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# INDIA-CHINA Relations

## A NEW PARADIGM

RUP NARAYAN DAS

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Rup Narayan Das

May 3, 2013

## INTRODUCTION

The four chapters in the monograph, broadly divided into two parts, apparently do not constitute an organic whole; nevertheless, they are not disjointed parts of India-China relations. The two countries are ancient civilisations of the world having a glorious past, a dynamic present and a promising future. This was unmistakably foreseen by India. How India foresaw the rise of China resonated in the portals of the Indian parliament even before India attained full freedom.

The first chapter on the Indian Parliament and Sino-Indian relations attempts to revisit the animated debate in the Indian Parliament. Prof. Nancy Jetly undertook pioneering work on this aspect a few years back. This chapter is a modest building block to the seminal work. This chapter has three broad objectives. First, it tries to put together the rich debate and authentic information, which have bearing on India-China relations; second, it tries to determine the extent to which Parliament has been able to influence India's China policy; certain reports of the standing committees of Parliament have also been referred and finally it elucidates how Parliament can thoughtfully engage in the discourse on India-China relations.

Parliament continues to be a treasure-trove of authentic source of information to any avid researcher working on India-China relations. It may be mentioned in this connection that on the issue of the Sino-Indian border dispute, the Government of India, between 1963 and 1969, placed on the Table of the Parliament as many as 14 volumes of 'White Paper'. The first volume contained the very first two protest notes dated July 17, 1959 from the Chinese side against what they alleged were Indian intrusion in their territory. The second protest note was dated August 13, 1954.

While the second and third chapters in Part One of the monograph deal with the domestic imperatives of the complex India-China relations, Part Two consists of chapters on external dimensions in India-China relations, which, nevertheless, have a bearing on the relationship between the two countries.

The third chapter deals with Confidence Building Measures between the two countries, which were initiated after the path breaking visit of Late Rajiv Gandhi to China in 1988. This chapter elucidates important CBMs like *Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border* (1993), *Agreement Between the Government of Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Confidence- Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the India- China Border Area* (1996), *Protocol between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Modalities for the Implementations of Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas* (2005). For better clarity and understanding, some of the important provisions in these agreements have been elucidated. This chapter also throws light on the latest Working Mechanism on Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs and the maritime CBMs, the details of which are being worked out. It also analyses the dialogue and communication mechanism like the Annual Defence Dialogue, Military Exchanges and the Joint Military exercises between the two countries.

The fourth chapter tries to put the Pakistan factor in India-China relations in proper perspective. There is no dearth of scholarly work on this aspect. In the past few years especially after the end of cold war and more particularly after the killing of Osama bin Laden in May 2011 and after the estrangement of the US- Pakistan relationship, there has been a perceptible shift in the geo-politics of the region. The improvement in India-China relations has also reduced the trust deficit between the two countries to some extent, which in turn has its resonance on the Pakistan factor in the India-China relations. This chapter, therefore, chronicles the recent developments in the sub-continent and how it is affecting the India-



China relations. To put the Pakistan factor in the India-China relationship in proper perspective, this chapter recapitulates China's military assistance to Pakistan in developing its army, air force, navy and the development of infrastructure in the disputed Pakistan occupied Kashmir and most importantly the nuclear arsenal, so as to balance India in South Asia. It also examines whether the improvement in India-China relations and the thaw in India-Pakistan relations can reduce the trust deficit and the security dilemma between the two countries.

The fifth chapter 'Managing China in the Asia-Pacific: India's calibrated Approach' throws light on the latest irritant in the India-China relations taking the conflict of interest from South Asia to the Asia-Pacific. In fact India's foray into the choppy water of South China Sea when the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) Videsh signed the agreement with its Vietnamese counterpart in October 2011, gave added dimension to India's 'look east' policy. Of late, the issue has subsided a bit with the withdrawal of the ONGC from block 128; but China still has a lurking anxiety about India's strategic engagement in the region with defence cooperation with countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam in particular. The US' attempt to mentor India has also fuelled China's concern. Thus, the chapter elucidates India's fine balancing.

The conclusion analyses the complex India-China relations. It reflects the overriding spirit of India-China relations in its totality and is not strictly drawn from the bits and pieces or facets of the complex, and yet fascinating, India-China relations. It is unorthodox and conveys a sense of optimism while recognising the constraints at the ground level.

## THE INDIAN PARLIAMENT AND SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS

*Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it.*

-George Santayana

On the face of it, a topic like ‘The Indian Parliament and Sino-Indian relations’ looks banal for many reasons. In the first place, there is a perception that the Parliament is like a talking shop, where debates and discussions are marred by interruptions, disruption and pandemonium and there is very little or no substantive discussion. Except in a war like situation, when there is a threat to national security, unity and integrity, parliamentarians neither have the time nor the inclination to discuss issues that do not have a direct bearing on their constituency or on electoral politics. Besides considering the sensitive and professional nature of the subject, parliamentarians tend to leave the foreign policy issues to the professional diplomats and the foreign policy establishment. But there have been exceptions to the rule in most democratic countries including India. India-China relations and India’s policy towards China is the best example of this category. In the recent past, the Indo-US Nuclear Deal also dominated the discourse in the Indian Parliament and almost brought the government to the brink of its ouster. It is against this backdrop that the present chapter attempts to revisit the animated debate that dominated the discussions in the Indian Parliament and continues to surface from time to time.

In seeking to determine the influence of the Parliament in the formulation of the foreign policy, it is necessary to have some understanding of the role of legislature in a parliamentary form of government in the general policy-making process. Philip Norton’s classification of legislatures based on policy-making is probably the most useful in this respect. The classification

distinguishes between policy-making legislatures, policy-influencing legislatures and legislatures with little or no policy impact.<sup>1</sup>

Policy-making legislatures, such as the US Congress, are in a position not only to amend or reject government proposals, but also to substitute proposals of their own. In other words, they can, and frequently do, play an active part in the initiation and formulation of policy. Policy-influencing legislatures, on the other hand, are restricted to amending or rejecting government measures with which they disagree – they have no capacity to substitute policies of their own. Those legislatures with little or no policy impact, self-evidently, can neither modify (let alone reject) proposals, nor put forward any of their own. Like most other Parliamentary forms of government, the Indian Parliament falls within the second category, *i.e.* a policy-influencing body.

The Parliament exercises budgetary controls by debating and approving the demands for grants of various ministries including the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs, which has a direct bearing on India-China relations. Besides, the Parliament also provides an opportunity to the Ministry of External Affairs to report on international situations and the legislators to discuss the government's view of the world. The Motion of Thanks on the President's address, calling attention, no confidence, adjournment motions, as well as the question hour at the beginning of each day's session, provide further opportunities for discussion on international affairs.

The Parliament's role in Sino-Indian relations predates even the Independence of the country and can be traced back to the Provisional Parliament called the Constituent Assembly (Legislative). Even before the Peoples' Republic of China was formally proclaimed on October 1, 1949, Prof. N. G. Ranga of the Congress regarded as the 'Father of the House', moving a cut motion in the Lok Sabha on December 4, 1947 relating to the

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<sup>1</sup> Cliff Grantham and Bruce George, 'The Influence of British Parliament on Foreign Policy' in Manohar L. Sondhi (ed), *Foreign Policy and Legislatures: An Analysis of Seven Parliaments*, Abhinav Publications, 1988, p8.

demands for grants of Ministry of External Affairs said, “China has become a sort of cockpit between the Soviet Russia and America. Are we going to keep mum about it, are we going to allow her to become an unfortunate victim of these powers as Republic Spain has become? Should we not take a positive stand in regard to this?”<sup>2</sup>

Another Congress member Brajeswar Prasad, supporting the sentiment of Prof. Ranga, said, “India and China are destined to be leaders of Asia. Joined together they will be (a) force to be reckoned with.”<sup>3</sup> He even went to the extent of proposing a federal union, saying, “It is in common interest of both the states to evolve a federal plan of union.” India’s nuanced approach to deal with China which India is pursuing today can be traced to Nehru’s calibrated response to China during the early years of India’s independence. Nehru in his inimitable candor and circumspection was of the view that since the position in China was not fully crystallized, it was imprudent for India to get entangled in its internal problems or express an opinion, which might prove embarrassing later. Articulating his views, he said, “... members may perhaps let themselves go about what should be done in China, Japan, Siam and Peru, but I fear it is a little difficult and it will be a little irresponsible for me to talk about these various matters. Naturally India is interested in Asian countries, even more than the rest of the world.”<sup>4</sup>

When the People’s Republic of China was formally proclaimed on October 01, 1949, India was the second non-communist country to accord recognition to it. The birth of the communist China found its echo and resonance in the Provisional Parliament of India. Though the two countries followed different political paths – India, a democratic path and China, a communist and totalitarian path –

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<sup>2</sup> Debates of Provisional Parliament, December 04, 1947, (column, henceforth ‘c’) c.1263.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, c.1255.

<sup>4</sup> Constituent Assembly Debate, December 04, 1947, c.1244.

the birth of the Communist China was welcomed by the members of the Provisional Parliament.

Initiating a debate on external affairs on March 17, 1950, Nehru said that it was not a question of approving or disapproving; it was a question of recognition of a major event in history and of appreciating it and dealing with it.<sup>5</sup> Articulating the policy of Independent India in the broader Asian context, he said:

“It affects us, because we are in Asia, it affects us because we are in a strategic part of Asia, set in the Centre of Indian Ocean with intimate connections with Western Asia, with South-east Asia and with Far Eastern Asia. We could not ignore it, even if we would, and we do not want to ignore it”.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.1 The Korean Crisis

It was just coincidence that when India recognized the birth of the People’s Republic of China, around the same time, a crisis broke out in the Korean Peninsula. An emergent session of Parliament was convened on July 31, 1950 to discuss the Korean crisis. Drawing the attention of the House, President Dr. Rajendra Prasad said that Prime Minister Nehru had appealed to the Russian Prime Minister Joseph Stalin and to the Secretary of State of the US, Dean Acheson that the authorities of these two great countries should be exerted to localize the arm struggle in Korea, and break the dead lock in the Security Council of the United Nations over the admission of the People’s Republic of China, so that the present international tension might be eased and the way opened to the solution of the Korean problem by discussion in the Security Council.<sup>7</sup>

Later participating in a debate and referring to the problem relating to the admission of the PRC to the United Nations on August 3,

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, c.1699.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, c.1696-7.

<sup>7</sup> Lok Sabha Debate, July 31, 1950, c. 10.

1950, Nehru maintained that after having recognized the new regime, it would have been exceedingly unreasonable not to accept the logical consequences thereof. He said, “Ever since we recognized the new People’s Government of China, it naturally followed the consequence of such recognition should come... It is none of our business to like or dislike governments, though we can do so of course...” Reiterating his plea for admission of China in the United Nations he said, “... as a result of China not being admitted into the United Nations, and the representative of the old Kuomintang regime being there, the House knows that the USSR and some of their friendly countries, more or less walked out of various organs of the United Nations, more essentially from the Security Council.”<sup>8</sup> The debate that followed witnessed near unanimity of views with regard to China’s admission to the United Nations. Generally, the members were supportive of the government’s stand on the issue and there was overwhelming sentiment that the change in China would have to be recognized by all nations sooner or later.

## **2.2 Revisiting History: India’s Advocacy for China’s admission to the United Nations**

At a time when India is making all efforts for a permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council, and China is reticent about its whole hearted support to India’s candidature maintaining that it understands India’s aspiration to play greater role in the world affairs without making any explicit commitment, it is only appropriate to recall how India extended its undiluted support to China’s admission to the United Nations. In fact, India was one of the first Asian countries to sponsor a resolution for the admission of China in the United Nations and when a resolution was moved by the Soviet Union in the Security Council to unseat Kuomintang representative in favour of the People’s Republic of China, India extended its full support. The government’s advocacy of China’s admission into the United Nations was generally supported by most political parties.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, cc. 225-226.

However, the issue of China's bid to become a member of the United Nations got entangled with the unfolding Korean crisis in 1950 as the war broke out in June 1950 in Korea. India voted for the UN resolution condemning North Korea's aggression on South Korea and calling for withdrawal of the Korean forces to the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, and supported the UN intervention to restore peace and security in the region. India was of the opinion that no settlement of East Asia imbroglio would be durable and permanent without China's concurrence. Speaking in the Parliament on August 03, 1950, Nehru categorically expressed the view that China's entry into the United Nations might well have prevented the Korean crisis and also made it clear that while India had accepted the UN resolutions, it completely disassociated itself from any American action with regard to Formosa (Taiwan).<sup>9</sup>

Although there were differences of opinion among the members in their understanding and approach to the Korean problem, they largely supported the government's advocacy of China's admission into the United Nations in order to stabilize the situation in the Korean peninsula. Initiating a debate on international affairs on December 06, 1950, Nehru reiterated the government's policy of advocating China's membership of the United Nations. Defending the government's decision for opposing the UN Resolution on endorsing the crossing of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, he argued that China viewed this as a grave danger to its own security and would resist it by all means at its disposal, thus enlarging the area of conflict. He said, "We had perhaps rather special responsibility with regard to China, because we were one of the very few countries represented there, and we were the only country, apart from the countries of the Soviet bloc, which could find out... what the reactions of the Chinese Government were to developing events... I can not conceive of a peaceful solution in the Far-East... even if there is war, any solution after the war, which does not take fully into consideration of this great country of China with regard to those, problems"<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Lok Sabha Debate, August 03, 1950, cc. 218-228.

<sup>10</sup> Lok Sabha Debate, December 06, 1950, c.1262.

In pursuance of the policy envisaged by Nehru, India opposed the UN resolution branding the People's Republic of China as an aggressor because of its involvement in the Korean War in opposition to the UN forces. Making a statement on Foreign affairs on February 12, 1951, he reiterated India's position that the People's Government of China should be brought into the United Nations. He said, "The House is aware that for over a year, we have been firmly of the opinion that the People's Government of China should be brought to the United Nations. This, according to us, was not only a recognition of a patent fact but was a necessary consequence of the whole scheme of the United Nations organization indeed, it may be said that if this unfortunate error of keeping out the new China from the UN had not been committed, much of the trouble that has subsequently occurred might have been avoided."<sup>11</sup>

### *The 1954 Agreement on Tibet*

The historic India-China Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between India and the Tibet Region of China signed on April 29, 1954 was discussed in Lok Sabha on May 15, 1954 under the discussion on international situation. Referring to the Agreement, he particularly mentioned the Preamble to the Agreement, which enshrined the five principles of the Panchsheel as under:

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty;
2. Mutual non-aggression;
3. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs;
4. Equality and mutual benefit; and
5. Peaceful co-existence.

Nehru exuded his innate optimism and idealism while articulating his views. He said, "There has been a great deal of talk of collective security, some times of preparedness for collective war or collective

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<sup>11</sup> Lok Sabha Debate, February 12, 1951, c.2699.



war-preparedness. Collective security, good as it is and essential to aim at, assumes the garb rather of preparation for collective war. I submit that it would be a healthy approach to this problem if it was that of collective peace.” Turning to Tibet he said, “... so far as Tibet is concerned, it is a recognition of the existing situation there. In fact, that situation had been recognized by us two or three years ago. Some criticism has been made that this is a recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. Apart from that fact, I am not aware of any time during the last hundred years when Chinese sovereignty or if you like suzerainty was challenged by any outside country and all during this period whether China was weak or strong and whatever the Government of China was, China always maintained this claim to the sovereignty..” In subsequent years Nehru has been criticized for his unequivocal articulation on China’s position on Tibet.

Although Nehru’s pronouncement on Tibet was by and large supported by most members particularly those belonging to the ruling party, he was also subjected to criticism by opposition members. Acharya Kripalani for example, felt that China after it had gone communist committed an act of aggression in Tibet. The plea that China had the ancient right of suzerainty, which he argued was out of date and antiquated, and that it was theoretical; it was never exercised or very rarely exercised and even then theoretically. He further said that Tibet was culturally more akin to India than it was to China, at least Communist China, which had repudiated all its old culture. By occupying Tibet, he argued, China had demolished a buffer state. “In international politics, when a buffer state is abolished by a powerful nation, that nation is considered to have aggressive designs on its neighbours.” He also drew attention of the House to the new map of China showing other border territories like Nepal, Sikkim etc. Contrasted with the pessimism of Acharya Kripalani, Shri Brajeshwar Prasad regarded the Sino-Indian treaty on Tibet, “as a non-aggression pact in embryo” and suggested a similar pact with Russia.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Lok Sabha Debate, May 15, 1954, c.7609.

### 2.3 The Tibet Crisis

It was unfortunate, however, that in spite of India's friendly overtures and painstaking efforts to give China its due in the comity of nations, Chinese occupation of Tibet which started in 1950, greatly strained the relationship between the two countries. Members of Parliament were concerned and agitated about the Chinese occupation of Tibet. The issue was discussed in Lok Sabha on March 17, 1950 in course of a discussion on external affairs, and members urged the government to clearly define its frontier with Tibet. Participating in the debate, P.C. Barua (of Congress) said, "The McMahon line, which was drawn up at a conference in Shimla is a very vague boundary. The line is more or less an imaginary one and that is the reason why our statesmanship in this particular area will be put to great test in the years to come."<sup>13</sup>

Intervening in the debate Mr. Frank Anthony, a nominated member of the Anglo-Indian community said, "I believe that it is not only self delusion but.... dangerous self delusion either to hope or to believe, however exemplary our motives in the international plane, however genuine our desire for neutrality... for friendship with all nations, that communists will in the final analyses respect our neutrality and our loftiness of motives".<sup>14</sup>

In his address to the Parliament on November 14, 1950, the President also expressed his distress at China's military action in Tibet. He said, "My government has been consistently following a policy of friendship with our great neighbour country, China. It was a grave matter of deep regret to us, therefore, that the Chinese however should have undertaken military operations in Tibet, when the way of peaceful negotiations was open to them. Tibet is not only a neighbour of India but has had close cultural and other ties with her for ages past. India, must, therefore, necessarily concern herself with what happens in Tibet and hope that the autonomy of this peaceful country will be preserved"<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, c.1734.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, c. 1719.

<sup>15</sup> Lok Sabha Debate, November 14, 1950 c.11

In the ensuing debate, Durga Bai (of Congress) criticized China for its aggression on Tibet and called upon the government to use its full strength in maintaining the freedom of Tibet. Shyam Nandan Sahay (also Congress) sought to move an amendment regretting that the address did not mention any 'firm policy' towards such a close neighbouring state as Tibet.<sup>16</sup> H.N. Kunzru (independent) pressed for an amendment calling for the strengthening of India's defence forces in view of the changed circumstances in Asia, in order to "...secure the safety and freedom of the people of India"<sup>17</sup>. Drawing attention to the fact that the entire border from Kashmir to Assam had become vulnerable, H.V. Kamath also moved an amendment motion.

On November 20, 1950, while responding to a question raised by a member as to whether India had got any well-defined boundary with Tibet, Nehru said in the Lok Sabha that while the frontier from eastwards had been clearly defined by the McMahon Line, which was fixed by the Shimla Convention of 1914, the frontier from Ladakh to Nepal was defined by long usage and custom. When H.V. Kamath drew the attention of the government to the new Chinese maps reportedly showing their southeastern boundary extending up to the Brahmaputra, Nehru hastened to assure the House that the maps in question were old. He declared, "Our maps show that the McMahon Line is our boundary and that is our boundary – map or no map. That fact remains and we stand by that boundary and we will not allow anybody to come across its boundary".<sup>18</sup>

This is a statement made by no less a person than the Prime Minister of the country on the floor of the House. Its importance, therefore, can hardly be over emphasised. A noteworthy aspect of the Parliament in the wake of the Chinese occupation of Tibet was that if earlier there was near unanimity about India's relationship with China on a positive note, there was absolute

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, vol 6, 1950, c. 39

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, c.46

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, Vol. 05, part-I, 1950, c. 155-6.

unanimity in views among all sections of the political spectrum in criticizing the Chinese action in Tibet. Even members belonging to the Congress Party were critical of the government's response to the emerging situation in China.

The debate that followed reflected the anguish and pain of the members towards the new regime in China. Many prominent leaders of Congress cautioned the government against adopting a complacent attitude towards China. The veteran Congress member Prof. N. G. Ranga expressed concern at the way the Tibetan question was being handled by the government. He cautioned the government against the threat of insecurity posed by China's military action in Tibet. J.B. Kripalani of the Congress questioned India's wisdom in having pressed for China's admission to the United Nations at so early a stage. M.A. Ayyangar of the Congress was equally critical of China's wanton invasion of Tibet. M.R. Masani of Congress in a forceful speech urged the government to reconsider its attitude towards China, which had plainly shown its aggressive character in Tibet, Formosa and Indo-China. Yet another member, Brajeswar Prasad pleaded for a Moscow-Delhi-Beijing axis, which he declared would promote peace and stability in South-east Asia. He moved an amendment reiterating his demand for non-aggression pacts with the Soviet Union and China.<sup>19</sup>

Responding to the sentiment expressed in the House, Nehru made it clear that China was a great country which could not be ignored no matter what resolutions were passed and what speeches were delivered in the House. "Can any one", he asked, "deny China at the present moment the right of a great power... to mould events not in the world but her own and shape her destiny or round about her. She is a great power regardless of whether you like it or dislike it."

## **2.4 The Indian Parliament's Resolution on China**

The outbreak of the war between India and China in October 1962 was the saddest day for India in the history of the bilateral

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<sup>19</sup> Nancy Jetly, *India China Relations*, Radiant Publishers, 1979, p. 22.

relationship between the two countries. Nehru was deeply anguished at the Chinese attack on India. It was certainly beyond his comprehension and was a setback to his idealism and optimism. The members of the Parliament irrespective of party affiliation were equally pained and agonized. The Proclamation of Emergency was issued by the President of India on October 26, 1962 under clause(1) of article 352. The Parliament witnessed a very animated discussion when the resolution was taken up for discussion on November 08, 1962. The protracted debate and discussion on the resolution started with Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru declining to accede to Dr. L.M. Singhvi's request to convene a secret session of the House to discuss the resolution. Giving reasons for this he said that the issues before the House were of high interest to the whole country and that right at the beginning to ask for a secret session would have a bad effect on the country.

Moving the resolution, Nehru bemoaned that in spite of the uniform gestures of goodwill and friendship by India towards the People's Republic of China on the basis of recognition of each other's independence, non-aggression and non- interference, and peaceful coexistence, China had betrayed the goodwill and friendship and the principles of *Panchsheel*, which had been agreed to between the two countries and had committed aggression and initiated a massive invasion of India by her armed forces. He then put on record the high appreciation of the House of the valiant struggle of the men and officers of the Indian armed forces while defending the frontier.

