

## Sino-India Relations: A Reality Check

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper seeks to critically examine the bilateral relations between two rising powers of Asia, namely India and China. These two countries have become the gravity of world politics, projecting the vision of Asian Century. Both have shared historical and literary traditions. Trade and commerce, pilgrimages and cultural influences were thriving through the ancient Silk Road corridor. Although existing in close proximity, for thousands of years, the ancient civilization of India and China discovered less to interplay with each other. At present the nature of their relationship is something combined with both positive and negative aspects, for instance cooperation in the field of economy along with imbalances and mutual apprehensions on the strategic fields whether political and geographical.*

*The mistrusts and rivalries between both countries are even extensively noticeable today. But there is a broad consensus among international political analysts that China and India both are on a rising trajectory and knocking at the door of global and regional powers. It is necessary for both countries to look back at their historical relationship and preserve common and friendly relations with each other. The competitive and cooperative elements between India and china relations are synthesized at regional and global dynamics, consequently in such a complex relationship it is very difficult to predict future orientation of these two nations. Therefore, this paper presents to review the horizon of India-China relations in contemporary world scenario.*

**Keywords- India, China, Dalai Lama NSG, OBOR**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The emergence of China and India as two significant powers in Asian continent have become the pivot of world politics in 21<sup>st</sup> century, predicted as the Asian Century. The interaction between the two rising Asian powers will not just apply significant and broad impact over the Asian security additionally observed as an unambiguous factor reshaping the international order. The rise of both China and India would not only contribute to the prosperity of this region but also will lead to the global peace and security<sup>[1]</sup> .

Although both countries China and India existing in close proximity for thousands of years, have shared cultural and traditional exchanges through silk route not found much interactive with each other. Silk route was not only limited for trade but also it was a significant source of export of Buddhism from India to China. These countries are two of oldest civilizations sustained with peaceful coexistence for over two millennium but political relations between ancient china and India have been few and limited. At the dawn of India's independence in 1947 and in the beginning of communist party rule in china in 1949, the two countries have shared a mix bag of relations “sweet and sour”. Initially, the two nations shared amiable and cordial relations. India became the first non communist country to establish diplomatic relation with

republic of China on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1950 and recognize it <sup>[2]</sup>. In the mid 1950s India and China signed the accord of “Panchsheel” as a mechanism of advancing their respective national interests which became a binding manuscript for the potential relations, promulgated by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Though, these relations quickly started worsening. Tibetan religious leader Dalai Lama crossed in to Indian Territory after a failed Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule, granted as a Political asylum sown the seeds of mistrust just a decade after the two nations of China and India came in to existence <sup>[3]</sup>.

The comparative studies between these two states shows some similarities and some dissimilarity, at the certain point of similarities have lot of potentials to improve the cooperation. Differences have become the source of strain relations between these two nations. Primarily China has developed itself to such a point that today it is striving to enthusiastically impact the global and regional system. The purpose of this paper is to critically examine the commonness and differences of China and India, which become the determining factor of shaping global, regional and bilateral relations. India and China are most populous countries and Asia’s economic giants, their cooperation would turn into Asian Century which has predicted by international political analysts. But the numbers of differences are more than the similarities. The horizons of conflicts and cooperation between Sino and India has been describing below.

## **II. BORDER DISPUTES IN SINO-INDIA RELATIONS**

Border issues between China and India have major source of disagreement. There are several disputed territories have existed between China and India namely, Aksai Chin, Depsang Plains, Trans-Karakorum Tract and Arunachal Pradesh. China has two striking claims on what India believe its own particular territory. One claim, in the western division, is on Aksai Chin in the northeastern area of Ladakh District in Jammu and Kashmir. The other claim is in the eastern area, the question of Arunachal Pradesh. In the battle about these zones in 1962, the very much prepared and well trained troops of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army overwhelmed the inappropriate and inadequate Indian troops, who had not been appropriately fitted to battling at high altitude.

