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'CHINA'S INTENTIONS TOWARDS INDIA HAVE NOT CHANGED'

by JAYADEVA RANADE

While Chinese leaders are making statements that attempt to gloss over the developments of recent years and seek to convey that China is keen on normalising relations and that together the two can develop and grow their economies, the reality is quite different. At no point since April 2020 have Chinese leaders conceded their error in launching a military operation to "teach India a lesson". On the contrary, a recent report by a Chinese think-tank reveals that China's People's Liberation Army has been augmenting its forces in Tibet and upgrading war preparedness.

China, which is an export-led economy whose manufacturing enterprises are geared to exports, is actually keen on getting unrestricted access to the Indian market. In the backdrop of the unprecedented tariff war with the United States, China will now be more desperate for the Indian and other markets. Chinese diplomats in India are making statements emphasising the need for China and India to work together so that they can develop and modernise. They are persuading their contacts and business lobbies in India to reinforce these arguments and pressure India to ease restrictions on Chinese businesses and FDI, resume flights etc. Beijing has, however, taken no tangible steps to ease the situation at the border or demonstrate goodwill.

Chinese President Xi Jinping's statement on April 1, congratulating Indian President Ms Draupadi Murmu on the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, was cosmetic. Xi Jinping repeated old arguments that both are ancient civilizations, major developing countries, important members of the "Global South" etc. and that good relations are mutually beneficial and the right choice for both. Without offering any substantive proposals, Xi Jinping advised that both countries should "view the relationship from a long-term perspective and strategic height". Chinese Premier Li Qiang sent a similar message to Prime Minister Modi.

An earlier statement by the Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman (February 26) on the border issue was similarly banal. It spoke of implementing the resolutions to end the standoff in Ladakh and repeated "We are ready to work with the Indian side to jointly preserve the peace and tranquility in the border areas". China nonetheless continues to construct border defence infrastructure, new airports, and induct new weaponry and troops. Neither has there been any de-induction or withdrawal of troops.

Beijing sees India as backward in manufacturing. Numerous articles in China's regulated official media and the heavily censored Chinese social media have suggested that Chinese enterprises could shift their factories to India and manufacture and export from there. They point out, though, that these factories should have second-hand machinery so that India cannot catch up with China. A Chinese think-tank published an article on April 1, captioned "Should we be wary of India?", which disparagingly said "In 2020, the Modi government promised to invest \$23 billion to revitalize the manufacturing industry. However, when the data came out, it turned out to be a black comedy - the proportion of manufacturing in GDP fell from 15.4% to 14.3%. This is not a small shop on the street making false accounts, but a large-scale rollover at the national level". It derided the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) program as non-performing. It said during the Covid pandemic the PLI spent "real money to do things in 14 fields such as mobile phone manufacturing, electronic components, and medicine", but "four years later, only 8% of the promised subsidies were issued, and the completion rate of corporate output value was only 37%.". It commented "on the government side, approving subsidies is slower than purifying the water of the Ganges".

Other posts highlighted the social and caste differences in India and the incidence of sexual harassment. For example, a recent post on the popular Chinese web portal Weibo said "The Indian Youth Delegation is coming again. I still remember the scandal years ago when a 100-member Indian group visited China — the male members harassed female members and female hotel staff. Considering how obsessed Indian men are with sex, it's best to publish their itinerary, so the women and females in the cities they visit can be on alert". The post attracted numerous comments endorsing the sentiments, including a number criticising the United Front for inviting such delegations and for being liberal with visas for Indians.

A lengthy article scathingly critical of India and which reveals the Chinese mindset was published in Guancha (Observer) on April 1. It was authored by Liu Zongyi, a senior Chinese academic and long-time commentator on China-India relations who is also Director of the South Asia Research Center, Shanghai Institute of International Studies. He could not have written or published the article without official approval. Reflecting the attitude of China's leadership, Liu Zongyi bluntly said "we should not commemorate for the sake of commemoration nor sacrifice long-term economic and strategic interests for the sake of appearing superficially friendly". He was writing on the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India. He said that "as a long-time observer of China-India relations, he believes that China should not have overly high expectations of India. This is because, over the past five years, and in fact, over the past 60 years, India has developed a distorted and abnormal perception of China. As India continues to fabricate false narratives about China, this misconception spreads within the country, poisoning minds, and is subsequently shared with the rest of the world as Indians engage globally. This situation arises not only from conflicts of interest between China and India but also from differing historical views and strategic cultural traditions between the two countries. The rise of Hindu nationalism in India has further fuelled the spread of erroneous perceptions about China".