The Chinese attack ignited a debate on India's foreign policy, including the Non-Alignment, its defence policy, economy and the planning process. The attack exposed India's vulnerability in terms defence preparedness and there was the demand for beefing up defence preparedness through indigenization of defence production and procurement of advanced weapons from friendly countries.

Initiating a discussion on the resolution and in reference to the question of indigenization of defence production, Nehru said, "...there is always a choice and there has been a choice for us to

buy arms from abroad or to make them ourselves. Obviously, it is always better to make them ourselves, because that strengthens the country; industrially and otherwise and secondly you can not altogether rely on out side supplies; any moment they may fail you and economically, it is bad to get them from outside. So, our practice has been to try to build up our arms, the industry and the like in the country and we have done fairly well. We might have done better; I do not know. All kinds of difficulties arise, because development of one industry depends on the whole industrial background of the country...” Talking about difficulties, he said further, “A great deal was said about arms automatic rifles and the rest. For the last three or four years, we have been trying to make them and various difficulties arose about patents ... and sometimes about our own difficulties in finding enough foreign exchange. Ultimately we got over these difficulties and we started their manufacture...”

Emphasising the priority of indigenization *vis-a-vis* importing arms from abroad, he added, “The only alternative was previously for us to get large number of those weapons from abroad. We hesitated; we wanted to make them ourselves. Undoubtedly, we could have got them, but remember this. If we have tried to get all those weapons from abroad in what might be called peace time, we will have to spend enormous sums of money. Our whole planning, etc. will have gone, because when you talk of weapons in terms of war, you talk in terms of thousands of crores. It is not a question of a few crores, but thousands of crores and it would have smashed our economy.”

In his thought provoking speech Nehru also articulated his considered views on the planning process and the primacy of agriculture in India’s economy. He said, “There is one other aspect, which I should like to mention, which is not indirectly connected with this matter but directly connected, and that is our development plans and the Five Year Plan. Some people have said, ‘Let us give up these plans so that we may concentrate on the war effort’. What is the war effort? People think of soldiers in the front, which is perfectly right. They are bearing the brunt on the heat and danger. But in this matter, in the kind of struggle that we

are involved in, every peasant in the field is a soldier; every worker in the factory is a soldier. Our work, our war effort essentially, apart from the actual fighting done, is in ever-greater production in the field and factory. We must remember that. It is an effort, which depends greatly on our development. Today we are much more in a position to make that kind of effort in field and factory than, let us say, ten or twelve years ago; there is no doubt about that. We are still not adequately developed. I hope this very crisis will always make us remember that an army today, a modern army, fights with modern weapons which it has to manufacture itself in that country.”

Elaborating the point further he said, “It is based on the development of industry, and that industry must have an agricultural base if it is to succeed. Therefore, we have to develop all round, apart from agriculture and industry, which are the basic things in our Five Year Plan... So that, to talk of scrapping the Five Year Plan is not to understand the real springs of our strength. We have to carry the Five Year Plan and go beyond it in many respects. It may be, in some matters, which are considered non-essential, we may tone down or leave them but in the major things of Five Year Plan we have to make the fullest effort. Among the major things agriculture is highly important. How can a country fight when it is lacking in food?” Nehru’s arguments, however, met with strong criticism even from the Congress Party. Prof. N.G. Ranga for example said, “... But why do you have this Planning Commission any longer? Even ordinarily it was useless and now it becomes much more useless; indeed it can even be a nuisance...”

Indian foreign policy was also subjected to intense debate during the discussion on the resolution. Making a consistent plea for China’s admission to the United Nations, which he had advocated earlier even during the Chinese occupation of Tibet and when the Korean crisis broke out in 1950, he said, “Here, I may say, it has been unfortunate, in this as in so many other cases, that the present Government of China is not represented in the United Nations. Hon. Members are surprised when we have supported the Chinese representation- the representation of the People’s government in

China- in the United Nations. We have supported this in spite of this present invasion, because we have to look at it this way; it is not a question of likes or dislikes. It is a question, which will facilitate Chinese aggression; it will facilitate its misbehavior in future. It will make disarmament impossible in the world. You might disarm the whole world and leave China, a great, powerful country, fully armed to the teeth. It is inconceivable. Therefore in spite of our great resentment at what they have done, the great irritation and anger, still, I am glad to say that we kept some perspective about things and support that even now.”<sup>20</sup>

Nehru was thus, trying to make China a responsible stakeholder in the comity of nations by bringing it on board to the UN system, which Kissinger facilitated later in 1971 and which USA had opposed all those years during the cold war years. It was quite audacious on the part of Nehru to stick to his position in the face of trenchant criticism, both within Parliament and outside. Elucidating his argument he further said, “The difficulty is one can not call them up before any tribunal or world court or anywhere”. Dr. L.M Singhvi, however, disagreeing with Nehru moved a substitute resolution and pleaded that India should desist from supporting or endorsing any move for admission of the People’s Government of China to the United Nations or any other international organization.

As he himself had great empathy with the philosophy of Communism and in deference to the Socialist Block, he further said, “I am not going into the question of Communism or anti-Communism. I do not believe that that is a major issue in this matter or any other. Communism may help; but the major issue is expansionist, imperialist minded country deliberately invading in to a new country...” Nehru had an insight into the national psyche of China. While Nehru’s defence of the NAM and the *Panchsheel* evoked some support from the Communist Party, members from his own party questioned the relevance and efficacy of these policies. Defending these policies, Shri H.N. Mukherjee

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<sup>20</sup> Lok Sabha Debate, November 08, 1962, cc.105-186.



said that *Panchsheel* was something, which would cure the world's ills. Turning to Non-Alignment he said that it was an idea, which had gripped us, because it had been implicit in the best aspects of the country's history. He said, "Non-alignment has been implicit in the way in which we conducted our struggle for freedom. Non-alignment has been implicit in the way in which after freedom we have been trying to build our country. Non-alignment is implicit in the way in which we are planning for a socialist society..." Prof. N.G. Ranga from the Congress Party recalling the earlier statement of Acharya Kripalini that *Panchsheel* was born out of the rape of Tibet, said that Mao Zedong "...was clever enough to get these things incorporated in to the India-China treaty over Tibet and leave our Prime Minister and various other people also under the impression that it was being presented to the world as a contribution of India's statesmanship. So *Panchsheel* has already gone." Questioning India's Non-alignment he pondered, "How are we to become strong if we hang on to this non-alignment policy...Non-alignment has not served us; does not serve any longer. The sooner we get rid of it, the better, the sooner we turn our back to it, the better..." Making a plea to take a re-look at our foreign policy, he said that he was glad "...the Prime Minister had told the House that all those democratic countries, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, France and so many other countries have been noble enough and decent enough and democratic enough to offer unconditional support in an unstinted manner."

After the debate the House passed the following resolution.

"This House notes with deep regret that, in spite of the uniform gestures of goodwill and friendship by India towards the People's Government of China on the basis of recognition of each other's independence, non-aggression and non-interference and peaceful co-existence, China has betrayed this goodwill and friendship and the Principles of *Panchsheel* which had been agreed to between the two countries, and has committed aggression and initiated a massive invasion of India by her armed forces;

This House places on record its high appreciation of the valiant struggle of men and officers of our armed forces while defending our frontiers, and pays its respectful homage to the martyrs who have laid down their lives in defending the honour and integrity of our motherland;

This House also records its profound appreciation of the wonderful and spontaneous response of the people of India to the emergency and the crisis that has resulted from China's invasion of India;

It notes with deep gratitude this mighty upsurge amongst all sections of our people for harnessing all our resources towards the organization of an all-out effort to meet this grave national emergency. The flame of liberty and sacrifice has been kindled anew and a fresh dedication has taken place to the cause of India's freedom and integrity;

This House gratefully acknowledges the sympathy and the moral and material support received from a large number of friendly countries in this grim hour of our struggle against aggression and invasion;

With hope and faith, this House affirms the firm resolve of the Indian people to drive out the aggressor from the sacred soil of India, however long and hard the struggle may be.<sup>21</sup>

There were members, who demanded that until the Chinese invaders are driven out completely from Indian territory there should be no negotiations by anybody for the settlement of the dispute.

## **2.5 Post 1962 years**

With the passing of time, a thaw in the relationship between India-China emerged towards the 1970s. Initiating a half an hour discussion on the subject of normalization of relations with China on August 16, 1972, Shri Samar Guha, an important member of

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Socialist Party, referred to the chat that India's charge de affairs Mr. Brajesh Mishra had with the Chinese officials, in Beijing on the occasion of the August 15 celebration in the Indian Mission in Beijing. He also drew attention of the House, to the fact that China's attitude towards India was also changing. In 1967, 1968 and in 1969, China was encouraging Naxalites over Peking Radio, which had changed. He also mentioned about Han Suyin's interview in November 1971 in a Chinese newspaper in which she said that China had desired India to be strong, united and independent. Replying to the discussion, the Minister of External Affairs, Shri Swaran Singh said that he could not see any escape from the ultimate emergence of a situation where the people of India and people of China would live in peace and as good neighbours. He said further "... There is also their general propaganda line of trying to project a picture of India as a disintegrating India, highlighting our troubles either on labour front or on the front of industrial production or food production; this unfortunately has been the attitude of China."<sup>22</sup> He thus sounded a cautious optimism about the prospects of Sino-Indian relations.

India's policy of combining flexibility with firmness bore fruits in early 1976 when informal exchanges took place between India and China to discuss exchange of ambassadors. After the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries, there have not been much animated discussions on India-China relations except on very rare occasions.

## 2.6 Sumdorong Chu Valley Incident

The Sumdorrong Chu incident of June 1986, however, evoked sharp reactions from the members. Making a suo moto statement in the Lok Sabha on July 18, 1986, the Minister of External Affairs and the Minister of Commerce Shri P. Shiv Shanker said that about 40 Chinese personnel, some in uniform, had intruded approximately two-three kms into the area of Sumdorong Chu

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<sup>22</sup> Lok Sabha Debate, August 16, 1972, c. 416.

valley in Arunachal Pradesh. After verification of the intrusion, New Delhi protested strongly to the Chinese government. The Minister further pointed out that India stressed that the area of the Sumdorong Chu valley was clearly south of McMahon Line, as well as within Indian Territory, and that India rejected the Chinese response received on July 8, 1986, that this was disputed area, and on their side of the McMahon Line. The Minister also informed the House that the issue would be taken up for discussion during the seventh round of official level talks scheduled for July 21, 1986 in Beijing, to be led by the Foreign Secretary.

Not content with the Minister's statement, the Speaker had to concede to the demand of a member Shri Dharam Pal Singh Mallik, to admit a calling attention notice on "Situation arising out of Chinese intrusion into Indian territory, and construction of a helipad in the Sumdorong Chu area of the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh". Initiating the discussion on the motion on August 01, 1986, the Minister of External Affairs Shri P Shiv Shanker informed the House that the Foreign Secretary of India, during his meetings with the acting Chinese Premier Wan Li, and Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian, expressed India's grave concern over Chinese intrusion, and told Beijing that since both sides had agreed to maintain peace and tranquility on the border, such intrusions added tensions and vitiated the atmosphere for finding a satisfactory and just solution to the boundary question. "As regards the matter of existence of a helipad, said to have been built by the Chinese in the area, our information is that no such helipad exists as on today. However, the government is keeping a close watch on the developments", he added.

Participating in the discussion, Shri Dharam Pal Singh, who moved the calling attention motion, wanted to know from the Minister, whether any attempt had been made or not by the Arunachal government and the Central government to establish contact with any citizen of the valley after the intrusion. He also drew attention of the House to the press report to the effect that the Chinese had tried to establish contact with the people of some villages in the area, and that they had told them that they were not enemies, but good friends, and if the Adivasis wanted to graze their cattle in

the area, they must pay taxes to them. Expressing his dismay, he bemoaned that it was very difficult to rely on such a country and that we would have to be very cautious in dealing with a country for which betrayal was a common practice. Shri Chintamani Jena, participating in the debate, remarked that China was anxious to have access to the modern technology of warfare from the U.S.A, but US had denied the export of such technology to China, though they were supplying it to Pakistan. He further said that China was supplying arms to the Nagas and wanted to know what actions had been taken by the government. Another member Shri Brajamohan Mohanty drawing attention to China's occupation of Paracel Island in 1974 and the Chinese attack on Vietnam in 1979 said that there was no point in carrying on negotiations or dialogue. Shri Jagdish Awasthi, intervening in the debate observed, "...today China, Pakistan and U.S.A have formed an axis in the political horizon of the world and whenever there are such questions, we find ourselves helpless..." Dr. Chinta Mohan asked, "Why did our intelligence fail to get a report of the helipad installation in Arunachal Pradesh?"

Replying to the debate, the Minister of External Affairs Shri P. Shiv Shanker reiterated that there was no helipad, notwithstanding the fact that some of the members had gone to the extent of saying that the Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister himself had confirmed it. He further said that the government had got it verified from responsible sources. Referring to the border intrusions at Sumdorong Chu Valley, he said that this was a violation of the gentlemen's agreement of 1984 at the fourth round of talks to maintain peace and tranquility in the border. Discerning the changing attitude of China towards border talks he added, "As a principle that was mutually agreed up on in 1984 in the Fourth round of talks. There is now, of course, a case from November 1985. A variation of their previous package, what is called in their expression 'the remodeling of the package'. They have been trying to say that variation of the previous package has been the concession on the East for corresponding concessions in the West. That is the concept which they have started adumbrating right from November 1985..."

A week later on August 8, the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs, Shri K.R. Narayanan making a statement in Lok Sabha stated, "It came to the notice of the government on August 4, 1986 that the intruding Chinese personnel had improvised a helipad in Wangdung in the Sumdorong Chu Valley and that Chinese helicopters had actually landed there." He further said, "...there is relatively easy accessibility of the area to the Chinese from the Tibetan side of the international boundary. Besides, the nature of terrain is such that it is not difficult to clear the ground to serve as a makeshift helipad. It has also been noticed that the Chinese are setting up tents and building huts in the area." Expressing deep concerns of the government, the minister informed the House that the government has taken diplomatically the issue of this intrusion with the Chinese authorities both in New Delhi and in Beijing". Expressing anguish Shri Jaipal Reddy said that the statement of the minister was only a bid to cover up the lapse. Shri P. Namgyal, the member from Ladakh urged for a thorough discussion on the issue under rule 193. Thus, the debates reflected the concerns of the members including even those from the ruling party, who were critical of the government.

### *Discussion on Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to India in 2005*

The improved India-China relations in later years found its echoes in the parliament. It may be mentioned that immediately after the historic visit of the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to India in April 2005; Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh made a statement on the subject in Lok Sabha on April 20, 2005. As per the well laid out convention of parliamentary practice, prime minister tabled in the House a copy of the joint statement signed between the two countries during the visit of the Chinese Premier. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh said that the two countries have agreed to establish a "Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity" and that India-China relations transcend bilateral issues and have now acquired a global and strategic character. He further said that the strategic and cooperative partnership was not in the nature of a military pact or alliance but reflects a congruence of purpose apart from a common perception of world events. Prime Minister also pointed out that during his meeting with Premier

When he stated that China regarded Sikkim as an “inalienable part of India”, and that Sikkim was no longer an issue in India-China relations and that the Chinese side had officially handed over a revised map showing Sikkim as within the international boundaries of India.

The Prime Minister’s statement was discussed in the Lok Sabha on May 20, 2005 under Rule 193, which obliges the Government to respond to the issues raised during the discussion. Initiating the discussion Shri Rupchand Pal, a member of CPM said that through intermittent hiccups, we have been progressing on settling issues like the border issue, giving recognition to Sikkim, about China’s global perspective and also about tackling a conspiracy by imperialist powers who want to use India to contain China. He further said that it was the responsibility of India not to become a strategic partner of the hegemonistic powers who have been hatching a conspiracy against China. Participating in the debate Shri K.S. Rao said that if China and India were to come together with open hearts, cooperate with each other in development, together these two nations would dominate the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He further felt that if there is trust between the two countries lot of resources could be saved, which could be diverted for development purposes.<sup>23</sup> Prof Ram Gopal Yadav cautioned the government going by China’s past betrayal. He also drew the attention of the House to China’s attack on Vietnam during Foreign Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee’s visit to China in 1979 because of which he had to cut short his visit to China as a mark of protest. Without naming the U.S.A, Shri Ram Kripal Yadav said, “There is one country in the world which tries to create tension between both the countries because it has got its own vested interests... these countries can not make huge profits by selling weapon to such countries. Therefore, such countries keep India, Pakistan and China engulfed by clouds of war so as to do their politics and serve their interests.”

Participating in the debate Shri Prabodh Panda said that the former Defence Minister (Shri George Fernandes) had identified China as

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<sup>23</sup> Lok Sabha Debate, May 12, 2005, cc.192-93.

India's enemy number one and that the former Prime Minister (Atal Behari Vajpayee) had written to the US President that India's nuclear tests were in response to the threat posed by China and that now the situation had developed to such an extent that Prime Minister told the media that India and China could together reshape the world order. Shri Madhusudan Mistry felt that a country could not build a good relationship with another country based on suspicions and urged that we would have to open our country to visits by the Chinese people and also the Chinese people would have to open its doors for visits by Indian people. Dr. M. Jagannath of the Telugu Desam Party while cautioning to be alert said that the visit of the Chinese Premier gave a good signal to the entire country.

Responding to the sentiment and concerns expressed in the House, Prime minister Dr. Manmohan Singh said that there was unanimity in the House regarding the importance of India's relations with China. He further said that he did not look at India's relations with China as those between rivals, but as between partners engaged in promoting peace, security and development in Asia and in the world as a whole. Responding to Prof. Ramgopal Yadav's reference to China's betrayal earlier, he said, "There are risks, but I think these risks will not deter us from moving forward, though we shall do so mindful of all the elements that go to influence this complex situation, which we have to deal with."

### *Recent Trends*

While discussing the demands for grants for the year 2011-12 in respect of the Ministry of Defence, the leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha, Shri Arun Jetley, expressed his concern regarding the nexus between China and Pakistan. Participating in the debate on May 8, 2012 he said, "In PoK, in Northern areas, the Chinese troops are today physically present. China has repeatedly, from a position of neutrality, altered its position with regard to Jammu & Kashmir. Today, at least, two nuclear reactors in Pakistan are being built with Chinese assistance. This is a changed reality, which was not there ten years ago." He further said, "Pakistan has considerably enhanced its own nuclear capability. On the Line of Actual Control, China had built roads, airbases and has strategically



positioned their troops. We do not want to repeat the Himalayan blunder of 1962 and therefore, in terms of changing geo-strategic realities, our defence strategy has to be planned.”

Responding to the concern expressed by the members participating in the debate, the Minister of Defence, Mr. A.K. Antony said, “We are living in a very volatile and dangerous neighborhood. The growing proximity between China and Pakistan is a cause of serious worry. Threat perception changes according to the emerging situation. Recently, we have given a new direction to the armed forces to prepare themselves to meet the challenges in the context of emerging new threat scenario. That preparation is going on.” He further added, “Regarding China and Pakistan, India’s approach is two-fold. On the one hand while dialogue will continue but on the other hand, we will strengthen our capabilities. If China can increase their capabilities in the Tibetan Autonomous Region then we can increase our military strength in our own land.”<sup>24</sup>

Issues relating to India-China relations have also been raised in both Houses of Parliament, during the ‘zero hour’. In addition, a number of searching questions have been raised by members on India China relations in both the Houses of Parliament. As it is not possible to enumerate an exhaustive list of such questions, some such important questions and their answers are mentioned in this chapter. These answers are authentic information given by the government on the floor of the House and in a way they also reflect the concern of the members to put the government on the mat. A recurring question on India-China relations pertains to the border issue particularly relating to border intrusions, or what the government calls border transgressions.

On May 16, 2012, replying to a question raised by a member in the Rajya Sabha as to whether it is a fact that Chinese soldiers have entered into Indian territory 37 times in five years, the Defence

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<sup>24</sup> Rajya Sabha, Synopsis of Debate (Proceedings other than questions and answers), May 8, 2012.

Minister said that there is no commonly delineated Line of Actual Control (LAC) between India and China. He further said, "There are a few areas along where India and China have differing perceptions of the LAC. Both sides undertake patrols up to respective perceptions of the LAC. The Indian security forces continue to patrol up to all areas that fall within the Indian perception of the LAC. Specific incidents of transgressions to differences in the perception of the LAC are taken up with the Chinese side through established mechanisms such as Hot Lines, Flag Meetings, Border Personnel Meetings and normal diplomatic channels. Effective border management is carried out through surveillance and regular patrolling by forces to prevent transgressions from the Chinese side." He added, "The number of incidents of Chinese transgression beyond our perception of the LAC during the last five years have generally been as per established pattern."<sup>25</sup> The same day, replying to a similar question in the Rajya Sabha, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs said that while during the year 2010 there were 228 instances of border transgression in the India-China border, there were 213 such instances in 2011.<sup>26</sup>

Replying to a question as to whether India has demolished Indian walls in the border area of Arunachal Pradesh, as reported in the media, the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs, Smt Preneet Kaur said that on July 13, 2011, a People's Liberation Army (PLA) patrol attempted to cross a 200 ft. wall of loose stones, constructed 250 m on India's side of the LAC in Yangtse area of Tawang. This attempt was prevented by Indian troops. The stone wall was partially damaged and had been reconstructed. The minister further said that as per the established mechanism with China, a strong protest was lodged with the Chinese side on the action of the PLA patrol in a Flag Meeting.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Rajya Sabha, Reply to Unstarred Question No. 4388, May 16, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Rajya Sabha, Reply to Unstarred Question No. 4412, May 16, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Lok Sabha, Reply to Unstarred question no. 439, March 14, 2012

## 2.7 Role of Parliamentary Committees

The concerns of the Members of Parliament on India-China relations have also been reflected in various Standing Committees in the parliament. The Committees of Parliament, particularly the Standing Committee on External Affairs and Defence have the potential to influence the foreign policy in a very limited manner. It must be noted that the recommendations of the Standing Committees are persuasive and recommendatory in nature, in the sense that the Government is not under obligation to implement them. It is now mandatory, however, to present an action taken report to the House within six months of the presentation of the report.

