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# A History of Sino-Indian Relations: From Conflict to Cooperation

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During the 1950's the relations between India and China were flowery, based on the peaceful co-existence, but the Tibet issue, followed by a border dispute poisoned the climate of Sino-Indian entente cordiale. Nehru's policy of no-dispute and no-negotiation policies finally led to a border war in 1962. From then on, Sino-Indian relations entered an era of cold war which lasted nearly 20 years. However during the era of Rajiv Gandhi (1988), the tension between the two countries was minimized and initiatives were taken for improvement in the relations. Since the end of cold war the relations between the two countries has steadily improved, and also strengthened in various fields of mutual interest. The continuous visits between the heads of state and officials have strengthened the relations and various issues including the border issue has been in the discussion for resolution by mutual cooperation. The recent visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh brought a new direction in the bilateral relations. In this paper attempt has been made to trace the history of Sino-Indian relations.

**Key Words:** India, China, Relations, Conflict, Cooperation.

## INTRODUCTION

India—China relations have undergone dramatic changes over the past five decades, ranging from the 1950's with a deep hostility in the 1960's and 1970's to a rapprochement in the 1980's and a readjustment since the demise of Soviet Union. The post-cold war era has offered enormous opportunities to New Delhi and Beijing to move in the direction of a 'productive relationship'. Both countries have realized the imperative need for cooperation in diverse areas, especially in the trade and economic domains, in the long-term interest of peace and stability in Asia as well as for faster economic development and prosperity at home.

During Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to China in June 2003, leaders of both countries not only emphasized the categorical need to deepen economic, trade and strategic ties, but also the need to explore a feasible framework for an early settlement of border question, which has been a contentious issue for more

than four decades. Realistically, the fast-changing economic and strategic milieu punctuated by uncertainty brought about by globalization in macrocosmic terms, has created challenges as well as opportunities for both India and China to free themselves of 'historical baggage' in terms of bilateral relations. In this chapter attempt would be made to give a historical background of Sino-Indian relations from the early 1950 to the present. (JAIN, 2004: 253-269).

India and China are the two giants of Asia of the oldest and living civilization of the world. Sindhu and Ganges gave birth to Indian civilization, which influenced south and Southeast Asia. Similarly, Huanghe (Yellow River) and Changjiang (Yangtze River, The longest river of Asia; flows eastward from Tibet into the East China Sea near Shanghai) gave birth to the Chinese civilization, which on its part influenced northeast and Southeast Asia. Being neighbours India and China had established trade and

cultural relations since time immemorial.

If one talks of thousands of years old Sino-Indian cultural interface then there must be a starting point for this. Here an attempt is made by not discussing the evolution by inference but to start from where onwards reliable historical records are available. It could be established from these records that Sino-Indian interface was always a two-way traffic and the two elements of this exchange could be categorized as material exchange and spiritual cultural exchange. This two-faceted exchange was carried through the following four routes of communication:

1. The Central Asian Route or the so-called Silk Route,
2. Assam-Burma and Yunnan Route or the famous Southern Silk Route,
3. Tibet Nepal Route, and
4. The Sea Route or the so-called Maritime Silk Rout (Huibian, 1994: 4-5)

The Central Asian Route was the main overland route though this was not the earliest one to be discovered. This route was especially vital for the traders and missionaries from China to India and vice-versa. The route started from Chang an (present Xi'an) passed through Dunhuang, and Kashgar. From Dunhuang, it bifurcated into a northern and southern route. The northern route passed through the oasis between the northern edge of Taklamaken Desert and the Tianshan mountain ranges. The southern route ran through the southern edge of the desert and Kunlun Mountain. These two smaller routes further merged at Kashgar in Xinjiang Autonomous Region. The route further splits into two from Kashgar- the northern route passed through Kokand and Samarkand (now in Kirghizstan) and southern route which ran through modern Bectria and merged with the northern branch at Merv in Margiana (present Turkmenistan). From Bactria, the route ran through Kapisi and Kabul to Peshawar and Taxila. From Taxila it was connected to Mathura and Ujjain (both in North India). Yet another route from Kashgar ran through Gilgit in Kashmir.