Probably inadvertently giving away Chinese thinking, he disclosed that "before the 1962 Sino-Indian border conflict, in mid-September, Chairman Mao Zedong, while conversing with those around him, said: "I've thought for ten days and nights, but still can't understand why Nehru wanted to mess with us." He added this particularly shows "China's failure to grasp the unique

mindset of the Indian side". Asserting that "to ensure healthy development in China-India relations, mutual understanding and perception must be strengthened", he mentioned that various suggestions were made during his visit to India in November 2023, but none have been "fulfilled to this day and have instead become bargaining chips for India to demand more from China". Liu Zongyi recalled that the Indian Consulate in Shanghai had once invited him to attend the "International Millet Festival" where the Indian Consul General "proudly showed seven different varieties of millet from India and mentioned that millet remains were found during the Harappan Civilization over 5,000 years ago". Liu Zongyi commented that while to an outsider it might seem like millet originated in India, the millet varieties showcased at the festival are all found in China. He added "In fact, China is the birthplace of millet". Noting that "The ancient Indian civilization played a very positive role in the development and prosperity of Chinese civilization. Many Indian monks came to China to spread their teachings, while Chinese monks like Faxian and Xuanzang traveled to India to acquire scriptures", he said when the Indian Ambassador to China, Vikram Misri, visited Shanghai in 2022 he "arrogantly asked us, several Chinese scholars: 'What has China given to India?'" Liu Zongyi commented that "With the rise of Hindu nationalism, India's sense of cultural superiority has grown stronger. India now aims to become the world's teacher (guru), but this mindset is actually not conducive to a country's development and progress".

Liu Zongyi asserted in conclusion that "India's elites primarily understand China through Western media, which has deepened the Indian public's misunderstandings of China. However, for India to achieve its rise as a great power and civilizational revival, it should not join forces with other great powers to contain China and replace China in global supply chains. Instead, India should seek a path of mutual learning and progress with China". He observed that "Prime Minister Modi recently visited the United States, and from his dialogue with Trump, it is clear that Trump does not see India as an equal partner but rather as a "follower" like Japan". Anticipating that the "India-U.S. relationship will experience more twists and turns, especially on tariffs and immigration issues", he said "In light of this, India should reflect deeply!"

On March 21, the Henan-based *Run Cheng Research and Finance Company* published an article captioned **'During the military reforms, the Tibet Military District, Joint Logistics Support Force, and the Tibet Corps of the Armed Police were all upgraded'**. It cited a report published by China's National Defense University and titled: *'2024 Border Defense Construction Research Report'*, which said "the upgrades of the Tibet Military District, the Joint Logistics Support Force, and the Tibet Corps of the Armed Police constitute a systematic project to comprehensively enhance high-altitude combat capabilities. The synergistic effects of the three forces after their upgrade have increased the overall combat effectiveness of border defense by 43.7%". It recalled that after the upgrade of the Tibet Military District to a full Theater command level, with a command hierarchy parallel to the Theater commands and direct command from the Central Military Commission, the Tibet Military District acquired greater decision-making power and resource allocation capabilities.

It disclosed that according to *PLA Daily* (2024), the upgraded Tibet Military District now "oversees five high-altitude mechanized brigades, two mountain brigades, one special operations brigade, and multiple support units, representing a 28.5% increase in troop size as compared to earlier. It stated that the newly established Special Operations Brigade is

equipped with the latest high-altitude special gear, including personal gear systems adapted to extreme cold and low oxygen, and high-precision strike weapons”. In a 2024 plateau combat exercise, this brigade demonstrated the ability to operate continuously for 72 hours—an important breakthrough in extreme high-altitude environments. There was also a qualitative leap in weapons and equipment and new systems tailored for high-altitude combat were introduced, including upgraded Type 15 light tanks, highland versions of the Z-20 helicopter, and long-range rocket systems suited for cold conditions.

