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Elements impeding Indo-China Relationship: A Study

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Abstract:

A good history of relation is shared between India and China with a brief economic and social conjunctions. Being the two largest democratic countries in the world, both are together accounting for more than a third of the world's total population. Both Indian and China experiencing a period of rapid economic growth. On April 1, 1950, India and China established diplomatic relations. The two countries also jointly developed the Panchsheel (Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence) in 1954. Despite growing bilateral cooperation between China and India, sources of tension in the relationship remain and in some cases become more prominent. The relations got sour after 1962, when the two nations had a war between them, which led to a serious setback in bilateral relation. Issues like Doklam, Dalai Lama, water dispute, boundaries issues, triangle with Pakistan and other have emerged between the nations. This makes the Sino-Indian relationship critical not only for those living in China and India, but for the whole world. The main objective of this study is to highlight the issues which affects the relation of both countries. The trajectory of bilateral relationship has many positive as well as negative associations. It would highlight both the convergences and divergences and then suggest ways by which the existing divergences can be bridged. It would also try and explain the validation for a healthy and positive engagement.

KEYWORDS: Panchsheel, Indo-China, Doklam Issue, Dalai Lama.

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Introduction

The period belongs to two present powers of Asia, China and India. In the era of development, innovation & advancement of the nations, both China & India have bloomed magnificently. China because of being world's largest budding military power, and also with a strongest economy and India because of a growth oriented economy and a democratically elected majority government determined on growth and economic progress. China is not only an Asian giant but continues to play an increasingly dominant role in international trade, whereas India aims to be a regional leader.

The coexistence of India and China in the international state system is highly noticed and unusual in that they both aspire to become superpower and share a border. Fifty years ago, this border was both casus belli and battleground between the two countries. Today, it remains the source of multiple disputes. Yet the Sino-Indian border, the wider relationship between the two countries, can just as easily be characterized as being relatively peaceful. China and India acts as both allies and opponent for each other irrespective of their differences.

History

In 1950, India became the first non-socialist alliance country to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, as reported in a press release by the Ministry of External Affairs.

In 1988, Then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visited china to stress down the Indo-China tensions following the 1962 conflict between the two countries.

In 1993, Ex- Prime Minister Narasimha Rao visited china and an agreement was signed between India and China on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), which reflected the growing stability and substance in the bilateral ties.

In 2003, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited China, during which the two sides had signed a declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation and also mutually decided to appoint Special Representatives (SRs) to "to explore the framework of a boundary settlement from the political perspective".

In 2005, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited India, The two sides established Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity, while the signing of an agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles.

In 2008, Prime Minister Dr. Man Mohan Singh visited China. A joint document, titled "A Shared Vision for the 21st Century" was issued during the visit.

In 2010, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visited India, the two sides jointly set a bilateral trade target of USD 100 billion for 2015. According to the statement, over 60 percent of the agreements between the two Asian giants have been signed during the last decade.

In 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited India, A total of 16 agreements were signed in various sectors- including commerce and trade, railways, space - cooperation, and etc. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed between the two countries to open an additional route for Kailash Mansarovar Yatra in India through Nathu La pass in China.

1n 2015, this was part of record 24 bilateral agreements signed between the two neighboring countries, amounting to USD 10 billion.

In 2016, former Indian President Pranav Mukherjee visited China to meet the Chinese leaders and attended a round table between Vice Chancellors and Heads of institutions of higher learning of the two countries.

Boundary Dispute

Border demarcation has been a major issue between India and China. In 1914 McMahon line was defined by British colonial administrator henry McMahon in Shimla convention, which was signed by British and Tibetan representatives. China has shown its disapproval over the McMahon Line and has refused to consider this as the international boundary between India and China. Currently, the line considered as border is a ceasefire. China claims Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh as its part and had been aggressively pursuing its policy in this regard. The area of Aksai chin in the north India has been captured by the Chinese authorities and they claim its part especially Arunachal Pradesh, it is always considered as its part. China always tries to keep India engaged in a strategic pressure from both the sides. China's intrusions in Daulat Beg Oldi and Chumar sector were criticized and apparently triggered a reaction from the Indian side. In the beginning of year 2017, without consent or intimation to India China officially changed the names of a few places in Arunachal Pradesh, leading to the cross action from India. The current demarcation as Line of Actual Control (LAC) is temporary and settling the border has been a huge issue between these two Asian giants. Denial of Visa to residents of Arunachal Pradesh, PLA's incursion into India's territories etc. have become frequent by the Chinese.

