

After Wang Yi's visit, taking stock of India-China bilateral ties

At his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, Wang said bilateral relations had experienced “ups and downs, and the lessons learned are worth remembering”, according to China’s Foreign Ministry readout.

Written by [Shubhajit Roy](#) [Follow](#)

New Delhi | August 21, 2025 07:20 AM IST

 **NewsGuard**

 6 min read



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi calls on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in New Delhi on Tuesday. (DPR PMO/ANI Photo)

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to India was the first ministerial visit from China since the two countries decided last October to disengage at the border.

At his meeting with Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) on Tuesday, Wang said bilateral relations had experienced “ups and downs, and the lessons learned are worth remembering”, according to China’s Foreign Ministry readout.

India, China in last 6 yrs

In October 2019, President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi met in Mahabalipuram for their second informal summit. As the leaders famously posed in front of the ‘Krishna’s Butterball’ rock, there was a sense of euphoria around India-China ties.

Just eight months later, the situation had changed dramatically. Indian and Chinese troops clashed violently in Galwan in eastern Ladakh, and 20 Indian Army personnel including a Colonel-rank officer and at least four Chinese soldiers were killed.

There was anger and anxiety in the Indian establishment. There was a rupture in ties, and India amassed 50,000-60,000 troops on the [Line of Actual Control](#) to match with the similar numbers on the Chinese side.

Over the years that followed, the two armies remained eyeball-to-eyeball at multiple places, and there were reports of confrontations and pictures and reports of infrastructure-building on both sides.

After several rounds of negotiations between diplomats and military leaders, there were troop withdrawals at some places. By mid-2024, the needle began to move in a significant manner.

On October 21, the two sides agreed to complete the disengagement process in the last two remaining locations in Depsang and Demchok. President Xi and PM Modi met in Kazan on October 23 and decided to mend ties.

Since then, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Defence Minister [Rajnath Singh](#), National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri have all travelled to China.

After Donald Trump’s election

On a visit to China last November as part of a delegation invited by the Chinese government, [The Indian Express](#) noted a palpable sense of outreach among government and Communist Party officials, businesses, and common people.

[Donald Trump](#) had just won the United States presidential election, and China was bracing for what might follow. “If they (the US) want to be friends with us, we will be friends with them.”

But if they don't want to be friends, we don't care. And we are ready," a Chinese interlocutor told The Indian Express.

After Trump entered the White House and targeted China — and now India — with his tariffs, the thaw between New [Delhi](#) and Beijing has progressed. The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra has restarted, and India has begun to issue visas to Chinese nationals again.

It is in this background that Foreign Minister Wang travelled to India. Wang's visit came ahead of PM Modi's visit to Tianjin for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) leaders' summit at the end of next month — his first such visit since 2018, when he attended the SCO summit in Qingdao.

Unlike in 2022, when he last visited India, Wang got a meeting with the Prime Minister this time.

Twin-track movement

The two sides have agreed to move forward on two fronts — border issues and bilateral ties — without allowing one to impact the other. The parallel engagement was agreed upon after the 1988 visit of then PM Rajiv Gandhi to China, and had been followed until 2020.

In the dual-track strategy adopted now, India and China have agreed to form at least three new border-related mechanisms.

- An "Expert Group" under the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) to "explore Early Harvest in boundary delimitation";

- A Working Group under the WMCC to "advance effective border management" in order to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas;

- "General Level Mechanisms in Eastern, and Middle Sectors, in addition to the existing General Level Mechanism in Western Sector, and holding an early meeting of the General Level Mechanism in the Western Sector."

The two sides also agreed to use the border management mechanisms at the diplomatic and military levels to carry forward the process of "border management, and discuss de-escalation", beginning with the principles and modalities.

Importantly, there is agreement on the need to take a "political perspective" of the overall bilateral relationship while seeking a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable framework for

settlement of the boundary question. This is in sync with India's position that the border situation directly impacts bilateral ties.

On the bilateral front, the two sides have agreed to resume direct flight connectivity" at the earliest; facilitate visas to tourists, businesses, media and other visitors; re-open border trade through the designated trading points at Lipulekh Pass, Shipki La Pass, and Nathu La Pass; and facilitate trade and investment flows through concrete measures.

On trans-border rivers cooperation, the Chinese side agreed to "share hydrological information during emergency situations based on humanitarian considerations".

Addressing trust deficit

● The repeated Chinese incursions on the border — Depsang in 2013, Chumar in 2014, Doklam in 2017, and the ongoing border standoff — have impacted trust. At least 50,000 troops are still stationed in eastern Ladakh, and de-escalation and de-induction must happen along a time-bound roadmap.

● China's military cooperation with Pakistan was on display during Operation Sindoor, when the Chinese supplied weapons and live intelligence to the Pakistanis.

● India has concerns with regard to the mega dam that is being built on the Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra), which will have implications for lower riparian states.

● India strongly raised the issue of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism, and recalled that one of the original objectives of the SCO was to counter the evil of terrorism.

● India is concerned at China's export restrictions on rare earths, tunnel boring machines, and fertilisers, which are key to India's development and food security.

If the new dual track strategy is to be durable, the onus is on Beijing to assuage New Delhi's concerns.

EDITOR'S CHOICE



Need to tap full potential of trade & investment ties: Jaishankar to Russia



Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh to head panels for economy, social sector reforms