India. This study revealed that the government was more likely to suppress ACPEs

when they were in response to the issue of Tibet or Chinese ministers’ official visits to India, as opposed to Sino-Pakistan ties or economic, border, and religious tensions. The Indian central government’s response to ACPEs—defined here as the official actions undertaken by the three branches of government and the three all-India services—were in effect a direct extension of its foreign policy. The Indian government’s decision to either suppress or permit ACPEs signals its priorities and level of commitment to the Sino–Indian relationship. As a result, it is important to note that the Indian government’s stance on the mobilization of anti-China sentiment is relatively fluid and tends to change over time, largely in response to the frequency and significance of any transgressions at the Indo–China border. However, given that the Indian government’s response to ACPEs also has an impact on domestic politics, and opposition parties often criticize the government in power for either being “too soft” or “too hard” on China, the actions of political and non-political civil society also have an influence, albeit indirect, on the Sino–Indian relationship as a whole. As such, the dynamics of anti-China sentiment in India will certainly serve as a crucial determinant of the extent to which India and China cooperate as well as compete and the general nature of Sino–Indian relations in the future.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


The Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS)

Established in 2005, the Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) at Georgetown University in Qatar is a premier research institute devoted to the academic study of regional and international issues through dialogue and exchange of ideas, research and scholarship, and engagement with national and international scholars, opinion makers, practitioners, and activists. Guided by the principles of academic excellence, forward vision, and community engagement, the CIRS mission revolves around five principal goals:

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