

SINO-INDO RELATIONS

Dr. B.N. Chaudhary,

Associate Professor,
P.G.D.A.V. College (Eve.)
University of Delhi

ABSTRACT

China and India enjoyed a strong bond in Ancient times. We will discuss that too in brief. However we have been at loggerheads for the last 60 years. This paper proposes to analyze the reasons of dispute between the two countries after 1950 and tries to discuss the area of mutual interest between the two giants of Asia. Disputes' leading to difference of interest is to be discussed in detail but shall also deal with the converging relations in the field of economics and sharing of hydrological data for flood control. A China-Pak relation too is a thorny pitch between the relations of China and India. We shall also take into account, while concluding if both can resolve to a path of mutual benefit or their acts will further increase the rivalry.

INTRODUCTION

Writings of 2nd century B.C. records contacts between China and India. Buddhism reached China in the first century B.C.ⁱ The Silk Road was the important trade route between the two countries and this route proved to be a facilitator of spread of Buddhism from India to China.

However, before starting the contemporary relation of rivalry, let us see the common features between the two. Both are the Asian giant and most populated country of the world. Both are developing countries, therefore their emphasis on economic growth is tremendous. It is due to this that in recent past both the countries have shown restrain whenever the clash seemed to be on door-step. With the rise of globalization both countries are going for economic reform and trying to influence the global world. Both support the multi-polar world and trying to define their role. China accepting the importance of India, trying to create a peaceful

international environment, maintain friendly relations with its neighbor and prevent India at any cost from forming Anti-China block. India to compete with China and gain influence in the world community wants a permanent seat at Security Council of U.N.O.

Also India's internal development forces India to develop co-cordial and positive relation with China. However, common people's response to re-appraisal to their bilateral relations has not been very positive.

According to a 2014 BBC World Service Poll, 23% Indians have fairly good opinion about China but 47% expressed negative view whereas 27% of Chinese people looked at India positively whereas 35% people expressed a negative view.ⁱⁱ A 2015 survey conducted by the Pew research centre showed 72% of Indians were concerned that territorial disputes between China and neighboring countries could lead to a military conflict.ⁱⁱⁱ

However, it is important for India to maintain cordial relation with China. Any clash with China or for that matter with any neighbor will impact the economy and its fast moving developmental process and various projects retrogressively. For the same the government needs to make a positive impact on the mind of common people. This is pertinent because perception of the people due to historical legacy of Sino-Indo conflict is not only fresh but an air of suspicion also exists.

While the left particularly communist party of India (Marxist) also want to have friendly relations with China but the rightist parties and even centrist and a section of establishment think China to be a security threat. Socialist leader and the Defence Minister of Atal Bihari Vajpayee Government declared in the parliament that China was India's "potential threat number one."^{iv}

Now let us turn towards the analysis of factors due to which a sense of distrust, suspicion and misunderstanding between the two countries exist.

AREA OF CONFLICT

India was one of the first countries to end relation with Republic of China (Taiwan) and recognize People's Republic of China as the real government of Mainland China formally. But unfortunately relations between the two countries have been having border disputes ending in three military conflicts such as Sino-Indian war of 1962, the Chola incident in 1967 and Sino-Indian Skirmish in 1987. Recently, the two countries clashed at Doklam Plateau in 2017. Border and Tibet issue is old issue between the two. Recently water issue has added a new issue and perhaps it will have a long term impact.

BORDER ISSUE

Border between India and Tibet has been defined by MacMohan line in which was drawn in 1914 in Shimla convention. However, China is not willing to accept this demarcation and argues that it was not obligatory on its part to recognize this demarcation

as it was not a party to Shimla Convention of 2014.^v India claims 43,180 squares kilometers of Jammu and Kashmir occupied by China including 5180 square kilometer ceded to China by Pakistan under a 1953 China – Pakistan boundary agreement. On the other hand China claims 90,000 square kilometer of territory held by India in Arunachal Pradesh.^{vi}

One of the important points of dispute which ignited the controversy between the two countries happened in 1959 march. Dalai Lama, spiritual and temporal head of the Tibet, sought sanctuary in Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, where Tibetan government-in-exile was established. Thousands of Tibetan refugees settled in north Western India. China viewed this incident as imperialistic and expansionist policy of India through out the Himalayan region.^{vii}

Border dispute resulted in war between China and India on 20th October, 1962.