Assam-Burma and Yunnan route originated in Chengdu, Sichuan province of China and entered Dali, Baoshan and Tengchong of Yunnan province. From Yunnan it passed through the northern part of Burma and entered Assam in the northeast of India. The southern silk route further ran through Bengal and then finally merged with the central Asian route. It is believed this was earliest route for the Sino-Indian interface. The Tibet and Nepal route was more difficult to access than the central Asian and Southern Silk route. This route came into being the late 7<sup>th</sup> century. (Deepak, 2001: 3-4)

## METHODOLOGY

Guided by the geopolitical perspectives, I intended to

interpret the strategic background and main historical episodes of the Sino-Indian dispute and the development of Sino-Indian relations. My approach examined historical records and official documents, and use of primary as well as secondary sources. Books, journals and magazines have been taken as the main source, other print sources including interviews of policy makers and experts on the subject have also been taken to ascertain the facts

## Ancient and Mediaeval Period

The reliable literature records of Sino-Indian interface could be traced from Han Dynasty (BC 206- AD 220). The first information is provided by Si Maqian (BC 145- BC90), the great Chinese historian, in his masterpiece *Shiji Xinanyizhun* (Records of the Historian: Foreigners in southwest). It has been narrated that people in the Shu (another name of Sichuan province) were wearing clothes that were brought from Shendu (Sindhu from India). Therefore it could be established from the above fact that India and China were already having trade relations in Second Century BC. Later Ban Gu (32AD – 92 AD) writes about Kashmir (Jibin State) in his book *Qian Hanshu* (early Han Annals), and talks about state of affairs there, its weather and products like pearls, corals and lapis lazuli, etc. From the above mentioned facts it could be established that by 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century AD there was already a sea route between India and China. As regard to the material exchange, India supplied the trade items that were in demand in China and available only in India. According to literary sources, imported items transported from India to China included coral, pearls, glass and fragrances. On the other hand, silk appears to be the major item transported from China to India. (Xianlin, 1991: 22-23)

Trade relations further developed during Tang (618-907), Song (960-1278) and Yuan (1279-1368) dynasties. By this time maritime activities were intense and it is reported in various sources that in Guangzhou (Canton) there were ships of Indian, Persians and Sri Lankan merchants. Meanwhile, Indian astronomy, colander, medicine, music and dance, sugar manufacturing technology, etc., made their way to China. Chinese silk products remained popular among the trading items. Relying on the historical literature and archeological discoveries, it could be established that there was a continuous flow of cross-cultural currents between India and China. The following table provides a chronological history of Sino-Indian interface.

Besides material linkage, there was yet another linkage—the spiritual linkage, i.e., Buddhism. Though the roots of communication had already been established, this new linkage made them undertake many religious pilgrimages from India to China and China to India,

besides opening many trade centers (Yinzeng, 1990: 6-7).

### Modern Period

The anti-imperialistic efflorescence of the Indian and Chinese people manifested in a major way as a challenge to the colonial order for the first time during the First War of Indian Independence (1857-59) in India and the Taiping Uprising (1850—1864) in China. The reaction of Chinese and Indian people against their common enemy was the same. For the first time Indian soldiers were stationed in China and switched over to the Taipings and fought shoulder to shoulder against imperialists and Qing government. It was due to the synergy between the cultures of India and China that the nationalists and revolutionaries of India and China developed deep mutual contact that turned into friendship amidst their anti-imperialist struggle. They became the natural allies and used various ways to remove the intruder. They supported the Tilak, the leaders of militant nationalists, carried out activities like Shivaji's commemorative meetings as far as Tokyo in to make the Indian voice of anti-imperialism reach outside India. (Minbao, 1993: 107).