It said the Tibet Detachment of the Joint Logistics Support Force was also upgraded from a full division level to a deputy corps level, and in early 2025, the upgraded detachment increased its personnel by 1,200. As part of innovation it established a fully integrated regional supply distribution system, which reduced response time by 42%.

The article revealed that the Tibet Corps of the Armed Police was upgraded from a full division level to a deputy corps level, overseeing six detachments, with a 32% increase in total manpower. It now covers all seven prefecture-level cities in Tibet. By early 2025, the Corps had achieved 85% modernization. It introduced a new highland unmanned reconnaissance system, expanding border patrol coverage by 3.7 times and greatly enhancing control over border areas.

Saying that shifting geopolitics was the reason for the upgrade, it explained “Tibet borders several countries and serves as a crucial defensive line in China’s southwest. In recent years, the surrounding region has seen increasingly complex dynamics and new security challenges”. With the upgradation “a multidimensional and comprehensive border defense system has been formed—capable of effectively responding to all kinds of security threats”. In a routine 2024 press briefing, the Ministry of National Defense stated: “Strengthening military forces in the Tibet region is a necessary measure to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity.” It added that the upgradation of military forces in Tibet sends a clear signal: China has both the resolve and capacity to defend every inch of its southwestern border. Military analysts noted in their 2024 reports that “China’s comprehensive military upgrade in Tibet indicates a more proactive and assertive defensive posture in the plateau border regions.”

The article revealed too in 2024, the Tibet Military District established a High-Altitude Operations Technology Research Center, the logistics force created a Plateau Logistics Innovation Lab, and the armed police set up a Plateau Special Equipment Testing Center. A new personal oxygen supply system, which extended the continuous combat time of soldiers above 5,000 meters altitude by 3.6 times, had also been put in place.

The article revealed that in early 2025, the Central Military Commission issued special instructions for military construction in Tibet: “Further deepen reform achievements, enhance joint combat capabilities of the three forces, and provide strong guarantees for safeguarding national sovereignty, security, and development interests.”

It is apparent from China’s official media reporting on India and the developments along the 4057 kms LAC, that the conciliatory statements by Chinese leaders are only intended to gain access to India’s market. The tariff war with the U.S. makes it imperative for China to seek new markets and India is the largest untapped market in the Indo-Pacific. India also needs to be aware that the objectives of China’s military manoeuvres of April 2020 were not

realised and a major potential challenge on the horizon is the issue of the XIVth Dalai Lama's reincarnation.

A translation of the report on upgradation of the PLA in Tibet is appended.



APPENDIX TO CCAS BRIEF (Dated April 13, 2025)

During the military reforms, the Tibet Military District, Joint Logistics Support Force, and the Tibet Corps of the Armed Police were all upgraded

Run Cheng Research and Finance Company

March 21, 2025 – 18:29

Henan

The upgrading of military forces is not a simple administrative adjustment, but a profound change in national security strategy. As an important barrier in China's southwestern border, any changes in the military deployment in Tibet have far-reaching significance. According to the "Research Report on Border Defense Construction" released by the National Defense University in 2024, the upgrading of the Tibet Military Region, the Joint Logistics Support Force, and the Tibet Armed Police Corps is a systematic project to comprehensively enhance plateau combat capabilities. The synergy effect of the three forces after the upgrading has improved the overall combat effectiveness of border defense by 43.7%.

The upgrading of the Tibet Military Region began in early 2016, when the national military reform was in full swing. Unlike other military regions that were reorganized into theater commands, the Tibet Military Region retained its structure and completed the upgrade. This special arrangement highlights the unique status of Tibet in the national defense system. After the upgrade, the Tibet Military Region was upgraded from the original deputy major military region level to the major military region level. The command level is parallel to the theater command and is directly under the command of the Central Military Commission. This upgrade is not only a change in level, but also gives the Tibet Military Region greater decision-making authority and resource allocation capabilities.

During the upgrade process, the Tibet Military Region also underwent major adjustments to its organization. According to a report in the People's Liberation Army Daily in 2024, the upgraded Tibet Military Region has five plateau mechanized brigades, two plateau mountain brigades, one special operations brigade and multiple support and guarantee units under its jurisdiction, with a force size increase of 28.5% compared to before the upgrade. It is particularly noteworthy that the newly added special operations brigade is equipped with the latest plateau special equipment, including personal equipment systems and high-precision strike weapons adapted to high-cold and hypoxic environments. In the 2024 plateau actual combat exercise, this special brigade demonstrated 72-hour uninterrupted combat capabilities, which is a major breakthrough in the extreme plateau environment.

