

# **INDIA CHINA RELATIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBAL PEACE AND REGIONAL SECURITY**

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## **Introduction**

The rise of China and India as major world powers has profound implications for world as well as regional peace and security. Both ancient civilizations have many commons, they have peacefully coexisted favouring economics over confrontation, except in 1962 when they went to war. They have developing similarities and stark differences, yet have competing economic and regional outlook. Both India and China have a large conventional military force and are nuclear powers. Cooperation between them can promote peace and stability, while friction can prove to be catastrophic. Despite animosities, misunderstanding and differing perceptions both have progressed well. China believes in the basics of Panchsheel, which continues to remain relevant - a view echoed by India. Is there space for both nations to revive the concept of 'Panchsheel' and collaborate to achieve the rightful place in world order that they deserve.

## **India China Relations and Failure of the Policy of Peaceful Coexistence in the 1950s: A Historical Perspective**

### **Historical Background**

India and China are ancient living civilizations, with a proud history continuing to influence the present. They have been friendly neighbours for several thousand years since 221 BC. By the first century of the Christian era, small Buddhist communities were in existence in the Chinese capital.

Pre-independence, their contact was limited to Nalanda University two millennia ago, trade along the great silk route, spreading Buddhism from India to Far East, and Dr Kotnis's medical assistance during the second Sino-Japanese war in 1938. Colonial influence coloured India's understanding of China, and China's problem towards India stem from British policies. India has inherited its problems with China from its colonial past.

## **Panchsheel**

June 1954, saw emergence of Panchsheel or Five Principles of bilateral relations based on the meeting between Nehru and Zhou Enlai. The five principles are: Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

- Mutual non-aggression.
- Mutual non-interference.
- Equality and mutual benefit.
- Peaceful co-existence.

Both nations viewed that Panchsheel “will help in creating an area of peace which can be enlarged; diminishing chances of war and strengthening peace all over the world.”

## **Relations Turn Sour: 1957-1961**

The relations deteriorated soon after 1957, with subversion of Tibet. In 1959, as fighting broke out in Tibet, the Dalai Lama along with his 1,00,000 followers fled for asylum in India.

## **The Dispute and Relations Thereafter 1962-1975**

India – China boundary is 4056 kms; of which Western, Middle and Eastern Sectors account for 2176 kms, 554 kms and 1326 kms respectively. In addition to 5180 sq kms area illegally ceded to China by Pakistan in 1963. The disputed areas are generally referred to in terms of three sectors:

- **Western Sector:** China claims Aksai Chin, Pangong Tso, Spangur Tso and a strip of land along the Eastern Ladakh border.
- **Middle Sector:** China lays claims in the area of Barahoti and Shipki La.
- **Eastern Sector:** In Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet, China claims areas, which includes Kameng Division and a major part of Lohit Division.

## **War of 1962**

As the dialogue between India and China failed, China attacked India in the Eastern Sector (Kameng and Thagla Sub-sectors) in September 1962. By mid-November, China was in possession of all territory which it claimed in Ladakh and NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh). China unilaterally declared a cease-fire on 22 November 1962 and then withdrew to its own side of McMahon line to pre 07 November 1959 position, probably due to its inability to logistically maintain troops across the Himalayas in winter. Although it withdrew in the Eastern Sector, it continued to occupy some territory in the Western Sector. The relations between both the countries remained tense till 1975, which includes Indo-Pak Wars 1965 and 1971, and Sikkim becoming part of India in 1975.

## **Present Situation**

The period 1976-2015 generally saw the diplomatic normalization and non-intervention by the Chinese in Indian internal affairs. There have been numerous meetings of the JWG (and Experts Group), primarily to examine the border dispute. During the visit of PM Narendra Modi in May 2015 to China, both leaders reviewed the progress of bilateral relations and concurred on simultaneous re-emergence of India and China as two major powers in the region and that the world offers a momentous opportunity for realisation of the Asian Century. This constructive relationship provides a new basis for pursuing state-to-state relations to strengthen the international system. The policy guidelines, therefore, for both nations have to be aligned to their national aspirations. Issues of convergence need to be strengthened and issues of divergence should be addressed and resolved amicably. Cooperation is preferred over confrontation.

