

## **The Tale of the Dragon and the Elephant: A Review on the Implications of Sino-Indian Border Disputes to Political Order in Asia**

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### **Abstract**

Asia is sitting on a tinderbox. Tensions such as involving China already grabbed enough headlines. One of which is the border dispute between this Asian Dragon with India. The formation of strong alliances and conflict escalation is very real. Rising aspirations and growing hunger for resources in a depleted continent that has been inhabited for millennia are leading to tension and instability. International system is maintained with its balanced structure, which is based on power. From the beginning of the colonial period to the height of western imperialism, and throughout the course of former colonies' national independence, territorial disputes have been a root cause of war and conflict between states. As China shares a border with more countries than any other state, it exists within an extremely complicated geopolitical environment. The continuing border dispute between China and India, for instance, is a puzzle for many. Despite six decades of attempts at resolution, the dispute persists in the face of official bonhomie and booming trade

relations between the two rising giants. This paper presents the discourses on Asia's geopolitics, particularly the Sino-Indian border dispute and multilateral politics in acquiring assorted global resources, forming regional and global identity, and political order and security issues. India and China are playing an increasingly important role in the world economy. A better relationship would boost trade ties, investments and employment in the two countries, and even augment global growth.

**Keywords:** *geopolitics, multilateral politics, Indo-China relations*

## **1. Introduction**

Both China and India are great ancient countries and civilizations with a long history. They are more than just nation-states; they are large ancient civilizations that together comprise nearly two fifths of humanity. Though they represent markedly dissimilar cultures and competing models of development, they also followed similar historical trajectories in modern times, freeing themselves from colonial powers and emerging as independent nations around the same time. These two Asian giants had a centuries-old traditional friendship. However, due to numerous historical, political and economic reasons, relations between China and India were basically left at a standstill in the past few decades.

Regional economic integration is undergoing an unprecedented boom. Although Asia is a latecomer in regional economic integration, since the late 1990s its integration has been accelerating at multiple levels, with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) being the hub, and ASEAN+1 and ASEAN+3 being two main pillars. During this process, the economic relationship between China and India – two countries that have experienced similar aftereffects of colonialism in their history, which are opening up their economies through similar

reforms at present, and that share long geographical borders – is attracting greater attention around the world. This process will not only affect the two countries themselves but will have a great impact on the Asian integration in connecting East Asia and South Asia and, to a greater or lesser extent, on the emerging shape of the world.

Today, both seek to play a global role by reclaiming the power they enjoyed for many centuries before they went into decline after the advent of the industrial revolution; however, both apparently views the other as a geopolitical rival. In 1820, China and India alone made up nearly half of the world income, while Asia collectively accounted for 60 percent of the global GDP. Enlightened self-interest dictates that China and India should improve their relationship. This would give them greater clout in international institutions and in negotiations with the established powers such as the US and the EU, as both two countries are complimentary powers.

## **2. The Genesis of 1962: Nehru’s “Forward Policy” versus Chinese Belligerency**

As the two most populous nations and Asia’s two largest and most dynamic societies, China and India have become the world’s most important economies and their participation and influence in regional and world affairs has increased over time. However, the relationship between the two Asian giants has not been an easy one. The border dispute, a colonial legacy, has existed since the very beginning of the relationship between the two new nation-states, established at the end of the 1940s. The border issue is one of the most protracted and complicated problems between the two countries. It is like a mirror, reflecting the ebbs and flows of the relationship between India and China. It does not stand alone but is related to many other bilateral and international issues.

Each time other events block the relationship, the border negotiations are also prevented from making any progress (Yang, 2007).

The borders between the Indian subcontinent and China have been peaceful for thousands of years and India was among the first nations to grant diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1950. In 1957, China completed building a road in Aksai Chin without the knowledge of the Indians until a Chinese map was published in 1958 (Shen, 2012).

The genesis of the 1962 war can be traced to the British India's frontier legacy and developments in Tibet. The borders between India and Tibet were largely undefined and not demarcated. China's forcible occupation of Tibet in 1950–51 exacerbated regional tensions and deprived India of a buffer. Although India accepted this new reality, reflected in the signing of the 1954 Panchsheel Agreement for peaceful coexistence, the Lhasa rebellion and flight of the Dalai Lama to India in 1959 were the proverbial tipping point, leading to the souring of relations and beginning of border tensions (McMillen, 2012).