This war saw the defeat of India which came to an end with unilateral cease-fire by China. India was humiliated. It is believed that Nehru could not come out of this shock and ultimately died. Thus the Indo-India relation collapsed. At its centre was mainly the disputed border between Tibet and India.

RELATION BETWEEN 1962 TO 1992

After 1962 war, the relation remained tense between India and China. It was a known fact that India and Pakistan do not enjoy a cordial relation and both followed the policy of "enemies' enemy is a friend." In 1963 (2nd March), China and Pakistan entered into a border settlement in Beijing agreement. Pakistan gave way 5080 sq.km of Pakistan occupied Kashmir. This was directly infringing into Indian Territory as India always considered POK as an integral part of India. It is known world wide that entire Kashmir's accession took place with India. However, in 1969 India expressed its desire to normalize its relation with China based on mutual respect, territorial integrity and non-interference.^{viii} Informal contacts were established between India and Chinese diplomats. In

August 1976, diplomatic relations were established between the two countries; K.R. Narayan was appointed India's Ambassador to China.

In 1974 on 18th May, India conducted its first nuclear test at Pokhran, Rajasthan. Here two aspects are notable. First – A fission device was tested and there had been no radioactivity in the atmosphere.^{ix} Secondly, P.M. Mrs. Gandhi had made it very clear that the explosion has been done completely for the peaceful purpose. But all other nuclear countries which are members of the Security Council were outraged. America blocked Aid to India and imposed numerous sanctions. But if you have the capability, the entire world comes around again. Though India has not joined nuclear non-proliferation treaty of 1970, the nuclear deal between India and U.S.A. during P.M. Man Mohan Singh's regime proved that the world has accepted India as a responsible nuclear power. China was not exception. China took it as a great leap forward of India in its strength and vehemently criticized India.

In the meantime, the merger of Sikkim with India and Sikkim became an integral part of India. It became the state of India. China expressed strong condemnation at merger of Sikkim with India. In February 1979, the foreign minister of India made a visit to China. It was aimed at improving tense relation between the two countries. While he was on tour, China attacked Vietnam. Prime Minister was shocked by this behavior and timing of this incident from the Chinese side and called off the journey of his foreign minister. Mr. Vajpayee curtailed his tour and returned to India. The net result was that instead of improving the relations, it deteriorated a bit more.

In 1987, Arunachal Pradesh was granted statehood. China claims it to be its own part of South Tibet. The bilateral relation deteriorated to such an extent that another war seemed inevitable. The claim on the populated area of Arunachal Pradesh, particularly Twang is based on the fact that Sixth Dalai Lama was born there India more and less comes up with similar argument. It demands sacred Mount Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet since it is sacred place of Hindu religion.^x

RELATION FROM 1993-2006

However, the tensions have started reducing after 1993 and 1996 border agreement between India and China. Both agreed that border dispute exists and it should be worked out but this issue should not hamper the all-round relation. Confidence building measures are being taken up along the border. Troops have been cut and local military commanders are meeting to sort out the differences. Further, an additional step was taken for the resolution of border disputes in 2003 when both sides appointed special representative to address the border issue.^{xi} But so far despite the fact that representative from both the sides have met many times, nothing in concrete has come up. Most probably, the intention of China is not clear. It wants to keep the border in ambiguity.

Mohan Malik rightly points out that "an unsettled boundary also suits the contemporary interests of China for China's claim in the Western Sector are complicated by the India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir, and China wants to engage India under strategic pressure on two fronts from that is from China and Pakistan."^{xii}

In 2003, when Indian Prime Minister visited China, India formally recognized Tibet as an integral part of China. This leads us to two conclusions. First – The main priority of India is to solve its border dispute than Tibet. Secondly – India is neither abettor nor instigator of uprising in Tibetan land, hence no interest as such.

However, recently we find that China is trying to block in our growth and engage it in short skirmishes. For example – Media more often than not reports that Chinese troops enter our side of line of actual control in Arunachal Pradesh. Again in March 2009 China attempted to block a \$ 2.9 billion loan to India from the Asian Development Bank on the grounds that it was destined for development of Arunachal Pradesh.^{xiii}

RELATION FROM 2006 TO TILL DATE

Though China has more or less restrained itself from creating a situation where border war seems inevitable but habitually it keeps reminding that border disputes exists between us.

