

The Asian Supercomplex and the contemporary securitization process of the line of actual control

El supercomplejo asiático y el proceso contemporáneo de securitización de la línea de control actual

Julia Rodrigues^{a*}  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8052-1951>
William Daldegan^a  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5806-0557>

^a Universidade Federal de Pelotas, Instituto de Filosofia, Sociologia e Política, Pelotas, Brazil,
e-mail: juliarudrigues@gmail.com, william.daldegan@ufpel.edu.br

Abstract

This article examines Sino-Indian border conflicts from 2017 to 2022, exploring the consolidation of the Asian Supercomplex through an analysis of the contemporary securitization of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Analytical and descriptive in nature, the study employs a qualitative methodology based on a literature review and theoretical-conceptual analysis guided by Buzan and Wæver's Regional Security Complex Theory. The findings suggest that the erosion of the institutional mechanisms established through the agreements documented in the UN Peacemaker database, together with measures such as *China's New Land Borders Law*, has contributed to the consolidation of the Asian Supercomplex. The intensification of the securitization of the LAC has thus reinforced a supercomplex that was already emerging from broader transformations in the Asian security order.

Keywords: line of actual control, Asian Supercomplex, securitization, China, India.

Resumen

Este artículo examina los conflictos fronterizos entre China e India de 2017 a 2022, explora la consolidación del supercomplejo asiático mediante un análisis del proceso contemporáneo de securitización de la Línea de Control Actual (LCA). De carácter analítico y descriptivo, el estudio emplea una metodología cualitativa basada en una revisión de la literatura y un análisis teórico-conceptual orientado por la Teoría de los Complejos de Seguridad Regional de Buzan y Wæver. Los hallazgos sugieren que el debilitamiento de los mecanismos institucionales establecidos mediante los acuerdos documentados en la base de datos UN Peacemaker, junto con medidas como la *Nueva Ley de Fronteras Terrestres de China*, ha contribuido a la consolidación del supercomplejo asiático. La intensificación

Received on November 15, 2024.

Accepted on October 2, 2026.

Published on October 15, 2026.

* Corresponding author:
Julia Rodrigues. E-mail:
juliarudrigues@gmail.com



This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Atribución 4.0 Internacional.

CITATION: Rodrigues, J. & Daldegan, W. (2026). The Asian Supercomplex and the contemporary securitization process of the line of actual control. *Estudios Fronterizos*, 27, Article e191. <https://doi.org/10.21670/ref.2613191>

de la securitización de la LCA ha reforzado así un supercomplejo que ya estaba surgiendo como resultado de transformaciones más amplias en el orden de seguridad asiático.

Palabras clave: línea de control actual, supercomplejo asiático, securitización, China, India.

Introduction

This article examines the escalation of Sino-Indian border conflicts between 2017 and 2022 and discusses the gradual formation of the Asian Supercomplex through an analysis of the contemporary securitization of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). According to Buzan and Wæver (2003), the interaction between the anarchic structure, combined with the balance of power derived from it, and the pressures generated by geographical proximity results in the formation of Regional Security Complexes (RSCs). However, Buzan (2011) warns that by the beginning of the past decade, the centre of gravity of a rising China was slowly and gradually increasing the levels of interaction between the RSCs of South and East Asia. In light of these developments, the author points to the formation of a supercomplex between these two RSCs: the Asian Supercomplex (Buzan, 2011).

This context, marked by China's global rise and India's stronger position as a power within its own RSC, could therefore signal a transformation in the boundaries and dynamics of the South and East Asian RSCs. Given these conditions, the conflicts of interest that permeate the relationship between China and India are particularly noteworthy. According to Daldegan, et al. (2022), these conflicts involve, in addition to disputes over influence and preeminence in South Asia and naval and arms competition in the Indian Ocean, territorial and border issues, which are the focus of this research.

Sino-Indian rivalry is covered by specialized international relations literature. Both nations are expected to become superpowers by 2050, and their relationship can be defined as a mix of collaboration and competition (Khan, 2023). Geographic closeness is an important factor in their complex interaction, something Verma (2024) calls positional rivalry. According to the author, China and India maintain competing visions for their place in the Asia-Pacific region and even globally, and both hold the desire to achieve greater influence than the other over these spaces (Verma, 2024).

While this rivalry exists, China and India do not hesitate to cooperate in various areas, such as global trade and environmental issues, and to advance common interests that conflict with those of the West (Nuruzzaman, 2022). This is consistent with the argument that the Sino-Indian rivalry is, as yet, not existential in nature but issue-specific. This means that, rather than involving deep existential security concerns, it concentrates on specific areas, such as the border, the Indian Ocean and influence over South Asia (Paul, 2024).

The variation between collaboration and competition across specific issue areas helps explain why, according to Sharma (2019), China and India are capable of cooperating in forums such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, as well as with the United States and the European Union and within international organisations such as the World Trade Organization and the United Nations (UN). Hall (2025) argues that, for India, the uses of the groupings

in which it coexists with China go beyond cooperation. Since the Galwan incident, these uses have also included New Delhi's efforts to undermine China's power and frustrate the Chinese government's agendas in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the BRICS and forums such as India-Brazil-South Africa and Russia-India-China.

Meanwhile, India refuses to participate in China's Belt and Road Initiative (Colley & Van Noort, 2022) and takes part in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) alongside the United States, Japan and Australia—an initiative associated with efforts to contain China's rise (Heiduk & Wirth, 2023)—. China and India's ability to navigate between issue areas and keep their rivalry from becoming driven by existential security concerns is called into question by the securitization of the LAC between 2017 and 2022.

Although the literature has examined Sino-Indian rivalry, cooperation and border disputes, less attention has been paid to how the securitization of the LAC may transform the broader regional security dynamics that connect the South and East Asian RSCs. This article addresses this gap by examining the relationship between the securitization of the Sino-Indian border and the gradual consolidation of the Asian Supercomplex.

Paul (2024) argues that when the opponent is viewed as a threat to the physical existence of a country, that opponent can be seen as an existential threat. It can be argued that a process of securitization of a border, such as the one that took place along the LAC, if left unresolved, puts the physical existence of the countries involved at risk. Hence, the research question guiding this article is the following: How does the securitization process of the LAC affect the relationship between China and India in a context marked by positional rivalry and cooperation in multiple spaces within the international system?

By answering this question, the present study contributes to the literature on Regional Security Complex Theory by examining how the securitization of a bilateral territorial dispute can intensify inter-regional security interactions and contribute to the consolidation of a supercomplex.

This article is structured into seven sections, including this introduction and the conclusion. The second section is dedicated to the research design and methodology, presenting the research question and main research objective while also discussing the methodological approach adopted. The following section discusses the formation of Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver's Regional Security Complex Theory as a theoretical-conceptual and methodological instrument and its contemporary state of the art. The fourth section discusses the legal status of the LAC and the impact of the *People's Republic of China's New Land Borders Law*. The following section addresses the securitization of the Sino-Indian border as a context for the consolidation of the Asian Supercomplex through the analysis of events in Doklam (2017), Ladakh (2020) and Tawang (2022). Finally, the sixth section provides a structural analysis of the Asian Supercomplex.

Research design and methodology

This study aims to answer the following research question: How does the securitization of the LAC affect Sino-Indian relations and contribute to the gradual formation of the Asian Supercomplex in a context marked by positional rivalry and cooperation across multiple domains of the international system? To do so, the main objective established is to assess the gradual formation of the Asian Supercomplex through an analysis of the contemporary securitization process of the LAC. To achieve this objective, the study employs a qualitative research methodology based on a literature review and theoretical-conceptual analysis guided by the Regional Security Complex Theory. The study is analytical and descriptive in nature.

