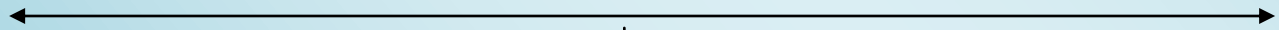


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INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS: COOPERATION WITHOUT TRUST

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ABSTRACT

This paper intends to assess the relationship between the two rising giants of Asia namely China and India. As they both are rising as great powers, their mutual relationship will have a significant impact not only on Asia, but on the whole world. At present, the nature of their relationship is something mixed i.e., growing cooperation in the field of trade and commerce along with distrust and mutual suspicions in the strategic fields whether political or geographical. For these apparent factors, the future relationship between India and China can be characterised by the cooperation in those fields whether mutual, regional or international which may be beneficial for the peaceful rise of both these states and confrontation, competition, and even hostility in some other areas where the respective interests of both the giants clash with each other, for example, the border issue, relationship with other countries particularly US and Pakistan, their encirclement policies, competition for energy resources, nuclear arms race, etc. However, at the international level, both countries would find convergence of interests by cooperating with each other on the issues like international terrorism, climate change, restructuring of international institutions, and on some other areas also.

INTRODUCTION

China and India, immediate neighbours, are powerhouses in regional and global politics. The last six decades of their relationships have seen more of mutual mistrust and suspicion than friendliness and cordial atmosphere. Such mutual mistrust and suspicion grew over the years.¹ They are not only good neighbours but peer competitor for resources with hostility. The ascent of China as an ongoing symbol of global economic and military power is the product of various geopolitical, economic developments since the last three decades. Since 1980's various conflicts in West Asia, tense relation between Moscow and West and India's internal problems like naxalism, Insurgency in Kashmir, separatist movements etc. all gave Beijing a space to its strategic and economic increase not only in Asia but also in other parts of the world.² The India-China relationship is multi-layered. There are many aspects to it, which in fact reinforce one another.³ The relationship has cultural and

civilisational linkage, political resonance, strategic and security dimensions and robust economic content as well. Keeping in view the emerging relations, this paper will focus upon Sino-Indian relations through the reflection on conflict, cooperation and competition

RISE OF CHINA AND INDIA

In the 21st century, India and China has emerged as the two visible powers in Asia and in the world with huge populations, growing economies and expanding markets. Over the past two decades, a fundamental transformation has taken place in the global scenario, driven by the impressive economic growth of developing countries of South like— ‘China, India, Brazil, and South Africa’. This transformation has glazed the globe with the acceptance of the notion of ‘Rising South’. Human Development Report 2013- ‘The Rise of the Global South’ also advocates this. Now the economic and political centre of gravity is inexorably moving towards the rising South and not surprisingly, ‘China and India’ are two well recognized emerging powers of South with the major share of the global GDP (Gross Domestic Production) and fastest growing economic and strategic weight.⁴ China and India are now major players in global economic decisions as part of the both ‘G-20’ and the ‘G-8 + 5’ (G-8 plus the 5 leading emerging economies). According to ‘IMF’ (International Monetary Fund) data, Over the past decade China’s economy has expanded at an average annual rate of 8.4 percent, while India’s economy has grown at an annual average rate of 6.0 percent.⁵

China and India are now modernising their power-projection capabilities. China is doing so much more rapidly, its military budget is the world’s second-largest after United States. Meanwhile, India has also replaced China as the world’s largest arms importer. Though, nowadays technology and type of weapons will surely help a side win a war, but having the numbers will also do a lot for confidence and territory combats. After all, there is strength in numbers. And in the term of numbers, China has largest army in the world while US has second largest and India possess third largest army. But in terms of military power, China has second most powerful army after US, while Indian army is fourth most powerful. Territory, Naval and Air Force defence capabilities of each country is remarkable. Today, China and India are competent nuclear powers and each has a sizable nuclear arsenal. According to the ‘Federation of American Scientists’, China has about 240 warheads while India has nearly 100. Also, in the field of ‘Space Technology’, whether China has recently developed an ‘Anti-satellite missile’ to rupture the dominance of US in the satellite warheads, India has also put a heavy mark in space by successful launch of its Mars mission- ‘Mangalyaan’ on 5th November, 2013.