The 1914 Simla Convention between Britain and Tibet established the McMahon Line as the official border between British India and China, denying the right of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. However, the line's namesake Henry McMahon was ordered back to London in disgrace over the "chicanery" he exercised in border negotiations in which he presented a different map to the Chinese envoy, thus distancing Britain from the legitimacy of the negotiated border. Thirty years later British cartographers began drawing the McMahon Line as the border between British India and China that revived the line's legal legitimacy (Abitbol, 2009).

Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru launched his ill-fated "forward policy" to secure India's borders with China. Indian intelligence believed that China could not sustain a major drive across

the “great Himalayan land barrier”, reducing the incentive for India to make any territorial concessions.

Nehru believed that the Forward Policy would not lead to war; that it could only spark off sporadic border clashes (Yang, 2007). It is regretful that Mao Zedong’s strategy was not as transparent as it should have been under the Chinese ideological propaganda and their Marxist-Leninist mode of analysis (Bhattacharjea, 2001).

China began its hostile military maneuvers along India’s border. It built massive strategic infrastructure along the India-Tibet border. It sought to destabilize India’s northern frontiers to undermine its potential to assist the Tibetan nationalists in the event of a likely uprising in Tibet (Ravi, 2014). When India raised the issue of land grab, China responded by saying that the border was “not defined”. India produced ample evidence to convince China that the border was traditionally well-settled. However, China ignored all the historical evidence.

Calvin (1984) and Tharoor (2012) recounted what happened on 20 October 1962. Both of them described how Indians were overpowered by Chinese because of ill-equipped defenses. It took less than six weeks of bloody fighting for Chinese to completely drive unprepared Indian forces back behind Chinese claim lines. The Chinese had wrested control of Kashmir’s Aksai Chin plateau in the west and, in the east, near India’s vital tea-growing heartlands in Assam. On November 21, Beijing called a unilateral ceasefire and withdrew from India’s northeast, while keeping hold of barren Aksai Chin.

### **3. Disputing over a Complex Border**

The India-China border is disputed in many unique ways. For one, Delhi and Beijing do not even agree on the length of their contested border. Delhi says the border is about 4060 km long; China claims it is only

2000 km. India contends that China is in occupation of 38,000 sq km of territory in the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir; Beijing claims 90,000 sq km of territory in the eastern Himalayas that is constituted as the state of Arunachal Pradesh in the Indian Union. Beyond the large claims on territory in each other's control, there is no delineated line of actual control in most parts of the contested border. In some places the gap between competing versions of the Line of Actual Control is pretty wide, as in parts of the Ladakh region (Mohan, 2013).

A note was appended to the Simla accord that contained a map showing a part of Tibetan (Chinese) territory as Indian, based on a thick red line known as the McMahon line. Furthermore, China was barred from any rights and privileges of the Accord with respect to Tibet.

While some of the writers say that Sino-Indian border is generally divided into the eastern, middle and western sectors, the conflict is mainly over two sectors. A few small chunks of territory are largely irrelevant when compared to these two major distinct territories.

The major territories disputed between these two countries can be divided into two distinct parts:

- (1) The **Western Sector** – Aksai Chin, which lies to the east of the Kashmir valley, covering an area of about 37,250 sq.km (14,380 sq.mi) – currently occupied by China.
- (2) The **Eastern Sector** – Most of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, that China calls South Tibet, covering an area of 83,743 sq.km (32,333 sq.mi) – currently occupied by India.

There are broader factors at play in the Sino-Indian relationship which foster distrust between the two, making it difficult for them to cooperate on political and security matters, in spite of their growing trade and economic interdependence (Das, 2014).

#### **4. Negotiations and Dialogues: Approaches beyond the Borders**

“To be frank, the Chinese are not an emotional people, so to some extent relations depend on the world situation. My own way of looking at this problem is that no position is static. No two countries could have been more hostile than America and China, yet they are willing to have a dialogue and even conservative Americans think that a dialogue is necessary.”

– Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi

“India is a great country. The Indian people are a great people. Chinese and Indian people ought to live as friends, they cannot always quarrel.”