The literature review is considered a useful method because it allows the researcher to bring together a vast and scattered body of studies on a topic and also helps answer broader and more abstract research questions (Baumeister & Leary, 1997). Furthermore, this method was chosen for the present study because it makes it possible to produce knowledge in relation to the existing body of knowledge concerning the object of study (Snyder, 2019). In analytical terms, the literature review was used to identify and synthesise the main debates concerning Sino-Indian relations, border disputes, securitization and Regional Security Complex Theory, thereby establishing the conceptual and empirical basis for the analysis.

Associated with the literature review method, a theoretical-conceptual analysis approach was employed. A conceptual framework can be defined as “a network, or ‘a plane,’ of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena” (Jabareen, 2009, p. 51). According to Jabareen (2009), conceptual frameworks are based on ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions and allow the researcher to understand the phenomena studied through an interpretative approach to social reality. Therefore, the Regional Security Complex Theory, discussed in the next section, is employed as a conceptual framework to analyze the object of research. In analytical terms, the theoretical-conceptual approach consists of using the core concepts of Regional Security Complex Theory, particularly securitization, regional security dynamics and the supercomplex, to interpret the evolution of Sino-Indian security interactions and their implications for the broader Asian regional security structure.

The empirical analysis focuses on three episodes—Doklam (2017), Ladakh (2020) and Tawang (2022)—selected because they represent significant moments in the escalation of Sino-Indian border tensions during the period under examination. These episodes are analyzed in light of the conceptual framework established by Regional Security Complex Theory, with particular attention to the construction of the border as a security issue and its implications for the wider regional security dynamics between South and East Asia. For analytical purposes, the content of the most recent Agreement on Border Defense Cooperation between India and China, from 2013, is also considered as a reference for examining the subsequent episodes and assessing the extent to which the mechanisms and commitments established by the two countries were maintained or challenged.

The study also draws on bilateral agreements and protocols concluded between China and India between 1993 and 2013 to establish the institutional background of border management. These documents are used to reconstruct the gradual development of mechanisms aimed at maintaining peace and tranquility, confidence-building, military restraint, consultation and cooperation along the border. Table 1 presents the main agreements and protocols considered for this purpose. For analytical purposes, the study adopts a temporal distinction between the period of institutionalized border management established through these bilateral agreements and protocols and the subsequent escalation of border tensions. While the former provides the institutional baseline for the analysis, the latter is examined through the Doklam (2017), Ladakh (2020) and Tawang (2022) episodes, which allow for an assessment of the transformation of Sino-Indian security dynamics and its implications for the Asian regional security structure.

Table 1. Bilateral agreements and protocols concerning Sino-Indian border management, 1993-2013

Year	Agreement/protocol	Content of an agreement/protocol
1993	The Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas	The agreement establishes five principles aimed at ensuring peace and tranquility along the LAC. These principles address the themes of sovereignty, territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference and peaceful coexistence
1996	The Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas	The agreement aims to define that both countries shall not use their military capability against each other and should strive for demilitarization and reduction of unilateral military activities in the border area. It also records the commitment of both sides to accelerate the clarification of the LAC
2005	Protocol Between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Modalities for the Implementation of Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas	This protocol follows the provisions set forth in the 1996 agreement, including clarifications and norms of good practices to facilitate compliance with the previously established agreement. Therefore, if the parties cancel the 1996 agreement, the protocol also automatically becomes invalid
2012	Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Establishment of a Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs	This agreement builds upon the 1994 and 1996 agreements and the 2005 protocol to establish the working mechanism for consultation and coordination on India-China border affairs, with the aim of facilitating cooperation between the parties
2013	Agreement on Border Defense Cooperation between India and China	The agreement aims to prevent conflicts in border areas and reiterates the points determined in previous agreements. It includes themes such as border-level cooperation, information sharing, best practices for military personnel and patrols and maintaining tranquility along the border

Source: own elaboration based on data from UN Peacemaker (2024)

The analysis also considers *China's New Land Borders Law*, adopted in 2021, as a complementary official source for examining the evolution of China's legal and political approach to border security. Together, these documentary sources provide the institutional and normative background against which the three episodes under examination are analyzed.

The regional security complex theory and the Asian Supercomplex

The concept of security in International Relations is intrinsically linked to the traditional context of political-military power. Thus, a threat to the state's security represents a direct danger to its survival. "The exact definition and criteria of securitization is constituted by the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 25). The securitization process is therefore a process of politicisation, as it produces justifications for the threatened state to use emergency measures and actions that are not compatible with usual political procedures.

Buzan and Wæver (2003), in identifying sets of interconnected units in the international system that were securitised to such an extent that it became unfeasible to analyze the processes of securitization and desecuritization of one unit separately from the others, created the concept of *regional security complex*. The inseparable nature of the security perceptions and concerns of the involved units and their respective national security issues is one of the fundamental characteristics of these complexes (Buzan, Wæver & Wilde, 1998). Buzan (2003a) considers security a social construct, using the theoretical-conceptual constructivist apparatus and extending the concept beyond the military and political sectors while maintaining its emphasis. The main units are therefore states, although this is not strictly mandatory.

The Regional Security Complex Theory, as posited by Buzan and Wæver (2003), occupies a space between materialist and constructivist approaches. The materialist aspects of this theory align closely with neorealism, given that it: *i*) employs ideas of limited territoriality and distribution of power; and, *ii*) emphasizes the regional level in a manner that is compatible and complementary to the structural scheme of neorealism, although, contrary to neorealism, it does not focus almost exclusively on the global level of structure. The constructivist aspects of the theory have roots in: *i*) its focus on the political processes by which security issues are constituted; *ii*) its perception that the distribution of power and patterns of amity and enmity are essentially independent variables, distinguishing it from neorealism; *iii*) its understanding of polarity as an important, but not determining, factor for security relations; and, *iv*) its view of securitization processes as essentially open and subject to the influence of a range of factors.

The level of analysis in this theory follows the general rule of regional theories by locating itself between individual units—states—and the set of them—the international system—(Buzan, 2003a). The objects of analysis are the regional subsystems, which are analytically addressed through emphasis on the military and political sectors. Its usefulness lies in facilitating comparative work between regions and focusing on the regional level and its importance, often ignored in favor of the direct unit-system dynamics in neorealist and Waltzian analyses. The central idea of this theory is that threats

travel more easily over short distances than long distances. Evidence of this is postulated by Friedberg (1993 cited in Buzan & Wæver, 2003): countries generally worry much more about the capabilities and intentions of their own neighbors.

The Regional Security Complex Theory considers that rscs are products of the anarchic international system as much as the balance of power (Buzan, 2003a). They can even be considered miniature anarchic systems, or even anarchic subsystems with their own characteristics, structures and patterns. However, these complexes may be absent in regions where *i*) units are not capable of projecting power beyond their borders or *ii*) external powers project enough power to suppress local powers and interaction between them. The latter consists of a condition of overlay and as such goes beyond mere penetration of external power. This includes the positioning of military troops in the region, direct intervention and forced repositioning of local units within the larger pattern of power rivalries. A classic example is the colonization process that Europe imposed on the Third World.