Water Disputes

In India and China water issues are becoming major area of concern. China's plan of constructing big dams and diverting the water of rivers to its own advantage has dissatisfied in India. The two countries must have a better understanding relating to water sharing and other attending benefits out of these rivers. But China's strategic advantage over these rivers makes it possible to counter-balance India on many other issues.

The main dispute between India and China is mainly regarding the Brahmaputra River. The 2,880 km-long river Brahmaputra originates in Tibet and flows eastwards through southern Tibet for a distance of 1,625 kilometers and at its easternmost point it swings around and enters India's easternmost state, Arunachal Pradesh.

The effort of diverting the water resource of Brahmaputra River away from India will worsen the situation between India and China. The melting glaciers in the Himalayas as a result of accelerating global climate change will have a dramatic effect on this river's water supply. This will increase water shortage as well as the likelihood of floods, impact agricultural livelihoods and strain the fragile equilibrium between the two Asian giants.

Dalai Lama

In 1950's difference rose between the two countries because of the status of Tibet. India's step to shelter Dalai Lama, who has taken shelter in Dharamshala, after his exile. According to china, India is treating Dalai Lama as government in exile in Dharamsala which is just 200 miles away from China's border. Another cause is the migration of around 1 lakh Tibetan residents. India's continued willingness to provide shelter to the Dalai Lama is a continued source of irritation in China-India relations. China has alleged that Dalai Lama provoking people in Tibet against China. China accused the Dalai Lama of being behind a self-immolation protest by a Tibetan exile in India during the visit of Chinese president in March 2012. So the presence of Dalai Lama and his anti-China activities in India have negative implications on Indo-China relations. Similarly, anti-social activists in India are always considered as the problem by China.

Doklam Issue:

Doklam is an area disputed between China and Bhutan located near their tri-junction with India. China claimed on Doklam is based on 1890. But in 1949 Bhutan tied a treaty with India in which Bhutan allowed India to guide its diplomatic and defense affairs. In this case India does not claim Doklam area but supports Bhutan's claim. Bhutan, which doesn't have any diplomatic ties with China is requesting India to provide the support of the border issue. In 1958, the map of china started showing large parts of Bhutanese territory as part of China. The tension arose in 1960 and in 1970s discussions took place between China and Bhutan in presence of India, which for some time played a supporting role but failed to create an agreement on the status of the Doklam plateau. Now the international forums and the consistent efforts of nations have solved several issues in a calm way. The issue of Doklam could be checked by interference of top military officials and diplomats.

India-China-Pakistan Triangle

The most unpredictable and dangerous strategic formations is India-China-Pakistan triangle. The three powers account for nearly half the world's population, In terms of population they are the second, first, and sixth largest countries. Regarding active personnel in the armed forces, they are third, first, and sixth largest in the world. India and Pakistan have fought four wars and managed several crises, while India and China have fought one war and had several smaller confrontations including most recently in Doklam in June-August 2017.

The general view is that China and Pakistan both are constant allies against India. In fact, the triangle has gone through phases, with China tilting one way and another. From 1949 to 1958, India and China were friends, and both were suspicious of Pakistan because of its US alliance commitments. From 1959 to 1989 the two powers china and Pakistan was in tacit alliance against India. With the end of the Cold War, China moved to a more neutralist stance between India and Pakistan. Since 2015, China has tilted once again towards Pakistan. The two purpose behind china to assist Pakistan is that, it takes Pakistan as a secure friend and ally in the Indian Ocean and second, they share a common interest to contain India. Pakistan supports China's candidate for China's entry into South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). India is against the prospect of Chinese membership. China also helped in the construction of the Gwadar port. China-Pakistan nuclear deal could spell trouble for India. The weakening of India-China relations since 2014 and the strengthening of China-Pakistan relations have put India in a difficult strategic spot.

Conclusion

The present state of relationship can be described as Sweet and Sour state of understanding. The two Asian giants continue to have an impressive cultural history and share some affinity, but the effect of a very complicated history also continue to stand.

The border issue with china need to be discussed at diplomatic value given the stand and condition of countries in present scenario. As long as this dispute remains there is going to be lack of mutual trust between both countries. A diplomatic relation that began years ago, now stands at junction with one path leading to benefits assisted by mutual cooperation, and the other leading to regression assisted by a downward spiral of disputes. There is an ongoing attempt by China to contain India by befriending immediate neighbors and have come to a munity at both military and civil level.

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