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**INDIAN WAR CABINET**

**BACKGROUND GUIDE**

**AGENDA : Classified**

**Letter from the Executive Board:**

Greetings, ministers and officers. The following is study guide to give you a brief understanding of the context within which the Indian War Cabinet 2017 is being simulated. This Cabinet will tackle a situation of heightened military escalation resulting from a standoff between India and China.

At the very outset, we would like to clarify that expanding knowledge beyond this document to historical matters surrounding the circumstance of the meeting are encouraged and recommended. What all portfolio holders need to understand before researching is that this is a military cabinet and will not function like a normal UN Committee and therefore will not have rules of procedure or diplomatic courtesy. However respect for your fellow officers of the State and an understanding of their experience and hard work in their own respective fields is to be maintained. All officers of the armed forces will be addressed by their respective ranks and the committee will function with an appropriate amount of urgency. As members of this cabinet, we will expect you to be well aware of the various roles played by the portfolio you represent in the given timeframe, and have an in depth understanding of the situation, from your respective viewpoints, depending on your specialization. Please keep in mind that the objective of such a simulation is not to replay the events as such, but try and adopt the best approach after due consideration, even if it is different, although it might not necessarily be.

For the benefit of the cabinet, hierarchy among officers will be suspended for committee participation. All portfolios must understand their respective jurisdiction and yet should not be limited by it. It is important for your research to reflect depth and be detailed. The brief below is just a summary of the conflict and holds no military details although we expect all officers to be equipped with the details worthy of military precision.

It is imperative to understand the urgency of the matter and take action based purely on any pragmatic value that might manifest from it. As the executive board, we are here to guide you and respond to your queries. Feel free to reach out to us in case any clarification is deemed necessary.

**Regards,**

**Aditya Khurana**

**Background Brief:**

Doklam, known as Donglang in the Chinese language, is an area with a plateau and a valley, lying between Tibet’s Chumbi Valley to the north, Bhutan' Ha Valley to the east and India's Sikkim state to the west. It has been depicted as part of Bhutan in the Bhutanese maps since 1961, but it is also claimed by China. Till date, the dispute has not been resolved despite several rounds of border negotiations between Bhutan and China. The area is of strategic importance to all three countries.

China's Chumbi Valley, to the north of Doklam, and India's Siliguri Corridor, to the south of Doklam are strategic mountain chokepoints critical in global power competition. The Chumbi Valley is one among if not the the single most strategically important piece of real estate in the entire Himalayan region. The Chumbi Valley intervenes between Sikkim and Bhutan south of the high Himalayas, pointing towards India's Siliguri Corridor like a dagger. The latter is a narrow 24 kilometre-wide corridor between Nepal and Bangladesh in India's West Bengal state, which connects the central parts of India with the north-eastern states including state of Arunachal Pradesh. Often referred to as the "chicken's neck", the Siliguri Corridor represents a strategic vulnerability for India. It is also of key strategic significance to Bhutan, containing the main supply routes into the country.

Our officials have suggested that China had been carrying out a steady military build-up in the Chumbi Valley, building many garrisons and converting the valley into a strong military base. In 1967, border clashes occurred at Nathu La and Cho La passes, when the Chinese contested the Indian demarcations of the border on the Dongkya range. In the ensuing artillery fire, states scholar Taylor Fravel, many Chinese fortifications were destroyed as the Indians controlled the high ground. In fact, the Chinese military is believed to be in a weak position in the Chumbi Valley because the Indian and Bhutanese forces control the heights surrounding the valley. The desire for heights is thought to bring China to the Doklam plateau.

*Our security experts have examined three strategic benefits to China from a control of the Doklam plateau:*

1. *It gives it a commanding view of the Chumbi valley itself.*
2. *It outflanks the Indian defences in Sikkim which are currently oriented northeast towards the Dongkya range.*
3. *It overlooks the strategic Siliguri Corridor to the south.*

A claim to the Mount Gipmochi and the Zompelri ridge would bring the Chinese to the very edge of the Himalayas, from where the slopes descend into the southern foothills of Bhutan and India. From here, the Chinese would be able to monitor the Indian troop movements in the plains or launch an attack on the vital Siliguri corridor in the event of a war. To New Delhi, this represents a “strategic redline”.

**Early Intrusions:**

In October 1965, in response to allegations regarding intrusions into Doklam, the Chinese government released a statement claiming that Bhutan was a sovereign country and that China did not recognize any role for the Indian government in the matter. It also asserted that the Doklam area had "always been under Chinese jurisdiction".

China later formally extended claims to 300 sq. miles of territory in northern Bhutan and areas north of Punakha, but apparently not in Doklam. Bhutan requested the Indian government to raise the matter with China. However, China rejected India's initiatives stating that the issue concerned China and Bhutan alone. As per evidence, Chinese troops withdrew after a month and the fracas over Doklam brought Bhutan even closer to our nation, resulting in the appointment of 3,400 Indian defence personnel in Bhutan for training the Bhutanese Army.