The weapons and equipment of the Tibet Military Region have also achieved a qualitative leap. After the upgrade, a large number of new weapon systems adapted to the plateau environment were introduced, including the improved Type 15 light

tank, the plateau version of the Z-20 helicopter and the long-range rocket launcher system adapted to the high cold. These equipment fill in many gaps in plateau operations. In particular, the Type 15 light tank, after the plateau modification, its power system can still maintain more than 85% of its performance at an altitude of 5,000 meters, which is more than 30% higher than similar equipment.

The upgrade of the Tibet Military Region is matched by the simultaneous upgrade of the Tibet Detachment of the Joint Logistics Support Force. The unit has been upgraded from the original division level to the deputy army level, and its establishment and equipment have also been greatly enhanced. According to data released at the beginning of 2025, the establishment of the Tibet Detachment of the Joint Logistics Support Force has increased by 1,200 personnel after the upgrade, forming a comprehensive support system covering medical care, engineering, transportation, repair, etc. The upgrade of this unit has solved the logistics support problem that has long plagued the plateau troops and significantly improved the sustained capability of plateau operations.

After the upgrade, the Tibet detachment of the Joint Logistics Support Force launched a number of innovative measures. The most striking is the establishment of an integrated material allocation system for the entire region, which shortened the response time to 42% of the original. In the 2024 plateau military exercise, the system successfully deployed 30 tons of emergency materials from Lhasa to the frontline position at an altitude of 5,200 meters in just 12 hours, setting a new record for plateau logistics support. In addition, the force has also established a special plateau medical rescue system, equipped with 10 highly mobile medical teams that can carry out complex treatment in extreme environments.

The upgrading of the Tibet Armed Police Corps reflects the determination to maintain stability in the border areas. The Corps was upgraded from the division level to the deputy army level, becoming one of the higher-level provincial corps in the armed police system. The upgraded Tibet Armed Police Corps has 6 detachments under its jurisdiction, and the total force has increased by 32% compared with before the upgrade, covering all 7 cities in Tibet. According to the 2024 Armed Police Force Annual Report, the upgraded Tibet Armed Police Corps performs more than 2,800 stability maintenance tasks each year and successfully handles more than 360 emergencies of various types, providing strong guarantees for stability in the border areas.

The upgrade of the Armed Police Tibet Corps also brought about a comprehensive update of equipment. At the beginning of 2025, the Corps completed the replacement of new riot control equipment, special vehicles for plateaus, and special communication equipment, achieving the modernization of 85% of its equipment. In particular, the introduction of a new plateau unmanned reconnaissance system has expanded the coverage of border patrols by 3.7 times, greatly improving border

control capabilities. These equipment upgrades enable the Armed Police Tibet Corps to maintain efficient operation in extreme environments of high altitude, low oxygen, and strong radiation.

The synergy effect of the three forces' upgrading has already emerged. In terms of the command system, the three forces have established a joint command platform to achieve intelligence sharing and action coordination. Statistics from 2024 show that the three forces have increased their joint operations through the joint command platform by 57%, and the coordination efficiency has increased by 63.8%. In the handling of a border emergency, it took only 42 minutes from receiving the alarm to the three forces' joint arrival at the scene, which is nearly half the time compared with the past.

The upgrading of the three forces also brought about the optimization of the talent structure. According to the 2024 military talent statistics report, the proportion of officers with bachelor's degrees or above in the upgraded Tibet Military Region, Joint Logistics Support Force and Armed Police Tibet Corps has increased from 68% to 86.5%, and the proportion of professional and technical personnel has increased by 15.3 percentage points. These high-quality talents provide intellectual support for the scientific and technological innovation and combat capability improvement of the plateau troops.