Just by way of an illustration, it is worthwhile to refer to the report of the Standing Committee of Defence on “Construction of Roads in the Border Areas of the Country” presented to Lok Sabha on August 20, 2012. This report has a bearing on India’s policy towards China. The Committee in its recommendation *inter alia* observed “...the infrastructure being created on the border by our neighbouring countries particularly China further poses challenges before the country.” Coming from a Standing Committee of Defence, the observation is certainly serious. The Committee further bemoaned “...whereas it is an acknowledged fact that roads and other infrastructure are being created on the borders by different countries particularly China, the Ministry has not maintained any details and data with regard to such activities going on the borders which is evident from the response of the Ministry. This speaks volumes of the casual attitude of the Ministry towards such an important matter concerning the security of the nation. The Committee feels that it is utmost necessary to keep a watch on the construction activities going on our borders by different countries and maintain the data in this regard. Besides, there is an urgent need to ensure that our plans are in consonance with the impending security challenges. As such the Committee strongly recommended formulating some sort of mechanism in this regard. The Committee should be kept informed about the action taken in this regard.”

Yet another Committee of Parliament, the Petition Committee of the Rajya Sabha, in their report took note of the situation on the Chinese side of the border and deliberated at length, on the pros and cons of the development initiated by China in the border areas. The report further mentioned:

“China has completed its 3900 km Beijing –Lhasa rail link and is pushing ahead with seven other railroad projects adjoining the Indian border. China proposes to build 5000 km of rail links, with emphasis on establishing connectivity in the Tibetan Autonomous Region. China has also proposed to build a rail network in Nepal. Besides this, China is said to be considering an extension of the Golmu-Lhasa line up to Xigaze, south of Lhasa and from there to Yatung, a trading center, barely a few kilometers from Nathu La, a mountain pass that connects Tibet with Sikkim. There is proposal too to extend the line to Nyingchi, an important trading town north of Arunachal Pradesh, at the tri-junction with Myanmar. These rail lines will bring the Chinese trains up to Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh - two Indian States that figure prominently on the radar of Sino-Indian disputes.”

Emphasising the need for initiating development of the railway network, the committee observed, “Economics and security experts have been warning that Indian Government is napping while China is set to extend its railway network up to Sino-Indian border.”<sup>28</sup>

In one more report, the Standing Committee on Information Technology in its report on the demands for grants of the ministry emphasised that the location of Arunachal Pradesh sharing its border with China has strategic importance and as such there is an urgent need to improve the telecom connectivity and broadband connectivity in the area. All initiatives with assistance of the Indian

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<sup>28</sup> 141<sup>st</sup> Report of the Rajya Sabha Committee on Petitions Praying for Development of Railway Network in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and other Himalayan States presented on December 19, 2011.

army/other authorities should be taken to provide better telecom connectivity and broadband connectivity in the said area.<sup>29</sup> It appears that there has been a continuous and concurrent vigil by the parliament on India-China relations and in most cases the recommendations of the committees have been implemented by the government.

## 2.8 Exchange of Parliamentary Delegations

Although visits by parliamentary delegations are more of goodwill visits and are ceremonial in nature, they do at times contribute to better understanding and cooperation not only between two fraternal parliaments and political parties, but also between the two countries and their people. It is worthwhile to recall that the Declaration on the Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China signed between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and his Chinese counterpart Wen Jiabao on June 23, 2003 *inter alia* stipulated that both sides 'agreed that personnel exchanges and friendly contacts between ministries, parliaments and political parties of the two countries should be further enhanced.' It is regrettable, however, that compared with other parliaments, exchange of parliamentary delegations between India and China has been few and far between and its potential has not been fully utilized. In the sixty years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, as of now, only three parliamentary delegations from China have visited India. A 14-member Chinese Parliamentary delegation led by Mr. Liao Hansheng, Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs of the National People's Congress of China visited India from November 30 to December 08, 1992. After a gap of three years, a 24-member Chinese Parliamentary delegation led by Mr. Qiao Shi, Chairman of the Standing Committee of National People's Congress (NPC) visited India from November 15-20, 1995.

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<sup>29</sup> Twenty First Report of Standing Committee on Information and Technology (2010-11), Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, August 2011.

The third visit of a 12- member Parliamentary delegation led by Mr. Li Peng, Chairman of the National People's Congress took place in 2001 at the joint invitation of the Chairman, Rajya Sabha and Speaker, Lok Sabha. The delegation visited New Delhi, Mumbai, Agra, Bangalore and Hyderabad. In New Delhi, he met the President, the Vice-President, the Prime Minister, the Speaker, Lok Sabha, the Deputy Chairperson Rajya Sabha and the Leader of Opposition. He also met the leaders of parliamentary groups. In Mumbai and Bangalore, he met the Governors. The visit was of great significance as this was the highest level of visit from China after the visit of President Ziang Zemin in 1996. The visit afforded the two sides an opportunity to exchange views on bilateral issues, and regional and international issues of mutual interest. The two sides also agreed to form India-China Friendship Groups in their respective parliaments. In pursuance of the decision, China had established a China-India Friendship Group in their National People's Congress comprising seven members led by Mr. Sheng Huuaren, a member of the Standing Committee of the NPC and former Chairman of the State Economic and Finance Commission. India also established the India-China Friendship Group comprising 33-members. During the visit, Li Peng delivered a speech at the India International Center entitled 'Deepening Understanding, Fostering Friendship and Strengthening Cooperation'. He asserted that China did not consider India a threat and was ready to strengthen cooperation with India. This visit was a conspicuous example of engaging parliaments between the two countries for promotion of better relationship between the two countries.

Besides these visits at the parliamentary level, there have been contacts and engagements between parliamentarians also. For example Mr. Wang Zhaoguo, Vice-Chairman of Standing Committee of National People's Congress of China called on the Speaker, Lok Sabha on November 9, 2005. The Speaker, Lok Sabha called on the President of the People's Republic of China on November 21, 2006. A seven member delegation led by Mr. Liu Mingza, called on the Chairman, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee on December 12, 2006. Mr. Jia Zhiijic, Chairman of

the China-India Friendship Group in the National People's Congress called on the Lok Sabha Speaker on January 1, 2008.

If the number of visits of Chinese parliamentary delegations from China was very insignificant, visits of parliamentary delegations from India to China too leaves much to be desired. In the six decades of relationship, so far only four parliamentary delegations from India have visited China. The first parliamentary delegation to visit China was in October 1956 when the then Speaker of Lok Sabha led a 26 member delegation to China. After a long gap, the then Speaker Shivraj V. Patil led a 15 member delegation in January 1993. The third delegation to China was led by the then Speaker Manohar Joshi in January 2003. The last delegation was led by the former Speaker Somnath Chatterjee in 2006.

## 2.9 Conclusion

In a parliamentary polity the role of parliament in foreign policy making is minimized as the making of foreign policy, considering its sensitive and strategic nature is often characterized by a degree of secrecy. Secondly, as far as Sino-Indian relationship is concerned, South Block, the seat of Ministry of External Affairs, at times, is not inclined to leave much space to other stake holders including the parliament for the same reasons. These are some of the inherent limitations in the role of parliament in Sino-Indian relations. Nevertheless, the parliament continues to be the fulcrum of the legislative and policy-making process and it is the pivotal institution through which omissions and commissions of the government are accounted for.

How does one assess the role of the Indian Parliament in the India-China relations? Has it hindered or promoted the relationship? As it can be discerned from the aforesaid study, there was a sense of goodwill towards China in the initial years of independence, when Nehru crafted India's China Policy. The attitude of members towards China started hardening when the relations between the two countries started deteriorating towards the 1950s. Even members of the ruling party became critical of the government's China policy as articulated by Nehru. There seems to be a mixed

opinion as to whether Nehru was stymied by the hostile parliament or he himself suffered from unilateralism. According to K.P.S. Menon, India's first ambassador to China and Independent India's first Foreign Secretary, "Nehru seemed personally disposed to negotiate on the frontier problem, but he gave up the idea and assumed an inflexible posture as a result of the opposition of some of his colleagues in the cabinet and criticism in Parliament." He further wrote, "The entire attitude adopted by the parliament during the crises was unhelpful. Brave talks that not an inch of Indian Territory should be surrendered and so on, left the government with no room for maneuvering." He concludes, "This is what happens when the Legislature tries to usurp the functioning of the Executive."<sup>30</sup>

A careful reading of Prime Minister Nehru's speeches and interventions in the debates in parliament on China from the very beginning until the end clearly suggests that he was consistent and coherent in his approach towards China in spite of China's virulent criticism, and critical remarks by members of parliament, including those from the ruling party (Congress). Nehru's articulation was measured and interspersed with circumspection and wisdom. His speech on November 8 suggests how he was mentally distraught. Although he did not express in so many words on the floor of the House fully knowing its repercussion both within and outside the House, the fact that on a number of occasions he was forgetting the years in which particular incidents had taken place, clearly reflected the mental trauma he was undergoing. It was an excruciating experience for him when his idealism and hopes were dashed.

Nehru himself being a committed parliamentarian familiar with parliamentary customs, conventions, etiquettes, and the procedural niceties had the highest respect for the parliament. Although foreign policy is the traditional domain of the Executive, Nehru always took the parliament into confidence on foreign policy issues

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<sup>30</sup> Excerpted from K.P.S. Menon's *Twilight in China* as reproduced in Ira Pande (ed.) *India China: Neighbours Strangers*, Harper Collins, 2010 (Prologue pg. xv-xvi).



including India's relations with China. The fact that he tabled the White Papers in the House and informed the House of the developments at the earliest opportunity conforming to established parliamentary customs, spoke of his respect and regards for the parliament. A study of the debates in the parliament also suggests that while there was a certain degree of consistency in the government of India's attitude towards China, the attitude of the opposition parties slowly changed from hostility towards more matured understanding of the complex India-China relationship.

Needless to say, at a time when China is a major challenge to India's foreign policy and defence policy, it is imperative that there be a connect between the Executive (the foreign policy establishment) and the political class, which includes the parliament and the political spectrum. China is India's largest neighbor with whom India shares 4338km of border, and there is an unsettled border dispute between the two countries. In India's grand strategy of dealing with China, the Parliament should be engaged in a creative manner through exchange of Parliamentary delegation. Visiting Chinese delegation to India should be exposed to India's pulsating democracy by enabling them to visit the sessions of the Houses. Unless there is thoughtful and purposeful interaction, there can be misunderstanding and a communication gap, which in turn may be harmful to the bilateral relationship between the two countries. It is not only important to study and analyse the perception and attitude of the members of the parliament, but equally or more important to sensitize them as how best to deal with China through objective and unbiased analysis of facts, events and incidents.

It is also important for the parliament to engage with China in concert with the Executive thoughtfully and imaginatively. While it is important for the executive to be sensitive to the sense of both the Houses of the parliament and its committees, it is also important for the members of parliament to know the government's thought-process and its strategy to deal with China. The government should be willing and prepared to the extent possible to share information with the members of parliament. If the information is confidential in nature, the members of parliament can be taken into confidence

not to share such information with the public in the larger national interest. The office of the Presiding Officers of the two Houses (the Speaker, Lok Sabha and the Chairman, Rajya Sabha) can be utilized to facilitate such exercises. At a time when engagement is the buzz word in international politics, the institutional mechanisms, devices and practices available to Parliament should be utilized to engage with China in cooperation with the foreign policy establishment. A positive vibe, as barometer of public sentiment, emanating from the parliament will signal a bounty of goodwill to China. These should not be trivialized as empty rhetoric, but with a little thought and imagination, it can produce what can be termed as a feel good factor.

## **CBMs IN SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS NEED FOR REVAMPING AND ENLARGING STRUCTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS**

*“For the first time since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the prospect of war is becoming even more unthinkable (than before). Major Powers are competing in peace and not preparing for war”*

-Condoleeza Rice

The nature and dynamics of world politics over the years, particularly after the end of cold war have changed a great deal. The idioms and vocabulary of world politics have also changed as much as the paradigm of geo-politics. There is a greater realisation that in a globalised world there is no substitute for cooperation and mutual interdependence. The India-China relationship is one of the most fascinating relationships between two major powers in spite of certain differences between the two countries. The way they have managed the relationship ever since the war of 1962 is a remarkable achievement. The border between the two countries, not withstanding occasional intrusions, remains peaceful and tranquil and this speaks of the salience of the Confidence Building Measures (CBMS) between the two countries.

If approaches to study of international politics and more particularly to the study of bilateral relationship between two countries can broadly be categorised as realist and liberal intuitionist, advocates of CBMS like defence cooperation and military engagement can be put in the category of the latter nomenclature. Liberal intuitionists as distinguished from the realists point out that international cooperation is not only possible but also highly desirable because it reduces transaction costs and makes interstate relations more predictable<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Please see Robert O. Keohan, (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986.

There exists, what may be called, a persistent security dilemma between India and China.<sup>32</sup> Although, there have been no major conflicts between the countries after 1962, there have been reports of border incursions from time to time, and tension has also built up across the border. In the post-1962 period, and after the restoration of the diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1976, the relationship between the two reached its nadir when the Sumdorong Chu incident took place in 1986. This incident brought the two countries almost to the brink of war, which in turn impelled the two sides to explore ways and means for defence cooperation and military engagement.

It is in this backdrop that it is significant to revisit the working of the CBMs between India and China in the field of defence cooperation and military engagement particularly at a time when there is, as mentioned earlier, a security dilemma and some degree of trust deficit between the two countries, which can be discerned from the bolstering of defence capabilities of both the countries.

### **3.1 Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity, 1993**

The consolidation of diplomatic relations between the two countries with the path breaking visit of the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to China in December 1988, established the Joint Working Group (JWG), the groundwork for defence cooperation and military engagement. A milestone in the military relationship between the two countries was the visit of Sharad Pawar, the then Defence Minister to China in July 1992. It was the first ever visit by a Defence Minister of India to China. During the visit it was agreed to develop academic, military, scientific and technological exchanges between the two countries. It is also believed that during Mr. Pawar's visit, the Chinese military leadership emphasised the importance of reduction of troops in the border region due to prohibitive cost. The visit fructified in the signing of the *Agreement*

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<sup>32</sup> Jonathan Holslag, "The Persistent Military Security Dilemma between China and India", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32(6), December 2009, pp. 811-840.

*on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border area* on September 7, 1993 during the visit of the then Prime Minister P.V. Narashima Rao. The agreement<sup>33</sup> was indeed a breakthrough. In view of its importance, it is worthwhile to elucidate the salient features of the agreement in greater detail.

Before elucidating the main features of the first major agreement between the two countries, it is worthwhile to have a conceptual clarity as to the meaning of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The LAC is understood to be the line up to which troops of the two sides exercise effective control. It has not been demarcated, but the term was first used by the then Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, well before the 1962 war, in a letter written in 1959 to the then Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru. The Chinese put forward the line as its understanding of the de facto position of the two sides. Beijing claimed India and China did not have a delineated boundary, but there was a well-recognised LAC. Early delineation of the LAC has, therefore, emerged as an option for establishing the border regions and securing a working boundary that the military forces on both sides would respect.<sup>34</sup>

In the first place, the agreement affirmed the view that the India-China boundary question shall be resolved through peaceful and friendly consultations and that neither side shall use or threaten to use force against the other by any means. Yet another important highlight of the agreement was that it stipulated ‘pending an ultimate solution of the boundary question between the two countries, the two sides shall strictly observe the Line of Actual Control (LAC) between the two sides and that no activities of either side shall overstep the LAC. In case of personnel of one side cross the LAC, upon being confirmed by the other side, they shall immediately pull back to their own side of the LAC.’ It further provided that when necessary, the two sides shall jointly

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<sup>33</sup> Brahma Chellaney, *Asian Juggernaut*, Harper Collins, 2010, pp. 296-300.

<sup>34</sup> Anna Orton, *India's border land disputes, China, Pak, Bangladesh and Nepal*, Epitome Books, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 4-5.

check and determine the segments of the LAC when they have different views as to its alignment.

Second, the agreement stipulated that each side would keep its military forces in the area along the LAC to a minimum level compatible with the friendly and good neighbourly relations between the two countries. It further iterated that the two sides agree to reduce their military forces along the LAC in conformity with the requirement of the principle of mutual and equal security to ceilings, and that the reduction of military forces shall be carried out in stages in mutually agreed geographical locations, sector-wise, within the area along the line of actual control.

Third, as regards military exercise, the agreement mentioned that each side shall give the other prior notification of the military exercises of specified levels near the LAC permitted under the agreement.

Fourth, in case of contingency or other problems arising in the area of the LAC, the two sides shall deal with them through meetings and friendly consultations between the border personnel of the two countries.

Fifth, the two sides also agreed to take adequate measures to ensure that air intrusions across the LAC do not take place and that the two sides shall undertake mutual consultation in case intrusions occur.

As a follow up of this agreement, a senior level Chinese military delegation aimed at fostering CBMs between the defence forces of the two countries made a six day goodwill visit to India in December 1993. The visit was reciprocated by the Indian Army Chief Gen. BC Joshi in July 1994. Since then, regular exchanges have been taking place at various levels.

### **3.2 CBMs for the LAC, 1996**

Three years later, the Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Area was followed by the Agreement Between the Government of Republic of India and the Government of the

People's Republic of China on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas<sup>35</sup> on November 29, 1996 during the visit of Chinese President Ziyang Zemin to India. The agreement while reiterating and reaffirming the intent and spirit of the 1993 agreement, *inter-alias*, stipulates that the major categories of armament to be reduced or limited include combat tanks; infantry combat vehicles, guns (including howitzers) with 75 mm or bigger calibre, mortars with 120mm or bigger calibre, surface-to-surface missiles, surface-to-air missiles and any other weapon system.

In order to maintain peace and tranquillity along the line of actual control in the India-China border areas and to prevent any tension in the border area due to misreading by either side of the other side's intentions, Article IV of the agreement provides that both sides shall avoid holding large-scale military exercises involving more than one Division (approximately 15,000 troops) in close proximity of the LAC in the India-China border areas. However, if such exercises are to be conducted, the strategic direction of the main force involved shall not be towards the other side. If either side conducts a major military exercise involving more than one Brigade Group (approximately 5000 troops) in close proximity of the LAC in the India-China Border areas, it shall give the other side prior notification with regard to type, level, planned duration and area of exercise as well as the number and type of units or formations participating in the exercise. The date of completion of the exercise and de-induction of troops from the area of exercise shall be intimated to the other side within five days of completion or de-induction.

With a view to preventing air intrusions across the LAC in the India-China border area and facilitating flights and landings by military aircrafts, the agreement provides that both sides shall take adequate measures to ensure that air intrusions across the LAC do not take place. However, if an intrusion does take place, it should cease as soon as detected and the incident shall be promptly

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<sup>35</sup> Brahma Chellaney, no. 33, pp 301-308.

investigated by the side operating the aircraft. The results of the investigation shall be immediately communicated, through diplomatic channels or at border personnel meetings, to the other side. It further provides that combat aircraft (to include fighter, bomber, reconnaissance, military trainer, armed helicopter and other armed aircraft) shall not fly within ten kilometres of the LAC. Under the agreement, unarmed transport aircraft, survey aircraft and helicopters are permitted to fly up to the LAC. No military aircraft of either side shall fly across the LAC, except by prior permission. Military aircrafts of either side may fly across the line of actual control or fly over the other side's airspace or land on the other side only after obtaining the latter's prior permission after providing the latter with detailed information on the flight in accordance with the international practice in this regard. In order to ensure flight safety in emergency situations, the authorities designated by the two sides may contact each other by the quickest means of communications available.

Similarly, with a view to preventing dangerous military activities along the LAC in the India-China border area, Article VI stipulates that neither side shall open fire, cause bio-degradation, use hazardous chemicals, conduct blast operations or hunt with guns or explosives within two kilometres from the LAC. This prohibition shall not apply to routine firing activities in small arms firing ranges. If there is a need to conduct blast operations within two kilometres of the LAC as part of developmental activities, the other side shall be informed through diplomatic channels or by convening a border personnel meeting, preferably five days in advance. While conducting exercises with live ammunition in areas close to the LAC, precaution shall be taken to ensure that a bullet or a missile does not accidentally fall on the other side across the LAC and cause harm to the personnel or property of the other side. If the border personnel of the two sides come in a face-to-face situation due to differences on the alignment of the LAC for any other reason, they shall exercise self-restraint and take all necessary steps to avoid an escalation of the situation. Both sides shall also enter into immediate consultations through diplomatic and/or other available channels to review the situation and prevent any escalation of tension.



Article VII of the agreement provides for flag meetings between their border representatives at designated places along the LAC and for maintaining and expanding telecommunication links between the border meeting points at designated places along the LAC and to establish systematic medium and high-level contacts between the border authorities of the two sides.

Article VIII of the Agreement provides that if the personnel of one side cross the LAC and enter the other side because of unavoidable circumstances like natural disasters, the other side shall extend all possible assistance to them and inform their side, as soon as possible regarding the forced or inadvertent entry across the LAC. The modalities of the return of the concerned personnel to their own side shall be settled through mutual consultations. It further mentions that the two sides shall provide each other, at the earliest possible, information pertaining to natural disasters and epidemic diseases in contiguous border area, which might affect the other side. The exchange of information shall take place either through diplomatic channels or at border personnel meetings.

Article X mentions that recognising that the full implementation of some of the provisions of the present agreement will depend on the two sides arriving at a common understanding of the *alignment of the line of actual control* in the India-China border areas, the two sides agree to speed up the process of clarification and confirmation of the LAC. As an initial step in this process, they are clarifying the alignment of the LAC in those segments where they have different perceptions. They also agree to exchange maps indicating their respective perceptions of the entire alignment of the LAC as soon as possible. It also envisages that pending the completion of the process of clarification and confirmation of the LAC, the two sides shall work out modalities for implementing confidence-building measures envisaged under this agreement on an interim basis, without prejudice to their respective positions on the alignment of the LAC as well as on the boundary question.

Thus, it can be seen from various provisions of different agreements and accords signed between India and China that every conceivable aspect of military contingency has been thoughtfully anticipated and ways and means to deftly handle them without precipitating

the matter have been envisaged. It was against this background of signing of various agreements providing for CBMS that a slew of visits at various levels between the two countries were undertaken. The most significant of the visit was that of the then Defence Minister, George Fernandes, to China in April 2003. The visit of Mr. Fernandes took place after a gap of more than one decade. It helped ease the post Pokhran tension.

Defence cooperation and military engagement between the two countries further received a boost during the visit of the then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to China in June 2003. It may be mentioned that during the erstwhile short-lived Janata regime, Vajpayee had visited China in 1979. He, however, had to cut short his visit to China when war broke out between China and Vietnam, as a mark of solidarity with the latter. The joint declaration between the two countries signed on June 23, 2003, *inter alia*, mentioned, "...they agreed on the need to broaden and deepen defence exchanges between the two countries, which will help enhance and deepen mutual understanding and trust between the two armed forces. They confirmed that the exchange of visits by their Defence Ministers and of military officials at various levels should be strengthened".<sup>36</sup> It may be mentioned that even after almost 16 years, there is not much progress in clarification of the alignment of the LAC, and except the Central Sector, exchange of maps has not taken place.