### **2.1 SSUE of Arunachal Pradesh**

Rejection of the McMahon line, China maps showed both the North East Frontier Area (NEFA) and Aksai Chin to be Chinese territory. Border disputes between India and China got intensified, adhering to the invasion of China at Indian Territory on 20 October 1962 and Beijing declared its pre-planned ceasefire on 21 November and all Chinese troops withdrew after a few weeks <sup>[4]</sup>. China’s unofficial claim to Indian Territory aligned with lot of suspicions and apprehensions, which is not in favour of strengthening the good relationship between these two states. China is in occupation of approximately 38,000 sq. kms of Indian Territory in Jammu and Kashmir. In addition, under the so-called China-Pakistan "Boundary Agreement" of 1963, Pakistan ceded 5,180 sq. kms of Indian Territory in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir to China. China claims approximately 90,000 sq kms of Indian Territory in Arunachal Pradesh and about 2000 sq. kms. in the Middle Sector of the India-China boundary.

Beijing has stated that it does not recognise Arunachal Pradesh. 1970s and the early 1980s, ill defined Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh/ Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh remained free from any major disputes and the relationship between countries are remained unneighbourliness. Leadership of two Beijing

and New Delhi expressed a desire to resolve the territory disputes peacefully through dialogue process and high level meetings. Starting of 1980s, both countries held formal yearly meetings on the territory issues. Indian side started establishment of army deployment, observation posts and patrolling on the bank of Sumdorong Chu. The movement of large scale of troops on the both side of border in early 1987, made the possibility of military conflict over the border. Arunachal Pradesh became a full-fledged state on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1987. After this event, tensions between India and China surmounted <sup>[5]</sup>.

In December 1988, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China. The Prime Ministers of the two countries decided to resolve the territorial disputes through the guiding principle of “Mutual Understanding and Accommodation and Mutual Adjustment” <sup>[6]</sup>. An accord on the preservation of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas was sign on 7 September 1993. Both countries proclaimed that territorial issue should be resolve through peaceful and affable meetings. As a part of this accord both countries signed an agreement on confidence building measures in the field of army reduction, and made mutual understanding about the prior notification of exercises at specific levels near the Line of Actual Control <sup>[6]</sup>.

During Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to India in April 2005, both countries signed an accord on political settlement of the boundary issue, setting guidelines and principles. In the agreement, China and India declared their willingness to seek a fair, reasonable and reciprocally satisfactory way out to the boundary issue through equal and friendly negotiations.

Just before the Chinese President Hu Jintao's state visit to India in 2006, Beijing's envoy in New Delhi Sun Yuxi had claimed that Arunachal Pradesh is a Chinese territory. Further he said, the whole of the state of Arunachal Pradesh is Chinese territory and Tawang is only one of the places in it. This statement had sent shockwaves among the Indian strategic analysts and policy makers. This noticeably painted out the intractable character of the boundary dispute <sup>[7]</sup>.

In May 2007, IAS officer Koyu's visa denied by Chinese authority, pointed out that he is a Chinese citizen since belongs to Arunachal Pradesh and hence could visit China without a Visa. China renounced the provision mentioned in an agreement signed in 2005 connected with boundary demarcation “in reaching the boundary settlement, the two sides shall safeguard due interests of their settled populations in the border areas.” This provision was relinquished as early as June 6, 2007 by Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi who stated that “mere presence” in populated areas would not affect China's claims. This was the china's purposeful act of provocation and it was clear signal china's hardening position on the territorial disputes <sup>[8]</sup>.

In 2013, India and china signed the “Border Defence Cooperation”, both reiterated not to use military forces against each other. Hotline and communication between the two sides was established and having accepted the principle of mutual and equal security. Both were agreed to continue the maintenance of peace, stability and tranquility along the line of actual control in the India-China border areas and to continue implementing confidence building measures in the military field along the line of actual control <sup>[9]</sup>. In 2014 both countries signed an agreement in principle to “increase military contact and exchanges along the Line of Actual Control” (India's naval strategy and Asian Security book). 18<sup>th</sup> round of boundary talks took place in New Delhi on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2015 by the special representatives of India and

China, talks were manifested by friendliness and candour and were held in a constructive and look forward atmosphere <sup>[10]</sup>.