Over the past six decades, India—China relations have undergone dramatic changes ranging from the 1950's with a deep hostility in the 1960's and 1970's to a rapprochement in the 1980's and a readjustment since the demise of Soviet Union. The Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence were the basis of flowering relations between the two until 1962 when the two contested on boundary dispute. This war dashed their peaceful relation for next three decade.

The post-cold war era has offered enormous opportunities to New Delhi and Beijing to move in the direction of a 'productive relationship'⁶. Both countries realized the imperative need for cooperation in diverse areas, especially in the trade and economic domains, in the long-term interest of peace and stability in Asia as well as for faster economic development and prosperity at home.⁷ Both are large economies and their domestic markets provide vast scope for diversified industrialization and trade.⁸

They have responded positively to the priorities of the post- Soviet world by opening up their economies, though China precedes India in its effort to liberalise its economy. Both the countries have expedited the process of integration in the global economy as well as bilateral economic cooperation.⁹ But comparative figures for both the countries indicate China's superiority in several sectors.

THE CONTENTIOUS BORDER

The two main areas of dispute along this Himalayan frontier are the *Western Sector* (Aksai Chin, around 37,250 square kilometres/ 14,380 square miles); and the *Eastern Sector* (Arunachal Pradesh, around 83,740 square kilometres/ 32,330 square miles). On the one hand, Arunachal Pradesh is inhabited by over a million people, Indian citizens, and includes important Buddhist centres like Tawang. On the other hand, Aksai Chin is a virtually uninhabited bleak barren plateau with no permanent settlements.¹⁰ The two countries have failed to resolve their long-standing border dispute witnessed three major military contest within 25 years; the Sino-Indian war of 1962, the Chola incident in 1967, and the 1987 Sino-Indian Skirmish. Both nations have steadily built-up military infrastructure along border areas.¹¹

Beijing in 2009 tried to block an economic aid or loan issued to India by Asian Development Bank on grounds for purpose of flood control project in the controversial Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims as its territory. India on the other hand deployed troops in the same year in Assam in close proximity to keep watch on

Arunachal Pradesh which angered China. Beijing is also opposed to India's supporting the virtual reign by Tibetan government with the exiled monk Dalai Lama whereas Tibet shares borders with both India and China.

India perceives China as a security threat because disputes about the demarcation of the border lines are still not solved. Occasional crossings of the Line of Control to India territory (LOC) by alleged Chinese soldiers and the “stapled visa affair“ concerning citizens of the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh and Kashmir pour oil into the fire that keeps the “Chinese threat theory” hot and boiling. The test of India’s Agni V long-range missile is also a part of India’s strategy to contain China militarily from a greater presence in South Asia. With Agni V, India's indigenous Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM), India has the capacity to attack any of China's strategic cities and regions with a nuclear bomb. The nuclear threat is one of the reasons, a realist would say, that hinders both countries to aggressively solve the border issue. It is also a deterrent ensuring, as yet, that the competition for dominance in some Asian regions did not evolve into an armed conflict.

TIBET

Tibet has been a key factor in China-India relations since China’s occupation of Tibet in the early 1950s. In March 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama, Tibet’s political and spiritual leader, fled to India to avoid the Chinese government’s crackdown on a popular armed revolt against Chinese rule in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. Following the revolt, China established complete military and political control over Tibet. The Dalai Lama established the Central Tibetan Administration, which is commonly referred to as the Tibetan government-in-exile, in Dharamsala, India. The organization’s stated goals are “rehabilitating Tibetan refugees and restoring freedom and happiness in Tibet.”¹² Insecure about its control over Tibet, China fears India will use the presence of the Dalai Lama and the large Tibetan refugee population in India to foment unrest in Tibet. China asserts the area it claims in Arunachal Pradesh is part of Tibet

Another reason Tibet plays an important role in China-India relations is that the Brahmaputra River, one of India’s major rivers, begins in the TAR. To generate electricity, China is constructing dams on the river and India plans to do so as well.⁶⁴ In November 2014, the first Chinese hydropower dam on the river, one of four the Chinese government plans to build, began partial operation. New Delhi and Beijing have discussed these projects and the Chinese government has stated the dams will not affect downstream areas, but if the dams lead to worsened flooding or lessened water availability in India, this issue could become a major source of tension in bilateral relations.

