

‘Friends’ in Waiting or ‘Enemies’ in the Making!: The India-China Storyline

Bipasha Ghose Dastidar

State Aided College Teacher

Department of Political Science

Netaji Nagar College

Abstract: India and China, the two gigantic superpowers and their strength of relations dates back to the 1950s when both the countries had been busy with their struggle against the evil of imperialism. The association between the two, since the past has undergone various phases of solidarities and animosities, the legacy of which is still being carried forward as is evident from some recent incidents which have contributed in making it a more complex one.

This article is an endeavour to investigate the swinging trends between India and China thereby throwing light on their future course of action.

Keywords: India, China, Association, Solidarities, Animosities, Trends.

India and China have been the two most populous nations on Earth along with a sound possession of nuclear weapons. There have several upheavals witnessed by both the countries besides instances of sparking friendship have made the ties more important with time.

History Comes First: A Befitting Influence

At the very outset, links between the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and India had been a modest one. In connection to this, Indian Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and his efforts deserve a special mention regarding India’s Non-Aligned Movement. According to him, being friends with China by supporting the latter’s entry to the United Nations (UN) would lessen the chances for the latter’s attack on India. Besides this, it was the Chinese Communist Party which believed that India’s support accompanied by the US all provided strength to Dalai Lama for fleeing Tibet therefore causing a huge uproar within the region. Similar to this, stood China’s pressing claims demanding India’s acceptance of the former’s control over the Aksai Chin road connecting Xinjiang and Tibet during 1956. This led to a series of clashes in 1962

which after repeated appeals led to the withdrawal of the Indian forces from the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The arrival of Deng Xiaoping led to the arousal of new beginnings between New Delhi and Beijing. His leadership paved the way for the formulation of policies that asked for restoring relations with the countries like India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore, etc. Apart from this, China embarked upon a new track of active participation by virtue of being members of the organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) to name a few. The relationship got further accentuated in 1988 following the visit of the then Prime Minister of India Rajiv Gandhi to Beijing. This proved to be an antidote for the Tibetans owing to their anti-Chinese acts along with securing the LAC through an Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity in 1993. This finds expression in Deng Xiaoping's words,

“Let both sides forget the unpleasant period in our past relations, and let us treat everything with an eye on the future.”

The Nuclear Quandary

India's conduct of its first nuclear explosion peacefully in 1974 had deeply influenced the Indo-China ties following the second one in May 1998 that sparked serious outrage within the country. A brainchild of Homi Bhabha, the provision of nuclear arsenal within the Indian regime would facilitate the country's military modernization and progress. In relation to this, the Chinese nuclear tests in 1964 which raised a lot of eyebrows in the route of its dealings with India were believed to be the chief motivators that showed the path for India's nuclear tests. Adding fuel to this entered Pakistan and its nuclear cooperation agreement with China in 1986. China, in its race to skip India for grabbing Asian dominance agreed to supply M-11 missiles to Pakistan. As against this backdrop Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1998 took plans for India's nuclear tests as a measure to show that the country was not lagging behind in developing nuclear deterrence against China.

As against this backdrop, differences did crop between both Beijing and New Delhi regarding their outlook on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). According to the Chinese authorities, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Treaty provided a fillip to the United States of America (USA) and the Soviet Union in exerting their hegemonic power, although the country had been included in the list of possessors of the nuclear weapons as guaranteed by the NPT. It was only in 1992, that Beijing finally gave its nod for being a NPT member on the grounds that the US-Soviet alliance would focus on reducing their speed in the chase for acquisition of the nuclear arms. India as a case has been unable to achieve anything regarding the NPT membership. Besides this, China was also accused of exporting nuclear materials to Pakistan despite the latter being a proliferation-sensitive country. However, this appeared to be a major difference within India's picture since it agreed to the customary rule of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons thereby paving the way for nuclear disarmament as well as energizing the India- China rift.