– Chairman Mao Zedong

At the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s some significant moves had taken place to reverse the worsening relations. The top leaders of India and China had expressed their will to resume bilateral relations. On 1 January 1969, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi stated in a press conference that the Indian Government would be prepared to try to find a way of solving the dispute with China through talks without any pre-conditions (Yang, 2007). However, some of the subsequent events interrupted this process. India moved closer to the Soviet Union as Mrs. Gandhi saw the threat of the emerging China-Pakistan-US triangle. India signed the Indo-Soviet Treaty and dismembered Pakistan in the third Indo-Pakistan War in 1971, thereby establishing its status as a regional power in South Asia. China regarded the Indo-Soviet Treaty as being directed against itself and Pakistan. Also in the same year, India enhanced its administrative control in the Northeast, declaring the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) as a centrally administered area named Arunachal Pradesh. Moreover, Sikkim was made a state of India in 1974

through a constitutional amendment. China strongly protested against India's actions in the NEFA and Sikkim. Thus, during 1971-75, the cold relations between India and China remained, but the desire for a better bilateral relationship continued. In 1976, both sides finally, as noted by Lu (2007), reached a consensus to restore ambassadorial-level relations. The exchange of ambassadors suggested that relations had emerged out of the deep freeze and entered a period of *détente*.

Since the reestablishment of their diplomatic ties in 1976, after a post-war pause, they and their relationship have in many ways had been transformed. A war in 1962 was an act of Chinese aggression most obviously springing from China's desire for a lofty plain that lies between Jammu & Kashmir and north-western Tibet.

The two countries are in many ways rivals and their relationship is by any standard vexed as recent quarrelling has made abundantly plain. One obvious bone of contention is the 4,000km border that runs between the two countries. Nearly half a century after China's invasion, it remains largely undefined and bitterly contested.

Despite several threatened dust-ups including one in 1986 that saw 200,000 Indian troops rushed to northern Tawang district there has been no confirmed exchange of fire between Indian and Chinese troops since 1967. In 2003, a coalition government led by the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party launched an impressive bid for peace. For the first time India declared itself ready to compromise on territory, and China appeared ready to meet it halfway. Both countries appointed special envoys, who have since met 13 times, to lead the negotiations that followed. This led to an outline deal in 2005, containing the "guiding principles and political parameters" for a final settlement. Those included an agreement that it would involve no exchange of "settled populations" which implied that China had dropped its historical demand for Tawang (*The Economist*, 2010).

Yet the hopes this inspired have faded. In ad hoc comments from Chinese diplomats and through its state-controlled media China appears to have reasserted its demand for most of India's far north-eastern state. Annoying the Indians further, it started issuing special visas to Indians from Arunachal and Kashmir. The relationship has generally soured. Having belatedly woken up to the huge improvements China has made in its border infrastructure, enabling a far swifter mobilisation of Chinese troops there, India announced to deploy another 60,000 troops to Arunachal. It also began upgrading its airfields in Assam and deploying the Sukhois to them.

Sino-Indian relations are likely to go nowhere unless the two countries are able to resolve their border issue. Having fought a war in 1962, and come close to another in 1987, they have managed to maintain peace and tranquillity there for the past 25 years and forged closer economic and political ties. But the Depsang Plains incident of April-May 2013 is a warning that a disputed border can never be a peaceful border, and it remains the principal obstacle to normal ties between these two rising Asian giants.

The deep mistrust between the two nations, caused by the 1962 conflict, was the largest hurdle to developing their relations. Hence, as the leaders on both sides decided to improve Sino-Indian relations, the opening of border negotiations was soon put on the agenda by the two governments. Lu (2007) cited three institutions had been established to negotiate the border by now.

The first institution for Indo-China border negotiations was the eight rounds of border talks at the vice-ministerial level, held annually in Beijing and New Delhi alternately from 1981 to 1987. The eight rounds of official-level talks failed to achieve any breakthrough on the border issue, but left the following significant contributions to Sino-Indian relations. First, after a prolonged interruption in India-China relations,

these talks allowed a friendly and candid exchange of views and enhanced mutual understanding between the two governments. Second, the dialogue itself eased tensions and helped to shape a negotiated solution acceptable to both sides. In addition, through official channels, the talks facilitated both sides to explore areas of exchange and cooperation in economy, trade, culture, science and technology, and the possibility of a corresponding mechanism.