CHINA'S GROWING PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Apart from boundary disputes, East Asia, South Asia and Indian Ocean, which is concerned with their imports and exports, are the major arenas and theatre of conflict and cooperation. China's military presence in the Indian Ocean has increased considerably over the last five years, almost certainly reflecting China's desire to improve its ability to protect sea routes vital to its economic development. Over 80 percent of China's crude oil imports travel through the Indian Ocean.¹³ New Delhi considered China's growing military activity and investment in and around the Indian Ocean as designed to encircle India and challenge India's goal of being the primary security guarantor in the Indian Ocean.

Indian Ocean stability will hinge largely on how India manages its maritime rise.¹⁴ On the one hand, if a robust Indian maritime presence were to fail to materialise, New Delhi would essentially be forced to surrender its interests in regional waters, leaving a strategic vacuum for the US and China. On the other hand, if powerful Indian naval forces were to be used for exclusionary purposes, the region would almost certainly become an arena for naval competition.

China has strong engagements with India's neighbours that mostly don't have really friendly ties with India. In the forefront is Pakistan. China assists India's western neighbour with building roads and power plants in Pakistan's Kashmir Region; India fears that China strengthens Pakistan's military and Pakistan-supported anti-Indian militant groups in the region. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi "very strongly" raised the issue regarding China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) during his recent visit to Beijing, and termed the project "unacceptable". The CPEC will link China's underdeveloped far-western region to Pakistan's Gwadar deep-sea port on the Arabian Sea via PoK through a massive and complex network of roads, railways, business zones, energy schemes and pipelines. The corridor -- expected to be ready in three years and provide about 10,400 MWs of electricity -- gives China direct access to the Indian Ocean and beyond.

China is also helping Sri Lanka to build a naval port. Although China assures that it will not be used for the presence of Chinese war ships in the region, India worries what will happen. The strategy China follows with the establishment of different ports and military bases from the Island of Hainan in the South Chinese Sea to the Persian Gulf in the Middle East is called "String of Pearls". This "String of Pearls" should secure China's energy supply and trade routes. India sees this strategy as interfering in India's own backyard. At the same time India increases also its naval presence in the Indian Ocean and in the Persian Gulf. India traditionally has a good

relationship with Iran. India is helping Iran to expand the port of Chabahar, South Iran, near the Iran-Pakistan Border. India also established naval presence in the Seychelles and Mauritius, and surveillance posts in Madagascar and in the Antarctic. Officially India strengthens its naval presence to secure the sea route for trading ships in the Indian Ocean Region. But experts are convinced that India also wants to counterbalance the increasing influence of China in the region.¹⁵ These examples show that China and India are both competing for a greater economic and political influence in Asia.