India and China showed stark differences regarding the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). On the one hand, the former advocated its refusal in signing the CTBT for it declared itself a nuclear weapon state that would not conduct any tests in future. Though in this case, the Indian policy makers and their uncertain attitude regarding the conduct of nuclear tests coupled with innumerable doubts surrounding the genuineness of weapons all posed as an impediment in India being a signatory of the CTBT. On the other hand, China though not ready to sign the CTBT at first, was persuaded by its own policy makers to finally nod its head which would in turn maintain its image within the global arena. Following the above, China finally agreed to sign the CTBT in 1997 primarily with an effort to keep itself in the long run.

‘Look East’: The Looking Glass

The first phase of Look East policy with its ample amount of stress on the competitive spirit between India and China was taken to be an important issue causing serious changes in the relationship between the two countries. Contrary to this stood the Look East Policy Phase 2 where stress was laid upon the notions of connectivity and the expansion of bilateral partnerships. The advent of the 1990s witnessed the growing closeness between the India and the USA accompanying the American cry for unity against terrorism. This brought India and China nearer who would in turn foster the spirit of dialogue apart from proving reasons justifying the Lion of Control (LOC). Besides this, China being a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) got the opportunity of exerting its influencing over the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) which pushed New Delhi to collaborate with the ASEAN countries for its mutual benefit. This

has rightly been stated by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee during his China visit in 2003 which endorses the view of ‘new step forward in strengthening the all round cooperation between India and China in the new century’.

Besides this, India’s close bonding with Myanmar has been visualized as a balancer regarding the scope of Indo-China relations. Myanmar’s membership of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the country attaining its full membership status in ASEAN gave access to Indian trade towards the east, an attempt directed mostly to lessen tensions within the North-Eastern region. Thus, as could be seen from the above context that India then harped on a policy of regionalism. Regionalism or the Look East Policy, on the one hand envisions stronger ties between India and ASEAN whereas on the other hand Phase 2 heavily concentrates on the extension of its arena from China to Australia including the East Asia. Although the above account makes it clear that India-China relations have been hugely influenced by the Look East paradigm, a thorough examination of the present day changes also needs to be done in order to gain a solid footing of the evolving relations between both the powers.

Pakistan: A Bonus or Blight

China’s increasing bond of friendship with Pakistan became evident in certain recent trends. This was evident in the Chinese declaration where both the Chinese and the Pakistani troops came together for joint patrolling of the China- Pakistan border. The term referred as ‘border’ here does not change the mere truth of Pakistan not sharing any boundary with China though it signifies the zone of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) surrounding Xinjiang to which India agrees to be a possessor. The ties between Pakistan and China are well known by the spread of the Chinese actions to the areas like Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, etc. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has made Pakistan a centre of attention from China’s perspective. As stated by Andrew Small, author of the China-Pakistan Axis, regarding the Pakistani side, CPEC made China a far more important patron than it had been when the two sides sought their security partnership. The Silk Road Initiative deserves a special mention in this case which highly endorsed the Chinese interests working towards the betterment of relations apart from laying a firm ground for China’s emergence as a dominant economic power. Adding to this, comes India and its uneasy stance regarding the CPEC, where India’s requirement to

promote the 'Belt and Road Initiative', a \$46 billion project furthering connectivity and infrastructure. India's refusal to this venture strained ties between India and China.

As against the environment, China's affinity for Pakistan gained momentum post Beijing's approval to extend its technical 'hold' for further 3 months in 1267 Committee of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This resolution was primarily an effort to ban Masood Azhar, the Jaish-e-Mohammad leader by the UN, the instigator behind the attack on the Indian Air Force (IAF) base in Pathankot. According to the spokesperson of the Indian Foreign Ministry, Vikas Swarup, there had been repeated appeals by India to condemn Azhar in order to prevent the spread of terrorism but it was China itself that negated the proposal owing to its blossoming relations with Pakistan. India along with the other 14 members except China called for a travel and assets ban on Azhar for which the former needed to place its application for the second time before the 1267 Committee along with the charge sheet details. China's call for negotiations between India and Pakistan had been visible since the aftermath of the Uri attacks in Kashmir where attention was given upon consultation and dialogue for an effective condemnation of the menace known as terrorism. As against this backcloth, it becomes fairly clear that Pakistan and China's modesty has generated greater mistrust between them and thereby given both the countries a chance to rethink about their relationship.