The joint working group (JWG) on the border was another institution of Indo-China border negotiation. Its establishment was fostered by the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in 1988, from 19 to 23 December. The JWG replaced the border talks at the vice-ministerial level to continue negotiation on the border question between Indian and China. The most significant progress made in this period are two agreements. One was the *Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control* (LAC), signed in September 1993. This agreement emphasizes that boundaries question should be resolved through consultation and collective efforts. Two, neither side would use force or threaten to use force against the other, nor undertake specified levels of military exercises in mutually identified zones. The Agreement envisaged the working out of effective confidence-building measures in the area along the LAC.

The other key agreement was the *Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military field along the Line of Actual Control*, signed in December 1996. This agreement has emphasized the reduction of military forces, limiting of tension and dangerous military activities, and also discussed about strengthening of exchanges and cooperation between their military personnel in various ways, such as establishing scheduled and flag meetings.

The Agreement also discussed the clarification of the LAC with the two sides acknowledging the need to arrive at a common understanding

of the alignment of the LAC, and to speed up the process of clarification and confirmation of the line. The segments in which both sides had different perceptions needed first to be clarified. Both sides agreed to exchange maps indicating their respective perceptions of the alignment of LAC as soon as possible.

The third institution has taken the form of the Special Representatives' Meeting. It was established in June 2003. This move opened a new phase in Sino-Indian relations. Suryanarayana (2004) explained that the Special Representatives-level talks and the JWG's work do not preclude each other. The JWG deals with the technical aspects of the border question such as the clarification of the LAC and the implementation of CBMs, as stated in the *Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China*, while the Special Representatives' Meeting discusses the question at a political level. The major achievement of the Meetings is the *Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the Border Question* which was signed during Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's visit to India in April 2005. At present, the objective of the Special Representatives' Meeting is to work out an agreed framework for the resolution of the boundary based on the agreed political parameters and guiding principles. This framework will provide the basis for the delineation and demarcation of the India-China boundary (Yang, 2007).

Pacifism has become the most significant factor in defining the bilateral relations where both India and China have succeeded in maintaining the territorial status-quo amidst the futile acts of episodic incursions and intrusions. This feature can be seen in their convergence of interests to settle the boundary issue with rationality. Mutual intention to maintain peace and tranquillity along the disputed border exists as it serves as the cornerstone of their expanding bilateral relationship. And in

this regard the border negotiation process has provided the two countries with the platform to carry forward the peace process that needs to be mutually accommodative and beneficial, making it a win-win situation rather than a zero-sum game of relative gains. *Apart from the territorial border issue, the Special Representatives of India and China also laid emphasis on issues of mutual concern such as counter-terrorism, disarmament and maritime affairs, trade, finance and climate change, as well as regional and international issues like cooperation in the East Asia Summit, and Afghanistan.* In this way, the border talks have expanded in their vision and approach. In assessing the implications of the border talks, it can be said that though the border talks since 2003 have not led to any remarkable outcomes, yet it has succeeded in making some progress in the boundary settlement process albeit at a very slow pace. India and China have crossed the first stage where both have reached the agreement to settle the boundary question. The second stage, which has been on building the “framework for resolution of the boundary question”, has been evolving for the past eight years. Only after drawing the “framework” will the two sides be able to proceed to the third stage of the talks that entails “demarcation on maps of any framework agreement and a delineation on the ground” (Jash, 2014).

## **5. On Building and Rebuilding Alliances in Asia and the West**

The realist paradigm of Sino-Indian relations would posit that if these two countries continue to grow in their current power trajectory, a power rivalry between them will be inevitable, given that both stand a sound chance of becoming superpowers in times to come. In contrast, the liberalist notion posits that the strategic rivalry is muted, with multilateral engagement and economic interdependence. In the interest of setting a “non-Western” vis-à-vis “multipolar world order” – as the

liberalist world foresees, China and India would think alike in a diverse multilateral context, which in due course would enhance their bilateral relations as “Asian powers” (Panda, 2013).

Champion realist theorists Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Thompson stated long ago:

The aspirations for power of the individual nations can come into conflict with each other – and some, if not most of them, do at any particular moment in history – in two different ways ... the pattern of direct opposition and the pattern of competition.

(Morgenthau and Thompson, 1985: 192)

China and India are two countries that had been in the positions of ally and rival in modern history. Being one of the important neighboring countries of China, India’s diplomatic and military strategy holds the key to China’s security in its western border and has great impact on China’s foreign policy. China was more amenable and sensitive to India’s interests because of India’s growing relationship with the United States (US), Japan and the countries of Southeast Asia. Alternatively, one should also watch carefully the changing dynamics among major powers as a result of the Ukraine crisis and the worsening relations between Russia and the West. On balance, China appears to be a net gainer with both Russia and the West seeking its neutrality, if not support. For India, the choices are more difficult.