There are four levels of analysis in the Regional Security Complex Theory: *i*) domestic; *ii*) regional; *iii*) inter-regional; and, *iv*) global (Buzan, 2003b). The interdependence between units at the regional level can be negative, resulting in conflict formation, or positive, constituting a security community. Buzan (2003b) emphasizes that, as a reference for assessing significant changes and as a basis for identifying the most likely pattern of evolution of an rsc. The theory evaluates the following structural elements: borders, anarchy-hierarchy, power polarity and discourses of friendship and enmity—processes of securitization and desecuritization.

Additionally, three key components are considered in the structure of a rsc: *i*) the arrangement of different units; *ii*) the patterns of amity and enmity; and, *iii*) the distribution of power among the important units (Buzan, 2003a). It is noteworthy that rscs are mutable, with numerous and continuous internal transformations. Thus, the theory allows the study of these subsystems both in their static form and in their dynamic form. Changes in the key components lead to redefinitions of the rsc (Buzan, 2003a), enabling even redefinitions in terms of the formation of a supercomplex: “set of rscs within which the presence of one or more great powers generates relatively high and consistent levels of interregional security dynamics” (Buzan, 2012, p. 2). This is the case of the emerging Asian Supercomplex (Buzan, 2012; Buzan, 2019; Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

The regional security configuration of the Asian continent in the post-Cold War era includes four rscs that do not necessarily exclusively encompass Asian states: the East Asia rsc, the South Asia rsc, the Middle East rsc, and the Post-Soviet rsc. Buzan and Wæver (2003) had already predicted the merging of the South Asia and East Asia rscs into a supercomplex orbiting an ascending China, leaving the question of whether this scenario would be one of conflict formation or a security regime. The East Asia rsc constitutes a junction of the Cold War Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia rscs and is formed by China, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Taiwan, Australia, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea. Mongolia is the isolating state that separates it from the Post-Soviet rsc and Myanmar is the isolating state that separates it from the South Asia rsc.

The Southeast Asia RSC drew closer to China in the post-Cold War era due to the sudden absence of Soviet power and the resulting recovery of long-standing political-military ties between Beijing and the countries in the region (Buzan and Wæver, 2003). While this relationship tended more towards a security community framework, the relations of the Northeast Asia RSC composed a conflict formation, marked by the Sino-Japanese dynamics and tension between the Koreas. Buzan and Wæver (2003) determine the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and more specifically the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum of 1994, as the pivot for both the institutional linkage and the mitigation of relations between China and Japan, as well as the linkage between these two powers and the states of the Southeast Asia RSC. Cossa and Khanna (1997) highlight that the economic leadership roles of the Asia-Pacific region occupied by Beijing and Tokyo led both to gradually recognize each other as partners beyond rivals. Seoul joined the economic cooperation effort of Yellow Sea nations, especially in the face of the need for a joint solution to Pyongyang's isolation and hostility and its potential impacts on the region.

While conflict formation was disengaged in the East Asia RSC due to the common denominator of regional economic prosperity, the South Asia RSC had a different unfolding. The dominant dynamics of this RSC are polarized by India and Pakistan, rival neighbors whose relationship is marked by a tumultuous past including the Indo-Pakistani wars of 1947, 1965 and 1971 (Marreiro, 2023) and the dispute over the territory of Kashmir (Sultan, 2021). However, the South Asia RSC is also formed by other nations: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Maldives. Afghanistan is the isolating state that separates it from the Middle East RSC, and Nepal is the isolating state that separates it from the East Asia RSC.

The beginning of Chinese involvement in the bipolar dynamics of the South Asia RSC dates back to the 1960s and more specifically to the Sino-Indian War of 1962, when Beijing formulated its famous alliance with Islamabad as a strategy to counter the common rival—New Delhi (Buzan & Wæver, 2003)—. Buzan and Wæver (2003) determine the emerging Sino-Indian security dynamics in the late 1950s as an element of the broader process of formation of the Asian Supercomplex. This security dynamic was intensely permeated by the dispute between Beijing and New Delhi over the border region, which was the cause of the 1962 War (Ganguly & Scobell, 2018; Kaura, 2020; Set & Pant, 2023).

Over the decades following, India sought to establish itself as a power not only in the Indian subcontinent but also in the Asian continent as a whole. Given New Delhi's growing disinterest in the South Asia RSC as its involvement in inter-regional dynamics with Beijing intensified (Buzan, 2002), and considering Islamabad's chronic political instability (Buzan, 2012), it can be said that the South Asia RSC and the India-Pakistan dynamics reached a level of stability. Pakistan, upon recognizing India's increasing self-perception as a major power in its RSC and the asymmetry of material capabilities between itself and its rival, further invested in alignment with China. A contemporary example of this is the China-Pakistan Corridor, part of the Belt and Road Initiative (Khan & Khan, 2021).

The Asian Supercomplex was indeed establishing itself as the international order moved towards a scenario of decentralized globalism (Buzan, 2011). China's position in the international system and its accumulation of material capabilities, aligned with the more modest but consistent rise of an India claiming a place as a global power, allowed, by the end of the 2010s, the generation of a still weak but definitely existing Asian Supercomplex uniting the South Asia and East Asia RSCs (Buzan, 2019).

The legal status of the line of actual control and the intervention of *China's new land borders law*

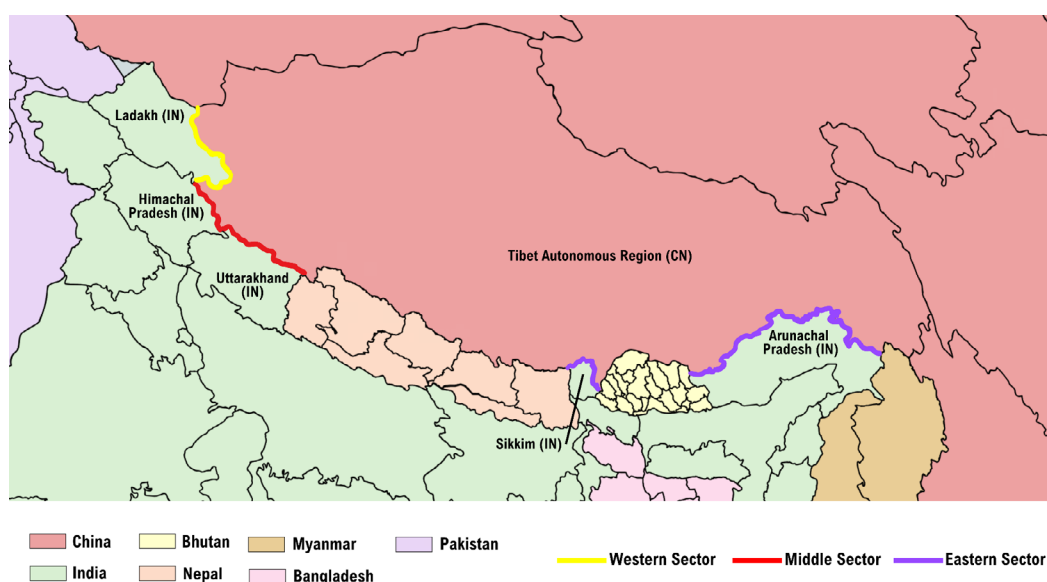
Separated by the natural threshold of the Himalayan Mountain range, China and India share the colonial scar left by the imperialist wave of the 19th and 20th centuries. After all, it was in the Indian state of West Bengal that opium manufactured by the British East India Company was produced and exported to the Chinese province of Canton (Ling et al., 2016). With India's independence in 1947 and the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, both countries simultaneously began consolidating their contemporary national states. According to Ling et al. (2016), confronting the challenges imposed by these historical processes generated a mutual sense of third-world solidarity between New Delhi and Beijing, as seen at the Bandung Conference in 1955. However, such shared similarities did not overcome divergent interests regarding the official determination of the Sino-Indian border.