19<sup>th</sup> round of talks were held in Beijing to resolve the vexed border dispute. Lately, in March 2017 China expressed its squalid intensions about Arunachal Pradesh, said the border dispute between and China can be resolved if India accepts China’s claim over strategically very significant Twang region in Arunachal Pradesh, New Delhi officials dismissed it as neither practical nor possible <sup>[11]</sup>.

14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama’s visit in Arunachal Pradesh on 12 April 2017, gave the signal of stressful relation between these two countries. China said, this region is not the part of Indian Territory but is a disputed area of the Sino-India border. Chinese officials Lu Kang said the Dalai Lama has had “disgrace performance” on the boundary question. State controlled China Daily wrote in editorial, the people of South Tibet- (so called Arunachal Pradesh) are leading hard lives under India’s “illegal rule”, faces various kind of discrimination and looking forward to returning to China. This incident has unfolded major complexities between India China relations <sup>[12]</sup>.

## **2.2 The Question of Sikkim**

Historically, Nathula pass was used as a significant trade route between two region India and China. This was the crucial part of the Silk rout through which traders were interlinked for trading purpose. This route thus became a corridor of not only trade but exchange of ideas, culture, and beliefs. The genuine surge in the trading activity via Nathula came after India’s independence. But the route was closed down after the Sino-India war in 1962 <sup>[13]</sup>. This route is also known as old silk route resumed after 44 years on July 6 2006, which coincided with the “year of Friendship” between the two countries. The date of reopening which also formally recognized Tibet as part of China by India. The opening of the pass is expected to strengthen the economy of the region and play a significant role in India-China trade. In the winter, the pass is blocked by heavy snowfall. For Hindus, the pass reduces the journey time to Mansarover Lake. But recently in June 2017, Now China is acting on the lines of “the pot calling the kettle black”.

The Chinese troops who crossed the Indian border in the Sikkim area are accusing the Indian troops of incursion and urged them to return immediately. At the same time, China has said that due to the conflict over the territory, it has blocked Nathu La Pass for Indian pilgrims going to Kailash Mansarovar. China has affirmed “security reasons” behind this. Chinese officials said, "China urges India to immediately call back the soldiers crossing the border and conduct a thorough investigation of the matter. After days of war mongering following the standoff along the Sikkim border China on 6 July 2017 made an attempt to open an alternate route to Nathula Pass for Kailash Mansarover pilgrims.

## **2.3 ISSUE OF DOKLAM**

Doklam is a tri-junction of India-China-Bhutan and a disputed border claimed by both China and Bhutan. Unlike Bhutan and China, India has not claim on Doklam. It is a pass connecting the Indian state of Sikkim with Tibet in China. Bhutan and China signed an agreement in 1988 and in 1998 that both countries will agree to maintain peace, tranquility and status of quo in the region. The tri-junction is of immense strategic significance to the three countries. In 2017, China attempted to construct a road in Doklam triggering a stand-off between India and China. The construction of road in Doklam has clearly changed the security

dynamics. The Chinese are changing the tri-junction unilaterally and this affects us, as the Chinese military presence here will be widened and deepened <sup>[14]</sup> .

Recently, China has given the official statement that withdrawal of Indian troops from the Doklam plateau as a pre condition for negotiations is consistent with its position on Tibet, Tiwan or South China Sea- areas are hyper sensitivity where Beijing perceives that its “Territorial sovereignty” is at stake <sup>[15]</sup> .

However, intrusion, border violation and troops invasion happened many a times by China on demarcated area clearly message of menace. It wants to entangle India in unprogressive activities. The border issue is at the core of India’s mistrust of China and the uncertainty about the future intensions. Thus, border issue between China and India is one of the delicate issues and needs instant resolution so that some long lasting peace can be brought.