India has watched China’s phenomenal growth in economic and military spheres with both envy and alarm. If there is one single lesson that New Delhi’s security analysts have drawn from the 1962 war, it would be this: power and strength are the only ticket to the club of great powers. For many of them, the very fact that China continues to lead India on many indicators of power poses a greater threat than its military

defeat more than forty years ago (Yuan, 2005). On its side, China is paying close attention to India's growing military power and its nuclear and missile developments. Beijing is wary of New Delhi's eastward strategy of developing greater economic and military ties with Japan and the ASEAN countries.

India's consistent official policy has been to disallow anti-Chinese activities by Tibetan refugees on Indian soil. In practice, India has allowed the Tibetans to run a government-in-exile, the Central Tibetan Administration. Indians have their reciprocal fears arising from Chinese military presence on the Tibetan plateau, history and future uncertainties. The true extent of China's military presence in Tibet cannot be gauged, given the extreme secrecy surrounding information about the People's Liberation Army (PLA), but rough yet differing estimates are available (Margolis, 2002, and Norbu, 2001).

Historically speaking, there have been difficulties for both China and India to handle each other's sensitivities. There is a geopolitical element in the perception making, because the two Asian powers are neighbors. When they were weak, the problem was already there. Now they are getting more powerful, the problem will still be there.

With the passage of time, the traditional warfare and conventional weapons have given way for nuclear warhead to become a deterrent weapon in the global world. While the military power was associated with the nuclear weapons, this technology proliferated beyond the "nuclear-weapon states". Nuclear tests were conducted by India, Pakistan, and North Korea. Muhammad and Muhammad, in their "Review of Indian nuclear program" (2012) in relation to regional hegemonic aspirations of India, believe that this is a matter of great concern as the growing nuclear club has certain implications for several regions in the contemporary world. The South Asia has very strategic location and its strategic worth has been further materialized by the

acquisition of nuclear technology by India and Pakistan. Even though it has been declared by both states that the weapons meant for deterrence not for use, this assertion does not undermine the severity of the case. The long history of mutual hostility and distrust has not only fuelled the arm race between the rivals but also has earned the alliances from the nuclear club. The triangular strategic milieu between India, Pakistan and China along with the strategic location of the region has become imperative in the new world order.

India and China, both heirs to ancient civilizations, have emerged today as the two most powerful and influential Asian nations in terms of their economic capabilities and geopolitical standing. The two erstwhile adversaries have recognized the need for casting off the baggage of history and residual mistrust and have embarked on the path of forging a new pragmatic partnership. There are two mutually reinforcing components to this new partnership. One, both continues to have a vested interest in a peaceful neighborhood to focus on an uninterrupted process of economic and technological progress and to sustain their steady rise as important centers of power. Two, there is a greater understanding on the part of both China and India that cooperation could work to their mutual advantage and benefit. Any conflict between the two would not only jeopardize their national security, but would also have serious implications for their regional and global security perspectives. It would also go a long way in positioning Asia as the fulcrum of the future world order, a prospect which would only be in their long-term economic and strategic interest (Jetly, 2010).

The potential for China-India rivalry in Asia is writ large on three specifics: *resources*, *identity*, and *power politics*. Apart from their territorial integrity, the quest for strategic resources and forming their respective regional and global identity as future powers have received the highest priority in their domestic as well as foreign policy

stratagems. Exploiting energy resources around the region has become the topic of their multilateral substance. Partaking with various regional bodies has become another crux of their foreign policy index. Though there have been constant interactions between them in the regional multilateral settings, hedging each other in multilateral power politics still remains the most vital determinant of their relations. It needs to be noted in this context that geopolitics of the current century is more than a zero-sum game. Power rivalry and competing cooperation are two facets of bilateral relations, and that is clearly noticed in China-India politics at the Asian level. Both Asian countries are aiming for “*pan-Asian leadership*” at the regional level (Niazi, 2006); hence, relying on *multilateral settings and sub-regional power alliances remain the two most effective and attractive medium in their regional strategic context.*

## 6. The Rise of China to World Power

The rise of China will undoubtedly be one of the great dramas of the twenty-first century. China’s extraordinary economic growth and active diplomacy are already transforming East Asia, and future decades will see even greater increases in Chinese power and influence.