The Himalayas constitute a region that, although representing a natural barrier, has been a stage for the intertwining and disputes of various Asian peripheral civilizations. Britain used this context to its advantage as the colonial empire of India, creating political alliances with indigenous societies in the region to make it a buffer zone separating its dominions from influences residing on the other side of the mountain range. It was in this imperialist context that Britain, along with the then states of Tibet and China, created the McMahon Line (Reyner, 1965). Resulting from the Simla Conference of 1912, the line aimed to delineate the border between India and Tibet. It is important to note that Beijing never ratified the McMahon Line, viewing it as a British policy that restricted Chinese control over Tibet (Inlow, 1964).

With the annexation of Tibet by China in 1951, however, the entire extent of the Indo-Tibetan border became part of the Sino-Indian border. Raghavan (2018) reports that New Delhi's counter-interference in the face of increased Chinese activities in the Aksai Chin Plateau between 1958 and 1962, and the fruitless nature of attempts at communication between Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (1947-1964) and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai (1949-1976), led to the outbreak of the Sino-Indian War in 1962. The result of this conflict was the creation of the LAC, a designation for what is, according to Ali (2023), the world's longest undemarcated border. First suggested by Enlai in a letter to Nehru in 1959, the LAC currently encompasses disputed regions and is officially recognized by both India and China (Brethouwer et al., 2022). However, Tellis (2020) points out that Beijing and New Delhi do not share complete maps of their respective versions of the LAC. After all, such action would clarify which areas each side actively controls and would complicate future territorial claims.

The status quo of the LAC is understood in this research according to the conception of Brethouwer et al. (2022), which comprises three sectors (see Figure 1): *i*) the western sector, which links the Karakoram Pass to Mount Gya and encompasses both the Chinese-controlled region of Aksai Chin and the Galwan River valley region in the Indian-controlled region of Ladakh situated north of Jammu and Kashmir; *ii*) the middle sector, which extends from Mount Gya to the trijunction with Nepal and is the least contested section of the dispute; and, *iii*) the eastern sector, which includes two disputed territories: the border between the Indian state of Sikkim and the Tibet Autonomous Region, and the former McMahon Line along the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Figure 1. The line of actual control and its three sectors



Source: own elaboration based on Brethouwer et al. (2022)

It was only in 1993 that China and India began legal efforts to build and maintain peace, stability, and tranquility along the LAC through the United Nations Peacemaker (UN Peacemaker) mechanism. The signing of the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas of 1993 is considered a milestone in the quest for joint solutions to the border issue. In it, the parties agreed that dialogue through peaceful and friendly consultations would be the primary recourse, and that under no circumstances should either side use or threaten to use any force. This legal dialogue included four agreements and one protocol in total and extended until the year 2013, as summarized in Table 1.

It is worth noting that while the border relationship between the two countries has been marked by boundary disputes over the last 60 years, this occurred in a controlled manner after 1993. During this period, no events of the magnitude of previous confrontations such as those in Sikkim (1967) and Sumdorong Chu (1987-1988) took place. However, the situation changed with the outbreak of the Doklam crisis in 2017. This event was followed by conflicts in the Galwan Valley in Ladakh in 2020 and the

clash in Tawang in 2022. The incident in Ladakh is particularly significant due to the occurrence of fatalities. According to Wheeler (2019), since the conflict at the Nathu La mountain pass in the Sikkim region in 1967, no deaths of Indian and Chinese soldiers linked to the border dispute had been recorded. The escalation of the dispute jeopardizes the regional stability that, according to Mansingh (1994), the LAC has been providing since its inception.

It is important to highlight that although the dialogues between China and India under the UN Peacemaker framework were interrupted in 2013, the signed documents establish the legal status of the LAC. In this sense, *China's New Land Borders Law*, adopted in 2021 and in effect since January 1, 2022, has consolidated its role in shaping this legal status by regulating the demarcation, security and stability of the country's borders. In fact, China commits in the new law to adhere to the principles of equality, mutual trust and friendly consultation, and to resolve border disputes that have remained from history through negotiations with its neighbors (The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, 2021).

However, the new law constitutes a unilateral legal instrument that contradicts the UN Peacemaker agreements with India by recommending the use of police weapons against intruders for border patrols. Furthermore, by postulating that China will take effective measures to safeguard territorial integrity, preventing and combating any acts that represent a threat, the new law leaves open to interpretation what will be considered a threat. This is especially dangerous since China released a new national map in August 2023. The new map, attached to the website of the Standard Map Service cartographic service, hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources of China, includes as part of Chinese territory the area considered by the status quo built in recent decades as Indian territory in the state of Arunachal Pradesh (Ma, 2023).

The primary reason for Beijing to institute the law was the escalation of border issues with New Delhi in the year 2020 (Panwar, 2022). Ahuja (2021) supports this argument, adding that the timing of the approval of the new law, immediately after the 13th round of military negotiations between India and China—which focused on the impasse in Ladakh and ultimately proved fruitless—and the language employed in the text are reasons for concern for New Delhi.

The securitization of the Sino-Indian border: the context of the consolidation of the Asian Supercomplex

The deterioration of the neighborhood relationship between India and China in recent years can be attributed to three elements of the contemporary context: *i*) the nationalist policies of Xi Jinping, leading China since 2013, and Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India since 2014; *ii*) the emergence of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad); and, *iii*) high-level diplomatic clashes in line with the intensification of border disputes (Ali, 2023). Daldegan et al., (2022), on the other hand, point out the elements of the dispute for influence and pre-eminence in the South Asian area and the naval and arms competition in the Indian Ocean.

Furthermore, India has even more reasons to harbor discontent towards its neighbor, exacerbating relations between the two and causing a particular outcry in national public opinion (Brewster, 2014): *i*) the issue of Tibetan autonomy; *ii*) China's alliance

with Pakistan; *iii*) China's attempts to ally with other key countries in South Asia; *iv*) China's refusal to recognize India's claims to great power status; and, *v*) Chinese activity in the Indian Ocean. All the authors (Ali, 2023; Brewster, 2014; Daldegan et al., 2022) agree on one sensitive point in Sino-Indian relations: the territorial and border disputes. Between 2013 and 2022, China and India engaged in confrontations related to border disputes on seven occasions (see Table 2), a number that exceeds the times conflict escalated in any other period since the Sino-Indian War of 1962 (Ali, 2023).

Chinese incursions in the western sector of the border are strategically planned and may aim for permanent control over specific contested areas (Brethouwer et al., 2022). Brethouwer et al. (2022) documented a total of 80 Chinese incursions in the western sector of the LAC between 2008 and 2020, with 60 of them occurring from 2013 onwards. In the eastern sector, there were a total of 20 incursions from 2008 to 2020, with 15 occurring from 2013 onwards. It is important to note that while there is consistently a higher volume of Chinese incursions in the Ladakh region, the intensification of incursions in the eastern sector is particularly notable from 2013 onwards, which marked the interruption of dialogue between China and India in the UN Peacemaker.