### 3.3 Protocols on CBMs along the LAC, 2005

The upward swing of defence cooperation and military engagement between the two countries was given a further impetus during the visit of the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in April 2005 in the Protocol between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Modalities for the Implementations of Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field along the LAC in the India-China Border Areas signed on April 11, 2005. This Protocol sought to further elucidate

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<sup>36</sup> Brahma Chellaney, no. 33, p. 317.

certain provisions of the 1996 confidence building accord while reiterating verbatim some of the bilateral commitments in the accord. Some of the amplified provisions which merit attention are as under:

Article III of the Protocol envisages the following provisions:<sup>37</sup>

- a. In the event of an alleged air intrusion of its controlled air space by the military aircraft of the other side, either side may seek a Flag Meeting within 48 hours of the alleged air intrusion in order to seek a clarification. The investigation shall be completed by the other side and its results communicated through a Flag Meeting within a period of four weeks.
- b. If a military aircraft of either side is required to fly across the Line of Actual Control or to overfly the airspace of the other side, prior permission shall be sought from the other side according to procedures and formats to be mutually agreed upon.
- c. If a military or civilian aircraft of either side is required to fly across the Line of Actual Control or to land on the other side of the Line of the Line of Actual Control in an emergency situation, the two sides will ensure flight safety in such situations by adhering to procedures to be mutually agreed upon.

Article V provides the following:

- a. Both sides shall hold two additional border meetings each year at Spanggur Gap in the Western Sector, Nathula Pass in the Sikkim Sector and Bum La in the Easter Sector respectively in celebration of the National Day or Army Day of either side. Specific arrangements shall be decided through consultation between the border forces of the two sides.
- b. Both sides are, in principle, to expand the mechanism of border meeting points to include Kibithu-Damai in the Eastern Sector and Lipulekh Pass/Qiang La in the Middle Sector. The precise

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<sup>37</sup> Brahma Chellaney, no.33, pp. 322-327.

locations of these border meetings points will be decided through mutual consultations.

- c. Both sides shall conduct exchanges between the relevant Military Regions of China and Army Commands of India. Specific arrangements shall be decided upon through mutual consultations between the relevant agencies under the Ministries of Defence of the two sides.
- d. Both sides shall strengthen exchanges between institutions of training of the two armed forces, and conduct exchanges between institutions of sports and culture of the two armed forces. Specific arrangements shall be decided upon through mutual consultations between the relevant agencies under the Ministries of Defence of the two sides.

### **3.4 Memorandum of Understanding, 2006**

It was against this background of what may be called the heightened engagement between the two countries that the then Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee visited China on a five-day visit in May/June 2006 and held wide ranging talks with Chinese leaders including Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and his Chinese counterpart General Cao Gangchao.

The high point of the visit was the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which is the first ever of its kind between the two countries. The MOU envisages the establishment of a mechanism to ensure frequent and regular exchanges between leaders and officials of the Defence Ministries and the armed forces of the two countries in addition to developing an annual calendar for holding regular joint military exercises and training programmes. The Defence Minister also visited the sensitive Lanzhou Military Area Command, which controls the largest physical area of China's seven military regions. The region holding the nuclear research and missile testing facilities comes under the Command of this area. Mr. Mukherjee's visit to the head quarters of the Lanzhou Military Command was a significant step in the process of building bilateral trust and confidence on the part of China.

These gains were further consolidated during the visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao to India in November 2006. In the Joint Declaration signed between the two countries on November 21, it was mentioned, ‘...the exchange of visits in the field of defence has resulted in the building of mutual trust and enhancement of mutual understanding between the defence establishments of the two countries. Both sides shall fully implement the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding for Exchanges and Cooperation in the field of defence signed on May 29, 2006, which provides a sound foundation and institutional framework for further development of defence cooperation.’<sup>38</sup>

Certain concrete steps were taken as a follow-up of the CBMs. For example the armed forces of India and China held a cordial meeting at a new border point in Arunachal Pradesh, on November 18, 2006, on the eve of President Hu Jintao’s visit to India. The two sides met at Kibithu in Anjwa district of Arunachal Pradesh, and discussed modalities for the conduct of troops along the border. An official press release claimed, “The meeting and exchanges were characterised by great warmth and bonhomie. It marks another milestone in the growing relationship and military exchanges between the armed forces of the two countries.” Border meetings between personnel of the armed forces of the two countries have traditionally been held at Chusul in Ladakh, Nathu La in Sikkim, and Bum La in Kamang district of Arunachal Pradesh.<sup>39</sup>

### **3.5 Hand-in-Hand 2008: The India-China Joint Military Exercise**

Encouraged by the success of the first ever joint military exercise between China and India in Kunming in Yunnan in 2007, a week long China-India joint anti-terrorists training kicked off on

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<sup>38</sup> Lok Sabha Debate “Suo Moto Statement by Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Minister of External Affairs Chinese President’s visit to India”, November 28, 2006.

<sup>39</sup> “Warm meeting at new border point”, *The Hindu*, November 21, 2006 at <http://www.hindu.com/2006/11/21/stories/2006112115401000.htm>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

December 6, 2008 in Belgaon in Karnataka with the performance of the Chinese *Tai Chai* and Indian martial arts. Qin Xiangyon, in charge of the Chinese soldiers participating in the sessions, said during the opening ceremonies that the joint training was aimed at promoting the two army's mutual understanding and trust. He also said that it was a way for the armies to develop their friendship, and expand the fields for exchanges and cooperation. After the ceremony, Chinese and Indian soldiers displayed their weapons. Moreover, Chinese soldiers performed *tai chai* and anti-terror shooting skills, while their Indian counterparts put on display the country traditional martial arts. Commenting on the importance of the joint military exercise, Quyang Wei, a professor at the University of National Defence said in an interview to Xinhua, "China and India are the world's biggest developing countries. Peace and Friendship between them is not only in the interests of both the countries, but also important for bringing peace, stability and prosperity to South Asia".

Highlighting the need for the joint training, the Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman Huang Xueping said that such training 'was intended to enhance mutual understanding and trust and advance development of relations between Chinese and Indian armies.' Emphasising the importance of such exercises Lt. General Ma Xiaotian, Head of the Chinese Military Observer delegation and also the Deputy Chief of the PLA said, 'It showcased the resolution of the two sides to safeguard regional peace and stability and create a harmonious environment for development together.'<sup>40</sup> An editorial in *China Daily* hailed the joint training programme and said, 'China and India are looking after their fences, turning the Himalayas, the highest mountains on the earth, into a friendly border.'<sup>41</sup> The joint military exercise was carried out according to the Memorandum of Understanding for Exchange and cooperation in the field of Defence signed in 2006 and listed in the annual exchange plan for 2008.

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<sup>40</sup> *News From China*, 20(12), December, 2008.

<sup>41</sup> "India, China military exercise landmark development: Report", at <http://expressindia.com>, December 22, 2007, accessed on September 21, 2010.

### 3.6 Exchange of Defence Delegations

Defence cooperation between India and China maintained a healthy momentum till 2009. The issue of stapled visa, however, compelled India to suspend the visit of the Northern Command, Lt General B.S. Jaswal to China in July 2010 as he was issued a stapled visa and not a proper visa on the ground that the “sensitive region” of Kashmir was under his charge. The issue was resolved when Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh met President Hu Jintao on the side lines of BRICS summit in Sanya in April 2011. Subsequently an eight member delegation led by Maj General Gurmeet Singh, General Officer Commanding of the Delta Force paid a visit to China in June 2011. The Delta Force is part of Rashtriya Rifles counter-insurgency unit of the army, battling rebels in Doda and adjoining areas of Kashmir and is part of the Northern Command. China’s refusal to interact with the Northern Command chief was just one of the irritants that had buffeted ties between the two countries. The delegation visited Beijing, Urumqi, the capital of Muslim majority Xinjiang “autonomous” region, and Shanghai. Welcoming the visit of Indian military delegation, the foreign ministry spokesperson of China said, “The military exchange is an important part of China-India relations”. “The significance is that any hiccups in any field should not derail our bilateral relations”, he said, adding that defence exchanges needed to become “the most powerful stabiliser of our bilateral relations”.

Chinese analysts welcomed the resumption of defence ties as a sign that the two countries had put problems such as the visa issue behind them but cautioned against high expectations amid persisting mistrust on a range of issues. This visit was more about symbolism, taking forward confidence-building measures and addressing ground concerns rather than a platform to resolve larger pending issues. Hu Shisheng, a South Asia Scholar at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) told the Beijing based correspondent of an Indian English daily that it was better “not to burden such military-to-military exchanges with too much expectations” and a political agenda. The scope of such exchanges, he said, was not to solve problems, but “to enrich each other’s

understanding on each other's positions on different issues in a correct way".<sup>42</sup>

In a communist system like that of China, where the Party commands the gun, in recent times the PLA has become more assertive and strident in wielding influence on the foreign policy. There is, thus, an imperative need to engage the PLA. The PLA has been "an official foreign policy actor" throughout the history of the People's Republic of China, according to Linda Jakobson of the Stockholm International Peace research Institute, who authored a report on different actors shaping China's foreign policy.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of hiccups, exchange of defence delegations between the two countries continued. After the visit of Maj. General Gurmit Singh to China in June 2011, New Delhi received an eight-member PLA delegation led by Lt General Lang Youliang from Tibet Military Command of Chengdu Military Region in the first week of November 2011. The Chinese military delegation during their stay in India visited defence installations in New Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai. The visit of this delegation was followed by yet one more delegation of mid-career officers of PLA led by Maj. General Jin Lechang in December 2011.<sup>44</sup> Among other places, the delegation visited the IDSA also, and interacted with scholars.

A 15-member Indian military delegation left for Beijing on January 10, 2011 after the size of the delegation was trimmed to almost half, which excluded an air force officer from Arunachal Pradesh, as he was not issued a visa by the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi.

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<sup>42</sup> Ananth Krishnan, "Military delegation's visit marks thaw in India China ties", *The Hindu*, June 22, 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Ananth Krishnan, "India to engage China's military as influence expands", *The Hindu*, September 29, 2010.

<sup>44</sup> "Boost for military-to-military interactions between India, China", *The Pioneer*, November 11, 2011 at <http://dailypioneer.com/nation/19543-boost-for-military-to-military-interaction-between-india-china.html>, accessed on December 30, 2012.



### 3.7 The Annual Defence Dialogue

The Defence Secretary led a high-level Indian delegation for the third Annual Defence Dialogue held in Beijing on January 6, 2010.<sup>45</sup> The fourth India-China Annual Defence Dialogue was held in New Delhi on December 9, 2011. The Indian side was led by the Defence Secretary Shashi Kant Sharma and the Chinese side was led by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Deputy Chief of General Staff, Gen Ma Xiaotian. Ma is an important PLA general, who visited India in 2008 to participate in the Hand-in-Hand Joint Military exercise conducted in Belgaon, Karnataka.

The Ministry of Defence said that while sharing regional and global security perceptions, talks between the two sides were held in an atmosphere of cordiality and both sides were frank and constructive in their approach during the deliberations. Acknowledging that the existing CBMs on the LAC had been successful in maintaining peace and tranquillity on the borders, both sides agreed to continue with them besides further strengthening dialogue and communication to ensure stability. "Both sides agreed that the provision of the 2005 Protocol for implementation of CBMs on LAC should be strictly adhered to by both sides so that peace and tranquillity are maintained in the border areas. It was also noted that the strengthening of the institutional mechanism for border discussions, which is expected to be operationalized soon through the establishment of a working level mechanism, would improve communications on important border related issues." Besides meeting Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee and Chief of Naval staff, Admiral Nirmal Verma, the Chinese delegation also called on Defence Minister A.K. Antony who expressed satisfaction at the talks held in a positive and constructive atmosphere. Mr Antony while extending an invitation to his Chinese counterpart said that both sides needed to work towards increasing mutual trust and confidence, which would benefit both countries. It is believed that the two sides are working for training of their defence personnel in training colleges in either country.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report, 2009-2010*.

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.newkerala.com/news/2011/worldnews-123683.html>.

### 3.8 Line of Actual Control or Line of Actual Concern?

Although these military engagement and CBMs have somewhat helped in diffusing tension across the border, incidents regarding border incursions are reported from time to time. Every month, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police reports around a dozen unannounced Chinese military patrols in the disputed border area, and this number has not decreased over the last decade. Most of these incidents are inoffensive. Often border-guards do not even make direct contacts, but leave behind subtle traces of their presence, like piles of stones, cigarette packets or cans. From time to time, Chinese military officials reportedly enter the Indian side of the LAC in civilian clothes and vehicles. Almost on a weekly basis, small Chinese boats tour around Lake Pangong Tso in Ladakh<sup>47</sup>

In more recent times, India is worried about a significant increase in the number of stand-offs between Indian and Chinese border patrols and more aggressive posturing by Chinese soldiers along the border. Sometime in early September 2010, a stand-off between the two sides along the LAC took place, when Chinese soldiers brought a bulldozer into a disputed area in the Ladakh region to construct a road. Even after the Indian side objected to it and asked the Chinese to take it back, the PLA unduly delayed the withdrawal of the machine and took it away only about four days later. The delay by the Chinese was unusual, but it fell into the trend noticed in 2010, of greater assertiveness by the PLA soldiers, reported a leading newspaper quoting senior officials. The 2010 summer recorded an almost 100 per cent increase in the number of stand-offs between the patrols of the two sides. These peaceful stand-offs were reported from Depsang, Demchok and Pangong Tso areas of the Ladakh region in recent times.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Jonathan Holslag, no. 32, p.817.

<sup>48</sup> *The Times of India*, September 27, 2010.

In yet another incident reported by the news agency PTI on January 9, 2011, it was mentioned that Chinese troops entered the Indian territory in the fag end of 2010 along the LAC in South-eastern Ladakh region and threatened a contractor and his team to halt work on constructing a 'passenger shed'. The Chinese troops, which included motor-cycle borne personnel of the PLA entered Gombir area in Demchok region in Jammu and Kashmir and threatened the civilian workers who were building a shed, the plan for which was cleared by the state rural development department. The incident took place in a village about 300 km south-east of Leh district headquarters. An official report which was prepared after a meeting of officials from the civilian administration, the army, central security agencies and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, stated that a passenger shed was approved at an estimated cost of Rs. two lakh to be built at 'T' point in village Gombir under the Border Area Development Project of Ministry of Home affairs. The Chinese army personnel came to the 'T' point and asked the contractor to stop work.

While such incidents have been down played by the government, Defence Minister A.K. Antony told Rajya Sabha on December 21, 2011 that 'on July 13, a PLA patrol attempted to cross a 200 feet long wall of loose stones constructed 250 m on our side of the LAC in Yantse area of Tawang, which was prevented by our troops.' He also informed the House that "the stone wall was partially damaged by the PLA and as per the established mechanism with China a strong protest was lodged with the Chinese side in a Flag Meeting of the two armies." The wall was erected to cut chilly winds and prevent animals from straying into the Chinese territory. News report from Itanagar, however, rejected the media reports on alleged Chinese intrusions in the Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh. A regional TV channel also telecast footage of the Chinese army damaging the 'wall' constructed on the Indian side of the border. Following the telecast, the local army official said that there had been no such incident reported on the international border at the Tawang district. He said that the information about the Chinese intrusion was nothing but rumour. The Deputy Commissioner of the area, while explaining his concern on the rumour assured that the news footage given in the TV channel

was false. He said such “unfounded news items may create panic and apprehension in the minds of the people”.<sup>49</sup>

Defence Minister Mr. A.K. Antony in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha in the month on 30 November 2011 said, “Our nomads grazing in Kakhung near Nyma Sector of Ladakh had been disturbed by Chinese patrols in December 2008. A strong protest regarding the same was lodged with the Chinese Garrison Commander and since then Chinese patrols have not visited the area again. Our nomads are grazing in the area currently without any problem.” Replying to the question on 21 December 2011 in Rajya Sabha he, however, said that the areas along the LAC are being kept under surveillance by regular patrolling by troops and other means. He further said that there are no confirmed reports of aerial intrusion from Chinese side in to Indian airspace during the last month. He added that there is no commonly delineated LAC between India and China and that there are a few areas along the border where India and China have different perceptions of the LAC. Both sides patrol up to their own perception of the LAC. Specific incidents of transgression due to differences in the perception of the LAC are taken up with the Chinese side through established mechanisms such as Hot Lines, Flag Meetings, Border Personnel Meetings and normal diplomatic channels. Effective border management is carried out through surveillance and regular patrolling, he said further.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh while refuting the views of Samajwadi President Mulayam Singh that China was making all-out efforts to attack India and had marked some posts across the border, said in the Lok Sabha in mid December 2011 that his government did not share the views that China was out to attack India. Asserting that there were problems on the border, he said that largely, the border remains peaceful. He, however, acknowledged, “There are some times intrusions according to us. But the Chinese perception of LAC sometimes differs. Therefore,

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<sup>49</sup> “Army contradicts Antony on China?”, *The Pioneer* at <http://dailypioneer.com/nation/30072-army-contradicts-antony-on-china.html>, December 24, 2011, accessed on December 31, 2012.

I think some confusion is created. These matters are sorted out between the area commanders on both the sides.”<sup>50</sup>

It was, however, reported in the media that in August 2011 two Chinese helicopters carrying seven to eight troopers intruded into Indian territory along LAC in Ladakh and damaged “unused bunkers” before flying back unchallenged. The Leh district administration reported this to the state government highlighting that while the ITBP and the Intelligence Bureau sent the report on this incident to the Union Home Ministry, the local administration was kept in the dark. The Leh Deputy Commissioner T. Angchuk told the media that he had sent a report on the incident to the state government and deputed the Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) as station house officer to visit the spot, and verify the facts and file a report.

The Leh district administration learnt about the incident (which took place on August 25) on September 9 and the SDM was deputed on a fact-finding mission. However, the Indian army denied any such incident having taken place. Official sources, however, maintained that the two choppers landed in the Chumur area, 200-300 ft on the Indian side of the LAC. They were there for 20-25 minutes. It was also reported that on June 21, 2009, two Chinese choppers were reported to have intruded into the area and according to the army stepped up patrolling in Chumur. The Indian army’s stated position, often articulated by the top commanders, is that “these are not incursions but transgressions, which take place because of the varying perception of the LAC.”<sup>51</sup> The General Officer in Command, 4 Corps Lt Gen Shakti Gurung during a meeting with Chief Minister Nabam Tuki said that everything was normal along the border. He expressed concern over the report of Chinese troops damaging a wall constructed by

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<sup>50</sup> Lok Sabha Debate, December 14, 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Arun Joshi, “Two Chinese helicopters entered India in August”, *Hindustan Times*, 14 September, 2011 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/Jammu%20Sec/Two-Chinese-helicopters-entered-India-in-August/Article1-745222.aspx> accessed on December 31, 2012.

the Army in Tawang area. He said that it was, however, not a major issue as the area is disputed with regard to Chinese claims over it. Besides, he said, the wall was a temporary structure of loosely placed stones stacked by jawans to protect themselves from harsh cold during the patrolling and to prevent cattle from wandering into Chinese territory. The same had been re-erected and is an old issue now, he added.<sup>52</sup>

### 3.9 Working Mechanism on Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs

Tension on account of border-intrusions arises because of non-demarcation of LAC, which needs to be addressed by both sides. It is for this point that Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and his Chinese counterpart agreed to set up a mechanism on coordination and consultation on border affairs, when they met on the sidelines of the BRICS meeting that took place in Sanya in China in April 2011. In pursuance of the decision taken during the Sanya BRICS summit, India and China established a Working Mechanism on Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs, as an additional Confidence Building Measure. The Working Mechanism is headed by the Joint Secretary level officer from the Ministry of External Affairs and a Director-General Officer from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and it is composed of diplomatic and military officials of the two countries. The Working Mechanism precludes the mandate given to the special representative mechanism to discuss resolution of the boundary question.<sup>53</sup>

Although it is expected that the Working Mechanism will help in arresting and in addressing the border intrusions, which have been causing tension in the bilateral relationship between the two countries, its efficacy is yet to be put to test. According to Prof. Swaran Singh, the mechanism aims to facilitate “real-time” contacts in case of allegations. Nevertheless, if viewed from a narrow

<sup>52</sup> <http://indianmilitarynews.wordpress.com/tag/a-k-antony/>

<sup>53</sup> <http://mealib.nic.in/?2010201218925>.

perspective, even this innovative mechanism has its limitations. He opines that since officials in New Delhi and Beijing will head the mechanism it would be difficult for them to know the local situation. Further he argues that while civilian bureaucrats will be heading these meetings, allegations are made by their militaries and this creates a piquant situation. He further contends that the mechanism envisages regular as well as emergency meetings involving Ministries of Defence, Interior and Foreign Affairs along with representatives from their armies, paramilitary forces and intelligence agencies. This could make the mechanism inefficient if not altogether ineffective.<sup>54</sup>

The mechanism on border affairs had its first meeting on March 5 and 6, 2012 in Beijing. The Indian delegation led by Joint Secretary (East Asia) of Ministry of External Affairs, Gautam Bambawale, included officials from the Home and Defence Ministries in addition to officers of the Indian Army and the ITBP. The talks were held in a “forward looking atmosphere with the common objective of continuing to maintain peace and tranquillity.”

### 3.10 Naval CBM

As it can be seen, most CBMs have been in the domain of the army and the air force, and there is no mention of the navy. At a time when the navies of the two countries are poised to expand beyond their territorial waters with possibilities for conflict and cooperation, it is only prudent that there are CBMs between the navies of the two countries. In recent times while China has been active in the Indian Ocean, India has also been active in the in the Asia-Pacific. Only in September 2011 the *Financial Times* of London reported that an Indian ship Airawat was challenged by the Chinese Navy in the South China Sea.<sup>55</sup> In view of the Indian Navy’s increasing engagement in the Asia-Pacific, and particularly in view

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<sup>54</sup> [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2012-01/18/content\\_14465713.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2012-01/18/content_14465713.htm).

<sup>55</sup> “Chinese warship confronts Indian navy vessel: Report”, *Times of India*, 1 September, 2011 at [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-09-01/india/29953009\\_1\\_indian-warship-south-china-sea-vessel](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-09-01/india/29953009_1_indian-warship-south-china-sea-vessel), accessed on December 31, 2012.

of the ONGC Videsh oil and natural gas exploration bid in the disputed and the sensitive South China Sea, there is an imperative need for Naval CBMs between the two countries. The Ministry of External Affairs issued a statement saying that “at a distance of 45 nautical miles from the Vietnamese coast in South China Sea, it was contacted on an open radio channel by a caller identifying himself as the Chinese Navy stating that you are entering Chinese waters.” The statement further said, “there was no controversy involving INS Airawat”. The occurrence of such incidents cannot be ruled out.

