

# Has India Given Adequate Response To Chinese Threat?

—By Wing Commander Dinesh Mathur, VSM (Retd.)

The primary aim of a group discussion is to arrive at some point of agreement or valid decision, and its purpose is to obtain various shades of opinion and ideas on the subject or topic under consideration. When a group of candidates is subjected to group discussion, its focus immediately shifts to assessing various attitudes of participating candidates. Today, most organisations have adopted the group discussion methodology as a tool, which is an essential part of their process of selection. This approach is quite logical since job contents of a modern professional demand that not only should a manager possess the ability to express his ideas in a convincing manner, but also provide a fair opportunity to others to convey their thoughts in a congenial atmosphere. In the present times, ability of an executive to convince others, and also get convinced by others, has emerged as a pivotal personality trait, which has become almost indispensable for a team leader.

During the process of selection of managers for a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU), 10 candidates were called to participate in a group discussion. The candidates arrived wearing a formal dress and were asked to sit in a semi-circle. This was done primarily to ensure that assessors could hear and closely observe the candidates while they speak. Assessors are required to not only carefully listen to what candidates are speaking, but also observe their body language and mannerism while they hold the discussion. Candidates were thoroughly briefed that they were at liberty to speak as many times as they wished, and as much as they wanted to speak. But, they must ensure that all candidates get a fair chance to air their views. They must discuss in an orderly manner and only one person must speak at a time. Candidates were given 25-30 minutes to complete the group discussion. They were offered four topics and were asked



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to select one of the topics for discussion after mutual agreement. The above topic was chosen for discussion by this group. Thereafter, the group discussion proceeded in the following manner:

**Candidate No. 9 :** Good morning friends. Hope all of you are feeling good this morning. We have been given a very current and hot topic for our discussion. I am sure all of you are waiting to give your ideas on this rather controversial topic. When we talk of India's response to Chinese threat, I think, it has two major dimensions. One pertains to our response to the ongoing stand-off, and the other dealing with devising a strategy for the long-term threat posed by China. Even though India has had very cordial ancient cultural relations with China, after India-China war in 1962, relations between the two nations did not remain friendly due to a number of pinpricks by China. In the past, India has been deliberately subscribing to a policy of restraint towards China. However, subsequent to Doklam standoff in 2017, things have further deteriorated. Finally, India-China relations reached its lowest

ebb in June 2020 after Galwan clash, and even presently, China continues to pose a huge threat to India.

**Candidate No. 2 :** I think to put things in perspective, we should know as to how India-China relations have reached this sad stage. After all, we are neighbours and two big powers of Asia. Don't you all think we need to explore ways and means to live peacefully?

**Candidate No. 1 :** Yes, quite right. India and China together have almost 38% of world population and the two are also world's fastest growing economies. India and China share a 3045 km-long border, but the main problem is that China does not accept the Line of Actual Control (LAC) between the two countries. After India became independent, it has been making consistent efforts to live peacefully with China. One would recall the Nehru-era when Hindi-Cheeni Bhai-Bhai slogans were made immensely popular in our country. India also did not deliberately oppose China annexing Tibet in 1950. However, later in 1959, after Tibetan uprising, a few disputes did take place and India's decision to give asylum to Dalai Lama was also not liked by China. All these developments made things worse for India-China relations.

**Candidate No. 4 :** I agree with you on this. All these developments eventually led to India-China war in 1962. In fact, China under Mao had decided to 'teach India a lesson' after India was upgrading some of its frontier posts. This was China's open expression of its unfortunate belief in display of raw power. India was totally taken aback by China's behaviour and had to suffer a humiliating defeat. Yet another low in India-China relations was witnessed when a huge military standoff took between the two countries in Doklam in 2017, when India objected to building of a road by China in the border area. India did so because this road-building had strategic connotations for India's security. China was not expecting such

a bold response from India on this occasion.

**Candidate No. 10 :** I think we have nicely covered the background information which was needed to understand the current threat posed by China.

**Candidate No. 3 :** Can some friend tell us why China is behaving in such a manner and has India done anything to aggravate this situation?

**Candidate No. 1 :** Friends, the basic fact is that during the last 70 years or so, China has made tremendous progress in military and economic fields and this progress is especially remarkable after 1976. China has made notable efforts to build up its arsenal, and currently its arms exports are more than \$20 billion, which makes China world's 5th biggest arms supplier. After achieving all this, China has now adopted a very dominating attitude, not only pertaining to India, but also a host of other countries. Today, China has border disputes with Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam, Singapore, South Korea, North Korea, Myanmar, Mongolia, Bhutan, Nepal, etc. China wants to somehow achieve its aims by using its economic and military power and has not treated international agreements and treaties with the respect these deserve. To my mind, that has been the main reason for most disputes China is presently saddled with. I am sure you all would agree with me on this?