### **III. REFORMATION OF UNITED NATIONS**

As India pushed hard for the reform of the UNSC in the last few years staking its claim for the permanent membership, China struck an ambivalent stand saying that it understands New Delhi's aspiration to play a bigger role in the UN. China’s support for India’s quest for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council remains a far-away dream. While addressing the students of the Tsinghua University during his China visit in May 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi explicitly underlined the positive impact of China’s support for a permanent seat of India at the UNSC. Taken as a whole on the issue of India’s membership in UNSC, China seems to be reluctant where as the other four members (America, Russia, UK, and France) and major world group have supported Indian candidature.

### **IV. CHINA AND INDIA’S NSG BID**

China has been continuously opposed India’s NSG membership, gave the reason that it is not a signatory of NPT. In May 2016, India applied for NSG membership for the first time. An important progress was noticed before the plenary when most of the nations (40 out of 48) were willing to let India enter the NSG. China has some apprehensions towards Indian interests, that India’s aspiration of playing bigger role in the global order in addition to the fright of a changing in South Asian geo- politics with India’s membership of NSG <sup>[16]</sup> . China also fears that India’s entry in NSG club would lead an equal footing with China. However, China needs to understand that preventing India’s entry into NSG club will not stop India for too long. Sooner or later, India will be able to enter in NSG club because most of the objections concerned by China against India are not valid. In May 2015, Modi delivered speech at Tsinghua University and expressed his view:

“China’s support for India’s permanent membership of a reformed UNSC and for India’s membership of export control regimes like Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) will do more than just strengthen our international cooperation. It will take our relationship to a new level. It will give a stronger voice to Asia in the world” <sup>[17]</sup> .

## **V. ECONOMIC COOPERATION BETWEEN CHINA AND INDIA**

India and China are two largest populous countries in the world. They are two burgeoning economies. India and China resumed trade officially in 1978. Both countries signed a Trade Agreement (Most Favoured Nation Agreement) in 1984. India-China joint Economic Group (JEG) on Economic Relations and Trade, Science and Technology is a ministerial level dialogue mechanism set up in 1988 during the visit of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to China. During the 9<sup>th</sup> JEG in 2012, the two sides also set up three working groups on Economic and Trade Planning Cooperation, Trade Statistical Analysis and Service Trade Promotion <sup>[18]</sup>. Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee’s visit to China in June 2003 picked up the pace for economic integration. This journey came out with decisive result by both countries’ leaders to promote economic trade and cooperations without being restricted by unsettled territorial disputes. After this visit, these two countries build up joint study group to examine how China and India could expand trade. In 2008, China’s economy grew 9.0 percent and India’s grew 7.3 percent, both faster than any other major economy in the world (Wang and Gupta 2009). India’s first economic partner is China, bilateral trade between two countries stood at \$70.73 billion in 2016. India’s trade deficit with China has swelled to \$ 52.68 billion in 2015-16, from \$ 48.48 billion in the previous year <sup>[19]</sup>. “Increasing trade deficit with China can be attributed primarily to the fact that Chinese exports to India rely strongly on manufactured items to meet the demand of fast expanding sectors like telecom and power,” <sup>[20]</sup>. India faces trade imbalance heavily in favour of China. Therefore trade experts said India dependence on China for exports oriented growth is limited. China “rise” for India is just like mixed blessing for India. In the given scenario, the “trade competitiveness” of Indian exports might suffer in the market. Implications of Economic ties between India and China are not just for bilateral but also have the potential to shape the economic landscape of the region and the world. Though, apart from such an intersection of interests, India remains uneasy and indecisive about China’s long term intentions. A major obstacle to bilateral investment that needs to be bridge is one of the remaining trust deficits sticking from the war of 1962 and unsettled border disputes. For instance in July 2008, the Indian government had forbidden companies from China. Other MoU have signed between the Ministry of Commerce of People’s Republic of China and Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India on ‘Cooperation on Industrial Parks in India’ was signed on 30 June 2014 in Beijing. A memorandum of Understanding between NITI Aayog of the Government of India and the Development Research Centre (DRC), State Council of the People’s Republic of China was signed during the visit of Prime Minister Modi to China in May 2015. Major steps has been taking from two sides, to increase economic engagement, but still trade between China and India is not in favour of India, displaying a huge trade deficit on balance sheet<sup>[21]</sup>. India and China both are the member of AIIB and ADB, have a significant role to play in the success of the New Development Bank. With the help of these two financial institutions China and India can do better cooperation wisely, for regional developmental mission