It was in this backdrop that some time back the Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Nirmal Verma broached the idea of a ‘hot line, direct and dedicated telephone and fax lines between the two naval headquarters’. The idea was given some shape in March 2012 during the visit of the Foreign Minister of China, Yang Jiechi to New Delhi prior to the BRICS Summit. The proposed mechanism seeks to involve the Coast Guards, the Navies and the Air Forces in action against pirates. The modalities are being worked out by a joint group that will include the two Foreign Offices, besides the Ministries of Defence, Shipping and Oceanography.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

Defence cooperation and military engagement between India and China is an aspect of the complex bilateral relations between the two Asian giants. It is based on the presumption that there is a security dilemma between the two countries. It recognises the framework and postulates of what is called cooperative security.

It is quiet ironical that while the CBMs envisaged for troops reduction and scaling down of military build-up on the border, there is in fact, bolstering of defence forces by both India and China, which clearly suggest that there is persistence of a security dilemma between the two countries. It is all the more imperative therefore, that there are institutional and structural mechanisms for effective dialogue and communication. CBMs basically, refer to maintaining peace and tranquillity in the land border and to some extent it also takes care of air intrusions, but the complex India-China relationship subsumes under its rubric other important



issues which determine the success or failure of the India-China relationship. Border disputes sometimes are symptoms of the disease and not the disease itself. This is true as much in the case of India, as in similar cases elsewhere.

Although peace and tranquillity in the India-China border has been achieved in recent years, the increase in the instances of border intrusions or border transgressions and the astonishing increase in the defence expenditure coupled with rapid infrastructural development in the India-China border by both the countries suggest that there are issues beyond the territorial disputes between them. In fact the rapid infrastructure development in the India-China border has rendered some of the provisions of the CBMs obsolete. There is a trust deficit and security dilemma between India and China. China's assertiveness does not match with its claim to peaceful rise. The Sino-Pak strategic nexus, particularly the development of infrastructure in the Pakistan occupied Kashmir, and China's role in providing nuclear reactors to Pakistan much to the chagrin of India, does not behove well for a healthy relationship between India and China. China's opposition to India's aspiration to be a member of the United Nations Security Council and the Nuclear Supply Group (NSG) also reflects lack of political good will between the two countries. This, however, does not belittle the efficacy of the CBMs in ensuring peace and tranquillity in the border, but CBMs without political will, will remain half-hearted.

## PAKISTAN AS A FACTOR IN SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS

One of the continuing and persistent features of South-Asian geopolitics is what is described as ‘the all-weather friendship’ between China and Pakistan. While China’s relationship with the USA, Russia- erstwhile USSR, Japan and many other countries in the region and the world around has oscillated between friendship, estrangement, conflict and vice-versa, its relationship with Pakistan with the possible exception of North Korea has been warm and cordial all through. China and Pakistan have been close allies since the 1962 war between India and China.

It is interesting to refer to various metaphors used to describe the enduring Sino-Pak relationship. In February 2006, while speaking before the Pakistan-China Business Forum, the then Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf described that their bilateral relationship ‘is deeper than the oceans, and higher than the mountains’.<sup>56</sup> After the killing of Osama bin Laden in the Pakistani territory of Abbottabad on May 2, 2011, when the US-Pak relationship suffered a severe jolt, and China swiftly extended solidarity to Pakistan, Prime Minister Gilani coined yet another metaphor when he described the relationship between the two as ‘one nation, two countries’.<sup>57</sup>

If Pakistan has used the choicest metaphors to describe its enduring friendship with China, it is worthwhile to refer to China’s description of its relationship with Pakistan. While the term ‘all-

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<sup>56</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-02/22/content\\_4210004.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-02/22/content_4210004.htm).

<sup>57</sup> Reshma Patil, “BFF: Pakistan and China”, *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 29 May 2011 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/World/BFF-Pakistan-and-China/Article1-703139.aspx>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

weather friendship' is invariably invoked by China with reference to its relationship with Pakistan, the Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao described Pakistan as its 'brother forever' while addressing the members of the Pakistani Parliament after completing his visit to India. He further said, 'China-Pakistan friendship is full of vigour and vitality, like a lush tree with deep roots and thick foliage. China-Pakistan relationship is strong and like a rock standing firm, despite the passage of time'.<sup>58</sup> It was like repackaging the oft-quoted metaphor 'all-weather friendship'.

This enduring alliance nurtured over the years witnessed its full blossom in April 2005 when China and Pakistan signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations. The enduring and strategic depth between the two countries was succinctly summed up by no less a person than the former Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari in an op-ed where he wrote, 'No relationship between two sovereign states is as unique and durable as that between Pakistan and China'.

While bilateral relationship between China and Pakistan has its own resonance, India weighs heavily in this narrative of strategic nexus. After Pakistan started tilting towards China in the wake of the 1962 war between China and India, China also started displaying gestures of goodwill and political support to Pakistan during the Bangladesh War in 1971. On April 12, 1971, Zhou En-lai sent a personal message to President Yahya Khan pleading China's support to Pakistani people and government in their struggle to safeguard their national sovereignty and independence, should the Indian expansionists "dare" to launch an aggression. China cast its earlier restraint aside and lashed out against the India-Soviet Treaty as an aggressive military alliance. It also assailed India as a superpower, which was engaging in subversive activities in East Pakistan and threatening its smaller Asian neighbours.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> "Wen calls on China, Pakistan to shape future by joining hands" *Xinhua Net.*, 18 December 2010 at [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-12/19/c\\_13655638.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-12/19/c_13655638.htm), accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Nancy Jetly, no. 19, pp. 267-270.

In the United Nations, China also extended support to Pakistan in no uncertain terms. Besides being the only country to vote against the Soviet Draft Resolution, it also expressed reservation about the US Draft Resolution for which it voted, having failed to condemn India's armed aggression against Pakistan. On its part, China submitted a draft resolution on December 5, 1971, accusing India of launching a "large scale attack on Pakistan". It also called upon India to withdraw its forces immediately and unconditionally. Further it criticized India for dismembering Pakistan and creating a "so called Bangladesh."<sup>60</sup>

#### 4.1 Sino-Pak Defence Cooperation

There are many facets to this lasting relationship, one important element of which is balancing India with whom Pakistan fought three major wars, if the Kargil war of 1999 is not counted as a major war. The history of Sino-Pak cooperation in security and defence and other vital areas dates back to the early 1960s when China extended financial and technical support to Pakistan to develop heavy industries and aeronautical complexes near Islamabad., which are now manufacturing main battle tanks and armored personnel carriers, and overhauling the whole range of combat aircrafts being flown by Pakistani Air Force.

Over the years, China has been supplying both conventional weapons and nuclear technology to Pakistan, which has security implications for India. The nuclear weapons supplied by China to Pakistan have the capacity to strike at cities all across India. China supplied the first batch of M-11 missiles (christened 'Ghaznavi' by Pakistan) in 1991-92. These missiles have a range of 300 km. In 1993, Beijing started supplying Islamabad with nuclear capable medium range DF-15/M-9 missiles (called 'Shaheen 1' by Pakistan) with a range of 600-750 km. This supply was in violation of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). The M-9 has the range to target major cities and towns in north India. While the US sanctioned against Pakistan in 1965 and again in 1990, China

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 273.

has consistently supported Pakistan's military modernization. According to G. Parthasarathi, a former Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, a significant feature that has emerged is that military and missile technology that China acquires from Russia is finding its way to Pakistan.<sup>61</sup>

China has been supplying fighter jets to Pakistan for more than three decades. The Pakistani Air Force is currently flying Chinese made JF-17s, Karakoram-8 jet trainers as well as F-7, F-7PGs and A-5s combat aircrafts. The two countries jointly manufactured JF-17 aircraft, which has already been inducted in the Pakistan Air Force.<sup>62</sup> Pakistani Navy has also inducted the first out of the four F-22P frigates that China has agreed to deliver as part of its efforts to boost defence ties between the two countries. The second and third ships are also nearing completion. They were scheduled to have been handed over to Pakistan in June 2010. The fourth ship is under construction at Karachi Shipyard and is expected to be completed by 2013. In November 2009, China agreed to sell Pakistan at least 36 advanced fighter jets in a landmark deal worth as much as 1.4 billion dollars. According to the deal, China will supply two squadrons of J-10 fighter planes in a preliminary agreement, which could lead to future sales in future.<sup>63</sup>

In the wake of the killing of Osama Bin Laden on May 2, 2011, Pakistani sources claimed that China has agreed to provide Pakistan with fifty new JF-17 Thunder multi-role jets under the co-production agreement. It was also mentioned that these fifty planes would be equipped with more sophisticated avionics.<sup>64</sup> There was, however, no confirmation by the Chinese sources. In fact, during a press briefing on May 19, 2011, the Foreign Ministry

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<sup>61</sup> "Cruise Missiles in Sub Continent: The Sino-Pakistani Nexus", *The Hindu Business Line*, 23 August 2009 at <http://www.thehindubusinessline.in/bline/2005/08/23/stories/2005082300311100.htm>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>62</sup> For detailed account see Swaran Singh, *China South Asia: Issues, Equations, Policies* Lancer Books, New Delhi 2003, pp. 171-209.

<sup>63</sup> "China to sell 36 fighter jets to Pakistan" UNI, November 11, 2009.

<sup>64</sup> "China to give Pakistan 50 Thunder jets", *The Asian Age*, New Delhi, May 29, 2011.

Spokesperson of China, Ms. Jiang Hu skirted the question about Pakistan-China signing the new defence agreement. Asked about the assertion by Pakistan's ambassador to China, Mashood Khan before Prime Minister Gilani's arrival that new defence deals would be signed, she said, 'The two sides signed agreement in economy, technology, finance and energy sources. As to specific cooperation, please refer to relevant companies'.<sup>65</sup> It can, be safely interpreted that Beijing does not want to embarrass Pakistan on the matter, by denying such reports in the media.

#### 4.2 China's Presence in PoK<sup>66</sup>

China's presence in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) is yet another matter of concern to India. As far as physical occupation of Jammu & Kashmir is concerned, it may be mentioned that while India holds 45 per cent and Pakistan controls 35 per cent, China occupies about 20 per cent of the Jammu & Kashmir territory.<sup>67</sup> China seized about 38000 sq. km. (14,670 sq. miles) of Indian Territory in Aksai Chin as well as another 5,180 sq. km. (2000 sq. miles) of Northern Kashmir that Pakistan ceded to Beijing in 1963. The Karakoram highway, which connects China's Xinjiang region with Gilgit-Baltistan region, under Pakistan occupation, was constructed by both, Chinese and Pakistani engineers and was completed in 1986. China is currently involved in several infrastructures in the disputed region. China and Pakistan signed a deal in 2006 to upgrade the Karakoram highway. Once the projects are completed, the transport capacity of this strategically significant region will increase significantly. The Karakoram highway will facilitate unfettered Chinese access to the oil-rich Gulf through the Pakistani port of Gwadar in Balochistan. During the visit of the Pakistani President

<sup>65</sup> "China Asks US to Respect Pak's Sovereignty, Independence", *Economic Times*, New Delhi, 20 May 2011 at [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-05-20/news/29565072\\_1\\_pakistan-s-ambassador-pakistan-china-pakistan-media](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-05-20/news/29565072_1_pakistan-s-ambassador-pakistan-china-pakistan-media), accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>66</sup> For detailed account see *Pakistan Occupied Kashmir*, Report May 2011, Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi.

<sup>67</sup> Mohan Malik, "China unveils the Kashmir Card", *China Brief*, 10(19), September 24, 2010.

Asif Ali Zardari to China in August 2010 to Beijing, he declared Kashgar as a Special Economic Zone like the Shenzhen. The announcement makes Kashgar in the north-west China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, the sixth Special Economic Zone of China.

Referring to the economic benefit that will accrue to China, the News of Pakistan reported on September 16, 2010, '...the Chinese will build Gwadar as a tax free industrial hub...and network of roads and railways... to China through the ancient Silk Route. 'An ambitious deal to build railways along the Khunjrab Pass has already been signed between Pakistan and China. The Chinese are more suited to develop the port and the network of rail and roads in Balochistan as they have experience and muscle to work in the troublesome part of Pakistan.' Welcoming the development an editorial in the newspaper the next day said, 'There are a number of reasons, which would suggest that the Chinese may be more profitable partners for us at Gwadar. Not the least of these is the vast tonnage of shipping that they could be bringing in, the oil and gas terminals, they could develop and the potential for infrastructure development that would follow along. We have already inked an agreement with the Chinese for a feasibility study of a rail link roughly parallel to the Karakoram highway. It is no stretch of the imagination to see that the link running from Kashgar to Gwadar in next ten to 15 years. They are already working with us in Gilgit-Baltistan on the upgrading of the Karakoram highway to an all-weather highway, they are silent people and able to work in the sometimes difficult environment we present.'<sup>68</sup>

During the visit of Pakistan's Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani to China in May 2011, Pakistan claimed that China had accepted its request to take-over operations at the strategic Gwadar port as soon as the term of agreement with the Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) expires. The request to take over the port was made during Prime Minister Gilani's visit. Former President of Pakistan Pervez

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<sup>68</sup> Ruchika Talwar, "Print Line Pakistan", *The Indian Express*, New Delhi, September 18, 2010.

Musharraf had given the management and operation control of Gwadar port to the PSA in February 2007 for a period of 40 years. Pakistan's Defence Minister, Chaudhary Ahamad Mukhtar in May 2011 said in Islamabad that Pakistan was grateful to the Chinese government for the construction of the Gwadar port, and that Islamabad would be more grateful to the Chinese government if a naval base was constructed at the site of Gwadar for Pakistan.<sup>69</sup> The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Ms. Jiang Yu, however, later said that she had not heard of the Pakistan Defence Minister's offer of a Chinese Naval Base at the strategic Gwadar port.<sup>70</sup> The issue of overseas bases has recently raised a debate in the Chinese think-tanks and strategic communities.<sup>71</sup>

China and Pakistan, as mentioned above, are already working to strengthen the Karakoram highway to increase its operation in adverse weather condition. The highway is currently closed for around six months every year in the winter. Kashgar is also known as the hotbed of Uighur separatists indulging in sporadic violence to press for their demands for an independent East Turkmenistan nation. China has been seeking both intelligence and military support from Pakistan to keep the Uighur separatists in check, and cut off their links with pro-Taliban forces. China and Pakistan have devised anti-terrorism programmes under which, Pakistani security forces push back Uighur fighters trying to cross the border to seek sanctuary in terrorist camps in Pakistan. China and Pakistan have held anti-terrorism exercise in 2004 and 2006. The third round of such joint military exercise between the countries was conducted in July 2010 to crack down on Islamic militant groups like East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM). ETIM regarded as a pro-Al Qaeda group is active in Xinjiang, the Chinese Muslim Uyghur majority province bordering Pakistan and the Chinese officials have complained that their cadres are being trained in terrorist

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<sup>69</sup> "China to take over Pak's Gwadar Port", *The Asian Age*, New Delhi, May 23, 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ananth Krishnan, "Neighbours Concern prompts debate in China on overseas bases", *The Hindu*, New Delhi, 2 June 2011 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article2068728.ece>, accessed on December 31, 2012.



camps in Pak-Afghan border. In July 2010, China Daily quoting Dong Manyuan, an anti-terrorist expert at the China Institute of International Studies, said that the military exercise against terrorism may result in joint action on ground in future. ‘There is also the possibility that the two countries might conduct joint military actions against ETIM terrorists along the China-Pak borders one day, as there is still room for more anti-terrorism cooperation between Beijing and Islamabad in future,’ Dong said further ‘The issue of ETIM militants figured high during the visit of Pakistani Army Chief General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani to China during which Beijing sought Islamabad support for a crackdown on the militant group.’<sup>72</sup>

### 4.3 Hydro – Power Projects

During the visit of Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari to China in August 2009 the two sides signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on construction of a hydro-power station at Bunji in Northern Areas, a move which is a matter of concern to India. India is of the view that Islamabad cannot undertake any project in the territory under its illegal occupation. The MoU was part of over six Memoranda of Understanding signed during the visit of the Pakistani President to China. Besides this MoU on hydro power project, there were MoUs for cooperation in education, fisheries, agriculture, dams and investment. However, the most important of them was the construction of the hydropower project on ‘Build, Operate and Transfer’ (BOT) basis, which means that all the investment would be made by Chinese entrepreneurs. The dam is estimated to cost between \$ 6-7 billion and will have a capacity to generate 7000 MW of electricity. During the visit, the Pakistani President also invited Chinese companies to bid for construction of over a dozen of small and medium sized dams in all the four provinces of Pakistan.

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<sup>72</sup> K.J.M. Varma, “China-Pak may contemplate joint-action against Terror Groups”, DNA, 3 July 2010 at [http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report\\_china-pak-may-contemplate-joint-action-against-terror-groups\\_1404803](http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report_china-pak-may-contemplate-joint-action-against-terror-groups_1404803), accessed on December 31, 2012

#### 4.4 Infrastructure Development in PoK

While India all along has been wary of infrastructural development in the PoK region with the active support of Beijing, a recent op-ed page article by American journalist Selig S. Harrison in *New York Times*, quoting foreign intelligence sources, mentioned that Pakistan is quietly handing over de-facto control of the strategic Gilgit-Balistan region in PoK to China. It reported that an estimated 7,000 to 11,000 soldiers of China's PLA have already moved in the area to develop the railway system. Besides constructing the railway system, the article mentioned that the PLA men are extending the Karakoram Highway that was constructed to link China's Xinjiang province with Pakistan. Other PLA soldiers are working on dams, expressways and other projects. It further mentioned that they (the PLA soldiers) are also constructing 22 tunnels in secret locations, where even the Pakistanis are not allowed to enter. It is being speculated that tunnels would be necessary for a projected gas pipeline from Iran to China that would cross the Karakoram through Gilgit. But they would also be used for storing missiles. They are also constructing a big residential complex that indicated that they would stay there permanently. Till now they are living in temporary accommodation.<sup>73</sup>

In a rejoinder to the article, China repudiated the fact contained in the article and held that landslides had cut off all links to Gilgit-Balistan, making it difficult for the government to ensure timely provision of the people's needs. Pakistan, therefore, sought urgent help from friendly countries, including China, whose engineers have the necessary experience, to repair the damage on this critically important highway. Harrison, however, stuck to his viewpoint.<sup>74</sup> India has expressed its concern about the strategic nexus between China and Pakistan, on several occasions at various levels. In

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<sup>73</sup> Selig S. Harrison, "China's Discreet hold on Pakistan's Northern Borderlands", *New York Times*, 28 August, 2010 at [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/27/opinion/27iht-edharrison.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/27/opinion/27iht-edharrison.html?_r=0), accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>74</sup> "China's Presence in Pakistan", Letter to the Editor, *New York Times*, 8 September 2010, accessed on 31st December 2012.

February 2011 in a talk in USA, Foreign Secretary Ms. Nirupama Rao said that the relationship between India and China “would be stronger when China shows more sensitivity on issues that impinge on our sovereignty and territorial integrity.” Referring to China’s support to Pakistan’s nuclear ambition she said that it was an area where India was “seeking more clarity and transparency” and “welcomed an open discussion.”<sup>75</sup>

In an interview to the media, the former Chief of the Army staff of India General V.K. Singh said that Pakistan is very closely allied to China. “There are credible reports that, to further widen Karakoram Highway, some projects have been given to China. This has resulted in a fair number of Chinese coming in as workforce, along with security people who guard their camps. They have also been given roads in what are termed as Northern areas. Also, projects have been given in Neelam Valley and near Mangla”, he added. General Singh further said that China had plans to link Karakoram Highway to the main highways so that the trade up to Gwadar can move swiftly. They also want to develop Kashgar and Khotan further. There is a lot of activity in terms of infrastructure. According to him, in military terms they are significant and that India is keeping a watch on it. He, however, hoped that the responsible power status that China is seeking, they would factor in how they will be seen if they are to provide concrete assistance in case of military confrontation.<sup>76</sup> Pakistan never misses an opportunity to play the China card against India. For example, when the two-day Siachen talks between India and Pakistan was held in New Delhi on May 30 and 31, 2011, Pakistan pushed for China to be represented during the negotiation on the ground that Beijing controls the Shakshan Valley in the Siachen.

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<sup>75</sup> “China should be more sensitive on Pak issues: Rao”, *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 14 February, 2011 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/Americas/China-should-be-more-sensitive-on-Pak-issues-Rao/Article1-661995.aspx>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>76</sup> Interview of Manu Pubby with General V.K. Singh, “There is a logic to AFSPA. Once removed, it will be hard to re-impose”, *Indian Express*, 13 January 2012 at <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/-there-is-a-logic-to-afspa.-once-removed-it-will-be-hard-to-reimpose-/899068>, accessed on December 31, 2012

#### 4.5 Support to Kashmiri Separatists and Opposition to India's bid for UNSC

Besides supplying arms and ammunitions, missiles, nuclear technology and developing infrastructure in the PoK, Beijing has been extending open support to Pakistan and the Kashmiri separatists through its opposition to the UN Security Council ban on the Jihadi organizations targeting India. Listing of terrorists and terrorist's organization under UNSC 1267<sup>77</sup> obliges countries to impose sanctions against them. China, which wields veto power in the UNSC, is empowered to block listings. India has been urging to impose sanctions against Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad. China, however, has placed technical hold on the Indian request ostensibly on the ground that India did not provide sufficient information. According to a Wiki-leak revelation carried in *The Hindu* on June 7, 2011, the US State Department views China acting at the behest of Pakistan. There is also a perception that both China and Pakistan are cooperating in preventing India's bid for a permanent seat in the United Nations' Security Council. For example, when Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari visited China in September 2010 the Chinese President is reported to have told him that Beijing will keep Islamabad informed about its plans for reforms in the UNSC.

#### 4.6 The Stapled Visa Issue

The practice of issuing stapled visa to Indian citizens from Jammu and Kashmir travelling to China, which the Chinese embassy in Delhi started from 2008 was yet another major irritant in the bilateral relationship between the two countries. In September 2010, China denied a visa to Lt Gen B.S. Jaswal, the GOC of the Indian Army's Northern Command for official talks in Beijing on the grounds that he was commanding troops in disputed area. The issue of the stapled visa was later discussed between the two countries at the highest level and the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi issued proper visas to Indian journalists from Jammu and

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<sup>77</sup> <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/>

Kashmir, who accompanied the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh when he visited China in April 2011 to participate in the BRICS Summit in Sanya. In recent times, there is no report of stapled visas being given to Indian nationals from Jammu & Kashmir. This is suggestive of China's shifting of attitude. But there has been no official statement regarding this purposefully. The reason being such an official statement will annoy Pakistan and secondly, it forecloses China's option of issuing stapled visas to Indian citizens of Jammu & Kashmir.