EMERGING COMPETITION IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

South East Asia is very important for the two in terms of imports and exports. China is a member of, or regular participant in, the following multilateral groupings: APEC, ARF, ASEAN+3, the EAS, the SCO, the Shangri-La Dialogue, the Six Party Talks, and the Tripartite Summit (China, Japan and South Korea). SAARC, ASEAN, IOR-ARC, ECO, BRICS, and now SCO are important regional, economic and security organisations for the two. These organisations also have shaped their ascendancy in South East Asia. India's Look East Policy (now Act East Policy) has dual objectives; to adopt defensive approach against China in East through Indo-Myanmar border and to maintain physical access with South East Asia. Myanmar is the only East Asian country that has common borders with both India and China. It is strategically located and has 1670 km long land and 200 km maritime border with India and is the gateway to South East Asia. It was India's 4th largest trading partner in 2009-10.¹⁶ Over the years, the PRC supported the Burmese military junta, politically in the UN Security Council, and strategically by selling them weapons and securing access to offshore natural gas reserves. Although India is trailing China, it started to invest massively in Myanmar, especially after the military junta started implementing democratic reforms in the country. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Myanmar in May 2012 and signed twelve agreements with Burmese President Thein Sein. They include agreements about border area development, air services, cultural exchange, a \$ 500 million credit line between India's Export-Import Bank and Myanmar Foreign Trade bank and establishing of a joint trade and investment forum. Since December 2006, in association with a Singaporean company, Silver Wave Energy, Gail India Ltd. signed a deal allowing the company to begin drilling for offshore oil. By 2016 a "Super-Highway" between India and Myanmar will be completed. Its aim is to create a new economic zone linking Northeast India, Myanmar, Thailand and eventually Cambodia and Vietnam.¹⁷ This will not only benefit India's Northeast which is in the desperate need of economic development, but this economic zone will also bypass China and foster India's access to oil and gas reserves in Myanmar and the rest of Southeast Asia.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi used the ASEAN summit in Myanmar's capital Naypyidaw to unveil India's new "Act East Policy," and convince his Southeast Asian counterparts that his government is serious about boosting ties with the region. "A new era of economic development, industrialization and trade has begun in India. Externally, India's 'Look East Policy' has become 'Act East Policy,'" Modi told the ASEAN-India Summit on November 12, 2014. He reiterated this point in his address at the East Asia Summit on November 13, stressing his government's attention to the region in the six months since he came to power. Modi's remarks are a deliberate attempt to signal a more action-oriented policy towards ASEAN specifically and East Asia more generally, in contrast to India's original Look East Policy first formulated under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in the 1990s.

The South China Sea, another potential energy field wanting to be tapped by India, is an area claimed by China, but disputed with other Southeast Asian states. This area became the arena of conflict and competition between India and China. India's attempts to drill for oil in the South China Sea, in a part controlled by Vietnam but claimed by China, brought angry Indian comments. India's military and economic involvement in the South China Sea is likely to grow in the future, as part of its envisaged extended neighbourhood.

COOPERATION BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA

China and India are competitors for influence and power in Asia, nevertheless, both share common goals of maintaining regional stability, fighting terrorism, taking advantages from globalisation and maintaining access to capital and markets, taking joint stand on many issues. Further, mutual cooperation between China and India will be more effective in balancing U.S. influence in the region and also increase their negotiating position with the sole super power. Both have coordinated at many multilateral institutions, including at the United Nations on the issue of state sovereignty and the non-interference principle; at the World Trade Organisation and G-20 against trade protectionism and the rights of the developing countries; on climate change proposals; and overall in fashioning a more equitable world order. The five-nation BRICS format has further expanded such interactions between the two countries.

However, while India has supported China's candidature in the United Nations since the 1950s, New Delhi is aware that China remains the only one among the P-5 countries that has not explicitly endorsed the Indian candidature in the reformed Security Council. Also, China has not supported Indian membership in the Nuclear Supplies Group so far. In 2008, differences between New Delhi and Beijing also came to the fore at the International Atomic Energy Agency and the NSG regarding the 'clean waiver' for New Delhi in the international

commerce on uranium and nuclear technologies. Beijing relented at the behest of Washington at these fora – but only after proposing Pakistan’s case. Subsequently, as a balancing act, China decided to ‘grandfather’ the Chashma III and Chashma IV nuclear projects in Pakistan.¹⁸ India is also upset with Beijing for having blocked the UN move - at India's insistence - to seek an explanation from Islamabad over the alleged violation of 1267 sanctions regime in releasing Mumbai attacks mastermind Zaki ur Rehman Lakhvi, The 1267 Sanctions Committee comprises as members 15 countries - 5 permanent and 10 non-permanent members of the UN Security Council. China alone blocked the UN move saying India had not provided enough information to merit such an action by UN.