'To Be' or "Not to Be": The NSG Regime

India's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) has been one of the most contentious events taking place within the contemporary scenario. Though India dreamt big, its prolonged attempts and high hopes all dashed to the ground due to China's opposition to the former being a member of the NSG group. China assertion gained importance which stated that being a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) appeared to be a necessary prerequisite for seeking membership into the 48-nation grouping called NSG. China was backed by Brazil, Switzerland, Austria, Turkey, New Zealand and Ireland in its move against India. As against this background, came in the US who in turn stood as an impediment in the Chinese decision against India. The US standpoint during President Obama's tenure aimed at the dominance of the Asia-Pacific through the cooperative efforts of the US itself, China and India along with the other countries in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea region. Refuting the US claims, the Chinese ministry accorded the former's strategy to be 'farewell gift' for India

since the completion of President Obama's tenure. In reaction to such unjustifiable Chinese allegations, the US Ambassador to India Richard Verma assured that the US would continue to extend its helping hand to India and its disappointment surrounding India's major failure at the NSG plenary in Seoul would call for constructive efforts from both sides as Major Defence Partners on this issue. Besides this, there was Pakistan especially Islamabad which also met the same fate regarding its entry into the NSG all for being a non-NPT signatory. India's application for the NSG membership had been highly applauded by the countries like Mexico, France which facilitated the efforts for combating proliferation coupled with keeping a check on the export of nuclear, biological materials to name a few. Prior to this in 2008, a NSG waiver promoting access to civil nuclear technology with China's consent was imposed upon India. New Delhi's want for becoming a nuclear supplier together with extending its civil-nuclear sector found huge support in the countries namely Mexico, France and Switzerland. Unfortunately, India's membership bid was accepted by all the other 47 countries excepting China. According to the reports stated by the Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, the above cannot be held true in entirety since China was not the only country opposing NSG membership. India had strong credentials for become a NSG member. However, it needs to be said that China by way of its opposition to the NSG deeply strained ties between both the countries. Above all, China amongst such controversies, also spoke of some constructive measures for facilitating entry of the non-NPT members like India especially through the group known as 'Friends of NSG' headed by Argentina.

Besides the above, on either side of the coin comes the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). This proved to be useful for India which included the country in its list of members. The Indian posture by virtue of being the 35th nation did not suffer in the hands of China by virtue of the latter being a non- member of the 35- nation regime with its request pending since 2004. Thus, this showed signs of cordiality on part of India by raising its level on the global platform. Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar gave the green signal to MTCR that essentially targeted towards the unchecked proliferation of missiles and their delivery systems thus enabling India to sell the BrahMos missile of whom India is a joint manufacturer along with China.

Intermingling Standpoints: A Bird's Eye-View

China has also been a bone of contention between India and Pakistan over their membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) fearing the fact that the Indo-Pak entry might lead to disturbances in the domain of Chinese influence. Viewing the lighter side of it, the New Delhi-Islamabad entry might also have a positive outcome to mend their already existing friction and subsequently develop a cordial friendship. As against this setting, comes the 'One- China Policy' referring to the perspective of China's existence as a singular entity thus diminishing the fact that China is divided into Mainland China and Taiwan. The US provided the breaking point with its unanimous support to Mainland China thereby generating animosity between India and China. India needs a careful handling of the situation, without disturbing ties with the US or China that could pave its way for being an emerging superpower. India also needs to keep a neutral image from the US, China and Pakistan's perspective in order to draw benefits during the times of need.