#### **4.7 Sino-Pak Nuclear Deal**

Yet another aspect of the comprehensive and strategic Sino-Pak relationship is the cooperation in the field of nuclear technology, which has grave security implications for India. China signed the first nuclear agreement with Pakistan in 1991 to supply a 300MV nuclear power plant at Chashma. The reactor was based on the first indigenous nuclear reactor developed by China at Qinshau, which became operational by 1993. The Chasma reactor became operational in 2000. China signed the second agreement with Pakistan after a gap of 13 years in May 2004, the year China joined the 46 member Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG). Pakistan's penchant for nuclear energy picked up after 2005 when the Indo-US nuclear deal or the 123 agreement became a reality. Both Beijing and Islamabad have been worried about growing economic, military and political ties between India and the US. It was in this backdrop that Islamabad claimed in October 2008 immediately after the visit of President Asif Ali Zardari to China that China would assist Pakistan in building Chasma-3 and Chasma-4 reactors in Pakistan. As the NSG guideline stipulates that members can sell nuclear equipment and material only to countries that are party to Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty or who accept full-scale safeguard, China was under obligation to obtain NSG's nod to supply two nuclear reactors to Pakistan.

On September 20, 2010, it was reported in the media that China's main nuclear energy corporation was in talks with Pakistan to build one Giga Watt atomic power plant in Pakistan. Qiu Jianggang, Vice President of the China National Nuclear

Corporation (CNNC) said, 'Both sides are in discussion over CNNC's exporting a one Giga Watt nuclear plant to Pakistan and confirmed that the two countries have signed contracts to build number three and number four reactors of about 300 MW each in Chashma.

It is worthwhile to mention that the Indo-US nuclear deal or the 123 Agreement was cleared by both, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the NSG. India also undertook to abide by its moratorium on nuclear testing, support international efforts to negotiate a verifiable Fissile Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), to implement rigorous export control norms and not to share enrichment and reprocessing technology with others. Thus, there are significant differences between the Indo-US Nuclear deal and the Sino-Pak nuclear deal. Defending the nuclear deal with Pakistan, the deputy director-general of the China Arms Control and Disarmament Zhai Dequan said, "Pakistan is also fighting a war on terror for the US as well as for itself and the country's loss is greater than the US and other 12 coalition nations combined. The economic aid it has received is too little compared to its loss. Pakistan has an urgent need for more civil energy and that need should be looked after."<sup>78</sup> The Sino-Pak nuclear issue came up for discussion before the NSG, which held its meeting at Christchurch, New Zealand on June 25, 2010, but it did not figure as an agenda item, especially after the numerous questions which China failed to provide clear answers.

The IAEA gave its approval to a safeguard agreement that China is building at Chasma... The deal is perceived to be in contravention of China's commitment as a member of the NSG, which bans the sale or transfer of technology to countries that have not signed Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Although the deal was "inconsistent" with China's energy commitments, the US reportedly defended the deal linking it to acute energy requirement and instability in Pakistan.

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<sup>78</sup> "China may finance Pak reactors", *China Daily*, 23 June 2010 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-06/23/content\\_10006302.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-06/23/content_10006302.htm), accessed on December 31, 2012.

The US Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia, Robert Blacke told journalists in Beijing that Pakistan was facing severe energy shortage in many parts of the country and that it was trying to help Pakistan to deal with these challenges.<sup>79</sup> Later in June, the NSG with acquiescence of the US approved China's supply of two additional reactors to Pakistan in violation of its own NSG commitments. This is viewed by India's foreign policy and strategic analysts as a blow to the country's security interest.

According to Mr. Kanwal Sibal, a former Foreign Secretary, "If China has got away with its NSG defiance; it is because the US has been unusually tolerant of China's appalling proliferation record. China's nuclear and missile proliferation activities primarily centered on Pakistan have deeply damaged India's national security. The US has ignored the China-Pakistan proliferation nexus, to the point of covering it up in A.Q. Khan's case even though India is most affected. China, in any case, has now become far too powerful to be forced to conform to codes of conduct established by the West."<sup>80</sup>

The news about China's offer to build the giant nuclear plant in Pakistan has been a matter of concern for India. Foreign Secretary Ms. Nirupama Rao, while delivering a lecture at Harvard University said, 'We believe that the challenges of nuclear terrorism and nuclear security have to be addressed. We have been affected by clandestine nuclear proliferation in our neighbourhood. We are, naturally, concerned about the possibility of nuclear terrorism, given the security situation in our neighbourhood.'<sup>81</sup> In the third week of March 2011, it was reported that the IAEA gave its approval to safeguard agreement for the two new reactors that China is building at Chashma.

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<sup>79</sup> Ananth Krishnan, "U.S. to give China a pass on NSG commitments for Pakistan nuclear deal", *The Hindu*, March 20, 2011 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article1554159.ece>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>80</sup> "NSG Stamp for Sino-Pak pact Blow to India, Kanwal Sibal", *Mail Today*, July 12, 2011 at <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/nsg-stamp-for-sino-pak-pact-a-blow-to-india/1/144445.html>.

<sup>81</sup> "India concerned over new proliferation in neighbourhood", *The Pioneer*, September 22, 2010.

While Pakistan's additional acquisition of China's nuclear assistance to set up two more reactors will affect the balance of power with India, what is disturbing is the possibility of such nuclear capability falling into wrong hands, the non-state actors, and terrorists in particular. In the light of Pakistan's earlier track record of clandestine supply of nuclear technology to Libya, North Korea and Iran, it is a matter of concern to India that such lethal technology does not fall into the hands of undesired and deleterious elements. India's position is that it is not opposed to Pakistan's legitimate claim for energy, but it only wants the deal to be transparent, structured around a package of non-proliferation commitments. It is of India's interest to sensitize both, the US and China about possible transfer of nuclear technology, which may be detrimental to India's security interests and the regional stability. In fact, India's Defence Minister A.K. Antony voiced his concern at the strategic nexus between China and Pakistan. Responding to a question after addressing the Unified Commander's Conference in New Delhi on May 20, 2011, he said, 'It is a matter of serious concern for us. The main thing is that we too will have to increase our military capabilities. That is the only answer.'<sup>82</sup>

According to security and intelligence officials, Pakistan has now acquired the capability to add eight to ten nuclear warheads to its weaponry every year. Pakistan's testing of surface-to-surface missiles meant for carrying small warheads has further confirmed the suspicion. According to Mr. S.D. Pradhan, India's former Chief of Intelligence Committee who has closely followed Pakistan's nuclear weapon program, Pakistan's desire for such weapons is one of the main reasons for the acceleration of its nuclear program. "They are following the Chinese model of having low yield nuclear weapons. Pakistan believes these weapons will provide it a flexible response in case of an escalation with India and allow it to dominate," he said.

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<sup>82</sup> "China-Pak Strategic Nexus worries Antony", *The Times of India*, 21 May 2011 at [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-05-21/india/29568390\\_1\\_nuclear-arsenal-antony-safe-havens](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-05-21/india/29568390_1_nuclear-arsenal-antony-safe-havens), accessed on December 31, 2012.



Officials and experts believe that Pakistan will use it only in case of any incursion made by Indian forces into Pakistani territory or what is known as India's cold start doctrine, which envisages that in the event of another Mumbai like terrorist attack, there is going to be real pressure on India to mount such an incursion and strike some of the terror camps. Indian officials reportedly said that the manner in which Pakistan has carried out work on the fourth reactor, of which there was no trace as late as 2009, suggest a constant supply of uranium and that this could only have been made possible by China. The official was quoted to have said, "The cost involved is too high and then of course the amount of Uranium required. It's too much power for Pakistan to acquire without support from China."<sup>83</sup>

#### **4.8 Terrorism: India and Sino-Pak Nexus**

The issue of terrorism in South-Asia has added a new dimension to the complex triangular relationship between China, India, and Pakistan. The three countries – China, India and Pakistan, have been affected by terrorism. But, it is unfortunate that there is no common refrain among the three, although there has been a broader and general agreement about the menace of terrorism. While India has been a victim of terrorism aided and abated from across the border, the Af-Pak region has been a target of terrorism for the last ten years since the ouster of Mullah Omar's regime.

The killing of Osama bin Laden, the fountainhead of international terrorism, who masterminded the twin-tower attack on November 9, 2001, on Pakistani soil is the vindication of India's consistent position that Pakistan has been the breeding ground of terrorism, which has affected India a great deal. It is in this backdrop that India has been sensitising the international community for long to fight against the menace of terrorism. New Delhi has also been impressing Beijing to exert its clout on Pakistan, its 'all-weather

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<sup>83</sup> Sachin Parashar, "Pak following China model of low-yield nuclear weapons", *Times of India*, 19 May 2011 at <http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=TOINew&BaseHref=CAP/2011/05/19&PageLabel=1&EntityId=Ar00104&ViewMode=HTML&GZ=T>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

friend'. Beijing's response, however, has not been very encouraging or at best been lukewarm or rhetorical. True, Beijing condemned the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001, but Beijing's response to terrorists attack on Mumbai in 2008, aided and abated by Beijing has been muted.

When journalists asked the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Jiang Yu if China would, in the wake of Bin Laden's killing, back India's efforts to bring to justice the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks, she said, "China will continue to firmly support Pakistan's formulating and implementing an anti-terrorist strategy based on national conditions", and avoided any direct answer to the question<sup>84</sup>. China's empathy with Pakistan in the context of the latter's estrangement with the US was very much evident in Jiang's statement that China will further support Pakistan's efforts to combat terrorism and that Pakistan has been at the forefront of the international fight against terrorism, and its government has been dedicated to the cause.

In yet another report, the China Daily said, "The US military assault that killed Osama bin Laden at his headway in Pakistan will inevitably alter Washington's approach to Islamabad and India may stand to gain". The report further added, "...but with bin Ladens's death fuelling doubts about the viability of the US-Pakistan relationship and removing the original reason for American military involvement in Afghanistan, Washington's primary focus may shift back to New Delhi as the region's economic and political heavyweight." Quoting Karl Inderfurth, a former assistant secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, now at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the report mentioned, "This further encourages closer US-Indian collaboration, intelligence sharing and cooperation in finding ways to work with India to address regional stability issues writ large".<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ananth Krishnan, "China strongly backs Pakistan", *The Hindu*, New Delhi, 4 May 2011 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/china-strongly-backs-pakistan/article1988200.ece>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>85</sup> "India Could Benefit from US-Pak strains", *China Daily*, 5 May 2011 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/binLadendead/2011-05/05/content\\_12448513.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/binLadendead/2011-05/05/content_12448513.htm), accessed on December 31, 2012.

Obliquely acknowledging elements of strategic autonomy in India's foreign policy, the report added, "...but India's ability to benefit from strains in the US-Pakistan relationship may also be limited. While New Delhi's ties with Washington are generally smoother than those of Islamabad, the limits of the relationship were made clear when India rejected bids from American companies for an \$11 billion jet fighter deal last month despite Obama's personal lobbying during a trip last year'. The report concluded with a statement attributed to Stephen Cohen, an expert on India at the Brookings, which said, "...senior levels of the Indian government no longer take pleasure in Pakistani agony. They know that if the Pakistani house burns down, the spark will blow over to India".

India and China in their bilateral and trilateral meetings like the Russia-India-China (RIC) have discussed terrorism in very general terms. According to a Chinese expert on India, Zhang Li, "The terrorist scourge in this region, as widely recognized, is entangled with protracted Indo-Pakistan rivalry and the Kashmir imbroglio in particular. Until recent years the complexity of the issue has limited Beijing's response towards the challenge that India has had to confront".<sup>86</sup> It may be mentioned that in the Kargil conflict of 1999 and the 2002 armed standoff between India and Pakistan, Beijing restrained from the traditional side-taking posturing and played a constructive role in defusing the tensions, helping to avoid an all-out war. But New Delhi expects Beijing to show sensitivity to India's concerns and given Beijing's clout over Islamabad, the former can certainly exert its influence on the latter.

#### **4.9 China's charm offensive real or tactical?**

In recent years, particularly after coming to terms with the Indo-US nuclear deal, China has been extending the olive branch to India to improve relationship with Pakistan. Similarly it has been prodding Pakistan to mend its relationship with US and India. Pakistan has also been showing interest to improve its relationship

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<sup>86</sup> Zhiang Li, "China-India Relations: Strategic Engagement and Challenges", *Aie. Vision* 34, September 2010, p21 at <http://www.ifri.org/?page=contribution-detail&id=6223&lang=uk>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

with India. In early 2008, immediately after winning elections in Pakistan, President Asaf Ali Zardari said, “Pakistan and India should develop trade first before solving the Kashmir dispute”, and that the two should leave controversies behind to the next generation.

Commenting on the emerging thaw between India and Pakistan, a Chinese scholar Cai Jiahua wrote, “As neighbours of South Asian countries, China is pleased to see that Indo-Pak relations have improved and are gradually moving from confrontation to dialogue, which run parallel with the Chinese foreign policy of building friendly relations and partnership with neighbours”, and “fostering an amicable, secure and prosperous neighborly environment” towards its peripheral countries.<sup>87</sup>

Continuing its support to the India-Pakistan thaw, Beijing supported the India-Pakistan foreign secretary level talks held in February 2010 after a 14-month hiatus in bilateral relations. These talks had been suspended following the Mumbai terrorist attack. Commenting on the development, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Qingng said “We are delighted to know that foreign secretary level consultations between India and Pakistan has taken place. We hope the dialogue and consultation between them can make substantive results and we also hope momentum of such dialogue and cooperation can be kept.”<sup>88</sup>

China reiterated its overture to India to rebalance its ties with India vis-à-vis Pakistan in June 2011. This was articulated by Qu Xing, a member of the influential Foreign Policy Advisory Group (FPAG), which provides input to the Chinese government on foreign policy issues. While briefing the media on foreign policy priorities for the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2011-15), Mr. Xing, who is also the President of the China Institute of International Studies said, “China indeed has a closer cooperation with Pakistan than

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<sup>87</sup> Cai Jiahua, “India Pakistan are moving from confrontation to dialogue”, *International Strategic Studies*, Beijing, (4), 2008, p. 6.

<sup>88</sup> “Indo-Pak talks will yield results: China”, *The Pioneer*, New Delhi, February 20, 2010.

with India. However, improvement in the bilateral relationship between China and India, we sincerely hope that we can take the relationship forward to make a better relationship.” The best solution, “...is that we should try to have such kind cooperation (with India), equal to that of China and Pakistan”, indicating that China should try to restore “a balance” it struck in relations with both the countries in the 1950s. “While pursuing the further development of friendship with Pakistan, we are also working actively to promote friendship between China and India”, added Ma Zhenggang, a former ambassador to the United Kingdom. “To be frank, the Chinese people do not wish to see suspicion between India and Pakistan concerning China’s relation between either countries.”<sup>89</sup>

China’s support for Indo-Pak cooperation and friendship received a fresh impetus when President Asif Ali Zardari, paid a private visit to India in April 2012 to offer his prayers at the shrine of the revered Khwaja Naimuddin Chisti’s *dargah* (mausoleum) at Ajmer. Echoing the sentiment of President Zardari that the India-China model of bilateral trade notwithstanding, the border issue could help improve the relationship between India and Pakistan, Beijing said that it was “happy to witness continuous improvement of India-Pakistan ties.” The two countries’ efforts in warming of their ties certainly are welcomed and applauded by the international community, including China, which neighbours both the nations and maintains significant ties with them,” said the commentary by Yu Zhixiao, a commentator for the Xinhua..<sup>90</sup>

#### 4.10 Conclusion

The Sino-Pak strategic axis had gained salience in the context of the geo-politics of the cold war. It was, and continues to be, a

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<sup>89</sup> Ananth Krishnan, “China rebalance ties with India, Pakistan”, *The Hindu*, New Delhi, 25 June, 2011 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article2132123.ece>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>90</sup> Ananth Krishnan, “China ‘happy’ to see improved New Delhi-Islamabad relations”, *The Hindu*, April 9, 2012 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/china-happy-to-see-improved-new-delhiislamabad-relations/article3293952.ece>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

marriage of convenience, contrary to what is claimed by both China and Pakistan as a brotherly relationship. It is clearly a case of convergence of interests of the two. China wants to balance India in South-Asia, and Pakistan wants a protective shield. The interests of the two countries had converged in the backdrop of the geopolitics during the Cold War years, particularly after the Sino-Soviet split and the Indo-Soviet friendship treaty of 1971. The bifurcation of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh had impelled the convergence of strategic and security interests of China and Pakistan. It may be recalled that during the earlier years of the Cold War in the 1950s, Pakistan had supported the USA in the CENTO pact against China. The change in the geo-politics only changed the equation between China and Pakistan. A study of Sino-Pak axis clearly indicates that their proximity was in close proportion to India's proximity to Russia, and later to the USA when the two signed the Indo-US Nuclear Deal in 2008. The Sino-Pak Axis can partially be explained in terms of the trust-deficit and security dilemma between India and China. The slow and incremental Sino-India engagement has produced corresponding Chinese sensitivity to India's concerns. Further, China displayed an equal gesture to both India and Pakistan when it signed the 'Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations' with Pakistan in April 2005, and Beijing signed a similar and path-breaking agreement with India.

The improved Sino-US rapprochement and strategic engagement has also produced corresponding resonance on Sino-Indian relations, which can be discerned from comments in the Chinese media and by the Chinese think-tanks in recent times. There have been certain perceptible changes in the Chinese attitude towards India. China's support to Pakistan needs to be understood and analysed in the context of China's domestic and external compulsions. For example, China needs the support of Pakistan to deal with East Turkmenistan Separatists operating in the contiguous border in Pakistan. Secondly, China requires the support of Pakistan to cultivate the Muslim countries. Thirdly, China depends on Pakistan in the SAARC, where it has an observer status.

Despite the fact that in the Post-Cold War era, Pakistan-China relations did undergo a slight shift, the overall content and strategic relevance has not been affected. The reason being that the geopolitical significance of Pakistan for China is hard to be ignored by anyone. Moreover, the geographical proximity of Kashmir to the disputed India-China boundary has brought Pakistan into the strategic centre stage of China's South Asia policy.<sup>91</sup>

It is against this context that India needs to adopt a nuanced approach so far as the Sino-Pak strategic nexus is concerned. As is evident in the paper, there have been certain gaps in Pakistan's claims and China's commitments. Besides, China's neutral position in the Kargil war was reflective of China's changing attitude towards India. The doing away of the practice of the stapled visa to Indian citizens from Jammu and Kashmir is yet another example of China's softening of its stance towards India. However, more needs to be done by China to mitigate the persistent trust deficit between the two countries.

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<sup>91</sup> Anna Orton, no. 34, pp. 55-56.

## ENGAGING CHINA IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC INDIA'S NUANCED APPROACH

*"...we have global interest. China has global interest, all of us do. All major powers are not only interdependent on each other, but also are dealing with each other across a whole range of issues. None of which recognizes some artificial constructs like South Asia or East Asia, these are interlocking circles about security and prosperity whichever way you look at it."*

-Shiv Shankar Menon, National Security Advisor

The tectonic shift of the economy from Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific in recent years; together with China's economic and military rise has thrown up both challenges and opportunities to the countries of the region. Although India's engagement with the Asia-Pacific has its own imperatives, it has some resonance on the India-China relations ever since India initiated its 'look east policy' in early 1990s, and more recently with India's foray into the South China Sea, when its state owned Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) Videsh, Ltd (OVL) signed an agreement with Petro-Vietnam in October 2011. Both, India and China have had deep engagement with the countries of the region. While China's closer physical proximity, historical and ethnic linkage have nurtured its relationship with the region, India also has a cultural, historical and political relationship with the region. China's economic surplus has enabled Beijing to invest heavily in the countries of the region. The 1997, the Asian Financial crises provided a very good opportunity to China to deepen its economic engagement with the region. Later, in January 2010, China and the ASEAN clinched the deal to establish FTA with ten-member ASEAN. Rapid economic development has helped China to replace the US as the major trading partner of Japan and the Republic of Korea.

While economic engagement with China has brought economic benefits for countries of the region, China's military rise has given



rise to consternation, if not outright fear, in the minds of the leaders of these countries. The United States, which has been the resident power in the region, has reinvigorated its strategic engagement with the region. Many countries in the region are now looking towards India not only for economic engagement, but also for strategic reassurance to soft balance China. What has added salience to the evolving strategic scenario in the region is the effort of the USA to mentor India in this endeavor of hedging China. It is against this backdrop that India is trying to calibrate its engagement in the region with a degree of circumspection and finesse in deference to the Chinese sensitivity and susceptibility.

As every text has a context, in order to put the narrative of this multilateral engagement in perspective, this chapter first delineates in a nutshell, India's engagement in the region in general. The second section of the chapter deals with major US initiatives with the focus to engage India; it then elucidates India's strategic engagement with Japan and Vietnam, the main drivers of the evolving strategic paradigm in the region. The third section deals with China's reaction to such US posturing and finally India's fine balancing act.

India's engagement in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly with countries of South-East Asia like Indonesia, Vietnam and Kampuchea, has been rooted in the history and culture of these countries and that of India. India's cultural influence is very vivid and pronounced in Indonesia in particular; so also in Kampuchea, where the world famous Angkor Wat temple is located. In modern times, India extended moral and political support to Indonesia and Vietnam in their fight against imperialism and colonialism. In Indonesia's fight against imperialism, India had played an active role even prior to her independence. Similarly, India played an important role in the Geneva Conference of 1954 and the subsequent armistice in Indo-China that brought peace to the region. In fact India and China together had worked hard for peace and stability in the region in the wake of the Geneva Conference<sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>92</sup> For details see T.N. Kaul, *India, China and Indo-China: Reflection of a liberated Diplomat*, Allied, New Delhi, 1980.

As far as Korea is concerned, it may be mentioned that India played a very active role when a crisis broke out in the Korean Peninsula in 1950. In fact, an emergent session of the Indian Parliament was convened in July 1950 to discuss the issue. India and China also cooperated to find a lasting solution to the impasse in the Peninsula. India's engagement with South-East Asia suffered a benign neglect during the 1970s and 1980s, which was renewed in the early 1990s when India initiated the 'look east policy'. This also coincides later with the release of the much touted Goldman Sach's BRIC Report, which forecasts the rise of India and China, besides Brazil and Russia.