Table 2. Conflicts along the line of actual control (2013–2022)

Year	City/Zone	Region	Context
2013	Depsang	Ladakh	The conflict lasted for 21 days (Ali, 2023) and preceded the 2013 UN Peacemaker agreement. In April of that year, an Indian patrol discovered a Chinese soldier camp established in the Depsang Plain (Joshi, 2013)
2014	Demchok	Ladakh	Demchok was invaded by Chinese troops carrying machinery for road construction (Ali, 2023)
2015	Burtse	Ladakh	The confrontation was sparked by India's decision to dismantle a watchtower built by China, leading to a clash between Indian and Chinese troops (Jash, 2015)
2017	Doklam	Bhutan	Motivated by Beijing's attempt to build a road in Bhutanese territory, the standoff in Doklam strained bilateral relations between China and India (Kaura, 2020)
2020	Galwan	Ladakh	The clash resulted in the deaths of dozens of soldiers from both sides (Chen, 2020) and constituted a severe escalation of regional destabilization promoted by the LAC
2021/2022	Yangtse	Arunachal Pradesh	Ali (2023) points out that there were two clashes in Yangtse: in October 2021 and in December 2022. In 2022, the clashes occurred in Tawang, resulting from another Chinese incursion into an area under Indian control (Rajagopalan, 2022)

Source: own elaboration based on Ali (2023), Chen (2020), Jash (2015), Joshi (2013), Kaura (2020), Rajagopalan (2022)

Despite the increase in the frequency of incursions into disputed territories, the border dispute remained largely dormant until 2017, when the Doklam Crisis erupted. For analytical purposes, the content of the most recent agreement on border defense cooperation between India and China, from 2013, is considered to understand how the conflicts in Doklam (2017), Ladakh (2020) and Tawang (2022) legally contradict what was agreed upon by India and China regarding the LAC in the UN Peacemaker mechanism.

The Doklam crisis in 2017

The standoff on the Doklam Plateau constituted the first real disturbance to the stabilization promoted by the LAC in the 21st century (Kaura, 2020). The conflict began with Beijing's attempt to build a road in the territory of Doklam, originally claimed by Bhutan. New Delhi was contacted by Thimphu in mid-June 2017 to address the issue (Ganguly & Scobell, 2018). Bhutanese authorities claimed that the Chinese army had started construction of a road linking Dokola to the Bhutanese army camp at Zompelri and requested Indian assistance (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, 2017). India, bound by a bilateral treaty in which it commits to help address Bhutan's security concerns (Kaura, 2020), promptly positioned troops in the disputed area. In August 2017, Indian and Chinese military units engaged in direct combat, leading to the withdrawal of the People's Liberation Army of China from the region in the same month.

In their bilateral agreements under the UN Peacemaker framework, China and India commit to sharing information regarding military exercises. Therefore, the activity of the Chinese army in disputed territory without prior notice in an allied country displeased India. However, since the Doklam region is not claimed by India but by Bhutan, it can be considered that the Chinese activity in the region did not concern the Sino-Indian border dispute and therefore did not constitute a violation of bilateral agreements between India and China.

New Delhi was not a primary actor in the Doklam dispute. However, it is important to highlight the proximity of the Doklam region to the eastern sector of the Sino-Indian border dispute, in the area near Sikkim. Therefore, as Xie (2019) points out, if India remained inactive in the face of road construction and the presence of the Chinese army in Bhutanese territory, it would convey an image of vulnerability to Beijing in a region that, as highlighted by Ali (2023), is very close to the Siliguri Corridor, known as the "chicken's neck". This corridor is located in the state of West Bengal and connects the Indian states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya to the rest of India, thus forming a sensitive chokepoint for New Delhi.

India considers the annexation of the former state of Tibet by China as a fait accompli but shows growing concern over Chinese incursions in the Sikkim region and neighboring states Bhutan and Nepal (Kumar, 2020). The Doklam crisis ended up poisoning the contemporary border relationship between China and India, intensifying the feeling of distrust (Kaura, 2020). Despite meetings between Modi and Xi Jinping to discuss the issue between 2018 and 2019, these proved ineffective with the outbreak of the conflict in Ladakh in 2020.

The Ladakh conflict

The clashes in the Galwan River Valley, which occurred in the Ladakh region on June 15, 2020, served to confirm India's contentious relationship with China (Set & Pant, 2023). Kaura (2020) believes that the situation in Ladakh dates back to the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A of the *Indian Constitution* in 2019. With this move, New Delhi transformed Jammu and Kashmir into separate entities and made Ladakh a union

territory to be administered directly by the capital. By controlling the Shaksgam Valley in Pakistani Kashmir and heavily investing in operational connectivity in the Tibetan autonomous regions and Xinjiang, China has been progressively building a position to challenge India in Ladakh and consolidating the strategic importance of Aksai Chin for Beijing (Kaura, 2020).

In April 2020, approximately 50 000 Chinese soldiers in tanks and armored vehicles armed with artillery approached the LAC. Chinese border police groups pressed five points in Ladakh simultaneously: Depsang, Pangong Tso, Kugrang, Charding Nala and Galwan. India reacted swiftly to ensure that China did not advance further into the disputed territory (Joshi, 2022). Chen (2020) even comments that China accused Indian troops of crossing the border twice. In one instance, the parties engaged in direct combat that resulted in the death of 20 Indian soldiers and an uncertain number of Chinese soldiers in the Galwan River valley (Brethouwer et al., 2022; Chen, 2020; Kumar, 2021). Joshi (2022) considers that Beijing's objective was to occupy some regions of Ladakh, rather than conduct a military offensive. However, the deaths in Galwan elevated the event to an undesired yet inevitable level of significance.

Although the patrols involved in the confrontation were indeed unarmed and used stones and pieces of wood (Brethouwer et al., 2022), it can be considered that the human forces of an army are part of its military capabilities. Therefore, the conflict and resulting soldier fatalities constitute a violation of the UN Peacemaker agreements by contradicting Article VIII of the 2013 agreement, which states that both sides shall not use or threaten to use force, avoiding armed conflict if the border defense forces of both sides come face to face in disputed areas of the LAC.

The border militaries of both countries are officially in the process of disengagement (Kumar, 2020). The deterioration in military relations is due to the fatalities of soldiers on both sides and the years of continuous conflicts in the area since then (Rajagopalan, 2022). This disengagement process also contradicts the bilateral agreement between India and China in the 2013 UN Peacemaker agreement, Article II, where both sides committed to maintaining an approach between the border military bodies of the two countries and sharing information, such as intelligence regarding military exercises, aircraft, demolition operations and unmarked mines.

The clashes in Tawang in the year 2022

The state of Arunachal Pradesh is of vital importance to New Delhi. After all, the strategic nature of the region lies not only in its relevance to Indian territorial and water security (Muratbekova, 2018), but also in its population density and cultural and religious significance (Ali, 2023). According to Muratbekova (2018), India occupied the Tawang Monastery—one of the most important Tibetan monasteries and the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama (Naha, 2022)—amid the turmoil caused by China's annexation of Tibet in 1951. Raghavan (2018) notes that during this period, Beijing prioritized its involvement in the Korean War and therefore could not properly respond to the act. However, Beijing's interest in Tawang did not dissipate.

Tawang's ties to Tibet strengthen China's claim to the region. However, Beijing claims the entire state of Arunachal Pradesh, which it considers part of southern Tibet (Naha, 2022). After the conflict in Ladakh in 2020, China turned its attention to

the Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary in the Trashigang district. Located in eastern Bhutan and very close to Tawang, a Trashigang under Chinese control would weaken India's defense system in Arunachal Pradesh. Naha (2022) reiterates that New Delhi needs to work on its relationship with Thimphu, as Beijing has already offered an agreement relinquishing its claim to areas like Pasamlung and Jakarlung in northern Bhutan if Thimphu were to give up some disputed regions to the east—such as Sakteng—. Such an agreement is particularly problematic for New Delhi since Bhutanese territory acts as a buffer between India and China and protects the Siliguri Corridor.