**Candidate No. 4 :** Presently, China is the pre-eminent power in the Indo-Pacific and is even rivalling the United States globally. China wants to gain control over Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh, which China asserts are her territories that were taken away from China through "unequal treaties" in the past. This assertion obviously poses a big threat to India, as China wants to regain her glorious past by acquiring these territories. India obviously cannot give away these areas to China and this situation has been the main reason for tensions between India and China. Apart from this, China has taken a number of other actions as well to annoy India. Even in the recent past, India did reach out to China to build cooperative and peaceful relations, but China continues to display her military power and domineering attitude.

**Candidate No. 9 :** It appears that China wants to show to the world that it can suppress a huge country like India and this will establish her military might.

Due to this reason, Chinese military intrusions have increased a great deal in the recent past. Not only China has become more aggressive on India-China borders, but it is also displaying similar attitude in the Indo-Pacific region, especially in South China Sea. The main issue is that China is unilaterally attempting to alter the status quo in eastern Ladakh in violation of all bilateral agreements. Other problems with China are the issues of the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passing through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, the current turmoil in Afghanistan and the increasing threat of terrorism coming from this region. All these issues pose multiple threats to Indian security and territorial integrity.

**Candidate No. 8 :** But, since India is having so many serious issues with China, what are we doing about it? Can some friend tell us what all actions India has taken to meet Chinese threat?

**Candidate No. 6 :** Friends, unfortunately, for a long time, India believed in the strategy that inaccessibility on our side of border will, in fact, discourage China from intruding across the borders. But, with the current technological advancements, this is not the situation now. The fact remains that it is only during the last 15 years or so that Indian approach has undergone a big change and India is now paying adequate attention to building its border infrastructure. More so, since the Galwan clash in June 2020, the pace of Indian border infrastructure development has quickened and India has made multiple efforts to improve its military strength as well as foreign collaborations to effectively meet the Chinese threat.

**Candidate No. 2 :** Yes, you are right. But, Indian infrastructure projects usually suffer due to bureaucratic delays as well as problems of environmental clearances. There are economic constraints as well. Moreover, there are inter-ministerial conflicts and similar other issues. After all, India is a democracy and it cannot keep pace with Chinese of way working. Am I right?

**Candidate No. 9 :** Friends, China's superior infrastructure is the net result of China's years of investment and due to the fact that China enjoys an easier topography of the Tibetan plateau. China is quietly developing dual-use infrastructure to vastly improve her military mobility and striking power. This is in addition to the fact that China has already deployed large number of her

forces on the entire India-China border. China has recently built a new bridge across the Pangong Tso as well as additional troop shelters, gun positions, helipads and jetties in the areas between Finger-8 and its military bases at Sirijap-1 and 2. So, all these developments pose a serious threat to India.

**Candidate No. 7 :** All this appears quite substantial and are presently big challenges for our Army and Air Force.

**Candidate No. 1 :** Yes, this bridge across Pangong Tso, which connects one of the five stand-off points, would vastly improve Chinese troop movements. I would like to inform that this is not the only incident of China building infrastructure in the border area. In fact, since 1999, China has been constructing infrastructure in Tibet, which includes building of a number of roads, railway lines, airports and helipads along the entire Bhutan-China and India-China borders. These activities have gained momentum since Chinese President Mr. Xi Jinping started military reforms in 2015. In fact, what is more worrisome for India is the fact that China has plans to build much more infrastructure in the coming years by building highways and railway lines along India-China border near Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh. China has also constructed a large number of helipads and heliports in south Tibet very close to Indian border. All this would help China to quickly bring troops in this area to counter Indian forces, if need arises. Don't you think all this is posing a very serious threat to India?

**Candidate number 10 :** That is really a big challenge for Indian armed forces. We need to gear up rather fast to counter the Chinese threat.

**Candidate No. 8 :** Not only this, China has planned to build quite a few airports and railway lines under their Five-Year Plan. This new infrastructure would help China provide much improved logistical support to Chinese army at the time of any conflict with Indian forces. All this is being done so that China can assert her sovereignty over the disputed areas vis-a-vis India. It is pretty obvious that China is making all preparations to threaten India to hand over territories, which China claims belong to her. I think international community must condemn such unlawful actions of China in no uncertain terms.

**Candidate No. 4 :** It is quite obvious now that India and China are presently

engaged in an infrastructure war at the India-China border. The fact remains that India's border infrastructure is much better than before, but China remains far ahead. I think we must accept that China is much ahead of India—both in terms of military power and economic strength. So, India needs to plan its strategy carefully with the help of foreign military powers and enter into military collaborations. In terms of economy, India is also a large and growing economy, and I think, it should be able to meet this huge challenge.

**Candidate No. 6 :** China has been putting pressure on India not only by displaying her military power, but also in other international forums. It has doubled its efforts to deny India membership of international bodies like the Nuclear Suppliers Group and is extending very strong help to Pakistan.

