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Evolving Sino- Indian Relations in the 21stCentury

REVIEW ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

The two most populous nations, China and India, are on their way to becoming economic powerhouses and are shedding their reticence in asserting their global profiles. Today China and India are more politically and economically engaged than at any time in recent history. Both capitals have shown a commitment to mitigating recurring tensions in the relationship. However, cooperation and competition coexist in this relationship, advancing in tandem on parallel tracks. And while the cooperative track has been accelerating since the turn of the century, the strategic competition has kept pace, and in some arenas advanced faster. India and China have recognized their comparative and cooperative strengths—even while acknowledging their shared concerns and competitive edge, *vis-à-vis* each other, and when pitted against the rest of the world. Not surprisingly, the strategic community, in general, and policy makers, in particular, has been keenly engaged in following the developments related to the two countries over the past four decades.

Key Words: Indian relations, Balance of power, China

The 21st century has been advertised as the Asian century. Asia has made enormous progress in the last fifty years in every dimension - economic, social and political. The key players would have to include Japan and China a potential great power. It should also include India once she is able to complete internal reforms and achieve her potential to be another great power1. India and China emerged on the world scene as independent entities; both are ancient civilization with deep historical memories. The Himalayas kept India and China peacefully separate, but modern communications broke down the physical barriers. India's relation with China is an important factor in India's foreign policy. India's involvement in the problems of partition in the post- independence era and China's preoccupation with her own civil war prevented them from having close relations with each other. The nature of the Sino-Indian relationship at present could be well explained by the notion of "Balance of Threat" propounded by Neo-Realist Stephen M. Walt in 1985, where he modified the already established "Balance of Power" theory² to better explain alliance systems. Walt suggested that alliances made by states are determined by their perception of a common threat from other states (or other alliances). Nation-states thus seek balance by forming alliances against a perceived threat to preserve their security. 'The proposition that states will join alliances ... to avoid domination by stronger powers lies at the heart of traditional balance of power theory'3. He also notes that states ally with other states that are either at parity with or weaker than them, since 'allying with a dominant power would mean placing one's trust in its continued benevolence. The safer strategy is to join with those who cannot readily dominate their allies... to avoid being dominated by those who can'4.

Sino-Indian Relations: a Brief Overview:

India was among the first countries to recognize and establish diplomatic relations with the

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People's Republic of China. The early 1950's saw the euphoric phase of "Hindi-ChiniBhaiBhai". They evolved the Panchsheel (Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence) in 1954. "Flowering relations" between India and China in the early 1950's were based on peaceful co-existence. But these withered and faded in an atmosphere of hostility following 1962 war between the two countries⁵. As early as on January 1, 1969, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi indicated at a press conference that India would be prepared to hold talks with China without any preconditions in order to seek ways of solving conflicts between the two countries. On May 1, 1970, during the festivities at Tien An Men Square, Mao Zedong conveyed an important signal to the Indian charge d'affaires, BrajeshMishra. He told Mishra that "India is a great country and the Indian people are a great people. Chinese and Indian people should live as friends, they cannot always quarrel"6. Further exploration of Mao's intriguing signal was delayed by the outbreak of the Bangladesh War of Liberation in 1971. India and China found themselves ranged on opposite sides. India sympathized deeply with the cause of the people of Bangladesh. Millions of Bangladeshis fled to India to save their lives and honour and it became clear that they would not return to their homes unless the Pakistani occupation forces were made to leave the country. China, on the other hand, sided with its quasi-ally, Pakistan. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the Bangladesh struggle coincided with a major development on the global scene. The United States decided to form an entente with China in order to contain Soviet influence. Anxious to cultivate its new ally, the Nixon Administration went to the extent of secretly encouraging China to take military action against India, ignoring strong American public support for the Bangladeshis.