On 6th July 2006: China and India re-open Nathu la pass which was closed since 1962.^{xiv} It was to show the growing understanding between the two countries but in May 2007. China denied visa to Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister to visit China. In a statement it said that Arunachal Pradesh was a part of China and the Chief Minister does not require any visa to visit his own country.^{xv} Not only had that China objected to Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh's visit to Arunachal Pradesh.^{xvi} In 2010 India had to cancel Defence exchange after Beijing denied. General B.S. Jaswal head of the Northern command to be a part of Defence team because he was "controlling" the disputed area of Jammu and Kashmir. In reply, India subsequently refused to allow two Chinese Defence officials to visit New Delhi.^{xvii} Not only that in Nov. 2010 China started issuing stapled visa to the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

These acts were pricking in nature. In 2012 the Chinese turned their attention towards economic front. In 2009 itself trade between India and China had surpassed \$ 50 million and China was our largest trading partner. In 2012 China stated that "Sino-Indian ties could be the most important bilateral partners of the century."^{xviii} Both the Prime Minister of China and India set a target of US\$ 100 billion trade by 2015.^{xix}

Bilateral trade reached US \$ 89.6 billion in 2017-18. It was a trade deficit of \$ 62.9 billion in China's favour.^{xx}

But as I have already said Chinese can never stop pricking. In April 2013, The Chinese troops entered into Depsang Bulge in Laddakh, about 19 KM towards our line of actual control claiming it to be the part of Xinjiang province. Indian military however succeeded in pushing them back.^{xxi} The Chinese government should be congratulated for its courage to invite Prime Minister Modi to attend the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) submits in Beijing in

May 2017. It was natural for India to refuse and it declined the invitation and issued the list of its objections.^{xxii}

DOKLAM FIASCO

Doklam is not a part of India. In fact both China and Bhutan claim to be its part and India recognize the right of Bhutan's claim. Though there is no agreement between Bhutan and India as such but there has been Indo-Bhutan friendship treaty. In the revised treaty of 2007 (8th Feb.), came into force following the exchange of instrument of ratification between the two governments in Dhimpu on 2nd March, 2007.^{xxiii} The clause reads "in keeping with the abiding ties of close friendship and co-operation between Bhutan and India, the government of the kingdom of Bhutan and the government of the republic of India shall co-operate closely on the issues relating to their national interest. Neither government shall allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other."^{xxiv}

The problem started in June 2007 when Chinese army engineers along with road building material, entered Doklam to construct a road. Keeping respect in mind for the Indo-Bhutan friendship treaty Indian army acting swiftly entered there and now both the army stood face to face for nearly 73 days. Diplomatic parleys were on and ultimately both the army withdrew.

CHINA'S REACTION IN RECENT INDO-PAK PROBLEMS

For the last three years, China has generally kept itself quiet when the major problems have erupted between India and Pakistan. India conducted a surgical strike against militant across the line of control in Pak occupied Kashmir on 29th September 2016^{xxv} and inflicted "significant casualties. It was in response of Uri attack by 4 armed terrorist where 19 soldiers and 4 terrorists were killed. China kept restrain.

WATER ISSUE

Look at the different report and measure yourself the importance of water:

Rising Population, Rapid Urbanization, Industrialization and Inadequate rainfall as

Reasons for sharp decline in Ground Water volume in the country – Report prepared under the ministry of water resources.

According to Niti Aayog's Composite Water Management Index, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi and Hyderabad are among the most affected states.

No less important than border issue is the issue of water, though it is not a pressing issue immediately. China has a 20% of population of world where as it has only 5% water of its own for its consumption. India is not in a better position either. "A Niti Aayog report released in 2018 predicts day zero for 21 Indian cities by 2020. Day zero refers to the day when a place is likely to have no drinking water of its own."^{xxvi} A report prepared by the ministry of water resources reported rising population, rapid urbanization, industrialization and inadequate rainfall as reason for sharp decline in ground water volume in the country.

It is essential for human existence and every drop of it is priceless. Therefore, to have water means to have power. It's possession in geo-political mechanics makes water a strategic commodity and its role as a strategic asset.