The clashes between the Indian Army and the People's Liberation Army occurred on December 9, 2022, in the mountainous region of Yangtse, east of Tawang (Rajagopalan, 2022). There were about 600 People's Liberation Army members patrolling the region when the incident occurred. Mankikar (2023) believes that Beijing's advance in the region constitutes an attempt to unilaterally change the status quo of the area, and Joshi (2022) warns that the confrontation highlights the need for measures to stabilize the LAC. It can be considered that this clash contradicts Article VIII of the 2013 agreement, as both sides use force and engage in direct combat. Article VII is also contradicted, as its text establishes that the sides should not follow patrols from the opposite side in areas where there is no common understanding of the LAC—Tawang is located in Arunachal Pradesh, controlled by India and claimed by China, as can be seen in Figure 1.

Taken together, the three episodes reveal a progressive transformation in the management of the Sino-Indian border. Doklam demonstrated the extension of Sino-Indian security competition beyond the immediate bilateral boundary; Ladakh represented a qualitative escalation marked by military confrontation and fatalities; and Tawang demonstrated the persistence of this dynamic in the eastern sector. Rather than constituting isolated crises, the three episodes indicate a cumulative deterioration of the mechanisms of confidence-building that had characterized the post-1993 period.

The Asian Supercomplex: a structural analysis

The Sino-Indian relationship in contemporary times is marked by a process of securitization concerning their border, evident in the recurrence of actions inconsistent with the usual political and legal procedures established bilaterally under the UN Peacemaker framework, as seen in the conflicts of Doklam, Ladakh and Tawang. Taking into consideration that borders are considered by Buzan (2003b) a structural element indicating the likely pattern of evolution of a RSC through its processes of securitization and desecuritization, the politicization of the border issue between China and India suggests the shaping of an Asian Supercomplex.

In the 1990s, the regional security configuration of the post-Cold War Asia-Pacific was consolidated. India, in its bipolar dynamics with Pakistan and preeminence in the Indian subcontinent, remained in the South Asian rsc. China, on the other hand, focused on its dynamics with Japan and its preeminence in Southeast Asia. During this period, China and India underwent a process of desecuritization of their borders, initiated in 1993 with negotiations under the UN Peacemaker, which ensured two decades of stability. However, Buzan and Wæver (2003) already considered, in the early 2000s, that an Asian Supercomplex would emerge in the Asia-Pacific region, with the Sino-Indian border being one of its main indicators.

From 2013 onwards, the Sino-Indian border entered a new phase of securitization, culminating in the Doklam crisis in 2017. Not only did China and India resume their confrontation in the border region, but their dispute also involved a third country interested in the regional balance of power—Bhutan—. The ongoing disputes along the entire border region since 2013 escalated to the point where, in 2020, China again faced India on the western border in Ladakh, resulting in casualties on both sides—something that hadn't occurred since 1967—. From 2021 to 2022, border conflicts continued in Yangtse. The processes of securitization and desecuritization of China and India in the border region today are therefore inseparable.

Applying the three key components to the structure of a regional complex as postulated by Buzan (2003a) in the case of the Sino-Indian border, we can confirm the evolution of the rscs of South and East Asia towards the formation of the Asian Supercomplex. Regarding the first element, which considers the arrangement of units different from each other, it is observed that the existence of a process of securitization and desecuritization on the border between China, a power of the East Asian RSC and India, a power of the South Asian RSC, indicates a strong interaction between countries of distinct RSCs.

Regarding the second element, which concerns patterns of friendship and enmity, there is a clear interruption of negotiations on the border under the UN Peacemaker in 2013 after twenty years of negotiation. The absence of negotiations was followed by the intensification of conflicts and the implementation of *China's New Land Borders Law* in 2021. Therefore, it can be stated, exclusively regarding the border issue, that patterns of friendship and enmity have fluctuated over time.

Finally, regarding the third element, which considers the state of power distribution among the important units, the growth of Beijing and New Delhi in terms of population, economy and military spending is notable—factors that interfere with the management of the border conflict—. China and India are currently the two largest populations not only in the Asia-Pacific region but in the world. While India is home to 1.42 billion inhabitants, China ranks second with 1.41 billion (World Bank Group, n. d.-c). Moreover, both are major economies in the Asia-Pacific region. While China has accumulated 17.96 trillion USD in gross domestic product (GDP), India ranks third with 3.39 trillion USD, surpassed regionally only by China and Japan and ahead of economic powers such as Australia, South Korea and Indonesia (World Bank Group, n. d.-a). China and India are also leaders in military expenditures in the Asia-Pacific, with expenditures of 293.35 billion USD and 76.6 billion USD respectively (World Bank Group, n. d.-b).

The Regional Security Complex Theory determines that securitization processes are essentially open and subject to the influence of a series of factors and focuses on the political processes by which security issues are constituted. In this sense, Ali (2023) identifies that some of the border conflicts between China and India since 2013 occurred concurrently with high-level diplomatic commitments, gaining significant media coverage for this reason. This is an element that represents the distribution of power between the units China and India in diplomatic avenues. The Depsang standoff in 2013 preceded the first visit to India by then-Chinese Premier Li Keqiang. The Demchok standoff coincided with a banquet offered by Narendra Modi to Xi Jinping in 2014. The Doklam standoff, finally, erupted ten days before Modi's visit to the United States in 2017.

The intensification of border conflicts since the Doklam crisis in 2017 can therefore be seen as a clear indicator of the gradual consolidation of the Asian Supercomplex. It is important to note, however, that the Sino-Indian border is not an isolated element regarding interactions between the East and South Asian rscs and conflicts between China and India. The Belt and Road Initiative, for example, also has significant influence on the securitization of the Sino-Indian relationship and demonstrates the rearrangement of different units. After all, Beijing's project increases its influence in the South Asian rsc and weakens New Delhi in its geographically advantageous position. India's absence from the initiative and the deepening of China's relations with Bangladesh and Pakistan, in both economic and strategic scope, generate strong interaction between the South and East Asian rscs. While China gains more penetration in the South Asian rsc, India approaches the powers of East Asia, Australia and Japan, as an attempt to counterbalance its neighbor.

Another example is the emergence of the Quad, which demonstrates rearrangements of units also between India and other powers of the East Asian rsc: Japan and Australia. By including the United States and its military presence in the region, the Quad also shows that the global level has a significant influence on the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific and is part of the strategic calculation of the Asian Supercomplex. The emergence of tensions in other Chinese territorial disputes concurrently with the escalation in the Sino-Indian dispute, such as in the Senkaku and Diaoyudao islands currently controlled by Japan, may indicate Beijing's discontent with the emergence of the Quad. After all, security alignment among Asia-Pacific powers with each other and with the United States weakens the position of the new global power in its own region.

These dynamics indicate that the Sino-Indian border dispute is not merely a bilateral security issue. China's increasing involvement in South Asian security dynamics and India's growing engagement with East Asian powers create sustained security interdependence across the boundaries of the two rscs. The border dispute therefore functions as one of the mechanisms through which the previously distinct security dynamics of South and East Asia become increasingly interconnected.

Conclusion

This study aimed to assess the gradual formation of the Asian Supercomplex through an analysis of the contemporary securitization process of the LAC. Barry Buzan identifies borders as a structural element of reference for assessing significant changes and identifying patterns of probable evolution of Regional Security Complexes. The results of the analysis of the three key components of the structure of a regional complex, identified by Barry Buzan, point to the gradual consolidation of an Asian Supercomplex.