Sujit Dutta, in his paper *China’s emerging power and military role* (1998), explained that the growth in China’s overall national power, including its military capabilities, and how China’s leaders will employ this power will have far-reaching implications for Asia and the world. China is not only the largest state in the world in terms of population but is many times larger than all other states, except India. Rapid and sustained industrialization and modernization over the next two to three decades is likely to transform this largely agrarian state into a powerful entity, given sheer demographic realities. Power in the Chinese case has a strong military component, since modernization of the armed forces

and the military-industrial complex is an important goal for China. The Chinese leadership's commitment to build comprehensive national power (CNP) is a major factor shaping the stability and security of Asia. In addition, China's nuclear weapon capability, its permanent status in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the large size of its armed forces and the crucial role the People's Liberation Army in its neo-authoritarian political system and national security policy-making give it a special place in the Asian security and strategic order.

Some observers believe that the American era is coming to an end, as the Western-oriented world order is replaced by one increasingly dominated by the East. The historian Niall Ferguson, as cited by Doninowska (2014), has written that the bloody twentieth century witnessed "the descent of the West" and "a reorientation of the world" toward the East. Realists go on to note that as China gets more powerful and the United States' position erodes, two things are likely to happen: China will try to use its growing influence to reshape the rules and institutions of the international system to better serve its interests, and other states in the system – especially the declining hegemon – will start to see China as a growing security threat. The result of these developments, they predict, will be tension, distrust, and conflict, the typical features of a power transition. In this view, the drama of China's rise will feature an increasingly powerful China and a declining United States locked in an epic battle over the rules and leadership of the international system. And as the world's largest country emerges not from within but outside the established post-World War II international order, it is a drama that will end with the grand ascendance of China and the onset of an Asian-centered world order.

The United States' "unipolar moment" will inevitably end. If the defining struggle of the twenty-first century is between China and the United States, China will have the advantage. If the defining struggle is

between China and a revived Western system, the West will triumph (Ikenberry, 2008). In recent years, Chinese development is regarded as a challenge to American system. Ikenberry (2008) believed that the West would try every way to induce China to accept rather than forcing it to challenge the Western order. Here, Western order may be thought as the international game rules stipulated and directed under the Western Values. China may eventually replace the United States and emerged as a new superpower. The West may see no problem with China emerging as new superpower under the Western order, but it would be quite serious if China wants to be a leader in values and turn the Western order down. However, Western value and system is hard to be moved and most Chinese people do not have allergic defiant thought in their conscientiousness. Influential Chinese thoughts such as Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism do not teach excessive sense as nervous confrontation since there is no such confronting construction as that between good and evil, believer and pagan. Thus, final decisive battle, generally, is more likely a Western thought (Wan, 2011).

As it faces an ascendant China, the United States should remember that its leadership of the Western order allows it to shape the environment in which China will make critical strategic choices. If it wants to preserve this leadership, Washington must work to strengthen the rules and institutions that underpin that order -- making it even easier to join and harder to overturn. U.S. grand strategy should be built around the motto "The road to the East runs through the West". It must sink the roots of this order as deeply as possible, giving China greater incentives for integration than for opposition and increasing the chances that the system will survive even after U.S. relative power has declined.

China is expected to become increasingly active and assertive in South, Central, and West Asia, and in the Indian Ocean regions – areas that are less important to its preoccupations today (Dutta, 1998). India

needs to take necessary steps now to match China in techno-economic terms, so as to thwart any negative fall-out to its security and well-being. Close defense ties with the Western powers, Russia, and extensive political, economic and selective defense ties with the Gulf States and Central Asia, ASEAN (including Myanmar and Indochina), Japan, and Korea, will become important in creating a positive external security environment. Joint military exercises, co-production and collaboration defense R&D with the advanced industrial world, and selective arms exports will also be major components of such a strategy. Concerted and coordinated efforts will also be needed to rapidly enhance the country's overall power and diplomatic role so as to face challenges posed by the major and even some minor powers.

## **7. The Role of India**

For Grant (2008), tensions between Delhi and Beijing are unlikely to lessen, unless they can somehow find an accommodation on their border disputes. India is likely to maintain friendly relations with Washington, and that will continue to cause concern in Beijing. However, if China took a more positive attitude to reform the United Nations Security Council, so that Japan and India could become permanent members, it would help to create a positive climate in India-China relations.