Further difficulties arose from the Chinese stance on two internal developments in India. The first of these was the designation of Arunachal Pradesh as a centrally administered territory. Beijing's negative reaction to this development reflected her territorial claims to this area. Beijing also refused to accept Sikkim's full integration into the Indian Union in 1974. Despite the fact that Sikkim never had an international personality, China took the position – the only country in the world to do so – that Sikkim was an independent state. Because of these complications, the pursuit of improved India-China relations could only be resumed in 1976. In that year, the two countries decided to restore ambassadorial-level diplomatic ties after a gap of 15 years. India took the first step by appointing K.R. Narayanan - who later became the president of India - as its ambassador and China quickly reciprocated by posting an ambassador to New Delhi⁷. The next major step was foreign minister Vajpayee's visit to China in February 1979 – the first high-level visit between the two countries since 1960. Among the issues Vajpayee took up with the Chinese was the question of Beijing's assistance to certain insurgent groups operating in north-eastern India. He received an assurance from his host that this was a matter that belonged to the past. There has been no evidence since that date of any Chinese involvement with insurgents operating in India. A major irritant in bilateral ties was thus removed. Vajpayee's visit was interrupted by a regional development. China decided to launch an armed attack against Vietnam while Vajpayee was on Chinese soil and Deng Xiaoping added to India's discomfiture by tactlessly drawing a parallel with the Chinese action against India in 1962. The Indian foreign minister had to cut short his visit in these circumstances8.

The regional factor–India's recognition of the HengSamrin government in Cambodia – also delayed Chinese reciprocation of the Vajpayee visit. However, in June 1981, the Chinese foreign minister, Huang Hua, came to India, reciprocating Vajpayee's visit. It was agreed during Huang Hua's visit to institute an annual dialogue at the level of vice-ministers/ foreign secretaries. By ensuring a regular dialogue at a senior level, another significant step had been taken in developing bilateral ties. In many ways, Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in December 1988 marked a turning point in India-China relations. It was the first visit by an Indian prime minister to China since 1954 and it reciprocated, after a gap of 28 years, premier Zhou En-lai's 1960 visit. Rajiv Gandhi's discussions with Chinese leaders significantly enhanced mutual confidence and understanding. A Joint Working Group was formed for

negotiations on the boundary issue and for exploring ways of maintaining peace and tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in the border areas. Another Working Group was set up to promote trade and investment. Agreements were signed on cooperation in cultural exchanges, on science and technology and on civil aviation. In short, steps were taken to promote all-round bilateral cooperation and to maintain a tension-free Line of Actual Control while the two sides continued to seek a peaceful solution to the border issue. This is the basis on which India-China ties have been developed since 1988. There has been a regular exchange of high-level visits between the two countries. The Joint Working Group on border issues negotiated an important Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control. This was formally signed during Prime Minister Rao's visit to China in 1993. Another important agreement, covering military confidence-building measures along the Line of Actual Control, was signed when president Jiang Zemin visited India in 1996. Both parties have honoured these accords and the Line of Actual Control has remained free from tension.

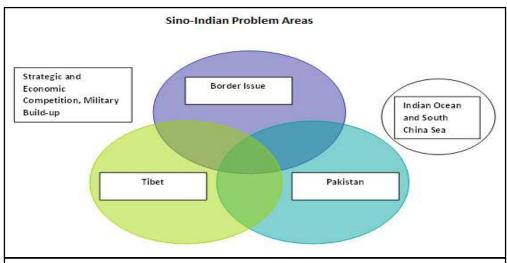
Sino-Indian relations after nuclear tests:

Relation between China and India suffered a setback after he Indian nuclear tests in May 1998. Bilateral relations went worse when defence minister, George Fernandis called China as- "Enemy number one". Beijing condemned the nuclear explosion and noted that India had maliciously accused China of posing a nuclear threat to India', which it called 'utterly ground less'. What intervened was a letter by Prime Minister Vajpayee to President Clinton that justified the decision on the basis of the threat from China. New Delhi downplayed the significance of the letter and reaffirmed its commitment to maintain good relations with China. India was determined to limit the damage to Sino- Indian relation. Indian government issued a statement to mollify the Chinese sentiments at the end of October 1998 declaring that India did not see China as a threat nor did it have any intention of pursuing a nuclear arms race with China. A series of high-level exchanges set the tone for normalization of bilateral relations. External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh visited China in July 1999, President K.R Narayanan went in May, 2000.