## **India and China: Divergence and Convergence Issues**

“China and India have a great deal of common ground and converging interests just as all neighbours do, they have differences and disputes from time to time. Look at the differences or disputes from a long perspective, seeking a just and reasonable settlement through consultations and negotiations, bear in mind the larger picture. Temporarily shelve issues that cannot be resolved so that they do not affect the normal state to state relations.” This sentiment echoes the feeling and aspirations of majority of Chinese and Indians. China and India continue to grow and reshape the international system to advance their own interests.

They invariably share many commons and certain differences, which have to be concurrently handled to progress on the road of development.

## **Changing Global Order**

India and China gained independence with an anti colonist impulse and oppose superpower hegemony. Sovereignty is the key priority for both nations; and they oppose Western-led interventions in the internal affairs of the developing world. They harbour reservations about international norms that seek to bind the hands of national leaders in domestic matters. China and India currently feel underrepresented in key international bodies and international economic institutions; while India claims a rightful place as a permanent member of the UNSC. At the regional level Beijing is particularly sensitive to increasing security and military relationship of US-India and leverage India possesses regarding Tibet. Although India is still hesitant to confront China out rightly or commit to a strong affiliation with the US; New Delhi and Washington are growing closer on issues such as democracy and humanitarian intervention.

## **Economy**

China and India support Globalization for an open economic order and believe in its future. China is for open, transparent, and rule-based global trade system. India is committed to a free-market-based and liberal global economic order. However, both countries are dissatisfied with existing balance of power in many global institutions. G20, BRICS reflect shift of power from developed world to developing world. Greater representation in international finance institutions like IMF, WB is expected and there is need to alter their structures. They resist rising protectionism among developed countries.

## **Regional Security**

China's security concerns are the confrontation on the Korean Peninsula and the South China Sea dispute. China blames US for complicating issues in South China Sea. India thinks unresolved sovereignty and territorial disputes, terrorism, and the challenge of maintaining high economic growth is critical. China and Pakistan are the key sources of insecurity for India when it comes to sovereignty and terrorism. They see the US as an indispensable actor in Asia. Despite their differences with the US, they need Washington for maintaining regional security

and in promoting economic cooperation and integration. India values existing American alliances to its security, but China wants US to emphasize that it is not balancing against China, and that neighbouring countries do not confront China on the assumption of US backing.

## **Border Issues**

The Sino-Indian border row is an eminently solvable problem. India has reconciled to Aksai Chin being with China and despite its grandiose claims on Arunachal Pradesh, China is not in position to translate that claim into reality. China wants calm western borders. There is very little dispute on the border in the central sector. India and China can easily demarcate the border in Arunachal and the central sector and accept status quo in the north. India lacks the power to alter it anyway.

## **Terrorism**

Xinjiang is China's only Muslim majority province encompassing sixth of its territory, facing terrorist threat since 1990s. The Uighur and East Turkmenistan Islamic Movement camps in Waziristan are a cause of concern since it has the base and support in Pakistan. Tibet has an ethnic, nationalist and religious character and is not terrorism. China has not been affected by terrorism since it has cultivated relations with Islamic states. India on the other hand is afflicted by Kashmiri terrorism with Pakistan support. Differences are primarily because China is supporting the failed cause of Pakistan. The US has chided Pakistan for harbouring terrorists. China's double standard on terrorism is obvious by its veto against Masood Azhar being declared a terrorist by UN, on grounds of 'technical hold' and lack of evidence.