Notable in this context, is Russia's growing relations with the US especially after Donald Trump's arrival with the lifting of economic sanctions against Moscow that would in turn hamper Russia's relations with China. Taking India as a reliable partner, Russia being a source of India's military equipment is also worried over India's close proximity with the US. China in order to protect its image in the arms market has brought in Pakistan as its saviour or as an answer to its Russian counterpart which has strained ties with China over its increasing closeness within the Indian arms market. Contrary to this, comes India's plan of the deployment of BrahMos missiles along the India-China border which is perceived as a threat to security. India's capability in launching the Agni-5 missiles followed by Agni-6 has gifted China a source of anxiety in disguise of India's greater military prowess. The actual necessity within this framework is the Chinese understanding of the fact that India is now ready to match steps with it which sheds chances of ignorance. Fearing India's rise, China has joined hands with Pakistan in the production of ballistic and such other missiles, or to be more specific has embarked upon its journey as a counterforce against an emerging India. Apart from the above, India's agreement with Iran for the Chabahar port development may be cited as an example explaining India-China competition to have its foothold in Iran. Though China had initially decided to this port

development process it was India who ultimately acceded to the need therefore establishing its control over its Iranian counterpart.

Another major area of concern between New Delhi and Beijing is the South China Sea. Though the dispute primarily brewed between the Philippines and China over the latter's acquisition of the Scarborough Shoal, China's claim over 90% of South China Sea waters call for a proper examination. India, whose 55% of trade passes through the Straits of Malacca opening into the South China Sea, is now wary of the fact that China might send ships to the Gulf of Aden, which in turn might seriously hamper the Indian Ocean security. As against this backdrop, China has warned India not to interfere in the South China Sea dispute if it aimed for better economic relations through tariff reduction of made-in India products. China's assertion to Japan regarding its irrelevant participation within the South China Sea dispute has led to emerging differences of opinion between the two countries. This called for visits by the Japanese Defence Minister General Nakatani to India, who in attempt to sort out relations urged for a meeting with the Defence Minister of India Manohar Parrikar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi requesting coordination within the maritime region between India, US and Japan similar to the one held during the Malabar exercise especially those who viewed China as the one hampering interests with the South China and the East China seas. This was seen as an attempt on part of New Delhi and Tokyo since 2014 along with the US whose aim was to create a stable environment within the Asia-Pacific region thereby maintaining a distance with China countering Chinese tactics to establish control over the aforesaid region.

Interestingly, Indo-Chinese cooperation also brings into limelight the recent incident of a rescue operation of a merchant ship hijacked by the Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden. Though the Chinese side disregarded the Indian help, above all this incident came as a sigh of relief amidst the hotbed of tensions between India and China over a range of issues starting from the Dalai Lama's recent visit, China's opposition to India's NSG membership together with China blocking the Indian efforts of declaring Masood Azhar as a terrorist by the UN. Besides this, there are several other issues which hint at India-China complexities. The Chinese blockage of the Brahmaputra tributary at Xigaze in Tibet is an example where the former has shown less generosity in exchange of hydrological data with its Indian counterpart. Adding to this, comes

the Indian challenge of thwarting China's efforts of close dominance in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) therefore arousing an intricate environment.

Money Counts: A Shifting Equilibrium

In recent times, various instances generating a positive attitude have got reflected between India and China. One such instance has been the rail line connecting Rasuwagadhi to Birgunj bordering Bihar that would grant a huge status to China within the South Asian domain. On the economic front, the severe downfall of India and its engineering exports along with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Sri Lanka have raised an alarm on part of both India and China especially the former for its less demand of steel and other products. According to the recent reports of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), India has achieved an enormous growth than China as shown by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of India to 7.4% in 2017-18 compared to China which remains 7.6% in 2018-19. Moreover, estimates have shown that India's inflation is to grow to 5.2% in 2017 and 5.4% in 2018 with exports growing to 6%. This has largely been an outcome of enhanced Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flow, stronger domestic demand along with agricultural improvement all which have contributed in India's rising status to be a fastest growing economy of the world. China's economic hold over India seems relevant in its increasing demand in Nepal who cuts China along with United Kingdom (UK), US, Japan and Switzerland as its 5 bilateral development partners thereby striking off India's name from the list based on the disbursement of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Chinese FDI in Nepal stood to \$57 million in 2015-16 whereas India's pledged FDI was \$18 million. China's increasing closeness with the economic sector in Nepal largely made it a reliable one in the eyes of Nepal which again showed signs of tension regarding India who wanted to safeguard the Himalayan nation from becoming totally dependable on China for its growth.