## **VI. CHINA’S INCREASED INFLUENCE IN INDIAN OCEAN**

China’s increasing presence in Indian Ocean knowing as a “String of Pearls” is because of the “security implications” and penetrating the sea route for oil, energy transit. Continuing with assertive and aggressive diplomacy, it has tried to strengthening its security and economic ties with countries like Pakistan,

Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar. China’s overpowering strategic essential in the Indian Ocean is the protection of its sea lines of communication (so called ‘SLOCs’) across the Indian Ocean.

In the course of the recent decade, China’s major development of economic relation in the Indian Ocean region is more than elsewhere in the world. China has been trying to build up a certain degree of influence in the countries belong to Indian Ocean region by providing economic aid, infrastructural development and development of ports. Major ports are being developed with the assistance of China like Gwadar in Pakistan, Humentota in Srilanks, Chittagong in Bangladesh, Sittwe in Myanmar, Maroa in Maldives. China’s penetration to raw material from the Middle East and Africa as well as its access to the European market also depends on sea lines of communication in Indian Ocean [22].

U.S naval officers and one of the most influential strategists on sea power derived the links between maritime trade, a country’s wealth and sea power. Mahan explains his idea in a very simple manner: foreign commerce was essential for a country to guarantee its economic affluence. To sustain foreign trade and economic prosperity, shielding the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) from any threat is supreme [23]. This security domain can only be provided by powerful navy. China factor is limiting India’s strategic option and continued threat in Indian Ocean. Some advocators of “String of Pearls” affirmed that China has negotiated some unrevealed access rights to permit the projects to convert these ports as logistics hubs or naval bases across the northern Indian Ocean. Growing participations of China in Indian Ocean region has been perceived as a major.

## **VII. ONE BELT ONE ROAD**

The ancient Silk Road brought benefits to China, Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe, and we hope this spirit of trade and constructive cooperation can be recaptured through One Belt One Road. This is also called the “Modern Silk Road.” Basically, China’s One Belt Road (OBOR) strategy envisions an overland Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road to foster trade and enter new markets.

China has several reasons to promote its new Silk Road plan. Foremost, it is an economic plan for taking the Chinese economy on to the path of sustainable growth. China’s major interest is to lessen the costs of transporting goods and accessing the new market for its manufactured goods. Apart from decreasing the transit cost, there are some important objectives have underlined by this initiative. China wants to construct infrastructures and buildings in other countries in order to reduce the economic dependence on domestic infrastructure investment. Second motive for the Belt and Road Initiatives is to sheltered transit route of china’s energy through new pipelines in Central Asia, Russia, and Southeast Asia’s deepwater ports [24].

China held meeting on May 14-15 summit, brought together leaders and officials of 130 countries, 68 of which they claimed had already signed on to the Belt and Road Initiative project. Some of the countries sent their heads of state, other like Japan and U.S who aren’t part of the initiative, sent senior officials. But India sent no one, not even a local embassy official to take notes [25].

Just open before session in Beijing, The ministry of External Affairs issued a comprehensive statement on its rejection of OBOR initiative. Major annoyance at the inclusion of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as part of the OBOR initiative. Primarily, China was reluctant to New Delhi appeals for the

consultations on OBOR objectives, nature and Financing. No country can accept a project that ignores its core concerns on sovereignty and territorial integrity <sup>[26]</sup>. Though, China’s infrastructure projects have begun to roll out the alarm bells have been ringing. In many countries, like Sri Lanka but also elsewhere, constructions of ports and highways by China have consequences in massive debts, usurious, exorbitant interest rates and it has tried to influence country’s foreign policy with the help of bribing political leaders. But this is not true in the case of all countries recognised OBOR initiatives, although it seems to prevalent in the areas closer to India.