## **Security in the Maritime Commons**

Global maritime system is crucial to the continued prosperity of China and India. Committed to UNCLOS, they uphold it for continued stability. But UNCLOS has no legal foundation over territorial sovereignty since it only applies to maritime boundaries. China sees the US Navy as a powerful tool to pursue American global hegemony to intervene in regional affairs. India considers US naval influence as an Asian power balance that limits China's capacity for domination. It has a robust program of joint exercises, is exploring more expansive forms of military-to-military cooperation and the US Navy is maintaining maritime order and stability.

## **Sino Indian Maritime Cooperation and Connectivity**

China depends on a secure and stable sea lane in the IOR to transport oil and raw material and export goods to other countries. India considers Indian Ocean and adjacent region as its core economic and security priority, it is skeptical of China's long term motive and has taken an ambivalent position since it has deepening economic interdependence with China. India's power projection at the moment is limited and it depends on US dominance till it achieves requisite capability which may take more than a decade. Therefore, at the moment it cannot allow Chinese dominance of China in Indian Ocean and thwart the perceived 'string of pearls'. Improving economy with China will guide option for India, which is to have US-India-China trilateral coexistence and maritime cooperation and interaction.

## **Energy Security**

India and China rely on coal based energy, and are dependent on international sources and markets for their energy needs. Nuclear energy and relations with NEC will shape energy policy of China and India. The two states continue to maintain a high degree of control and influence over their NECs through various political and bureaucratic instruments. Their commercial concerns are predominant than their national security interests.

## **Overall Assessment**

The two ancient civilisations have more in common. They oppose any attempt to challenge their sovereignty but will not join or form any military alliance, yet they have confidence in US led international order. Economic aspiration is the backbone for international cooperation. The differences in the Chinese and Indian positions sometimes arise from the two countries' competing visions and geopolitical rivalry. Both sides conceal their differences in public, and have often struggled to reach some accommodation that might permit occasional practical cooperation. India has to overcome British colonial thinking. China treats India with disdain and India in turn harbours deep fears about China's policies and intentions for securing strategic advantages. Despite the superficial convergence on many global issues, there are subtle disagreements that preclude the development of a meaningful partnership between them. At mutual level have two basic issues to resolve boundary issues and Tibet. Both are not insurmountable problems and can be resolved. Pakistan continues to shape Chinese agenda with respect to

India. China has considerable influence on Pakistan and its dependence on China has increased, which complicates relations with India.

China fears US Pivot to Asia policy favouring India that is significantly tilting regional balance in Asia. The possible exception to this generalization might be the international economy, where the interests of all three powers may align on many of the major issues. Economy is a common driving agenda.

### **Interests and Challenges of India and China with USA and Other Regional Nations**

The rising economic and military might of the two Asian powers impacts not only the region but also the world geopolitical scenario. India along with China can stabilise Asia's security order, particularly in curbing terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and climate change. The war against terrorism provides a common platform for the three powers to discuss matters of strategic importance.

### **Changing World Order**

The global political architecture is undergoing a transformation with power increasingly shifting from the West to East. China and India are on their way to becoming economic powerhouses. Japan is gradually increasing its military profile, and the South East Asian economies are back in reckoning. The challenges ahead in the Korean peninsula, South China Sea and Afghanistan, signal that global attention is now shifting to Asia. The future of Asia depends on China and India. But, India-China relationship remains complex and difficult to decipher.

### **Military Equation**

China has built a strong informationized military, reorienting from theater defense to trans-theater mobility. China will unconditionally not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against nonnuclear-weapon states or in nuclear-weapon-free zones. Indian military strategy is to fight on two fronts with Pakistan in the west and China in the north. The strategy is dominance towards Pakistan and deterrence towards China. Though China does not give clear figures of its defence expenditure its defense budget is more than \$150 billion, three times that of India.