India's relationship with Russia is much less important than it was during the Cold War. There is very little non-military trade between the two. India continues to buy Russian armaments, but the military ties seem to be declining in importance. India sometimes wants US weapons in preference to those offered by Russia, which does not go down well in Moscow, and the two sides have been sparring over the price of an aircraft carrier that Russia is due to sell to India. One problem for the economic relationship is the lack of an overland route for trade between

them (Pakistan does not allow transit).

Politically, relations between India and Russia remain quite good. Some Indian strategic thinkers see Russia as a potential element in their strategy for preventing Chinese dominance of Asia. Sino-Russian/Soviet relations are characterized by ups and downs. In 1950 they signed the Treaty of Friendship and had a honeymoon period for a decade. However, by the late 1950s, the differences in national interests and ideologies emerged, leading to serious disputes in the early 1960s, which developed into acute conflicts and border clashes in 1969 (Chandra, 2010). Chinese nuclear bases were threatened, and China was forced to improve its military strength. This, later, created face-to-face military tensions and threats between the two countries.

Indo-Russian front is moving satisfactorily and is well-tested. However, in recent years, after the improvement in Indo-US relationship and India's bid to diversify its defense acquisition process, there was palpable strain in India-Russian relationship. While Sino-Russian front is manageable, the history of vicissitudes in their relationship due to border disputes, ideological clash, and fight for dominance had remain to be a challenge. Yet, the biggest challenge is within the mistrust prevailing at the Sino-Indian front. On a positive note, efforts are on from the both sides to shed the previous differences and move forward to start a fresh beginning. India's relations with the European Union (EU) have been mainly focused on the burgeoning trade and investment relationship. But not many Indians see the EU as a strategic partner, largely because of its inability to reach a united position on the issues that matter to India, such as reform of the UN Security Council and the India-US nuclear deal, Grant (2008) further explained.

*India sees itself as a stabilizing force in Asia and it is the central power that binds South Asia as a strategic and geographic unit. Its success as a modern, powerful, secular and democratic state would*

strongly constrain the growth of fundamentalism, militarism, and hegemonism, and promote the formation of a cooperative, peaceful and law-governed order in the region. India has vital political, economic, and security interests in the region spanning the Gulf, lower Central Asia, the Indian Ocean, China, and Southeast Asia. India's large size; its democratic, secular, and federal polity; its growing need for oil, technology, markets, and capital; its vast market and economic potential; and its technical and military power make it important for the well-being of the rest of Asia. A powerful and prosperous India will also serve as the engine of change for the largest population concentration in the world – in South Asia (Dutta, 1998).

## **8. The Rise and Maturity of the Asian Giants: “*The Dawn of Asian-Pacific Century*”**

“People should ask what India and China can learn from each other, but not who can get ahead of the other.”

– Indian Economist and Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen

Asia faces many serious obstacles to a continued rise. It must cope with entrenched territorial and maritime disputes; harmful historical legacies that weigh down its most important interstate relationships; increasingly fervent nationalism; growing religious extremism; and sharpening competition over water, energy, and other resources. Moreover, political integration in the Asia-Pacific lags behind economic integration, and, to compound matters, it lacks an adequate regional security framework.

The geopolitical determinist would argue that the stage for the 1962 border dispute was set from the start; because the northeast and northwest extremities of India's Himalayan border with China lacked buffer states, and the two would eventually come into conflict. However,

this oversimplifies the events that led to war. Domestic politics and national pride played a key role in China's decision to go to war in 1962.

The writer of *The Great Game: Imperial origins of the 1962 Sino-Indian War* argued that as both China and India become increasingly powerful players in world politics, the border issue is increasingly important. Though Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh remain disputed territories today, continuing talks and confidence-building measures working toward reducing tensions have taken root. China and India continue their security and foreign policy dialogue started in 2005 related to the dispute over most of their rugged, militarized boundary, regional nuclear proliferation, and other matters.

Experts point out on how the Asian power politics is currently under a “profound change”, and the “rise of China is the principal cause” along with other factors like the rise of regional multilateral institutions (Shambaugh, 2005). In a way, the prime geostrategic regions in Asia are becoming interwoven in a network of power politics, where China and India are the principal actors. Three major sub-regions may be taken as examples in this context: *Southeast Asia*, *Central Asia* and *South Asia*. Corresponding to them are three principal sub-regional or multilateral settings: ASEAN, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), where both China and India are involved with each other in a spectrum of power politics. A case-by-case analysis will expound this thesis, though it suggests that China has emerged as the predominant power with evocative security interests with these regions and their corresponding multilateral bodies.