**Historical Agreements:**

The region has witnessed the 3 states coming together to negotiate agreements. The negotiations initiated in 1972 between China and Bhutan. India had little impact over these, supporting from the sidelines. China, however, sought the exclusion of India. Bhutan commenced its own border negotiations with China in 1984. Prior to putting forward its claim line, it carried out its own surveys and produced maps that were approved by the National Assembly in 1989. Bhutan voluntarily shed territory in the process. There was a reduction of 8,606 km2 area in the official Bhutanese maps. The Kula Kangri mountain, touted as the tallest peak in Bhutan, was also ceded to China. Through the course of border talks, Bhutan reduced 1,128 km2 of disputed border areas to 269 km2 by 1999. In 1996, the Chinese negotiators offered a "package deal" to Bhutan, offering to give up claims on 495 km2 in the central region in exchange for 269 km2 in the "northwest", i.e., adjacent to the Chumbi valley, including Doklam, Sinchulumpa, Dramana and Shakhatoe. These areas would offer strategic depth to Chinese defences and access to the strategic Siliguri Corridor of India. Bhutan turned down the offer under Indian persuasion. Having turned down China's package deal, in 2000, Bhutanese government put forward its original claim line of 1989. The talks could make no progress afterwards. In 2004, China started building roads in the border areas, leading to repeated protests by the Bhutanese government based on the 1998 Peace and Tranquility Agreement. The Chinese built a road up the Sinchela pass (in undisputed territory) and then over the plateau (in disputed territory), leading up to the Doka La pass, until reaching within 68 metres to the Indian border post on the Sikkim border. Here, they constructed a turn-around facilitating vehicles to turn back. This road has been in existence at least since 2005. In 2007 the Chinese destroyed unmanned Indian forward posts on the Doklam plateau. Bhutan and China have held 24 rounds of boundary talks since it began in 1984. The Royal Government of Bhutan claims that the present road construction on the Doklam Plateau amounts to unilateral change to a disputed boundary by China in violation of the 1988 and 1998 agreements between the two nations. The agreements also prohibit the use of force and encourage both parties to strictly adhere to use peaceful means. Notwithstanding the agreement, the PLA crossed into Bhutan in 1988 and took control of the Chumbi Valley near the Doklam plateau. There were reports of the PLA troops threatening the Bhutanese guards, declaring it to be Chinese soil, and seizing and occupying Bhutanese posts for extended periods. Again, after 2000, numerous intrusions, grazing and road and infrastructure construction by the Chinese were reported as reported in the Bhutanese National Assembly.

**Timeline of recent developments in the region:**

Over the past 2 months, several events have taken place in the region which all the members attending the meeting need to be apprised with. The blatant attempt made by China to change the status quo in the region should not be looked upon casually. The Indian force cannot let its vigil down and must prevent any untoward incident. The events are discussed ahead.

* On 16 June 2017 Chinese troops with construction vehicles and road-building equipment began extending an existing road southward on the Doklam plateau.
* In response to this, on 18 June 2017, 270 Indian troops, with weapons and two bulldozers, entered Doklam to stop the Chinese troops from constructing the road.
* On 29 June 2017, Bhutan protested to China against the construction of a road in the disputed territory. According to the Bhutanese government, China attempted to extend a road that previously terminated at Doka La towards the Bhutan Army camp at Zornpelri near the Jampheri Ridge 2 km to the south; that ridge, viewed as the border by China but as wholly within Bhutan by both Bhutan and India, extends eastward approaching India's highly-strategic Siliguri Corridor. The Bhutanese border was reportedly put on high alert and border security was tightened as a result of the growing tensions.
* "Sketch Map of the Site of the Indian Troops’ Trespass" – Translated Map published by the Chinese Foreign Ministry on 2 August 2017. On the same day, China Foreign Ministry released a map depicting Doklam as part of China. Using the map as illustration, China's Spokesperson Lu Kang read Article I of the 1890 Convention of Calcutta and asserted that it proved that the Donglang (Doklam) area, a territory North East of Gipmochi as shown on the map, belongs to China.
* On 30 June, Ministry of External Affairs of India released the statement entitled Recent Developments in Doklam Areastating our official position. We have charged China of changing status quo in violation of a 2012 understanding between the two governments regarding finalizing the tri-junction boundary points and causing security concerns, widely understood as at its strategic Siliguri Corridor. We have said that our personnel at Doka La coordinated with Bhutan and approached the Chinese construction party and urged them to desist from changing the status quo.

Answering a question about Bhutan's protest, China's Spokesperson Lu Kang made the following statement about Doklam's history after asserting that the area where the construction activities are underway is totally under the jurisdiction of China because it is completely located on the Chinese side of the China-Bhutan traditional customary line: “Before the 1960s, if border inhabitants of Bhutan wanted to herd in Doklam, they needed the consent of the Chinese side and had to pay the grass tax to China. Nowadays the Xi Zang Tibet Archives still retain some receipts of the grass tax.”