When Vajpayee (as Prime Minister) visited China in June 2003, a joint Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Co-operation and ten other agreements were signed. The Declaration provided a roadmap, based on shared perspectives between India and China, in an extensive range of areas. The two sides agreed to set up a compact Joint Study Groups (JSG) composed of officials and non-government economists/ business leaders to examine the potential complementarities between the two countries in expanded trade and economic cooperation. The mechanism of Special Representatives was also established to explore, from the political perspective of the overall relationship, the framework for a boundary settlement. UPA government had also maintained and, to a certain extends, accelerated the pace. During the visit of Chinese Primer WenJiabao to India (April, 2005), the two Special Representatives signed an Agreement on the settlement of the India-China Boundary Question. Renouncing the use or threat of force, they call for "a package settlement" that "must be final, covering all sectors of the India- China boundary"10. Chinese President HuJintao arrived in Delhi on November 2006. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and HuJintao agreed that an early settlement of the boundary question will advance the 'basic interests' of the two countries and it should be pursued as a "Strategic Objectives." The special representative dealing with the boundary issue "shall complete at an early date" finalizing an appropriate framework for a "final package settlement". In a major advance, the two sides agreed to promote cooperation in nuclear energy consistent with their international commitment. They agreed that "international civilian nuclear cooperation" should be advanced through innovative and forward-looking approaches, while safeguarding the effectiveness of global non-proliferation principles. HuJintao said that -China would not oppose India's Nuclear Deal at the 'Nuclear Supplier Group'11. The two leaders set a target of enhancing bilateral trade to \$40 billion by 2010, decided to hold regular summit -level exchanges in each other's country and multilateral forums, open new consulates in Kolkata and Guangzhou, and set up "experts –level mechanism" to discuss issues relating to trans –border rivers. Agreement on bilateral investment protection and promotion, a protocol on cooperation between the foreign Ministers, a memorandum on commodity futures regulatory cooperation, and a protocol a phytosanitary requirements for exporting Basmati Rice from India were also signed. India and China decided to explore the possibility of opening new routes for the Kailash Mansarovar yatra and trade.

Chinese President Xi Jinping made his highly anticipated first presidential visit to India in September 2014. The recent visit of the Xi Jinping to India symbolizes the beginning of a new stage in the development of the Eurasian space. To some the trip was a great success; to others, it was a disappointing trip clouded by a Sino-Indian stand-off in a disputed border region. The results of the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to India last week can be evaluated according to several criteria. Suffice it to say that by the end of his talks with the Indian Prime Minister NarendraModi about 20 agreements were signed. The agreements cover a variety of areas including investments into the road and port infrastructure of India, cooperation in space and in nuclear energy, construction of industrial parks in India, joint efforts in combating terrorism, cultural cooperation and a twin cities agreement between Mumbai and Shanghai¹².

The various issues of divergent and convergent between both countries still exist. Some of them are following:



Source: SaloniSalil, FDI Visiting Fellow, athttp://www.futuredirections.org.au/publications/indianocean/1305-india-china-relations-how-can-they-be-improved.html#_ftn1

Border disputes:

There are a number of serious problems in relations between China and India, creating an atmosphere of mistrust. One of these is the still unresolved border dispute. India's China problem began with its failure to properly assess the security implications of the take over of Tibet in 1950 by Maoist China. For the first time in history a political and geographical buffer between China and India was being removed. In the absence of a formally demarcated border in the western sector in Jammu and Kashmir and China's position on the McMahon line in the east, its occupation of Tibet should have warned us of the dangers ahead¹³. The Problem of Tibet – For China Tibet was a core issue and for India it was certainly a border dispute. India had longstanding, traditional cultural and regional ties with Tibet. China's military occupation of Tibet caused a mass influx of Tibetans headed by the Dalai

Lama to India that certainly had a highly negative impact on India—China relations, India had given acceptance to China's legal status in Tibet Autonomous Region as part of the territory of the People's Republic of China and that it did not allow Tibetan to engage in anti-china political activities in India.