Southeast Asia, with its economic and resource strength, is a vital strategic region for both local and great actors' power projection. It has been argued that “position between two of the regional economic, political and military powerhouses – India and China – has made the

relatively affluent region even more crucial in geopolitical terms” (Swanstrom, 2008). Southeast Asia is also known for the economic weight of the ASEAN.

Egberink and van der Putten (2010) said that compared with other multilateral bodies, the role and influence of ASEAN is limited geographically, and particularly over various security issues. Both China and India are influential powers in ASEAN-led Southeast Asian politics. Three specific issues attract China and India to the Southeast Asian region: (a) pushing the regional situation to sway trade and economy in their own favor; (b) the South China Sea dispute; and (c) exploiting the resources in Myanmar (Burma).

Clubbing together with ASEAN has been a principal policy priority for both China and India. At present, while China is clubbed with it under ASEAN+1, ASEAN+3 and ASEAN+6 frameworks, India is clubbed only under the ASEAN+6 framework. Compared with India, the Chinese have always enjoyed closer contact with the ASEAN through a versatile policy strategy in the Southeast Asian region that includes a variety of economic, political and cultural linkages. Officially, China wants to promote and has asked for “ASEAN’s leading role in regional cooperation” in East Asia under ASEAN+1 or ASEAN+3 frameworks. Beijing has developed and pushed for a range of “practical cooperation” in the field of infrastructure, connectivity, trade and economy, capital and information, transport and people-to-people exchanges.

India’s engagement with ASEAN and with the region goes back to 1991, when it introduced the “Look East” policy, but this relationship was limited to trade and economy, ignoring the security aspect. India too has signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with ASEAN recently. India is also a dialogue partner of ASEAN and a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

For both China and India, the primary contention in their engagement with ASEAN is: *who will have an edge in ASEAN-led regional politics?* Both are concerned about the geographic scope of the Asian community building. Chinese commentators are worried about India's recent revitalized approach towards ASEAN and Southeast Asia. India's concern lies in the fact that Southeast Asia is the gateway for Chinese shipping to Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Given the rising maritime drive between China and India, Southeast Asia is one region where both want to consolidate their position, perhaps through security multilateralism.

It seems that, *as both nations mature, they are much more capable in their diplomatic dealings with one other.* It is, however, crucial that policymakers consider issues of territory from the perspective of their counterparts and take into account the constraints of national pride on domestic politics.

As is known to all, before the 18th century China and India were the first of the world in development of both cultural and material civilizations. Only after being invaded by imperialist and colonialist powers did they decline. Now, Asian countries including China and India have realized that they should not only politically safeguard national sovereignty and independence, but also economically get rid of poverty and keep pace with developed countries. Wang (2011) in the analysis of the economic prediction reports for China and India said that whether it is China or India will be the biggest economic body is not important. What is important is both China and India will achieve great development.

In talking about the future of Sino-Indian relations, Western scholars always take much delight in foretelling the competition and confrontation between the two countries. They think that China and India cannot escape the fate of contending with and opposing to each

other, because they think that China and India, as countries, each with a large population and vast territory would be naturally proud of their brilliant history and each would try to be the leader of the third world. If there is any competition between the two countries, Wang (2011) added, it should be the competition each country has to face in the market economy of the world. However, the competition is not the mainstream of the two countries. The competition in business is positive for it will improve the quality of goods and the level of business management.

At present, China and India are facing the challenge of how to bring their big population and wide territory into full play in the world.

Now, China and India are practicing a foreign policy of independence. They not only do not allow any country to interfere in their domestic affairs, but also strive to play a leading role in solving the important problems such as human rights, environmental protection, talks between South and North, and maintenance of regional and world peace and security through their close cooperation.

Though they are still emerging powers, the future will belong to them (Wang, 2011). The so-called “Asia-Pacific Century” or “Asian Century” should be the century in which China and India will enjoy common prosperity. The rise and cooperation of the Chinese and Indian peoples of more than two billion is the true guarantee for the coming of the “Asia-Pacific Century”.

## **Note**

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