It is unfortunate, however, that in spite of India's geographical and cultural proximity to the ten member countries of the ASEAN, India's relationship with the region remained rather subdued, if not lukewarm; until India embarked on the path of liberalisation and economic reforms in early 1990's. Despite the shared maritime heritage of India with the countries of the region, particularly with Indonesia, these had not been fully exploited until recent times. It is perhaps not widely known even in India that the island of Pu Breaush, located northwest of Sumatra, is only 92 nautical miles away from Indira Point in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Similarly, Phuket in Thailand is only 273 nautical miles away from Indira Point. Besides this maritime proximity, with Myanmar becoming a member of the ASEAN, India also shares a land border with the regional entity. With the eastward expansion of the ASEAN to include Myanmar, India and the ASEAN are no longer just maritime neighbours but share a land boundary of over 1600 km. Both India and Indonesia were also two important founder members of the erstwhile Non-Alignment Movement.

How does one explain India's earlier low key and subdued relationship with the region in spite of geographical contiguity and proximity until when India ushered what is christened as the 'look east policy'? One plausible reason perhaps is that the cold war years were characterized by geopolitics in which economics was on the back burner. With globalization, India also initiated economic reforms and liberalisation, and this started echoing in India's external relationship and foreign policy postulates. India's

shift of focus on the foreign policy was articulated with economic contents with the ASEAN as a whole and with individual countries of the regional forum. After 1991, however, a conscious effort was begun to reach out to these countries as part of India's 'look east' policy.

India became a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of the ASEAN in 1992 and a Full Dialogue Partner in 1996. The Dialogue Partnership with the ASEAN has enabled India to significantly deepen its relationship with its member countries. The accordance of the status of a Full Dialogue Partner to India with the ASEAN along with others such as Australia, Canada, China, European Union, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the USA is recognition of India's economic prowess and potential.

As part of its 'look east policy', India had been engaging at summit level engagement with the ASEAN, *i.e.*, interaction at the highest level. It was in this backdrop that at the Seventh ASEAN Summit, held in November 2001 in Brunei, Darussalam, the then Chairman of the ASEAN, took a decision to upgrade its relations with India to Summit level. The decision was a recognition of the sincere and sustained efforts by India to expand and deepen cooperation with the ASEAN, as well as with the individual member countries bilaterally in diverse fields. Thus, India participated in the first ASEAN-India Summit Meeting in Phnom Penh in November 2002 and the second ASEAN-India Summit Meeting in Bali in October 2003. The Bali summit articulated the Framework Agreement on comprehensive Economic Cooperation between the ASEAN and India. The Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation signed at Bali in October 2003 provided a road map to the future economic cooperation between India and the ASEAN. The third Summit Meeting held in Vientiane further articulated this road map and committed to full implementation of the ASEAN-India free trade area.

Yet another aspect of India's engagement with the East Asia is the platform of East Asian Summit. India's participation in the first ever East Asian Summit in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur in December 2005 was a measured diplomatic exercise to engage India

in one of fastest growing economies of the world. Besides the ASEAN countries, other countries which participated in the Summit include China, Japan and Korea in addition to India, Australia and New Zealand. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, who led the delegation including the captains of India's business and corporate houses, registered India's enthusiastic response to integrate its economy with the economic power house of the region. It is pertinent to mention that ever since India initiated its 'look east policy', the volume of its trade with the ten member countries has been growing significantly. In 2011 India's trade with the ASEAN was \$58 billion. If the projections are met, this would translate into a growth of 20 per cent in trade between India and the ASEAN. According to Mr. Sanjay Singh, Secretary (east) Ministry of External Affairs, the India-ASEAN FTA will help increase goods trade between India and the ASEAN countries to \$70 billion by 2012.<sup>93</sup> The signing of the FTA with the 10 member-ASEAN countries, after a protracted negotiation, opens a new chapter in the Indian relationship with the ASEAN countries, both at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

Besides bilateral trade between India and member countries of the ASEAN, another area that offers very good opportunity pertains to investment by the ASEAN countries in India's growing infrastructural sectors. Ever since the idea of the East Asian community was conceived, there has been speculation about India's participation and association with the South-East Asian fraternity vis-à-vis China, which has already signed the FTA with the ASEAN, and an apprehension has been expressed in some quarter that East Asia is not big enough to accommodate the Chinese dragon and the Indian elephant. However, a closer and careful analysis indicated that such apprehensions are, if not misplaced, exaggerated. The position can best be described in the words of Singapore's elder statesman Le Kuan Yew that the two countries must not be paranoid and suspicious of each other in a game of one-upmanship and instead, they could cooperate and compete economically and

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<sup>93</sup> "Indo-ASEAN Trade to grow 20 per cent in 2012", *The Mint*, January 21, 2012.

each could improve its performance by using the other's progress as benchmark for what they should do better.<sup>94</sup>

India's 'look-east policy' envisages a progressive and multifaceted partnership with the South-East Asia region with a long term goal of creating harmonious and prosperous relations that would facilitate pooling of resources to tackle common challenges. India is supportive of the view that a pluralistic security order based on a cooperative approach is the answer to the polycentric security concern in the South East Asian region. The 'look east policy' also envisages engagement through dialogue both at bilateral and multilateral platforms, to attain the full promise of India's relation with the region.

Referring to the evolving security situation in the region, the Annual Report of the Ministry of Defence of the Government of India for the year 2010-11 said, 'The security situation in East Asia increased security concerns among several nations and underlined the need for initiatives for building trust and confidence in the region. The establishment of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus forum of ten ASEAN and eight non-ASEAN countries, including India is seen as an effort to establish an, open and inclusive security, architecture for the region. India's policy is to encourage and participate in cooperative approach which would enable all countries in the region to counter traditional and non-traditional security challenges and to ensure that the critical sea lanes are kept open, secure and free from navigation and trade.'<sup>95</sup>

### **5.1 The US' return to Asia Pacific and its overtures to mentor India**

While the Asia-Pacific region, particularly the South-East Asia occupied strategic significance in the 1950s with the birth of China, the Korean crisis and later the imbroglio in Indo-China, the tectonic shift of the world economy from west to the Asia-Pacific with the

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<sup>94</sup> <http://www.hindu.com/2005/11/22/stories/2005112217861200.htm>.

<sup>95</sup> Ministry of Defence *Annual Report 2010-11*, Govt. of India, p 4

publication of the Goldman Sach's BRIC report has added salience to the strategic significance of the region. More than half of the global population lives in Asia, a rapidly changing region that has emerged in less than a quarter of a century.

The BRIC's study, published in October 2003, predicted that well before 2050 – in fact, by 2039, if its prediction comes true, the combined gross domestic products of Brazil, Russia, India and China (the BRIC) would exceed that of the US, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Japan, whom it collectively dubbed as G-6. In 2050, the study predicted, China's GDP would be \$ 44.5 trillion, and India's \$ 28 trillion – 125 per cent and 80 per cent of US' projected GDP of 35.4 trillion. China would be the world's largest economy. It is already the second largest economy of the world, ahead of 2015, as predicted by the BRIC report.

Since economic power is a precursor to political power, the report also reinforced the belief in the US that in the future China would be its main rival for world dominance. The National Intelligence Council of the USA predicted in 2005 that China's desire to gain the 'great power' status on the world stage will be reflected in its greater economic leverage over countries in the region and elsewhere as well as in its steps to strengthen its military. East Asian states are adapting to the advent of a more powerful China by forging closer economic and political ties with Beijing, potentially accommodating themselves to its preferences, particularly on sensitive issues like Taiwan. China will continue to strengthen its military through developing and acquiring sophisticated submarines, and increasing the numbers of ballistic missiles. China will overtake Russia and others as the second largest defence spender after the United States over the next two decades and will be, by any measure, a first-rate military power.<sup>96</sup> It is against this backdrop that the US has returned to the Asia-Pacific region, though the return is a relatively benign one. The US is trying to forge a coalition of like-minded Asian countries favouring

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<sup>96</sup> Prem Shankar Jha, *India and China: The Battle Between Soft and Hard Power*, Penguin 2010, p. 11 and p. 12.

continuing “peace and stability” a coalition that might deter, the Chinese assertiveness.

## 5.2 Condoleezza Rice’s Statement, 2005

The US motive and interest can be gauged from the statement of the then Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice during a 2005 visit to Tokyo. Asked whether she viewed China as a strategic partner or competitor, Rice replied:

“When I look at China’s role in this region, I think it’s a very important thing that China plays an increasing role. It is nonetheless, a good thing that China plays that role in the context of democratic alliances like the United States and Japan. I really do believe that the US-Japan relationship, the US-South Korean relationship, the US-Indian relationship are all important in creating an environment in which China is more likely to play a positive role than a negative role. These alliances are not against China; they are alliances that are devoted to a stable security and political and economic, and indeed, values-based relationship that put China in the context of those relationships, and a different path to development than if China were simply untethered, simply operating without that strategic context.”<sup>97</sup>

The National Security Strategy of the USA, unveiled in May 2010, also saw India, China and Russia as the “key centers of influence” in the contemporary world, countries with whom Washington would like to deepen its partnership. “Certain bilateral relationships-such as US relations with China, India and Russia-will be critical to building broader cooperation on areas of mutual interest,” the 52-page document said. Noting that Asia’s dramatic economic growth has increased its connection to America’s future prosperity and acknowledging India’s “responsible advancement”,

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<sup>97</sup> Condoleezza Rice’s address at Sofia University, Tokyo, Japan, 19 March, 2005 [http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/0501qus\\_china.pdf](http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/0501qus_china.pdf), accessed on December 31, 2012.

the report said the US and India are “building a strategic partnership that is underpinned by our shared interests, our shared values as the world’s two largest democracies, and close connections among our people.” The report further added, “We value India’s growing leadership on a wide array of global issues, through groups like G-20, and will seek to work with India to promote stability in South Asia and elsewhere in the world.”<sup>98</sup> The US National Security Adviser James Jones, in his comments during a media briefing, said, “India with which our growing relationship is one of the defining partnerships of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, And China, with which we have forged a Strategic and Economic Dialogue to advance mutual interest on areas such as global economic recovery and non-proliferation,”<sup>99</sup>

The statement of the US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton at the ASEAN Regional Forum meeting in Vietnam on July 23, 2011, where she said that resolving the South China Sea issue was pivotal to regional stability and mooted ‘a collaborative diplomatic process by all claimants for resolving the various territorial disputes without coercion’, further exacerbated the strategic scenario in the Asia-Pacific.

The call to engage India in the Asia-Pacific was renewed by the USA when President Obama visited India in November 2010. Addressing the members of Parliament, a rare honour extended to very select Heads of State or the Government, President Obama said, “...more broadly, India and the United States can partner in Asia. Today the United States is once again playing a leadership role in Asia-strengthening old alliances; deepening relationships, as we are doing with China; and we are reengaging with regional organizations like the ASEAN and joining the East Asia Summit

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<sup>98</sup> [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf), accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>99</sup> “India among the ‘key centres of influence’ in Obama Security Strategy”, IANS, *Hindustan Times*, May 28, 2010 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/Americas/India-among-key-centres-of-influence-in-Obama-security-strategy/Article1-549620.aspx>, accessed on December 31, 2012.



–organizations in which India is also a partner. Like your neighbours in South-East Asia, we want India not only to ‘Look East’, we want India to ‘Engage East’ because it will increase the security and prosperity of all our nations.”<sup>100</sup>

The appeal to exhort India was reiterated when the US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton visited India, in July 2011. Speaking in Chennai she said, “Much of the history of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be written in Asia which, in turn, will be influenced by the partnership between the US and India and its relationship with neighbors.”<sup>101</sup> She said India could build a leadership role in the Asia-Pacific in fora like the East Asia Summit and the Asian Regional Forum, contribute more to maritime security, democracy promotion, explore a new Silk Route into Central Asia, support rebuilding Afghanistan and even help stabilize Pakistan. US renewed its appeal to India to reinvigorate its engagement in the Asia Pacific when President Barack Obama addressed the Australian Parliament in November 2011.<sup>102</sup>

The US reiterated its nudge to India in its Pentagon report titled “Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defence” in January 2012. The new strategy, envisaged in the report, is geared towards tackling the emerging threat from China’s military build-up. It takes forward the process of reorienting American military might from Atlantic to the Pacific. The basic idea is that the US forces would fight fewer counter-terror campaigns in far flung areas, but will focus on its air and naval forces to balance China or face down Iran. Turning to India, the report said the US is geared to “investing in a long term-term strategic partnership with India to support its ability to serve as a

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<sup>100</sup> [http://blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2010/11/obama\\_speech\\_to\\_india\\_parliame.html](http://blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2010/11/obama_speech_to_india_parliame.html), accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>101</sup> <http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/Chennai/As-China-looms-US-tells-India-to-lead-Asia/Article1-723313.aspx>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/obama-in-australia/obamas-speech-to-parliament/story-fnb0o39u-1226197973237>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

regional economic anchor and provider of security in the broader Indian Ocean region”.<sup>103</sup>

Such exhortation to co-opt India was reinforced in February 2011 in Singapore when the U.S. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Geoffrey Pyatt, suggested that New Delhi “adopt a ‘Be East’ policy”. The objective was to encourage India “expand (its) market and security integration across the Asian region”. He was equally candid about the U.S. wanting to revolutionize its military relationship with India. According to one opinion acquiring unexplored meaning in such an evolving ambience, is Mr. Pyatt’s view that “one of the areas in which we see great potential for the U.S.-India is indeed in East Asia”. Such a potential partnership in East Asia can be viewed as part of “the U.S. support for India’s expanding global reach”.<sup>104</sup>

It was against this backdrop that the first ever US-Japan-India Trilateral meeting took place in Washington in the third week of December 2011. Commenting on the event, the People’s Daily Online said that the meeting held at the Assistant Secretary level is believed to be a part of the current US efforts to carry out its “pivot to Asia Policy”, which aims at consolidating the US predominance in Asia. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Liu Weimin, when asked to comment on the event, said “The United States, Japan and India are countries with great influence in the Asia Pacific region. We hope the trilateral meeting will be conducive to regional peace and security.”<sup>105</sup> As a matter of trust and transparency it is understood that India appraised China about the US-Japan-India trilateral.

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<sup>103</sup> Harsh V. Pant, “Tectonic rumblings in the region”, *Indian Express*, January 11, 2012 at <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/tectonic-rumblings-in-the-region/898178/> accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>104</sup> P.S. Suryanarayan, “U.S. move to mentor India in new East Asia”, *The Hindu*, 22 February, 2011 at <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/us-move-to-mentor-india-in-new-east-asia/article1477749.ece>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>105</sup> <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90883/7684096.html>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

### 5.3 Beijing's Suspicion: Ring of Encirclement

Commenting on Mrs. Clinton's visit to India an opinion piece article in *China Daily* said, "In the current Obama administration, Clinton has emerged as one of the most vocal proponent of the "China balancing" theory."<sup>106</sup> In her official press conference in India, Clinton urged India to play a leading role in Asia-Pacific, which directly or indirectly hints at the balancing of China's influence in the region. Her speeches in Africa, and now in Asia clearly hint at the US concern about its receding influence in the Asia-Pacific region. Repeatedly, she has been successful in instigating the media to chant the "China threat theory". Referring to the Indo-US relations, the article said, "Overall, Indo-US relations have improved over the last decade, but it will be an exaggeration to say that India is a US ally in the region. A 2005 Indo-US civil nuclear deal did not change the status of the Indo-US strategic relationship in a large way. The emerging new relationship between the two democracies is only a late recognition of their converging interest in combating global terrorism sponsored by state and non-state actors. There is a long way to go for before an Indo-US strategic relationship, and it will be immature at this stage."

Beijing is critical of the USA's efforts to court the countries in the region including Japan and India to hedge against China in the region. This can be gauged from writings and views in Chinese authoritative journals and the commentaries in the news papers. As the *China Daily* wrote in February 2010 "China is in a crescent-shaped ring of encirclement. The ring brings in Japan, stretches through nations in the South-China Sea to India, and ends in Afghanistan."<sup>107</sup> In an article<sup>108</sup> written by John W. Garver and

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<sup>106</sup> Binod Singh, "Clinton's India visit reached no consensus on fighting terrorism", *China Daily*, July 27, 2011 at [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2011-07/26/content\\_12985144.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2011-07/26/content_12985144.htm), accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>107</sup> [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2010-02/22/content\\_9481548.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2010-02/22/content_9481548.htm), accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>108</sup> John W. Garver and Fei-Ling Wang, 'China's Anti-encirclement Struggle', *Asian Security*, 6(3) 2010.

Fei-Ling Wang, the authors quote the Colonel of the PLA, that the United States is constructing a ring of encirclement stretching from Japan, South Korea, and Mongolia in North through the South China Sea to India in the South as steps towards the final “carving up and destruction of China”.

China’s unease and discomfort at the US efforts to put in place an anti-China alliance to contain China was also reflected a year later in an article published by the Chinese Communist Party Journal *Qishi* (seeking truth). The article, whose author was named as Xu Yunhong, said, “The U.S. seems highly interested in forming a very strong anti-China alliance. It not only made a high profile announcement of its return to East Asia but also claimed to lead in Asia”. The article further said, “What is particularly unbearable is how the U.S. blatantly encourages China’s neighbouring countries to go against China.” It added, “Countries like Japan, India, Vietnam, Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Korea are trying to join the anti-China group because they either had a war or another conflict of interest with China.” Turning to India it said, “The probability for India to cooperate with China is also not great” and “India has stayed closely allied with the US. In recent years, (US President Barack) Obama proposed to support India for a permanent membership in the UNSC (United Nations Security Council).”

#### **5.4 India-Japan- China: India’s fine balancing**

In India’s ‘look east policy’, Japan is increasingly occupying a strategic significance. According to the Annual Report of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, for the year 2010-11, ‘Defence and security cooperation has gradually emerged as a key factor of India’s Strategic and Global Partnership with Japan and is recognized by both sides as beneficial to peace and prosperity in Asia and the world.’ Within the framework of the October 2008 India-Japan Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, which was the first of such document signed by India with any other country, a concrete Action Plan was issued in 2009. The Plan envisaged a wide range of issues, ranging from maritime safety and security, fight against piracy and transnational

crime, safety of transport, protection of marine environment and non-traditional security threats like disaster management through consultation and cooperation.

In 2010-2011, defence and security cooperation between India and Japan proceeded on the basis of the two agreed documents, as well as the Annual Calendar of Defence Exchanges. Among the new dialogues launched in the year was the first ever 'Two-plus Two' dialogue held in New Delhi on July 6, 2010 between Foreign Secretary and Defence Secretary of India and their Japanese counterparts.

India's relations with Japan have undergone a significant transformation in recent years, with the establishment of the 'India-Japan Strategic and Global Partnership' and the practice of annual summits during the visit of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Japan in December 2006. India and Japan have also concluded an Annual Strategic Dialogue between Foreign Ministers since 2007. Besides, there are other dialogue mechanisms between the two countries as well. One of the high points in India's relations with Japan in recent years was Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's visit to Japan in October 2010 for the annual summit with his Japanese counterpart Naoto Kan during which they signed two very significant documents, *viz.* a Joint Statement 'Vision for India-Japan Strategic and Global Partnership in the Next Decade' and a Joint Declaration between leaders of India and Japan and conclusion of the 'Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.' The visit helped in giving an impetus to the upward trend in the India-Japan relationship and the summit level commitment to this increasing important relationship.

## 5.5 The Elephant in the room

In the narrative of the India-Japan relationship China has been the elephant in the room. No wonder, therefore, China was the key component of the discussion between the Indian prime minister and his Japanese counterpart, Naoto Kan. This prompted a leading strategic analyst of an Indian daily to remark that the prime ministers of India and Japan talked the language of strategy through

a round of Chinese whispers. Foreign Secretary Ms. Nirupama Rao was quoted as saying that the two prime ministers “exchanged views on China” and that their discussions covered strategic security and economic issues. The two countries, she said, shared their experiences in handling China, “We both wish to see the peaceful rise of China”, she added. The two sides discussed how China could be engaged and drawn into cooperation. It was reported that India shared with Japan its mechanism of border talks with China.<sup>109</sup>

While China is wary of the closer strategic proximity between India and Japan, this discomfort was evident in the Chinese media after Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh’s visit to Japan in 2011. Japan’s decision to allow its companies to take part in arms development projects with countries other than the US and the \$15 billion currency swap deal between India and Japan are a cause of concern to China. Japan’s moves toward boosting its military might will send alarming signals across Asia. China Daily quoted Shi Ying, a researcher at the China Institute of International Studies in Beijing, “In terms of political safety, (Japan) wants to counter China by linking with countries such as the US, India and Australia. But on the other hand, it is aware of the fact that Sino-Japanese relations are a prerequisite for its quest to become a normal country. So personally, I think this is itself contradictory”, China Daily quoted Zhao Gancheng, director at the Shanghai Institute for International Studies. Nonetheless, Liu Jianguyong, an expert on Japan studies at the Tsinghua University, said Tokyo’s incentives are primarily economic.<sup>110</sup>

Given the persistent security distrust between Japan and China and conscious of Chinese wariness, New Delhi has been sensitive to the Chinese consternation about the evolving security and

<sup>109</sup> Prमित Palchauthuri, “Chinese glue brings India Japan together”, *Hindustan Times*, 26 October 2011 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/NewDelhi/Chinese-glue-brings-India-Japan-together/Article1-617760.aspx>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>110</sup> Kim Varma, “Indo-Japan ties worry for China: State media”, *The Pioneer*, New Delhi, December 31, 2011.

strategic relationship between India and Japan. Moreover the timing of the growing strategic and security relationship with Japan (a close ally of US) coincided with India's growing proximity to the US and signing of the Indo-US nuclear deal. It was against this backdrop that that New Delhi reassured Beijing that the India-Japan strategic relations are not aimed against China in so many words. India thus, scrupulously avoided any reference in the text of the India-Japan declaration to 'the new security challenges', a sobriquet that forms part of Japan's strategic partnership with Australia, and is a euphemism for the rise in China's might. It must also be recalled that within hours of signing the security declaration, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh said in Tokyo that the increase in India's bilateral relation with China in the last year alone was 'more than the whole of total trade with Japan'. The message was clearly meant for Beijing. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh further emphatically said that economic relations and security cooperation with Japan 'would not be at the cost of any third country, least of all China'.<sup>111</sup>

It is in this backdrop that India is trying to strike a fine balance. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's sustained and balanced approach to India's relationship with the USA, Japan, and the countries of the South-East Asia particularly Vietnam, Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand vis-à-vis China seems to have the desired result of winning China's trust and confidence. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has nurtured India's relationship with China mindfully, thoughtfully and with great care and circumspection. In spite of India's strategic relationship with the USA, he never flaunted it. On the contrary all his utterances and posturing have been nuanced. He has been taking special care in his overtures to Beijing. Similarly he has been resisting overtures from countries such as Australia, Japan, Vietnam and Taiwan to take any step to ruffle feathers of China. It seems Australia has been keen to forge a defence cooperation with India to hedge China, a proposal which seems to have failed to enthuse South Block. Prime Minister Dr.