The border issue was complicated by additional problem: The Karakoram highway that had given China direct access to Pakistan was made at least partially possible by Pakistan giving away some territory that India claims to have been in illegal occupation of Pakistan. Sikkim's accession to India has yet to be recognised by China. There was strong rejection of Chinese envoy's claim of sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh. External Affairs Minister said that Arunachel Pradesh is an integral of India. Among the border problems, there is also the long-standing problem of Tibet. Back in 2003, India recognized China's sovereignty over Tibet, but at that time China recognized Indian sovereignty over Sikkim only, not withdrawing its claim to Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing refers to as Southern Tibet. Recently, on the eve of Xi Jinping's arrival in India on September 2014, Chinese troops, according to the Indian side, crossed the Line of Control in Kashmir and penetrated deep (500 metres) into Indian territory¹⁴.

Pakistan factor:

A major problem in India's China policy is Pakistan. Pakistan has been a willing pawn in China's hands to thwart India's ambitions and keep it boxed in South Asia. Without being seen as confronting India directly and generating an atmosphere of open hostility-which does not suit its strategy of presenting its rise as peaceful-it lets Pakistan do this. By making Pakistan nuclear and giving it weapons delivery capability, China has neutralized India strategically within South Asia itself. Pakistan has been given the means to continue its politics of confronting India without India being able to retaliate militarily even though it enjoys conventional military superiority¹⁵. Over the years Beijing has developed a very special relationship with Pakistan, steadily developing military economic and political relations. China supplied M-11 missiles and ring magnets to enhance Islamabad's nuclear capability. India is concerned with China's supply of high-tech weapons to Pakistan which are used by terrorist in Kashmir and Punjab. One of the important diplomatic gains from the rapprochement with China was the shift in the Chinese position on Kashmir through the 1990's. President Jiang's call to put Kashmir issue on back burner and South Asia should concentrate economic cooperation. China and Pakistan deepening their links in the nuclear sector with or without the Nuclear Supplying Group's blessings China has built a 300 MW reactor at Chashma and as in the process of constructing a second 300 MW reactor at the same location under the "grand father clause" of the NSG rules, which allows the completions of projects signed before a supplier country formally joins the cartel. China's assistance in the construction of Gwadar port President Musharraf has talked of an energy corridor from Gwadar to China. By building up a countervailing military power in India's neighbourhood, China has used Pakistan to prevent India from exerting its leadership role even within South Asia.

While indirectly questioning India's sovereignty over Jammu and Kashmir by issuing stapled visas to residents of the state or those associated with it officially (a practice Chines states it will discontinue but the political point has already been made), China deals with Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) and the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) area as if Pakistan sovereignty there is undisputed and secure. It is getting involved in massive road building and hydel projects, disregarding Indian objections. India cannot but see the increased Chinese footprint in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, which includes the Northern Territories, as a threat of military encirclement in J&K, especially as India and China are already in confrontation in the Aksai Chin area. Our Army Chief has publicly expressed concern about the presence of 3 to 4 thousand Chinese, including PLA troops, in POK 16.

Others neighbouring countries:

China has used a judicious mix of propaganda about Indian hegemony, the natural sense of