## **Economy**

China and India are the two emerging economies of the world. Their combined global share in nominal terms and PPP is 16.08% and 23.16% respectively. Among Asian countries, they account for 52.77% (PPP) and 48.99% (Nominal) of Asia's GDP. In 2015, India crossed \$2.2 trillion and China crossed \$11.4 trillion. India is the fastest growing economy over the next decade, projected by World Bank at 7.5%. India's economic freedom and political openness will prove to be the decisive difference between rise of India and China.

## **Russia**

India-Russia defence cooperation is an important pillar of the strategic partnership. They have military and technical cooperation in the sphere of research and development, production and sales of armament systems and military equipment. On 15 Oct 2016, they signed \$390 billion deal signaling continued cooperation. Over the past decade, Russia and China too have had closer alignments and bilateral collaborations. There is a shared historical and ideological connection of an authoritarian style government. They are willing to deploy their military/ threaten to use it to further their national interest, and challenge existing regional security orders. Russia in Ukraine or Syria, and China in the South China Sea, has demonstrated a militaristic disposition to resolving territorial grievances. Russia has become more assertive, while China seeks Russian support. India too must reinvigorate its ties with Russia and not be alienated due to proximity with US.

## **ASEAN**

China's reclamation of islands in the South China Sea has made ASEAN countries are suspicious about China's strategic intentions. China's obstinacy in South China Sea issue has raised concerns amongst US allies about lack of US will or ability to assert its influence in East Asia. The Pivot strategy of US aims to bridge the Pacific and the Indian Ocean regions. India and ASEAN have seen deepening of cooperation across politico-military, economic and socio-cultural aspects. India is the tenth largest services exporter in the world, while the ASEAN is a net importer. ASEAN therefore is important player in India's economy and regional assertiveness. India supports with ASEAN countries on South China issue.



## **Central Asian Republics**

India's interests in 'its near abroad' are supply of energy critical for India's economy. In Kazakhstan, it seeks oil exploration. It is engaged in protracted negotiations regarding the 1680 km-long Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline, estimated to cost US\$7.6 billion. In Tajikistan India has established a military outpost and refurbished the Ayni airbase in 2004, for \$70 million. In Kyrgyzstan, India plans to open a joint military research centre to train Kyrgyz soldiers for UN peacekeeping missions. But Russian influence is so immense that no worthwhile engagement has so far taken place in the CAR countries. India's ability to access Central Asia is vulnerable because of Pakistan's geography and deliberate policy of obstruction. China's massive economic muscle gives it considerable leverage in the region. China is the most prominent economic actor and main source of foreign investment in the region. Both will continue to constrain India's ability to project meaningful economic/military power in Central Asia.

## **Regional Equations**

The South Asian strategic quadrilateral relationship involves China, India, the US and Pakistan. At the heart of this matter is the India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir, and continuing US involvement in Afghanistan and Pakistan. China's support for Pakistan is a serious and ongoing source of tension in the Sino-Indian relationship, especially China's reluctance in supporting India on terrorism and hindering India's entry into nuclear supplies group. US has withdrawn military aid and subsidy on purchase of F16 fighter aircrafts to Pakistan. Dr Shakil Afridi's case is sign of deteriorating US-Pakistan relations.

China is concerned about growing closeness between India and the US. It's South Asian interests as firmly linked with Pakistan. If regional security situation deteriorates India and China stand to be losers. Both countries should put their resources together to powerfully collaborate with each other and resolve contentious regional issues amicably.

## **Pakistan**

Pakistan is central to strategic politics in South Asia, and it is arguably Pakistan, even more than Afghanistan, which holds the key to stability in the region. The Kashmir dispute is the heart of South Asia's problems, and until it is resolved India's relations

with its regional neighbours, including China, will suffer. But India views the India–Pakistan and India–China relationships separately. Until the interconnectedness of the wider US–India–China–Pakistan relationship is fully acknowledged and acted upon, tensions in the region are likely to remain high.

## **Other States of South Asia**

South Asia is India's closest and most vital sphere of strategic action. "India will not be able to realize its own destiny without the partnership of its South Asian neighbours." But, China's growing economic, political, and security footprint in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, complicates India's dealings with these countries. India needs, above all, to build its credibility in delivering on its promises and intentions.