The deep-seated reasons for the upgrading of the three forces are closely related to geopolitical changes. The Tibet region borders many countries and is an important defense line on China's southwestern border. In recent years, the situation in the surrounding areas has been complex and changeable, and border security has faced new challenges. By simultaneously upgrading the three forces, a three-dimensional, full-coverage border defense system has been formed, which can effectively respond to various security threats. In 2024, the spokesperson of the Ministry of National Defense made it clear at a regular press conference: "Strengthening the construction of military forces in the Tibet region is an inevitable requirement for safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

The changes brought about by the upgrade are also reflected in the training mode. The three forces have adopted a new training mode of actual combat, joint and information-based training. In 2024, the Tibet Military Region organized 32 joint live-fire exercises, 14 more than before the upgrade; the Tibet detachment of the Joint Logistics Support Force completed 47 plateau extreme environment support exercises; and the Tibet Corps of the Armed Police conducted 28 cross-regional mobility exercises. These high-intensity, actual combat trainings have enabled the combat capabilities of the three forces to achieve a qualitative leap.

From an international perspective, the upgrade of military power in Tibet also sends a clear signal. It shows that China has the determination and ability to defend every inch of land in the southwestern border. International military observers pointed out in their 2024 analysis report: "China's comprehensive upgrade of military power in Tibet shows that it has adopted a more proactive defense posture in the plateau border area." This strategic adjustment has achieved remarkable results, and the security situation in the border area has improved significantly.

The upgrade also strengthened the scientific and technological innovation capabilities of the three forces. In 2024, the Tibet Military Region established a plateau combat technology research center, the Tibet detachment of the Joint Logistics Support Force established a plateau logistics innovation laboratory, and the Tibet Corps of the Armed Police established a plateau special equipment testing center. These three innovation platforms jointly promoted the development of plateau military technology, successfully developed 21 plateau-specific equipment, and applied for 47 military technology patents. Among them, the plateau soldier's personal oxygen source system solved the major problem of combat in high-altitude areas, extending the continuous combat time of soldiers at altitudes above 5,000 meters by 3.6 times.

In terms of infrastructure construction, the three forces have received more resource support after being upgraded. In 2024, the Tibet Military Region completed the modernization of 32 border outposts, the Joint Logistics Support Force built 7 plateau material storage centers, and the Armed Police Tibet Corps built 12 border rapid response bases. These infrastructures have greatly improved the working and living conditions of officers and soldiers on the plateau, while also improving the mobility and response speed of border defense forces.

The social benefits brought by the upgrade are also significant. The three forces actively participated in local construction and disaster relief, becoming an important force for stabilizing the Tibetan area. According to data from 2024, the Tibet Military Region participated in 3,200 disaster relief operations, the Joint Logistics Support Force provided medical services to the public for 5,700 times, and the Armed Police Tibet Corps participated in 14 infrastructure construction projects. These actions have shortened the distance between the military and the people, strengthened the unity between the military, the government, the military and the people, and created a good environment for the economic and social development of Tibet.

The upgrading of the three forces also promoted the integrated development of the military and the local government. By 2024, the Tibet Military Region and the local government will jointly build seven industrial projects, the Joint Logistics Support Force will open up military and local medical resources for sharing, and the Armed Police Tibet Corps will send professional forces to support local construction. The military-local integration projects have created 3,500 jobs and increased the income

of local residents by 28 million yuan, becoming a new driving force for Tibet's economic development.

As time goes by, the strategic significance of the upgrading of the three forces has become increasingly prominent. Together, they have built a three-dimensional defense system in the Tibet region, forming a coordinated mechanism of "military regions in charge of combat, joint logistics support, and armed police maintaining stability." At the beginning of 2025, the Central Military Commission issued an important instruction specifically on the construction of military forces in the Tibet region: "We must continue to deepen the results of reform, enhance the coordinated combat capabilities of the three forces, and provide strong guarantees for safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests."

Today, when we turn our eyes to the snowy plateau, the lights in those military camps are still bright. These lights not only illuminate the way forward for border guards, but also illuminate the solid barrier of national security. The upgrading of the Tibet Military Region, the Joint Logistics Support Force, and the Tibet Armed Police Corps is not only an important part of the military system reform, but also a profound adjustment of the national security strategy. From the initial doubts to the current answers, we have seen the country's high attention to the construction of military forces in the Tibet region and the strategic wisdom behind the upgrading of the three forces.