insecurity of small countries under the shadow of a large one, religious and ethnic differences as well as economic and military assistance to add to pressures on India from within the region. China scholar John W. Graver argues that the overlapping sphere of influence sought by India and China in South and South- East Asia has been a fundamental source of tension between the two Asian giants. While India believes that the subcontinent and its environs are its natural security zone, China believes that it cannot let India exercise dominance on its southern border. Garver asserts that the Indian perception of the Chinese policy in the subcontinent amounts to a 'strategic encirclement', while Beijing sees its policies as being aimed at preventing 'Indian hegemony' in the subcontinent. The rise of Chinese influence in the subcontinent and its environs over the last two decades- in the form of deepening strategic relations with Pakistan, a new position in Myanmar, and expanding links with Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka- has taken place at a time of increasing complexity of India's own relations with immediate neighbours in the subcontinent. India's position is not as hopeless as Garver makes it out to be. In coping with strategic challenge from China, India cannot hope to restore the status quo ante but must find new ways of managing it. The quest for a new approach to the neighbours has been at the centre of the Indian foreign policy throughout the 1990's and was explicitly articulated in the form of the 'Gujral Doctrine' in the mid-1990. The political challenge for India is not to stop Chinese economics presence in the subcontinent but to increase its own commercial integration with its neighbours. Indian profile in South-East Asia, where many nations see New Delhi as a natural partner in maintaining the balance of power in the region. Although India remains concerned about china's expanding influence in the subcontinent. New Delhi is rediscovering its potential to develop a strategic profile in China's backyard India's deepening of strategic ties with Vietnam and its growing military and economic cooperation with Japan, reflect the new trend of Indian assertiveness.

Another set of problems is associated with the active penetration of China into the Indian Ocean and its increased influence in countries that neighbour India in this basin. This Chinese strategy has been called the "string of pearls," while in India, many believe that the goal of this strategy is the surrounding of India from the sea. Thus, this time as well, before coming to India, Chinese president Xi

Jinping visited two other countries in South Asia – Sri Lanka and the Maldives, being important links in this "string of pearls." In Colombo and Male, Xi Jinping actively promoted the idea of a ??"Maritime Silk Road" and found full understanding from the side of his partners¹⁷.

Economic relations:

Growing economic relation between India and China are of more recent origin. India and China resumed official bilateral trade in 1978. The two countries signed a Most Favored Nation Agreement in 1984. Bilateral trade has been steadily increasing. China is already India's second most important trading partner by the time Premier Zhu Rongji visited India in January 2002, there was a new vigour in the bilateral economic relations. The structural framework for economic cooperation is being continuously strengthened and expanded. China and India are both willing and able to foster new highlights in cooperation among Asian countries and make new engine of the world economy, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said on his India visit 2013."The two countries have the will, wisdom and capability to jointly nurture new bright spots in cooperation among Asian countries, create new engine of the world economy, provide huge growth potential and market demand for Asia and the world, and push forward China-India strategic cooperative partnership for peace and prosperity," Li said at a smaller meeting with his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh¹⁸.

China is emerging as a significant link in the manufacturing chain of the world, while India's potential for the Knowledge-based services and manufacturing is being noticed. These complementary strengths of the two economics can be further exploited for mutual benefit. Cheap Chinese products are a cause of concern in Indian business circles. The demand of the time is that- China's growing economic might should be seen by India more as challenge than as a threat. On Dec. 1991 Border Trade Agreement was signed between China and India. Shipkila Pass was reopened in 1992; later on Lipulekh was also opened and Nathu La Pass was reopened in 2006. The development of economic cooperation is the main pillar of India-China relations. The volume of India-China trade increased from US\$100 million in 1988, to US\$73.9 billion in 2011. China has become India's biggest trading partner and India is China's seventh largest trading partner. The two governments have set the goal of increasing their trade volume to US\$100 billion by 2015. With increasingly closer trade relations, mutual investment has developed quickly as well. By December 2011, China's accumulated investment in India had reached US\$57.6 million and India's investment in China had reached US\$44.2 million. Their mutual investment is still booming¹⁹. Just a few hours into the Xi's three-day visit on September 2014, a reputed Indian newspapers were awash with accomplishments: a joint industrial park, a sistercity pact, ramped up cultural ties, business deals and investment promises from China worth well more

Despite the development that has occurred so far, however, there are still many constraints in bilateral relations between China and India, affecting political, economic and security co-operation. In economic relations, the current status of India-China co-operation does not match the economic scales of the two countries. There is a huge opportunity for them to expand the size of their markets and deepen their economic interdependence. In 2011, the trade volume between China and India was only equal to one-sixth of that between China and the United States and one-third of that between China and South Korea. Given the large populations in each of these countries, it is obvious thatneither country has fully explored the market opportunities available in the other. Moreover, India has been worried about a trade deficit with China; for instance, India had a US\$27 billion deficit with China in 2011. Such a trade imbalance could lead to nervousness in the bilateral relationship. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, India has been putting pressure on the Chinese Government to import more Indian products and has set high tariffs to protect Indian industries. Further, the relative backwardness of the domestic infrastructure in India is another constraint on co-operation that restricts deeper economic collaboration and personnel exchanges²¹.