Water is emerging as the main concern as far as the relation between China and India is concerned. The way China is behaving these days put a question mark on seemingly inevitable clash between the two countries. Since 2010, China has been engaging itself with Bangladesh on Hydrological data sharing, flood control and disaster management. It has decided to finance a series of hydropower projects in Pakistan under its "Belts and Road Initiative" (BRI) which includes one in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. Both BRI project and construction of hydropower project in POK is going to prove major trouble for India in near future. Construction

of dams and water diversion projects, threatens the downstream countries.^{xxvii} Four rivers flow from China to India and it gives strategic advantage to China over India. Because of this it is possible that this issue may counter-balance India on so many issues. It is pertinent to study and analyze the water issues between the two countries.

RIVER FLOWING FROM CHINA TO INDIA

There are four rivers descending from four direction of Mount Kailash in the Nagari region of Tibet to the Indian Sub-Continent.^{xxviii}

1. Brahmaputra: It flows through three countries, China, India and Bangladesh. The Tackok Khabab originating from the East of Mount Kailash and flows from upper region of Nagari down to the valley of Tsang, where it merges with Kyichu River of Central Tibet flowing through Yarlung Dagpo. It then bends to the right of the Namchang Barwe Mountains into Hustang and flows through the eastern region of India becoming Brahmaputra. It then descends into Bangladesh and finally into Bay of Bengal.
2. The Ma Cha Khabab originates in the North of Mount Kailash and flowing through the region of Nepal and then through the state of Uttar Pradesh into India. It merges with Ganga and ends up in Bay of Bengal.
3. The Languchen Khabab originates in the North of Mount Kailash and ultimately becomes Sutlej river flowing through Rampur and Kannaur valley in Himachal Pradesh and then into Punjab from where it flows through Pakistan into Arabian ocean.
4. The Senge Khabab originates in the West of Kailash and flows through Nagari and then becomes Indus flowing through Ladakh, Kashmir and then through Pakistan finally into Arabian ocean.

Before going on to analyze the advantages that

China enjoys over India, it is very important to point out here that India is a lower riparian vis-à-vis China.

An analysis would suggest the following:

- A. China is a upper riparian state.
- B. The water issue is also complicated also because both the countries differ on line of actual control.
- C. The matter gets more complicated because China claims integral part of India as its own.
- D. Absence of any agreement between India and China/Tibet related to water issues.

Further, "it is hard to imagine China playing the role of responsible upper riparian by releasing re-regulated flows from power house immediately back to river. China's consumption requirements and long distance transfers of water will undoubtedly hurt interests not only of India but also of Bangladesh".^{xxix}

"The problem gets more complicated in the absence of international law on shared waters and when one such was attempted, China voted against the convention on law of the non-navigational use of internal water course in the U.N. General assembly in 1997".^{xxx} China has not been regularly sharing hydrological data for flood control. They want to build many water projects in Tibet which includes a dam on Brahmaputra also. Satellite study of cross border Tibetan rivers has also been completed. On any pretext, they stop sharing hydrological data. The example is – when tension arose in Doklam, they stopped sharing the data. Mr. Raveesh Kumar, spokesperson of external affairs ministry during a regular briefing and said that "for this year, we have not received the hydrological data from Chinese side".^{xxxi}

Now two questions arise in mind. Can it stop water to India or can China stop sharing water with India?

And the answer is very simple. No. No way it's possible. Not because China may or may not want this but because geography is such that it is not possible. So many huge dams and canals are required to stop and divert the water. Even this does

not likely to happen because Tibet is cut off from China and India by high mountains and water diversion project would require mountains to be cut through or use existing rivers. It will also have to flow against gradient.

DALAI-LAMA

The way Dalai-Lama is treated in India with respect and the way more than 1 lakh Tibetan refugees are leading comfortable life in India has been an irritating point for China. The telegraph in its report writes that Dalai Lama and his associate "openly encourage Tibetans with in Chinese border to carry out self immolation" against China. Dalai Lama was behind a self immolation protest by a Tibetan exile in India during the visit of Chinese president in March 2012 and Chinese primer in 21st May, 2013.^{xxxii}

CONCLUSION

Concluding it can be said that China's claim on Arunachal Pradesh and Brahmaputra are two very important bones of contention. China is likely to use water as a means to extract maximum concession on border issues. Skirmishes will continue but full-fledge war seems impossible as China also knows that neither India is a India of 1962 nor China is a super power. Both the countries are developing giants of Asia and their interest lies in peace, not in war.

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