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<sup>111</sup> <http://blogs.reuters.com/pakistan/2008/10/25/india-japan-in-security-pact-a-new-architecture-for-asia/>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

Manmohan Singh's clarity, transparency and sincerity of purpose in deference to China's sensitivities and susceptibilities have endeared him to both President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao.

This can be discerned from the comments expressed by leading Chinese scholars working on India. For example, when Prime minister Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Japan in October 2010, before his arrival in Hanoi to participate in the East Asian Summit meeting, where he later met and interacted with his Chinese counterpart, the *Global Times*, known for its strong opinion, commented that 'containing China' was the motivation behind Dr. Singh's East Asia tour. Contrasted with this rather pessimistic assessment, Prof. Rong Ying, Vice-President of China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) said, 'At the government level, and at the level of scholars here who study India, we are very aware of India's good interaction with the regional countries and the 'Look East' policy, which has been announced for a long time'. Referring to Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wen Jiabao on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit and sounding a note of optimism, he further said, "This meeting is very significant, as it has become increasingly important for both sides to better communicate their interests.' He added, 'Both governments agree that the relationship is of importance beyond bilateral issues, and has strategic and global significance. In areas like G-20 cooperation, global economic governance and climate change, the two countries can really show to the public and the world at large that that they can work together. By doing so, we can also help build strategic trust, which is particularly important in a fast changing regional environment'.<sup>112</sup>

Yet another important Chinese scholar who closely follows India and is the author of the book 'Rising India', Ma Jiali in an interview carried in the *Global Times* in response to a question as to whether 'the US is shifting its strategic focus to Asia and it supports India

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<sup>112</sup> Ananth Krishnan, "After Prime Ministers' meeting, India and China look to address trust gap", *The Hindu*, October 30, 2010 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/article857587.ece>, accessed on December 31, 2012.



in containing China in Asia' said, "The US does have the strategic intent to use India to contain China, as we can learn from some US official documents. But we should see that India is independent on its foreign policy. There are voices against the US in India, and some Indian intellectuals know clearly that the US kindness to India has a strategic intent".<sup>113</sup> Replying to a doubt about there being a zero-sum game between the two Asia giants and recalling Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's oft quoted assertion that Asia has enough room to accommodate the development of both China and India, he further said, "The development of China and India is not a zero-sum game, but could be a win-win situation."

It seems that in China there is also a section of scholars that argues for a better India-China cooperation to counter the US policy of expanding influence in Asia. e.g. the People's Daily in an Opinion piece in February commented "... the development of the China-India relationship is being tested by the United States in the Asia Pacific region which will have a complicated and in-depth influence on the future of India-China relation." Referring to the US-Japan-India Trilateral meeting, the article said that the effort was to beseech China, instead of getting into an apparent anti-China effort. India should enter into a strategic partnership with China that will create mutual trust and benefit.<sup>114</sup>

Far from being a divide between China and the US or between China and Japan, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has been a sort of bridge between them. True, the US has been trying to mentor India to be a sort of resident power in the Asia-Pacific, but New Delhi has calibrated it with a great degree of finesse to the liking of Beijing. His approach has been to bring China to a transparent system of dialogue through an institutional mechanism, rather through hedging or through the new lexicon of 'soft

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<sup>113</sup> [http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/commentary/2011-03/634998\\_3.html](http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/commentary/2011-03/634998_3.html), accessed on December 31, 2012.

<sup>114</sup> Sutirtho Patranobis, "Paper calls for China-India alliance against US", *Hindustan Times*, February 21, 2012 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/China/Paper-calls-for-China-India-alliance-against-US/Article1-814493.aspx>, accessed on December 31, 2012.

balancing'. The entry of both the USA and Russia to the East Asia summit will certainly produce some sobering effect on China's assertiveness.

India would like to see China as a responsible stake holder to ensure and facilitate peace and stability in the region through institutional mechanism like the East Asia Forum, the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ADMM+. This is easier said than done, but that is the challenge before the diplomats. Since China may not be amenable to reason at times, some degree of hedging is also called for. India is uniquely positioned to interface between China and the countries of the region, because it enjoys the confidence of China, the USA and the countries of the region.

## **5.6 Vietnam: the Fulcrum of India's 'look east' policy**

In India's 'look east' policy, Vietnam has been the major pivot, at least in terms of security and strategic imperatives. While India has had cultural linkages with the Indo-China region, in the modern times India has extended political support to Vietnam during its protracted liberation struggle and New Delhi has also been actively involved in the historic Geneva Conference of 1954 that brought peace, although elusive, to the region. In that sense, India's engagement predates its 'look east' policy. In recent times, however, India's engagement with Vietnam has been elevated to a strategic level. There is also an institutional mechanism of the Foreign Office Consultation and strategic dialogue between the two countries. There has been exchange of visits between defence personnel of the two countries from time to time. Naval ships from India have also been making port calls at Vietnamese ports. The Indian Navy has been supplying critical spare parts to Hanoi for its Russian origin ships and boats. After Defence Minister A.K. Antony's visit to Vietnam in 2007, Indian and Vietnamese have engaged in joint patrols, and both navies participated in a joint exercise in 2007. India has also repaired and upgraded over 100 MiG planes of the Vietnam Air Force and supplied them with enhanced avionics and radar systems. Indian Air Force pilots have also been training their Vietnamese counterparts.

India's foray into the South China Sea has indeed given a new twist to its engagement with Vietnam and to India's 'look east' policy. To put the issue in perspective, it may be mentioned that as soon it was reported in the media on the eve of India's External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna's visit to Vietnam to participate in the Fourteenth India-Vietnam Joint Commission Meeting on Trade, Economic, Scientific & Technological Cooperation which took place on September 16, 2011 in Hanoi that the two countries were to sign an agreement to explore oil in the disputed South China Sea, the media in the two countries went overboard in reacting and commenting. New Delhi and Beijing, however, at the governmental level handled the issue deftly. On September 15, 2011, alluding to the media report, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Jiang Yu said that China enjoys indisputable sovereignty over the South China Sea, and that China's stand was based on historical facts and international law. It further stated that China was opposed to any projects in South China Sea, without directly referring to India.<sup>115</sup>

The same day while answering a question raised by a correspondent about the Chinese objection to the ONGC Videsh venture, the spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs of Government of India said in New Delhi that ONGC Videsh had been present in Vietnam for quite some time, including in a major oil venture for off-shore oil and natural gas exploration, and that they were in the process of further expanding their cooperation and operation in Vietnam.<sup>116</sup>

The issue was, however, played out in the media both in China and India, more so in China. The reaction in the Chinese media was strong and not in good taste. The ultra nationalist Global Times observed, 'Reasoning may be used first, but if India is persistent in this, China should try every possible means to stop this

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<sup>115</sup> <http://www.livemint.com/2011/09/15161303/Refrain-from-South-China-Sea-o.html> accessed on May 19, 2012.

<sup>116</sup> <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530318274> accessed on May 19, 2012.

cooperation from happening'<sup>117</sup>. An editorial in the same newspaper described the proposal of the ONGC Videsh as reflecting India's rising ambition, and a likely Indian move to counter China's behaviour in the Indian Ocean.<sup>118</sup> Yet another report entitled, 'Bundling Strategy over South China Sea will be disillusioned' was carried by Xinhua News Agency on September 27. The report said that India's oil exploration cooperation with Vietnam in South China Sea was a blunt trampling on China's sovereignty.<sup>119</sup> In another article titled 'Time to teach those around South China Sea a lesson' carried in the Global Times, it was commented, 'We (Beijing) shouldn't waste the opportunity to leave some tiny scale battles that could deter provocations from going further.' In words that are more intemperate, the commentary further said, 'The elephant should stay restrained if mosquitoes behave themselves well. But it seems like we have a completely different story now given that even mosquitoes invited an eagle to come to their ambitious party'.<sup>120</sup> The commentary evoked strong reaction from the readers, some of whom described it as reckless, fuelled by extreme hatred and radicalism.

The commentary by the Indian strategic community, was by and large nuanced. An acknowledged strategic affairs commentator, writing in his blog said, 'The implications of the reported Indian move to accept the Vietnamese claim of sovereignty and to consider favorably the Vietnamese invitation to undertake oil and gas exploration do not appear to have been carefully considered by the Government of India'<sup>121</sup>. Yet another commentary said, 'There

<sup>117</sup> Ananth Krishnan, "South China Sea project a 'serious political provocation', Chinese paper warns India", *The Hindu*, 16 September 2011 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article2459736.ece>. accessed on May 19, 2012.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2011-09/26/c\\_131160220.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2011-09/26/c_131160220.htm) accessed on May 19, 2012.

<sup>120</sup> <http://www.globaltimes.cn/NEWS/tabid/99/ID/677717/Time-to-teach-those-around-South-China-Sea-a-lesson.aspx> accessed on May 19, 2012.

<sup>121</sup> B. Raman, "South China Sea: India should avoid rushing in where even US exercises caution", South China Analysis Group, 17 September 2011 at <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/\papers48\paper4702.html> accessed on May 19, 2012.

is no point in acting with bravado when we do not have the necessary military capacity to take on the Chinese in the South China Sea. It would be very wise indeed to take a hard look at our involvement in the disputed waters of the South China Sea'<sup>122</sup>. The comment by India's celebrated strategic analyst C. Rajamohan was, however, more mature. He wrote, '... Vietnam's new importance to India has been misrepresented by the media at home and abroad by viewing it through the distorting prism of China.'<sup>123</sup> In fact, a clear testimony of Vietnam's fine balancing act was while its President was signing an agreement in India, its Party Chairman Nyugen Phu Trong signed another agreement with China. It is obvious that the left hand knew what the right hand was doing. This is suggestive that there was a fine balancing act on the part of Vietnam.

Due diligence should have been taken by commentators both in China and India to verify facts, and the parallel diplomatic parleys between China and Vietnam should have been followed. The fact is that the cooperation between the ONGC Videsh and Petro-Vietnam goes back to the 1980s, which led to the signing of the Production Sharing Contract between Hydrocarbon India Ltd, renamed later as ONGC Videsh, and Petro-Vietnam in May 1988. Later, in June 2006 they signed the deal for the award of two exploration blocks, 127 and 128 in Phu Kan basin in Vietnam through regular bidding process. The latest agreement is intended for developing long-term cooperation in oil and gas industry and shall be in force for three years. Some of the key areas in which both the companies are desirous to cooperate are related to exchange of information on the petroleum industry, new investments, expansion and operations of oil and gas exploration and production including refining, transportation and

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<sup>122</sup> R.S. Kalha, IDSA, "India and South China Seas: The need for a second look" at [http://idsa.in/idsacomments/IndiaandtheSouthChinaSeasTheNeedforaSecondLook\\_rskalha\\_230911](http://idsa.in/idsacomments/IndiaandtheSouthChinaSeasTheNeedforaSecondLook_rskalha_230911), accessed on May 19, 2012.

<sup>123</sup> <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/looking-beyond-malacca/858300/0> accessed on May 19, 2012.

supply in Vietnam, India, and third countries, according to laws and regulations of their countries.<sup>124</sup>

It may be mentioned in this context that in June 2011, China and Vietnam agreed to speed up consultation over a pact regarding the fundamental principles to solve maritime disputes between the two countries, pledging to work harder to sign an agreement as early as possible. In fact the Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister Ho Xuan Son visited India in June 2011 and later paid a visit to Beijing, where he was closeted with State Councilor Dai Bingguo and held talks with Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Zhijun and the two countries agreed to solve disputes through friendly consultation. In addition, Chinese foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, who was in New York in September 2011 in connection with the UN General Assembly meeting, held a consultation with his Vietnamese counterpart on the sidelines. It was reported that during his meeting with the Chinese Foreign Minister, the Vietnamese Foreign Minister said that Vietnam was ready to work with China to enhance mutual trust and friendship between the two countries.

The official understanding is that the issue was blown out of proportion by the over-zealous media. This can be discerned from a statement attributed to Defence Minister A.K. Anthony, which he made in his interaction with the media after the Coast Guard annual conference in New Delhi wherein he said, “South China Sea is not our worry. Our worry is to guard our own backyard and our own areas in our neighboring island nations. We are more concerned about areas around us and we are not the main players in the South China Sea”.<sup>125</sup> On yet another occasion, while addressing at the Naval Commanders Conference in New Delhi on October 12, 2011, he said India had no plans to increase its presence in the South China Sea and is only interested in the

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<sup>124</sup> M. Saraswathy, “India Inc Firms up footprint in Vietnam”, *Business Standard*, October 13, 2011 at <http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/india-inc-firmsfootprint-in-vietnam/452415/> accessed on May 19, 2012.

<sup>125</sup> Sandeep Dikshit, “India China to have system soon to check intrusions”, *The Hindu*, September 27, 2011 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article2491086.ece> accessed on May 19, 2012.

uninterrupted passage of ships in the region. “There is no question of India going there in large scale. We will go there for exercise and uninterrupted passage of ships and trade. There is no question of any naval presence there. That is not our intention, our main concern is to protect our core area of interest,” he said.<sup>126</sup>

In spite of India’s clear position, Beijing from time to time continued advising New Delhi to restrain from making further advances on the choppy waters of the South China Sea. “The area is a disputed one. So we do not think that it would be good for India to do (explore oil) that”, the Deputy Director-General of Asian Department in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sun Weidong told a group of visiting Indian journalist in Beijing in March 2011. Asking New Delhi not to get involved in the “disputes”, Mr. Weidong said the sovereignty of the islands in the region was a major issue and India should not carry out oil exploration till resolution of the vexed issue. “We want common development in the region. We hope the Indian side is not involved in those disputes. We hope India would do more to ensure peace and tranquility in the region,” he further said. When reminded about the commercial nature of India’s oil exploration in the region having huge oil and gas reserves, he said the issue was very complicated and China was trying its best to find a peaceful solution to the problem. Asked why China was objecting to India’s exploration projects in the Vietnamese oil blocks when Chinese companies were involved in carrying out infrastructure projects in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), the official in-charge of India affairs said both issues are “totally different”<sup>127</sup>

China’s opposition to OVL’s foray into South China Sea was reiterated few days later when a leading government supported

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<sup>126</sup> <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/india-concerned-over-chinese-presence-in-pok-antony/858945/> accessed on May 19, 2012.

<sup>127</sup> Manash Pratim Bhuyan, “Don’t venture into South China Sea, Beijing warns Delhi”, *Pioneer*, New Delhi, March 26, 2012 at <http://www.dailypioneer.com/home/online-channel/360-todays-newspaper/52638-dont-venture-into-south-china-sea-beijing-warns-delhi.html>. Accessed on May 19, 2012.

Chinese think-tank said that India would face “political and economic risks” if its companies continued exploring oil in blocks off the coast of Vietnam in the disputed South China Sea. Mr. Wu Schicun, president of the National Institute for South China Sea, supported by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the Southern Hainan province, while questioning the claims of Vietnam that the two blocks were not part of the dispute because they lay within 200 nautical miles of Vietnam’s territory and fell under its claims under the United Nations Convention on Law of Sea (UNCLOS), he said, “40 per cent” of the two blocks were within the area denoted in Chinese maps by a U-shaped line, where China held claims over the South China Sea’s islands, which are disputed by at least 10 countries. “So it is a disputed area, not a non-disputed area. In any disputed area involving so many claimant states, the involvement of external multinational oil corporations will make the situation even more complicated and pose even more obstacles”, he said. Mr. Wu alleged that it was ‘Vietnam’s maritime strategy to try and invite international oil companies and governments to get involved’. It was China’s hope that “not only claimant states, but all external states like the U.S, Japan and India play a positive role to push for a peaceful settlement”, he added.<sup>128</sup>

It was against this backdrop that during a press briefing, the spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, said on May 10, 2012, “We have been following with concern, the recent developments involving China and the Philippines in the South China Sea. Maintenance of peace and security in the region is of vital importance to the international community. India urges both countries to exercise restraint and resolve the issue diplomatically according to the principle of international law”.<sup>129</sup>

In yet another significant development, the government in a statement on May 15, 2012 said that the OVL efforts to drill a

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<sup>128</sup> Ananth Krishnan, “South China Sea projects risky for India”, *The Hindu*, April 5, 2012 at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article3281437.ece> accessed on May 19, 2012.

<sup>129</sup> <http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=530319380> accessed on May 19, 2012.



well in block 128 in Vietnam were not successful due to logistic constraints in anchoring the rig on a hard sea bottom. This, however, in no way means to suggest that India is buckling under pressure from any source. It is important to mention in this connection that the OVL will continue operations at block 6.1 in the same region, from where it got 2 billion cubic meters (BCM) of gas in 2011-12 for its 45 per cent participating interest. The OVL had already abandoned block 127 after it failed to find any hydrocarbon there.

Although, India treats the issue of the ONGC Videsh's foray into the South China Sea, primarily as a commercial venture, its strategic and security implications for the region, though remote and distant, cannot be ruled out. India's strategic position with regard to its engagement in the Asia-Pacific can be discerned from a statement made by its National Security Adviser Shiv Shankar Menon some time back in the United States when he said, "...China has a presence in South Asia. It has been there for a long time... We have a presence in East Asia for a long time..."<sup>130</sup> Emphasising peaceful cooperation he is further reported to have said, "...We have global interest. China has global interest, all of us do. All the major powers are not only inter dependent on each other, but also are dealing with each other across a whole range of issues. None of which recognizes some artificial constructs like South Asia or East Asia, these are interlocking circles about security or prosperity, whichever way you look at it." This eloquently reflects India's strategic thinking with regard to the Asia-Pacific.

## **5.7 Implications for India**

In an increasingly globalized world, threat to peace anywhere is threat to peace and prosperity everywhere. The integration of the world economy, mutual economic interdependence, the communication revolution, and cross-migration across the world have bridged time and space.

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<sup>130</sup> <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/china-powerful-in-s-asia-india-in-southeast/691027/>, Accessed on May 19, 2012

Because of the proximity of the region to India, its cultural affinity and historic linkage, India has all the more reason to be concerned about peace and stability in the region. The menace of terrorism, drug-trafficking, and piracy in the sea-lanes, cast great responsibility on India to engage in the region thoughtfully and imaginatively. India's rising profile and the existence of ethnic populations in the region and India's growing economic engagement are also compelling reasons to take a proactive role in the region. The rise of China, India's mighty neighbour in the region, is yet another dimension to chalk out a meaningful policy towards the region. At a time when India and China are trying to revamp and strengthen the structural mechanisms between the two countries every care should be taken not to precipitate the relationship between the two countries. There should be restraint by all the stakeholders, and issues should be sorted out in a transparent manner and through an institutional mechanism.

## CONCLUSION

The India-China relationship may not be an ideal relationship in the narrative of a bilateral relationship between the countries. But given the complexity of the relationship taking into account the divergent political system, the unresolved territorial dispute, compulsion of geo-politics, the quest for resources and markets, and aspirations of the two countries for global influence and power, the relationship between the two countries is certainly a matter of great satisfaction. In spite of occasional hiccups and pinpricks, the relationship between the two countries has shown a certain degree of resilience. It is not a relationship between a large country and a small country, but a dynamic relationship between two great countries boasting of a great civilisation and cultural past, complex dynamics of the present and a very challenging and promising future crafting a new world order.

True, the two countries fought a war in 1962, but it was a short-lived war and the source of the border dispute is the McMahon line, a legacy of British colonialism. Nehru had a consistent and nuanced approach to China, even at the height of the heated debate in the parliament on November 8, 1962 as discussed in the second chapter. He strongly advocated for China's admission into the UN system. The underlining idea was to bring China to a dialogue mechanism. China had suffered British imperialism, Japanese imperialism, and the American imperialism, but had never any such bitter experience or memory from the Indian side. On the contrary, what the two countries have enjoyed is the two thousand years of cultural intercourse with Buddhism providing a perennial source of bonding and goodwill. This is no rhetoric, but a reality. In modern times, the two fought against imperialism and colonialism, and raised their voice at the Brussels Congress in 1927 much before the two were born as independent and sovereign

states. When Rabindranath Tagore received the Nobel Prize in literature, the Chinese rejoiced proclaiming it as recognition of Asian talent. They related to him as Tagore's writings fathomed the yearnings of the Chinese for freedom, liberty and modernity. Tagore is as much an icon today in China as in India. No wonder the Chinese celebrated his 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary with equal aplomb.

True that there is a trust deficit and security dilemma between the two countries, but it is equally true that there is a groundswell of goodwill between the two countries. Although one cannot rule out the possibility of a conflict between the two countries, one has to remember that 2012 is not 1962. Not only that over all these years India has acquired credible deterrence *vis-à-vis* China in terms of defence capability, but also there has been a number of institutional dialogues and communication mechanisms playing out between the two countries, as discussed in Chapter Three, facilitating and promoting interaction and understanding between them, their governments and their people. International geo-politics has also changed over the years after the end of cold war. World economy has not only been integrated, but has also become mutually interdependent. Although there is conflict of economic interest, there is also the complementarity of economic interest. The challenge before India is, therefore, to manage the asymmetrical relationship between the two countries thoughtfully and imaginatively through a multi-pronged strategy in which defence preparedness should be of paramount importance. Simultaneously, however, communication, the dialogue mechanism and CBMs should be beefed up.

The perception and attitude of members of parliament do matter in India's grand strategy towards China; particularly in the context that there is a parliamentary resolution pledging to take back the territory occupied by China. The stormy debates in parliament referred to in chapter 2 clearly reflected the temper of the agitated and anguished members, some of whom even argued that India should have no negotiation with China unless the latter surrendered the occupied territory. Ever since, the issue has occupied a sense of national pride to recover the occupied territory. Since the

resolution of the border dispute will finally involve some degree of territorial settlement, a political consensus to that extent is required. As such the parliament needs to be taken on board by the executive in this regard.

In the relationship between the two countries, some amount of conflict of interest is bound to be there, but that need not stymie the relationship. In fact, over the years the relationship between the two countries has acquired a degree of resilience, which is reflected in their mutual accommodation and adjustment. India's growing stature, its economic rise and military capability including the launching of the Agni V missile has certainly helped in stabilising the relationship between the two countries.

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India-China relations may not be ideal in the narrative of a bilateral relationship between the countries. But given the complexity of the engagement and interaction between the two countries and taking into account the divergent political systems, the unresolved territorial issues, compulsions of geo-politics, the quest for resources and markets, and aspirations of the two countries for global influence and power, the relations between the two countries are certainly a matter of reassurance and optimism. In spite of the occasional hiccups, the two countries have shown a certain degree of resilience and have learnt to live together.



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