Strategic relations:

An Agreement on the maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the India-China Border Area was signed during Prime Minister Narsimha Rao's visit to China in September 1993. An India-China Expert Group of Diplomatic and Military Officers to assist the JWG on the boundary question was set up. This Agreement provided for both sides to respect the status quo on the border, Clarify the LAC where there are doubts and undertake Confidence Building (CBM). China and India agreed. When Prime Minister Vajpayee visited China in June 2003, on the need to broaden and deepen defence exchanges between the two countries, which will help enhance and deepen the mutual understanding and trust between the two armed forces.

A protocol on the Modalities for the Implementation of CBMs in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control in the India- China Border Areas was signed during the visit of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to India in April 2005. Armed forces of India and China have held a "Warm" meeting at a new border point in Arunachal Pradesh in Nov. 2006²². The convergence on a broad range of global issues exists and that should be leveraged to broaden understanding. Already, globalization process is infusing rivalries among nations in the security domain. China through its recent reforms seeks to alter the rules of global economic competition beyond trade and investment. As China and India ventures out globally they should jointly seek to initiate new norms of global relationship including striving for the removal of strategic disparities that for long induced global terrorism²³.

Conclusion:

Sino-India relations are very complicated. Both Countries consider themselves as regional power, both posses' nuclear weapons. They try to show friendly, cordial relations but they have many outstanding issues such as:-Unresolved border disputes; China's support to Pakistan with weaponry and nuclear technology; Dalai Lama as refugee in India. It is very much true India cannot change its geographical location and cannot run away from its neighbours. So, it is in India's interest to avoid confrontations and tensions with its neighbour and tries to solve the problems in peaceful manner. Now in India and China relations 'Geo-Economics' is playing more important role than 'Geo-Politics and Security'. The recent developments are showing positive trends. There is need of "careful management" of India-China relations. A direct dialogue is obviously called for to ensure this. The need is for a positive attitude towards a positive dialogue. It should be substantive and would in time expand itself. No time should be lost in getting it off the ground. What a better India-China understanding requires is positive agenda for positive action.

Today, in a rapidly changing world order, an entirely new architecture is being formed in the global economy, politics and security. And on how relations develop between the two leading economies of Asia, not only determines the stability of the region, but also the direction of global politics for decades to come. To team up to expand the strategic opportunities, new leadership could build upon the exiting strategic mechanisms on economic, defence and regional issues. They could start with impending issues such as Afghanistan, Central Asia, West Asia and terrorism. This could be a welcome departure from the past and should be followed without a zero-sum perception. Most importantly, the leaders of China and India have sufficient time to carry out these tasks. Modi became prime minister just recently, and barring any extraordinary events, will remain in office at least until 2019. Xi Jinping became President of China in March of last year and, according to the accepted practice in the country, is likely to retain this position until 2023²⁴.

Despite divergences in the perceptions and approaches of New Delhi and Beijing on issues such as Sino-Pakistani military and strategic ties and India's Tibet policy, both countries have enormous potential and opportunities to expand and deepen their economic and trade ties in their mutual interest. Emerging trends indicate that both India and China would remain highly competitive in the global and regional trade and economic domain, and would continue to compete for status and

influence in the Asian region in general, and in South Asia in particular²⁵. In conclusion, China and India are likely to witness continued friction across the geopolitical spectrum for the foreseeable future, even if outright conflict remains unlikely. Perhaps that should be expected from two powers so large, rising so fast, in such close proximity. And perhaps the Chinese and Indian leadership should be given credit for pursuing mutual cooperation despite their litany of differences. Whether they continue sparring and collaborating under the framework of a cold peace or descend into an openly hostile rivalry will depend on China²⁶.

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