First, a different arrangement of the units of the East Asian and South Asian rscs can be observed in the process of securitization and desecuritization along the Sino-Indian border. The agreements concluded between China and India between 1993 and 2013 established mechanisms aimed at maintaining peace, confidence-building, military restraint and consultation between the two countries. Although these arrangements did not resolve the territorial dispute, they contributed to a period of relative stability

and institutionalized management of the border. From 2013 onwards, however, this pattern was increasingly disrupted by recurrent confrontations, culminating in the Doklam crisis in 2017, the clashes in Ladakh in 2020, and the confrontation in Tawang in 2022. These episodes indicate an intensification of the securitization of the border issue and a progressive deterioration of the mechanisms of confidence-building that had characterized the post-1993 period.

Second, changes are noted in the patterns of friendship and enmity between China and India regarding the border between 2017 and 2022. The three episodes analyzed demonstrate that the deterioration of Sino-Indian relations cannot be understood solely in terms of isolated border incidents. Doklam highlighted the strategic relevance of the Sino-Indian relationship for South Asian security dynamics; Ladakh represented a qualitative escalation marked by military confrontation and fatalities; and Tawang demonstrated the persistence of this dynamic in the eastern sector. Taken together, these episodes indicate a cumulative transformation in the management of the border, in which cooperation and confidence-building were increasingly accompanied by perceptions of threat, military preparedness and strategic competition. At the same time, Sino-Indian rivalry remains issue-specific and coexists with cooperation in other domains, indicating that the relationship has not become exclusively defined by enmity.

Third, the distribution of power among the units relevant to the analysis has changed due to the growth of China's and India's individual capabilities. This transformation is particularly relevant because both countries occupy increasingly important positions in the Asian regional security architecture. China's growing involvement in South Asian affairs, including through the Belt and Road Initiative, intersects with India's increasing engagement with Japan, Australia and the United States, including through the Quad. These developments demonstrate that the security interactions between China and India extend beyond their bilateral border dispute and increasingly connect the security dynamics of South and East Asia. The result is not the disappearance of the two RSCs, but the increasing interdependence of their security dynamics.

Therefore, after applying Regional Security Complex Theory as a theoretical-conceptual and methodological instrument, this article concludes that the intensification of conflicts along the Sino-Indian border has contributed to the consolidation of an Asian Supercomplex emerging from increased inter-regional interaction between the Regional Security Complexes of South and East Asia. The analysis suggests that the securitization of the LAC should not be understood solely as a bilateral territorial dispute. Rather, the intensification of Sino-Indian security interactions constitutes one of the mechanisms through which the previously distinct security dynamics of South and East Asia become increasingly interconnected. In this sense, the Sino-Indian border represents an important mechanism through which an emerging Asian Supercomplex becomes increasingly consolidated. The findings therefore do not suggest that the Asian Supercomplex emerged exclusively as a consequence of the securitization of the LAC. Rather, they indicate that the intensification of this securitization has contributed to strengthening a supercomplex that was already emerging as a result of broader transformations in the Asian security order.

This conclusion also reinforces the relevance of borders as an analytical element within Regional Security Complex Theory. The Sino-Indian border illustrates how changes in the management of a territorial dispute can have implications beyond the

immediate geographical area in which they occur, particularly when the states involved occupy central positions in different but increasingly interconnected regional security structures. The LAC therefore operates not only as a contested territorial boundary but also as a point of interaction through which broader patterns of amity, enmity and power distribution across South and East Asia become increasingly interconnected.

Finally, the evolution of talks between China and India regarding the LAC, which resumed in 2024, raises further questions that could be explored in future research. The Sino-Indian border issue is unlikely to be permanently resolved in the near future and therefore requires continued investigation by scholars working on this research agenda. Future studies could examine whether the resumption of negotiations contributes to renewed confidence-building and partial desecuritization or whether the structural changes identified in this study continue to reinforce the inter-regional security dynamics associated with the Asian Supercomplex.

References

- Ahuja, U. (2021, November 18). *China's new border law: a concern for India*. Observer Research Foundation. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/chinas-new-border-law>
- Ali, G. (2023). Territorial disputes, the role of leaders and the impact of Quad: a triangular explanation of China-India border escalations. *The Pacific Review*, 37(3), 533-555. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2023.2185662>
- Baumeister, R. F. & Leary, M. R. (1997). Writing narrative literature reviews. *Review of General Psychology*, 1(3), 311-320. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.1.3.311>
- Brethouwer, J.-T., Fokkink, R., Greene, K., Lindelauf, R., Tornquist, C. & Subrahmanian, V. S. (2022). Rising tension in the Himalayas: a geospatial analysis of Chinese border incursions into India. *PLOS ONE*, 17(11), Article e0274999. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0274999>
- Brewster, D. (2014). Beyond the 'String of Pearls': is there really a Sino-Indian security dilemma in the Indian Ocean? *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 10(2), 133-149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19480881.2014.922350>
- Buzan, B. (2002). South Asia moving towards transformation: emergence of India as a great power. *International Studies*, 39(1), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002088170203900101>
- Buzan, B. (2003a). Regional security complex theory in the post-Cold War world. In F. Söderbaum & T. M. Shaw (Eds.), *Theories of new regionalism* (pp. 140-159). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403938794_8
- Buzan, B. (2003b). Security architecture in Asia: the interplay of regional and global levels. *The Pacific Review*, 16(2). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0951274032000069660>
- Buzan, B. (2011). The South Asian security complex in a decentring world order: reconsidering *regions* and *powers* ten years on. *International Studies*, 48(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002088171204800101>

- Buzan, B. (2012). The geopolitical reconstruction of Asia: a reflection ten years on from regions and powers. *Politique étrangère*, 77(2), 331-344. <https://doi.org/10.3917/pe.122.0331>
- Buzan, B. (2019, April). Afterword to: 'Networking hegemony-alliance dynamics in East Asia'. *International Politics*, 57(2), 285-289. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-019-00184-w>
- Buzan, B., & Wæver, O. (2003). *Regions and powers. The structure of international security*. Cambridge University Press.
- Buzan, B., Wæver, O. & de Wilde, J. (1998). *Security. A new framework for analysis*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Chen, J. (2020). Financial and political impacts of AIIB on China's Belt and Road Initiative. *Academic Journal of Business & Management*, 2(6), 45-56. <https://francispress.com/papers/2701>
- Colley, T. & Van Noort, C. (2022). *Strategic narratives, ontological security and global policy. Responses to China's belt and road initiative*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-00852-8>
- Cossa, R. A. & Khanna, J. (1997). East Asia: economic interdependence and regional security. *International Affairs*, 73(2), 219-234. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2623825>
- Daldegan, W., Bretanha, J. A. F. & Rodrigues, J. M. S. A. (2022). Balança de poder asiática: uma análise das relações securitárias e de defesa sino-indianas. *Conjuntura Global*, 11(2), 78-95. <https://revistas.ufpr.br/conjglobal/article/view/86791>
- Ganguly, S. & Scobell, A. (2018). The Himalayan impasse: Sino-Indian rivalry in the wake of Doklam. *The Washington Quarterly*, 41(3), 177-190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2018.1519369>
- Hall, I. (2025). India's China strategy after Galwan: Minilateral and multilateral soft balancing in the Indo-Pacific. *International Affairs*, 101(5), 1815-1832. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaf069>
- Heiduk, F. & Wirth, C. (2023, June). The quadrilateral security dialogue between Australia, India, Japan and the United States. More symptom than solution to the problem of growing instability in the Indo-Pacific. *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik Comment*, (31). <https://doi.org/10.18449/2023C31>
- Inlow, E. B. (1964). The McMahon Line. *Journal of Geography*, 63(6), 261-272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221346408985279>
- Jabareen, Y. (2009). Building a conceptual framework: philosophy, definitions, and procedure. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(4), 49-62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800406>
- Jash, A. (2015, November 16). The "boundary settlement" between India and China: a dilemma. *South Asia Democratic Forum Comment*, (11). <https://www.sadf.online/comment-nr-11-the-boundary-settlement-between-india-and-china-a-dilemma/>
- Joshi, M. (2013, May 14). *Depsang incursion: decoding the Chinese signal*. Observer Research Foundation. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/depsang-incursion-decoding-the-chinese-signal>
- Joshi, M. (2022). *Understanding the India-China border. The enduring threat of war in High Himalaya*. Hurst.

