Lessons from Doklam

What is the issue?

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- The India - China standoff in Doklam is now resolved with diplomatic efforts.
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- However, the turn of events calls for India to pay attention to some larger questions on our military strength and support of other powers.
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What should India learn from the Doklam issue?

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- **Army strength** - India has to look into the relative strength of its military power as against that of China's.
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- With due acknowledgement to the professional Indian armed forces, the reality is that they do not outweigh the Chinese in a conflict scenario.
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- India's military strength was sufficient only to make a defensive response to the whole issue.
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- **Infrastructure** - The high density of infrastructure on the Chinese side has forced India to respond with the Line of Control (LoC) mindset in a disputed territory where India has strong claims.
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- Here again, India limited itself to a defensive position, as it feared of losing some territory.
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- It thus did not choose to draw the Chinese in and then inflict punitive losses.
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- The infrastructure on the Indian side, both strategic railway lines and important roads, has shown no significant progress over the years.
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- **Military preparedness** - India's military preparedness in this context is weaker in relation to its opponent.

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- The delay in military modernisation schemes have made army’s ammunition reserves unsustainable even for a 10-day-long war.
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- Not properly equipped and stocked Indian armed forces seem to be unprepared and vulnerable, to a possibly two-front collusive threat from China and Pakistan.
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- **Bhutan** - Bhutan has been a strong Indian ally and has stood by New Delhi during the standoff.
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- However, views within Bhutan are strongly demanding a “balanced foreign policy” i.e. opening of ties with China.
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- Also, there are high chances of resumption of the now cancelled Bhutan-China border talks.
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- The talks involve a swap for Doklam with disputed areas in the north, an offer which has always interested Bhutan.
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- All these developments are something which India cannot afford to ignore.
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- **International support** - Though being indirect, India got considerable support from the many countries in the Doklam issue.
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- The world nations' own relations with Beijing made it very difficult for them to state their support openly.
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- At this juncture, it is for India to seriously think on relying on international support against China if India and China were to clash again.
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What is the way forward?

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- In all its statements following the disengagement in Doklam, the Chinese have emphasised their sovereignty over the area.
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- Thus, the Doklam crisis may be over, but another crisis between India and China cannot be ruled out completely.
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- This requires India to gain experience from the Doklam standoff and be

prepared to handle any such similar situation in future.
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- A reassessment on military systems and processes, and diplomatic negotiations are essential at this point.
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Source: Indian Express

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