**Candidate No. 5 :** All this is understood, but how does India plan to meet this big challenge. I am sure a country of India's size and population can't be threatened in this manner by China. It is obvious that by doing so, China wants to show to the world that she is the undisputed power in this region and also wants to rival the US globally.

**Candidate No. 4 :** Friends, in the recent past, India did approach China and made attempts to build peaceful relations, but China did not pay any heed to all such attempts. In fact, Chinese intrusions into Indian territory kept on increasing on a regular basis. Therefore, now India has appropriately risen to the occasion and has recently entered into several bilateral and multilateral arrangements like Quad with a view to checking China's aggressive behaviour in the region. India is also seeking cooperation from European powers like France and others.

**Candidate No. 2 :** Yes, quite right. India is now working with the US, Japan and Australia to effectively prevent China from increasing her influence in the Indian Ocean. India has also recently purchased some military equipment like S-400 radar systems, etc. from Russia to augment her military strength. Even though, the US did object to these purchases from Russia, but eventually India did have her way. These radar systems have already been deployed on the India-China border areas now.

**Candidate No. 7 :** But, knowing China's military and economic strength, is India ready for a full-fledged war with

China and Pakistan at the same time? Should India go for this option?

**Candidate No. 9 :** Yet, another major issue is the fact that Chinese leader Mr. Xi Jinping has made recovery of the so-called 'disputed areas', which are Indian territories, as his personal agenda to give China its self-defined old glory. Therefore, he is leading China towards achieving this goal by displaying China's aggressive attitude and military power to threaten India.

**Candidate No. 1 :** So far India has rightly avoided falling into the Chinese trap of getting provoked to start a war. It is quite satisfying to observe that India has handled the present standoff at Ladakh in a bold manner. But, experts opine that India needs to devise an effective long-term strategy to deal with China. Even though India has entered into a number of bilateral and multilateral arrangements, it must be absolutely clear about expectations as well as limitations of these arrangements. This is all the more significant since India presently faces a double challenge from China and Pakistan/Afghanistan. In view of this new challenge, India needs to formulate a comprehensive National Security Strategy, which must take into account India's own military strength, as well as support it would receive from other countries during the time of a conflict.

**Candidate No. 6 :** Are we presently prepared to deal with China, knowing the China's military and economic strength? Can somebody throw some light on this aspect also?

**Candidate No. 4 :** Yes, it is a very pertinent question currently. After facing a 20-month long military standoff with China in eastern Ladakh, India has gone for a huge modernisation drive to acquire new military equipment. The present focus is on procuring long-range weapons and night-fighting capabilities, multi-capacity drones and early-detecting and targeting systems, etc. Presently, our Army is in the process of purchasing equipment worth Rs. 1.37 lakh crore. Indian Air Force has recently purchased Rafale aircraft and Indian Navy is also in the process of acquiring more equipment.

**Candidate No. 8 :** Yes, I think all this is quite encouraging. I am sure India can certainly handle this. But, we need a lot of planning in terms of military modernisation and build up international cooperation to support us.

**Candidate No. 1 :** Friends, we all know that China is a much bigger power and India can't match China in economic

terms, but by strategic thinking and adequate preparation to develop appropriate capabilities, India can certainly give a befitting reply to China. We all know that Indian armed forces are one of the best in the world and they will certainly rise to the occasion, if need arises.

**Candidate No. 9 :** Friends, time allotted to us for the discussion is over and we all had a very fruitful exchange of thoughts on this important topic. We agree that stupendous rise of China has made her aggressive and dominating both on India-China border and in the South China Sea. India did make efforts to live peacefully with China, but the latter is out to display her military strength and deal with situations in her own way, which is not as per international law. Therefore, India is making adequate preparations to deal with China by taking international support and modernising her Army.

Thank you friends. Have a good day.

## Critical Analysis of Candidates' Performance:

### Good : Candidate No. 1, 4 and 9

*These candidates have shown good awareness of the topic and spoke with confidence. Other candidates listened to them with attention and did not dispute or contradict points raised by them. It became quite obvious that they had made adequate preparation and updated their knowledge on this topic. They have made good contribution to bring out all important aspects of the subject. Due to all these reasons, their performance has been assessed as 'Good'.*

### Average : Candidate No. 2, 6 and 8

*These candidates did contribute to take the group discussion further, but their participation remained limited only. They have displayed limited knowledge of the topic and their inadequate preparation was fairly visible. Owing to their limited awareness of the topic, they also lacked sufficient confidence to air their views. If prepared adequately, they could have performed much better. Due to all these reasons, their performance has been assessed as 'Average'.*

### Below Average : Candidate No. 3, 5, 7 and 10

*These candidates barely made any contribution to take the group discussion to a logical conclusion. They did speak a few times, but merely to show their presence. In fact, they either asked other candidates to speak or agreed and appreciated them. They clearly did not prepare the topic and hence were not able to contribute in an adequate manner. Due to all these reasons, their performance has been assessed as 'Below Average'.*

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