* On 3 July 2017, China Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang stated that former Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru accepted the 1890 Britain–China treaty and said: ‘On September 26 of the same year, when writing back to Premier Zhou Enlai, Prime Minister Nehru unequivocally stated "the boundary between Sikkim and Xi Zang, China was defined by the 1890 Convention. This boundary was demarcated in 1895. There is no dispute over the boundary between Sikkim and Xi Zang (Tibet), China".

However, Pt. Nehru's 26 September 1959 letter to Zhou, cited by China, was in fact a point-by-point refutation of the claims made by the Zhou on 8 September 1959. In the letter, Pt. Nehru wrote: ‘This Convention of 1890 also defined the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet; and the boundary was later, in 1895, demarcated. There is thus no dispute regarding the boundary of Sikkim with the Tibet region.’

When this was pointed out by us, the Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang replied about the disputed tri-junction with the following comment: ‘The so-called tri-junction, as the name suggests, is a point. It is not a line, much less an area. India misinterprets tri-junction point as an area, from ulterior motives. This time, the trespassing point of Indian army, is on the Sikkim-China border, which is 2000 metres away from the tri-junction point, Mount Gipmochi, by the 1890 Treaty.’

* On 5 July 2017, the Chinese government said that it had for the past 24 months a basic consensus with Bhutan that Doklam belongs to China, and there was no dispute between the two countries.
* On 24 July 2017, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told reporters that it is very clear who is right and who is wrong in the standoff in Doklam, and that even senior Indian officials have publicly said that Chinese troops have not intruded into Indian territory. "In other words, India admitted that it has entered Chinese territory. The solution to this issue is simple, which is that they behave themselves and withdraw."
* On 2 August 2017, the Chinese foreign ministry released a 15-page official position statement The Facts and China's Position Concerning the Indian Border Troops' Crossing of the China-India Boundary in the Sikkim Sector into the Chinese Territory. According to this document, there were still over 40 Indian troops and one bulldozer in Doklam (Donglang) region.

Beijing accused India of using Bhutan as "a pretext" to interfere and impede the boundary talks between China and Bhutan. The report referred to India's "trespassing" into Doklam as a violation of the territorial sovereignty of China as well as a challenge to the sovereignty and independence of Bhutan. China also claimed in this 15-page document that it notified India regarding its plan to construct road "in advance in full reflection of China's goodwill".

* On 4 August 2017, our Ministry of External Affairs refused to confirm or deny when asked why, if India received notification from China in advance on its plan to construct road, it had not used diplomatic channels before sending its troops across the border since it was asking for diplomatic solution.

This debacle is something that all of us need to collectively consider.

* On 8 August 2017, Chinese diplomat Wang Wenli claimed that Bhutan had conveyed to China through diplomatic channels that the area of the standoff is not its territory, saying, "After the incident, the Bhutanese made it very clear to us that the place where the trespassing happened is not Bhutan's territory." On the next day, the Bhutanese government denied this, saying over the phone "Our position on the border issue of Doklam is very clear" and referring to the governments 29 June statement.
* On 15 August 2017, several Indian soldiers were injured after a group of Chinese soldiers attempted to infiltrate across the border near Pangong Lake into Indian controlled territory in Ladakh. As per Indian intelligence the confrontation occurred after Indian soldiers intercepted a Chinese patrol that veered into Indian-held territory after losing its way apparently due to bad weather.
* On 16 August 2017, the state run news agency released a segment of its show "The Spark" on Twitter racially attaching India, the video named the "Seven Sins of India" portrayed a stereotypical Indian with a turban and beard and a typical Indian accent, the segment spoke of Indians having "thick skin" and "pretending to sleep" on the matter of the border standoff between the two countries. The video went on to claim India was physically threatening Bhutan, and compared India to a "robber who breaks into a house and does not leave". The content of the video were factually incorrect.

As of yesterday, 18th of August, we have conclusive intel supplied by the Indian Army of China’s intensions to gain control of Doklam using unscrupulous intimidation tactics. With Chinese state media’s calls for the government to “militarily humiliate India”, we are at the most crucial impasse seen in the history of the region. Beijing’s strategic calculations have limited our diplomatic channels and reach, especially to the United Nations with China wielding veto power in the Security Council. We must realize that this standoff not only has bearings on India’s strategic security interests but also on its pride as a nation. China, it seems is in no mood to retract it’s military from Doklam and so long as they remain there, we cannot withdraw our troops either for that would present us as weak to the world and that would be extremely damaging to our image of being a rising regional superpower. At the same time, it is important for all of the officers at the meeting to note that any action we may take, the Sino-Indian border will not be the same again. It is you who must decide whether that is for a better hold, or a disadvantage, for today’s India is not the India of 1962. For this reason, the honourable Prime Minister of India has decided to institute a military cum political cabinet to deal with the situation. Those receiving this document are ipso facto members of the said cabinet. We hope that a meeting of this cabinet shall be convened shortly.