Bangladesh dominates the Bay of Bengal sitting on potential sea trade route which can give access to Chinese goods through India and link the seven sisters for India's North East. India in the last few years has resolved land issues and developed stronger relations. China needs Bangladesh support for trade and dominate the South Asian region. But, both India and China evince good relations with Bangladesh. It is a point of convergence for both regional powers.

Afghanistan and Myanmar are important to India's security and geopolitical objectives because they have in the recent past provided havens for insurgent groups that have operated against India. They are the gateways of South Asia to Central and West Asia, and to Southeast Asia. They are crucial to South Asia's economic links with other parts of Asia. Afghanistan and Myanmar are the hinges on which the open economic doors of Southern Asia will revolve. In Afghanistan, India has expressed its willingness to work with China in joint projects for economic development.

## **The Road to Future**

China and India's peaceful developments are the most significant events that beckon the new world order. Both nations must embark on the new prospects of pioneering peaceful development in the World. China is now close to achieving national revival, it does not seek hegemony nor does it wish to dominate the world geo-politics. China's rise has been achieved by peaceful and cooperative development, with self sustaining growth transforming its society. India though still 20–25 years behind China too has embarked on a similar path. Both nations

detest violence. Panchsheel and Ahimsa are central to their core values and thus these two principles should guide their policies and development.

### **Policy Options for India and China: Peaceful Coexistence in the Changing World Order**

Peaceful coexistence should be the central theme for policy options for India and China, highlighting the principles of Panchsheel. As Manmohan Singh said “We should develop our relations on the basis of these principles”. The future prospects and policy options for China and India must address the following five areas in accordance to the basic principles of Panchsheel.

#### **Panchsheel Principle-1: Mutual respect territorial integrity and sovereignty (Boundary Dispute)**

The boundary dispute is primarily an issue of perception. Resolving the boundary dispute will eliminate tensions and standoffs on the border, reduce troop deployment, open road and communication axis thereby promoting trade. China has signed border agreements with Nepal, Mongolia, and Myanmar, and exchanged bigger pieces of land for smaller ones during negotiations. India did the same for Bangladesh. Maintaining peace and tranquility on the India-China border areas has been the cornerstone of India China relations. India needs China's support, which serves as an economic engine for the nation's growth.

#### **Panchsheel Principle 2: Mutual non-aggression (India's and Chinese Foreign Policy)**

While China has displayed remarkable consistency in dealing with India, India has been uncertain and indecisive over China policy. India needs coherent guiding strategic framework to exhort regional influence underpinning realities of relationship and not base them on future potentials to shape its foreign policy. India will have to overcome strategic culture deficit that pervades foreign policy and overcomes its defensive attitude. There are three broad views on how India should deal with China- pragmatists, the hyperrealists and the appeasers. Pragmatists treat China as competitor; the hyperrealists believe that China is a real threat and the appeasers view China as friendly and benevolent neighbour. India's ability to exert influence is yet to be developed both economically as well as militarily, hence its power to exert are limited. Both nuclear states must sign a no use of nuclear weapons

to usher in peace in the region. Close economic cooperation between China and India is the best way to build trust and friendship, leading to peace between two states. Confrontation is not the solution cooperation is.

### **Panchsheel Principle 3: Mutual Non-Interference (Bilateralism)**

China is perhaps India's most important bilateral partner in the contemporary era. The reverse is not necessarily the case; although India will certainly rank high in the Chinese list. China and India have their respective foreign policies articulated; they are divergent and rarely consensual on important issues. The border is not the only core concern. There is the critical issue of support to Pakistan, visa issuance and shared water resources that needs immediate attention. Both sides must act with mutual respect and sensitivity for each other's core concerns, aspirations and equality. Tibet is like an albatross around its neck. India accepts Tibet Autonomous Region as an integral part of China but the support to Dalai Lama in exile is a compulsion for India. China and India must again seek to resolve this with maturity. India should limit its support to Tibet. South China Sea is where US wants India's involvement alongside ASEAN nations. India has economic interests and should limit its support to the ASEAN countries. India must strike a balance between maritime security imperatives in the Indian Ocean, and its legal stand on freedoms enjoyed by user states in territorial waters. India should refrain from involving much into the theatre. Along with this is maritime cooperation which facilitates trade and commerce essential for both nations.