TRADE AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS

India and China resumed official bilateral trade in 1978, and signed a Most Favoured Nation (MFN) Agreement in 1984. Two-way investment links between China and India are also increasing. The new investments are critical strategic moves aimed at profiting from the other country’s rapid rise and are also driven by the shortage of talent in crucial sectors in both the countries. While China has comparative advantage in labour intensive mass-produced goods, India’s competitiveness lies in its ability to produce differentiated niche products. Intra-industry trade between the two economies is possible and can help convert competition into new areas of cooperation.¹⁹ A Joint Study Group (JSG) established in June 2003 during Vajpayee regime to examine the potential complementarities between the two countries in expanded trade and economic cooperation, a Joint Task Force (JTF) was set up to study the feasibility of an India-China Regional Trading Arrangement. There are also Joint Working Groups on Trade, Agriculture and Energy. In December 2010, both countries agreed to set up the India-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (SED). India is the 2nd country after US with which China holds this type of a dialogue. First SED was held in China in September 2011 and 2nd in 2012.²⁰ Regarding the future of India and China James Wolfensohn, former World Bank President remarked, —Western nations must prepare for a future dominated by China and India, whose rapid economic rise will soon fundamentally alter the balance of power. It is true that their bilateral trade boosted in recent years with significant growth rates.

After the restoration of full consular relations between the two countries, the trade between India and China, which was only \$300 million, now went up to \$ 70.59 billion. India’s trade with China is in the great deficit (India’s trade deficit with China reached a record 48.43 billion in 2014-15, with two-way trade declining last year by 1.5 per cent on account of a sharp decline in Indian exports) means India have very unfavourable balance. Only during the year 2003 to 2004 it has a moderate favourable balance of trade then in second quarter

of 2004, it stated becoming unfavourable and it is in continue till today. There is also no balance in investments, as the Chinese have invested much more in India. China provides cheap labour, making the country a viable conduit for manufacturing goods for markets in third countries.

India need not be apprehensive about the influx of Chinese goods, as they are producing only those goods that India needs. If we produce enough goods for Chinese consumption, the question of conflicting interests would not arise. India has some advantage in the banking industry, and our mercantile law is second to none in the world, making India a prime candidate for foreign investors. It is not true that the Chinese are getting much more FDI as the calculations differ. The Chinese FDI is also ethnicity driven, whereas non-resident Indians (NRI) are mostly professionals, and not businessmen or traders.²¹ Chinese migrants in South-East Asia and North America have in effect adopted their ancestral villages and towns, and set up industries, exhibited their patriotic leanings and preserved tradition.

CONCLUSION

Although, there has been increasing cooperation between the two Asian giants in the political, economic or other fields in the past and is likely to remain so in the future also, but the misperceptions, distrust, suspicion and hostility towards each other has not fully vanished and in future also, these features will characterize China-India relations along with cooperation. While India has always remained suspicious about China, the Chinese on the other hand, remain skeptical about India's future course of policies and action. It will be not acceptable for China to see India playing the role beyond South Asia or emerge as an equal competitor to China. For example, India's aspirations to play a more active role in East Asia are not encouraged by China; the latter prefers that India remain in South Asia although, it plays lip service to the notion that India should be a major player in the global affairs.

Further, the future relations between China and India will remain delicate and sensitive and there is possibility of sudden deterioration of relations as a result of misperceptions, hostile attitudes especially on border issue. In addition, the competition for resources, overlapping spheres of influence, rival alliance relationships shows that the future relations between the two Asian giants will be characterized more by competition than cooperation in the foreseeable future. However, it must be reiterated here once again that in such a complex and delicate atmosphere, neither side would do anything that would destabilise their current bilateral economic or other relations. But at the same time, both the states will try to consolidate their power and position while striving

to resolve their domestic and internal problems. However, along with such a strategy, they will also continue to monitor closely each other's activities to expand influence and gain advantage in the wider Asian region. This turn of positive development was based on the mutual need to focus on social and political stability, strong economic growth and a sense of security so that each side can avoid the dangers of stagnation and decline. It is due to this complex nature of Sino-India relations that it cannot be explained in simplistic format of 'friend' or 'foe'

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