Besides the nationalists like Borohan, Surendermohan Bose, Rash Behari Bose, M.N Roy, Barakatullah, LalaLajpatRai, and many others outstanding pioneers of Indian freedom movement maintained good contacts and friendship with Sun Yat-Sen who whole heartedly supported the Indian cause and rendered all possible help to them.

With the rise of Gandhi in Indian politics, the entire Indian freedom movement turned into a mass movement. He took spiritual world order or spiritual management of society and worked to bring in order through civilized means such as Satyagraha and ahimsa. He made non-violence his principle, creed and never compromised with it. He was upheld by Chinese people as a symbol of 'eastern civilization' who manifested himself to represent this civilization in various shapes and forms. The Chinese media paid utmost attention and widely covered the Indian freedom struggle in various newspapers and journals. (Zazhi, 1990: 74)

A new chapter was written in the history of Sino-Indian relations during the war of Resistance and Second World War. So long as China suffered at the hands of Japanese, the reverberation affected India also. India dispatched a medical mission to China in 1938 to help them in their War of Resistance. Nehru made bonds of friendship even stronger when he visited China in 1939. The period from 1905—1947 was the period when both the people of India and China rendered support and sympathy to each other in their common struggle. It was Nehru's vision that in future India and China would

necessarily come nearer to each other for the vast and tremendous potentials of economic cooperation in the New World after the war. (Deepak, 2001: 12- 16)

### The period from 1947 onwards

The post liberation history of Sino-Indian relations has been that of friendship, setback and normalization. India was the first country in non-communist bloc to recognize China and establish diplomatic relations. India attained independence on 15 August 1947 after a long and nonviolent nationalist movement. China attained independence on October 1949 in the culmination of Chinese Civil War (1945-1949). There was a brief period of cooperation from 1949—1957 where diplomatic relations were formally established (1 April 1950) and high-level visits were exchanged. (Athwak, 2008: 20).

Nehru greeted the birth of communist China in October with great pomp. In a rare gesture, India displayed excessive zeal in prompting its membership in United Nations. Nehru did not share the American perception that communism was a threat to world peace and stability. On the contrary, he believed that Western hatred of communism might boomerang, since nationalism in China was stronger than communism. For the present the Indian Prime Minister was convinced that Chinese nationalism played a far better important part than communism and that Chinese civilization was too old to succumb completely to Marxist dogma.

The early phase of Sino-Indian relations was marked by a close warm friendship, despite China's military takeover of Tibet in 1950. Although the Indian government did not register a serious protest with Beijing, opposition leaders in parliament criticized Nehru's policy on the Tibetan issue but he remained unmoved. He preferred to deal with monolithic China diplomatically by keeping it in check, and isolating it from USSR rather than coming into open confrontation with it. This strategy paid off. India was able to maintain peace and tranquility on its northeastern borders for over a decade. (JAIN, 2004: 254).

In 1954, India and China signed an agreement on trade and intercourse between the Tibet region of China and had an exchange of notes. India thus signed away all its inherited privileges in Tibet by virtue of earlier pacts. The five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Panchsheel) and the Bandung Conference were highlights of Sino-Indian cooperation. However, the cooperation was not to last. By late 1950s, serious differences between the two states had begun to surface, particularly over the undemarcated border. The unresolved border issue would lead to war by 1962. (Athwak, 2008: 20).