Before summing up, India-China clash of interests have started since history and have been continuing till today. The Chicken's Neck and its vulnerable position has been a serious issue for India as that would affect its relations with the North East. China has been involved in several developmental projects that have not been the same for India. Moreover, China together

with Pakistan have worked together to lessen Indian influence where India should try to maintain a work balance with every country within its proximity that in turn would serve as an antidote to the Chinese hegemony.

Dalai Lama's recent visit to Arunachal Pradesh reignited greater animosity between India and China. According to the historical records, China following India's defeat in 1962 had withdrawn beyond the MacMohan Line running between India and Tibet thereby leaving Tawang and Arunachal Pradesh in Indian hands. As against this backdrop, serious differences cropped up between both the countries owing to the fact that China considered Arunachal Pradesh as its own, referring to it as South Tibet. This seemed to have caused a deep wound to China's sentiments that became amply visible in the country's objection to Dalai Lama's visit to Arunachal Pradesh. Regarding India it chose to maintain a firm stand and considered him a spiritual leader who was solely free to go anywhere in India. This finds firm assertion in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) statement,

“The government has clearly stated on several occasions that His Holiness the Dalai Lama is a revered religious leader, who is deeply respected as such by the Indian people.”

Beijing expressed its supreme desire to have control over Tibet that ushered in its wish to approve the name of Dalai Lama's successor. Though in 1969 the decision laid with the Tibetans as to who would be his successor, the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) declared its power to decide who would be the next highest monk of Tibetan Buddhism. This received a hateful response from Dalai Lama himself who was strictly against the Chinese endorsement for his next successor and therefore regarded it as a move to deprive the Tibetans. His rejection of the Chinese claims led to the creation of a hostile environment in China who in turn believed to gather ample support to their demand for a Chinese approval for Dalai Lama's successor through the central government's support which would look into this matter thus resolving differences with China.

Furthermore, India-China rift has also been witnessed in Dalai Lama's visit to Mongolia which greatly angered the Chinese officials leading to an economic blockade. Despite India's help, the situation worsened that resulted in the Mongolian authorities blocking the entry of Dalai Lama forever within the Buddhist country. Notable within this context, comes China's

objection to Dalai Lama as a part of the group of Noble Laureates who aimed at meeting the President of India for which India went to specify the details stating it as a non-political visit. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to the Tibetan Prime Minister in-exile to attend his swearing-in ceremony made China furious thereby generating mass protests in the country.

In addition to the above, Dalai Lama's visit to Arunachal Pradesh has compelled the Beijing government rename towns in the region as a move to establish its rule over what it declares as South Tibet. The 6 places been renamed as Wo'gyainling, Mila Ri, Qoidengarbo Ri, Mainquka, Bimola and Namkapub Ri the Chinese step was an effort to express its displeasure against Dalai Lama's visit to Arunachal Pradesh backed by a strong support from India who took it as a purely religious visit. This invited a harsh response on part of India who resented against the Chinese government claiming Arunachal Pradesh as a vital part of India. This clearly finds place among the words of the MEA Spokesperson Gopal Baglay, *"Assigning invented names to towns of your neighbour does not make illegal territorial claims legal. Arunachal Pradesh is and will always be an integral part of India"*. This in turn has hugely affected the question of participation in the 'One Belt, One Road Infrastructure Plan' Summit hosted by China where the tussle surrounds the CPEC whose passage through India has not provided the latter a reason to cherish. As against this background, the Chinese measure of renaming the cities of Arunachal Pradesh have greatly strained Indo-China ties all that need to be looked upon urgently.