- Kaura, V. (2020). India's relations with China from the Doklam crisis to the Galwan tragedy. *India Quarterly*, 76(4), 501-518. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0974928420961768>
- Khan, K. H. (2023). China-India rivalry and the economic corridors. *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 8(9), 252-258. <https://doi.org/10.36348/sjhss.2023.v08i09.003>
- Khan, Z. & Khan, Z. (2021). *India's evolving deterrent force posturing in South Asia. Temptation for pre-emptive strikes, power projection, and escalation dominance*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-6961-6>
- Kumar, D. (2021). Multilateral initiatives and security dilemma: explaining India's choice to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). *Strategic Analysis*, 45(3), 222-236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2021.1920496>
- Kumar, S. G. (2020, July-September). India-China border agreements. *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, 150(621), 339-350. <https://www.usiofindia.org/publication-journal/india-china-border-agreements.html>
- Ling, L. H. M., Abdenur, A. E., Banerjee, P., Kurian, N., Lama, M. P. & Bo, L. (2016). *India China. Rethinking borders and security*. University of Michigan Press. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.6577564>
- Ma, Z. (2023, August 28). *2023 edition of national map released*. China Daily. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202308/28/WS64ec91c2a31035260b81ea5b.html>
- Mankikar, K. A. (2023, July 28). *China in South Asia: Cold War, hot peace along the India-China border*. Observer Research Foundation. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/china-in-south-asia>
- Mansingh, S. (1994). India-China relations in the post-Cold War era. *Asian Survey*, 34(3), 285-300. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2644986>
- Marreiro, M. M. A. (2023). A Índia para além do sul da Ásia: a diplomacia de defesa indiana na região do Oceano Índico. *Conjuntura Global*, 12(1), 43-63. <https://doi.org/10.5380/cg.v12i1.85792>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade. (2017, June 29). *Press release*. Royal Government of Bhutan. <https://www.mfa.gov.bt/press-release-272/>
- Muratbekova, A. (2018). The Sino-Indian border issue as a factor for the development of bilateral relations. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 3(1), 3-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2057891117690453>
- Naha, A. (2022, January-March). The Himalayan discord: Bhutan in India's strategic calculus. *World Affairs*, 26(1), 90-103. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48674369>
- Nuruzzaman, M. (2022, December). Conflicts, strategic divergences and the survival of economic groupings: will China-India rivalry make BRICS obsolete? *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 7(4), 1025-1044. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20578911221108800>
- Panwar, Y. (2022, February). *China's new land border law. A comparative analysis of regional consequences* (A. Satluri, Ed.). Centre for Security Studies. https://www.cssjsia.com/_files/ugd/348fae_a26c5a2444d44928bf3d3e1de4d2e171.pdf
- Paul, T. V. (2024). The Sino-Indian rivalry and balance-of-power theory: explaining India's underbalancing. *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs*, 11(4), 451-474. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23477970241282065>
- Raghavan, S. (2018). The security dilemma and India-China relations. *Asian Security*, 15(1), 60-72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2019.1539818>

- Rajagopalan, R. P. (2022, December 20). *Explaining the latest clashes on the Sino-Indian border*. Observer Research Foundation. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/explaining-the-latest-clashes-on-the-sino-indian-border>
- Reyner, A. S. (1965). A questão da fronteira Sino-Indiana. *Afro-Ásia*, (1), 69-85. <https://doi.org/10.9771/aa.v0i1.20233>
- Set, S. & Pant, H. V. (2023, February). The Himalayan barrier: India-China relations since Galwan. *China Review*, 23(1), 135-159. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48717991>
- Sharma, M. (2019). India's approach to China's Belt and Road Initiative-opportunities and concerns. *The Chinese Journal of Global Governance*, 5(2), 136-152. <https://doi.org/10.1163/23525207-12340041>
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: an overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333-339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>
- Sultan, A. (2021). Changing regional security complexes, rising powers and the future of strategic stability in South Asia. *Strategic Thought*, 3, 97-112. <https://strategicthought.ndu.edu.pk/site/article/view/28>
- Tellis, A. J. (2020, June 4). *Hustling in the Himalayas: the Sino-Indian border confrontation*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2020/06/hustling-in-the-himalayas-the-sino-indian-border-confrontation>
- The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China. (2021, October 23). *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo ludi guojie fa [Land Border Law of the People's Republic of China]*. http://www.npc.gov.cn/c2/c30834/202110/t20211023_314278.html
- United Nations Peacemaker (UN Peacemaker). (2024). *Peace Agreements Search*. <https://peacemaker.un.org/en/areas-of-work/peace-agreements-database-and-language-of-peace-tool/peace-agreements-search>
- Verma, R. (2024). India-China rivalry, border dispute, border standoffs, and crises. *India Review*, 23(5), 397-408. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736489.2024.2423996>
- Wheeler, T. (2019). Clarify and respect the line of actual control. In M. Krepon, T. Wheeler & L. Dowling (Eds.), *Off ramps from confrontation in Southern Asia* (pp. 111-125). Stimson. <https://www.stimson.org/2019/clarify-and-respect-line-actual-control/>
- World Bank Group. (n. d.-a). *GDP (current US\$)*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD>
- World Bank Group. (n. d.-b). *Military expenditure (current USD)*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.CD>
- World Bank Group. (n. d.-c). *Population, total*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>
- Xie, C. (2019). How status-seeking states can cooperate: explaining India-China rapprochement after the Doklam standoff. *India Quarterly*, 75(2), 172-189. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0974928419841771>

Julia Rudrigues

Brazilian. Master's candidate, Graduate Program in Political Science at the Universidade Federal de Pelotas, Brazil. Bachelor's Degree in International Relations at the Universidade Federal de Pelotas. Research lines: international political economy and international security and defense. Recent publication: Rudrigues, J. & Menezes, C. (2026). O papel do conflito entre o Estado e os cartéis na crise aguda de violência e revitimização da mulher no México: uma análise de conjuntura. *Revista Intellector*, 23(45), 77-90. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20206183>

William Daldegan

Brazilian. PhD in International Relations at the San Tiago Dantas-Unesp/Unicamp/PUC-SP, Brazil. Professor and researcher at the Institute of Philosophy, Sociology, and Politics; International Relations Department; and Graduate Program in Political Science at the Universidade Federal de Pelotas, Brazil. Research lines: international political economy, contemporary international politics, international development and international negotiations. Recent publication: Daldegan, W. & De Borba, V. (2023). The development concept in BRICS: an analysis of projects financed by the NDB. *International Organisations Research Journal*, 18(4), 7-33. <https://doi.org/10.17323/1996-7845-2023-04-01>