### **Panchsheel Principle 4: Equality and Mutual Benefit (Regional Competition)**

China outscores India in economic growth, poverty alleviation, human development index, military balance and in regional prowess. But India's meteoric rise and potential is significant. Competition rather than confrontation is the key to development. It will be in mutual interest of India to work to enhance its collective security and regional and global stability. China and India seek to work with the international community to maintain regional stability and broaden the converging points of common interests and settle differences on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, notwithstanding the differences in social systems and ideologies. India has to understand Chinese view point and promote bilateral resolution of South China Sea rather than confrontation in

line with US. The point of convergence is that India takes a back seat in South China Sea and seeks China's support on anti terrorism activities of Pakistan and maintains equilibrium with China and US.

### **Panchsheel Principle 5: Peaceful co-existence (Global Issues)**

China and India have to collaborate at global level they must concur on international policies, and shape them before implementation. The Panchsheel is the basis of guiding their policies. Everything based on Panchsheel will be acceptable. First and foremost is the World Order that preferably is in consonance with US aspirations since US still wields global influence. Second is the economic growth, which must promote freedom of trade, mutual assistance and cooperation and promote brotherhood. Collaboration in economic aspects will give rich dividends. Regional and international free trade agreements are the way forward. Global financial institutions need to be revamped giving more space to China and India. Third is the military balance and nuclear weapons. China's defense policy is as one that does not present a threat to any other state and upholds world peace and stability. China and India have already declared peaceful coexistence as part of Panchsheel; and at this stage a NO war pact and treaty on use of nuclear weapons will guarantee peace globally as well as in the region. India must assertively engage China on all issues especially on terrorism, border settlement, economic cooperation and free trade agreement without compromising its interests. The position is somewhere above appeasing but below confrontation. Competitive is perhaps the better strategy and confrontation is to be avoided at all costs.

Lastly, there is the necessity of the civil society of both countries to constructively engage in promoting peace and harmony. Indian civil society is very vibrant and there are China experts, albeit some are hawkish; but notwithstanding these hardliners, there is space for track II diplomacy between the two nations. Chinese think tank is conservative, governed by the state and is not vocal. There may be a problem of free opinion as Chinese thinkers will speak the government line. Yet some interaction is desirable.

### **Conclusion**

China and India, the two largest developing countries in the world, despite certain irreconcilable differences, have a commonality of history, culture, economy and social characteristics. Both nations are engaged in attempting to put the

past behind and forge new relationships based on the emerging global strategic realities. China has reached a level where it can assert itself on global as well as regional level. India on the other hand is yet to achieve that status. The policies it adopts have to be growth oriented, non confrontational and peaceful. It has to have a collective response to China i.e. diplomatic, economic, military and culturally all agencies work in concert to achieve greatness together. Economy alone cannot achieve pinnacle of greatness. As George Keenan said “Nothing is more likely to make us poor than the single minded pursuit of economic growth, to the neglect of security.” Thus security is as essential as economy. Any friction at regional or global level with China will delay its rise. India must avoid war and promote economic growth.

The economic development of China and India needs America’s cooperation and support. In turn America needs the huge markets of the two big Asian countries. The US could be a positive factor for Sino-India relationships. Policy of non confrontation and competition between India and China is essential for world peace and regional stability. Mutual respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non interference, cooperation and peaceful co-existence between China and India is the way forward for both nations to progress.

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