Therefore, in a nutshell, the roadmap of cooperation between India and China show signs of mistrust thereby leaving possibilities of chalking out the areas of convergences providing a boost to their friendship. The same was reiterated by President Pranab Mukherjee during his tour to China in June. As rightly asserted by him,

"By 2025, it is likely that our successful trade, flow of investments and collaborations in information and technology may bring about transformative changes- not only in our countries but also in our extended neighbourhood and beyond."

The need of the hour is that both New Delhi and Beijing shall make room for more developments and through an avoidance of the continuous fissiparous tendencies try to solve the irreversible differences arising between them through the best possible avenues. It is only through such varied platforms where both India and China would work with the view in mind

that emerging trustworthy ties between the two serve as the only key towards a stable and a secure environment thereby leading to a rise in the standards of both the countries within the arena of international relations.

Notes and References

1. Angang, Hu. (2011). *'China in 2020'*. Harper Collins Publishers.
2. Chakraborti, Tridib. (2009). The Distance-Proximity Paradox: Unravelling India's ASEAN Policy Over Three Decades, In Tridib Chakraborti, Anjali Ghosh, Anindyo Jyoti Majumdar and Shibashis Chatterjee (Eds.), *India's Foreign Policy*, (pp. 267-300) Pearson.
3. Chakraborti, Tridib. (2005). Disparate Priorities: Explaining the Penumbra of India's Look East Policy, In K. Raja Reddy (Ed.), *India and ASEAN: Foreign Policy Dimensions for the 21st Century*, New Century Publications.
4. Chellaney, Brahma. (2006). *'Asian Juggernaut: The Rise of China, India and Japan'*, Harper Collins Publishers.
5. Frazier, Mark W. (2004). Quiet Competition and the Future of Sino-Indian Relations, In Francine R Frankel and Harry Harding (Eds.), *The India-China Relationship*, (pp. 294-318) Oxford University Press.
6. Hu, Weixing. (1999). India's Nuclear Bomb and future Sino-Indian Relations. In Susan L Shirk *One-Sided Rivalry: China's Perceptions and Policies toward India* (p.81) Oxford University Press.
7. Jain, B M. (2011). *'India in the New South Asia'*. Viva Books.
8. Perkovich, George. (2004). The Nuclear and Security Balance, In Francine R Frankel and Harry Harding (Eds.), *The India-China Relationship*, (pp. 178-218) Oxford University Press.
9. Shirk, Susan L, (2004). One-sided Rivalry: China's Perceptions And Policies towards India, In Francine R Frankel and Harry Harding (Eds.), *The India-China Relationship*, (pp. 75-100) Oxford University Press.

10. Srinivasan, T N, (2004). Economic Reforms and Global Integration, In Francine R Frankel and Harry Harding (Eds.), *The India-China Relationship*, (pp. 219-266) Oxford University Press.
11. Tellis, Ashley J. (2004). China and India in Asia In Francine R Frankel and Harry Harding (Eds.), *The India-China Relationship*, (pp. 134-177) Oxford University Press.
12. *The Statesman*, January 19, 2016
13. *The Statesman*, May 17, 2016
14. *The Statesman*, August 4, 2016
15. *The Statesman*, July 30, 2016
16. *The Statesman*, July 12, 2016
17. *The Statesman*, June 27, 2016
18. *The Statesman*, August 12, 2016
19. *The Statesman*, December 31, 2016
20. *The Statesman*, January 17, 2017
21. *The Statesman*, January 21, 2017
22. *The Statesman*, April 5, 2017
23. *The Times of India*, April 8, 2017
24. *The Times of India*, April 21, 2017
25. *The Times of India*, May 25, 2016
26. *The Times of India*, August 3, 2016
27. *The Times of India*, July 12, 2016
28. *The Times of India*, October 18, 2016