Zhou Enlai refused categorically to accept the McMahon line as the final line of the border demarcation between India and PRC. To counter the Indian claim that

Beijing had, in the past, never contested the legality of McMahan line, China argued that local Tibetan authorities had no legality with the McMahon line, China argued that local Tibetan authorities had no legal rights to conclude any border treaty with the British. Moreover, China regarded the disputed Aksai China area as part of the Chinese province of Sinkiang and not Tibet. To the contrary, India contested that "Chinese maps had never shown Sinkiang to extend south of the Kuentun range, which separated it from Tibet". Ultimately, border clashes led to the Sino-Indian war in October 1962. India's crushing defeat at the hands of the Chinese shattered Nehru's image at home and abroad. (Eekelen, 1967: 160) Between 1962 and 1969, Sino-Indian relations remained in a deep freeze. Emboldened by its easy victory over India, China initiated a vitriolic and vituperative propaganda against India, which deepened India's suspicion of China even further. India's mistrust about China was further confirmed when China befriended Pakistan and started to extend military and political support to it. China on the contrary essentially saw Indo-Soviet friendship as an anti-China ploy. In the wake of humiliating defeat, when India accorded high priority to its armed forces, China accused India of "militarism". According to Wang's (1998:264) analysis, Nehru hated China for not giving him a "face" and "betraying his friendship." He also grudged that the "sword" in his hands was not sharp enough; while the "betrayal" was beyond his control. However, the "sword" could be sharpened by strengthening the national defenses'. Wang asserts that it was under these circumstances that "militarism raised its head" in India after the 1962 War. India saw it necessary to strengthen its armed forces in aftermath of 1962 debacle. When India sought the US and Soviet support, India was leveled as a stooge of the US imperialism and Soviet revisionism and social imperialism. (Deepak, 2001: 275).

From the mid-1966 onwards, the internal conditions of both India and China were in a state of continuous flux. China was in the midst of socio-economic upheaval and acute leadership struggle during the Cultural Revolution phase (1966-69). The new Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi was an untried and untested leader. Besides she faced many problems, like famines due to widespread drought. In 1967 parliamentary elections severely weakened the central leadership, where the ruling congress party of Mrs. Gandhi was returned to power with reduced majority. Chinese foreign policy remained dormant during the phase of Cultural Revolution but this did not stop the Chinese from extending its support to the so-called national liberation movement in the third world by exhorting them to replace the legitimate regimes. Accordingly, China started exploiting two basic weaknesses in the government of India. One was the inability to integrate the tribal peoples of the northeast into the mainstream of Indian life. Another was the failure

to ameliorate the condition of the rural peasantry and landless laborers in the lower Ganges Valley. Sensing the weakness as an opportunity, China openly supported Naga and Mizo insurgents and encouraged them to rise in revolution against India. The Naxalbari uprising in West Bengal provided a golden opportunity to the Chinese to recommend the Maoist path for the Indian revolutionaries.

India-China relations further deteriorated in June 1967 with the expulsion of two Indian diplomats from Beijing on alleged charges of "espionage activities". The winter of 1967 witnessed skirmishes on India-China border. On 11 September, Chinese troops attacked Indian troops on the Sikkim border across the Nathual and opened heavy mortar and artillery fire. After repeated Indian protest and proposal for ceasefire, by 15 September there was a virtual cessation of all hostile activities. The Chinese again fired heavily on the Indian positions at Chola, on 1 October and both sides suffered casualties. Thus the condition between the two countries continued to deteriorates. Mrs. Gandhi, kept striving to normalize relations with Beijing, by the end of 1967, in a discussion on external affairs, Mrs. Gandhi stated:

*"China continues to maintain an attitude of hostility towards us—carries and anti-Indian propaganda not only against the Indian Government but against the whole of our democratic functioning and even our national integrity. But I would like to say that we do not harbor any evil intention towards the Chinese people, and we do hope that a day will come when they will also realize that it is in the interests of all the countries of South East Asia that we should be friends and that each country should be able to devote its strength to solving the very major problem of combating poverty and backwardness".*

This was a flex approach adopted by Mrs. Gandhi regarding relations with China. Time and again the Indian government tried to establish healthy relations with China. In an address to parliament on 20 February 1970, the President reiterated his government's desire to conduct its relations with China on the "principle of mutual respect of each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference. We expect China to respect our rights to pursue own domestic affairs and foreign policy".