### **VIII. ISSUE OF MASOOD AZHAR AND CHINA’S REACTION**

The relationship between India and China became more stressful, when India blamed Pakistan after the incident of attack on the Indian Air Force base in Pathankot on January 2, 2016. India put forward a proposal before United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to designate Masood Azhar as a terrorist. But at the request of Pakistan, China used veto power twice to block the proposal <sup>[27]</sup>.

China is the alone member among the 15 member UNSC to oppose the ban on Azhar. Nonetheless international community is aware that the Pakistan based Jaish-e –Mohammed which is prohibited by UN, has been accountable for numerous terrorist attacks on India including the Pathankot air base. The failure of the International community to list Masood Azhar as a terrorist is an ill-fated blow to the joint effort to effectively counter all form of terrorism and also confirms China’s double standards in fighting against terrorism. It was very surprising, because we had expected China would have been more understanding about the threats posed by terrorism and join India’s proposed mission against terrorism.

### **IX. CHINA-INDIA GREATER ENGAGEMENT WITH MULTILATERAL FORUM**

Currently both countries have been sharing several multilateral forums, like BRICS, RIC, SCO, G20, East Asia Summit and The BASIC countries. Since the formation of BRICS has extended its functionalities in two main areas of work: Firstly coordination in meetings and international organization and secondly, the advancement of an agenda for multisectorial cooperation among its member states. All BRICS member states have the mechanism focuses on economic-financial and political governance spheres. Issues have listed in its agenda naming G-20 cooperation, including IMF reform. In the political realm, the BRICS advocate the reform of the UN Security Council, aiming for more inclusive representation and more democratic international governance <sup>[28]</sup>.

Recently G20 summit was held in Hamburg, Germany, where Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi pointed out the issue of terrorism, without taking the name of Pakistan, by naming the terrorist organizations that function from its soil. By raising his voice on global terrorism he called for concerted global actions.

On 9<sup>th</sup> June 2017, India became the full member of SCO which is mainly security based organisation, have increased the potential of cooperations between these two countries specially combating with terrorism, separatism, extremism which is the core agenda of this organization. But There are some other issues where can directly cooperate such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, These are the regional and global

forums, whereas China and India should pursue effective cooperation and protect the rights and immense interests of developing countries instead of becoming the rivalries of each other.

## **X. CONCLUSION**

From the above discussions, we have underlined lots of differences between China and India. If we study deeply about India's relations with China have some suspicions in sides. China has never shown explicit and unambiguous policies to maintain healthy bilateral relations with India. Unlike India, It has never been expressed some determined factors which could outline the China's foreign policy, means followed swing policy according to its own national interests. Both countries have lot of commonness in Asian continent but today, looking more of rivalries and less of friends. Lately, China's stance on several issues towards India has been really disappointing like issue of Arunachal Pradesh, listing Masood Azhar as a terrorist, avoiding Indi's concern over OBOR Initiative and China's crackdown in Doklam. Sometimes it seems expansionist policies have been consistently following by China to prove national interests and to exhibits its dominance in world scenario. Example claimed on Arunachal Pradesh as a part of south Tibet, South China Sea as a part of China, Illegal road construction started in Doklam` and encirclement of Indian Ocean, clearly shows expansionist policies of China attempting to establish dominating status in New world.

Apart from all these bitter things, India and China have lots of potential to concretise their relations. Today, as the rise of China and India is a big appearance for global politics. Both have a huge potential to manage current international scenario and global discourse. In the backdrop of this circumstance, despite presence of deep rooted difficulties and mutual suspicions, both nations have tried to engage upon a course of dialogue. A lot of Steps has already taken for CBMs and strategic partnership but they don't seem mature. In terms of cooperation and coordination both sides have to be more realistic, fair and transparent for each other. But the complex relation between India and China means that both the nations have to move cautiously to continue the normal situation. Especially India has to be extremely cautious towards China, pending a concluding solution to the border problem. Because the recent Chinese position at the tri-junction, Doclam and unresolved territory could be one reason for going to war.

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