During the 1970s Pakistan's problem between East and West Pakistan, China not only supported the military junta and its role in East Pakistan but also tried discreetly to moderate Yahya Khan's brutal policy towards East Pakistan but without success. China alleged that "Weighed down with difficulties at home and abroad, the reactionary Indian government has embarked on a mad course of arms expansion and war preparations—to carry out an expansionist policy towards its neighbor." China continued to step up friendly acts against India.

In spite of virulent anti-Indian Chinese propaganda; India played cool and maintained a low profile. India again took the initiative to start dialogue with China, when its ambassador in Moscow met twice with his Chinese counterpart in May 1971, to discuss the terms of restoration of diplomatic representation to the Ambassadorial level. (Mishra, 2004: 36-42).

India did not lose hope at last after a period of 14 years of gap Sino-Indian war, India's normalization of relations with Beijing, ultimately resulting in the restoration of diplomatic relations with China in 1976. One of the senior members of the Indian Foreign Service, K.R. Naryan, was accredited India's Ambassador to Beijing in 1976. This was a pragmatic step towards putting Indian-Chinese relations back on an even track.

The stunning debacle of Mrs. Gandhi's Congress Party in the 1977 parliamentary elections paved the way for the formation of Janta Party-led government under the leadership of Morarji Desai, a strict disciplinarian and true Gandhian. Prime Minister Desai continued with the legacy of normalizing relations with China. He sent his foreign minister, A.B Vajpayee, to China in 1979 to carry forward the process of rapprochement. During this visit Vajpayee broached the contentious border issue with Chinese leaders. Deng Xiaoping, a veteran Communist Party leader, told Vajpayee to avoid bringing the issue, on which both countries differed sharply into the discussion. Deng stated: "We should have common ground while resolving differences. As for the boundary question between our two countries, we can solve it through peaceful consultation. This question should not prevent us from improving our relations in other fields". (JAIN, 2004: 257)

### **New Phase: Rajiv Gandhi Era**

India-China relations entered into a new phase with the 'path-breaking' visit to Beijing in December 1988. This visit to China saw a significant improvement in India-Chinese relations. Following his visit, Sino-Indian relation became more cordial that at any time since mid-1950's. China's close relation with Pakistan has been very important to Beijing. It is a long standing friendship that has been, as the Chinese and Pakistanis like to say, "tested by adversity," which has come in the form of regime changes and upheavals in both countries, fundamental realignments in the international system, and war. Pakistan played a major role in China's strategy for coping with India and following the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, with the Soviet Union.

Rajiv Gandhi's December 1988 visit to China was judged a success by both sides. As the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to China since J L Nehru's 1954 visit, Gandhi's visit helped balance the score in terms of summit visits. Gandhi formally notified China's leaders of

the new thrust of India's China policy and indicated a willingness to increase consultation and cooperation with China on a range of international issues, such as the creation of a New International Economic Order, disarmament, and pollution. New Delhi's willingness to cooperate with China on such global issues (which we may perhaps call macro diplomatic cooperation) represented acceptance of Chinese proposal that had been on the table since the early 1980s. The idea behind macro diplomatic cooperation is that, as large developing countries with long histories, China and India share many important characteristics and common interests. Moreover, by cooperating on these issues, the two countries will create an important atmosphere conducive to better bilateral relations. (Garver, 1996: 323-325).

Gandhi during his visit set the tone by declaring, "it is now time to look to the future, I have come to renew an old friendship". Deng Xiaoping, the top Chinese leader said that "China and India should forget the unpleasant past and set their eyes on future." Premier Li Peng was Rajiv Gandhi's major interlocutor during the visit, and their discussion focused on the substantive issue of the border, Tibet, bilateral relations and international situation. Premier Li accepted Gandhi's invitation to play a return visit to India.

During the visit the two sides had in-depth discussions "on the Sino-Indian border questions and agreed to settle it through peaceful and friendly consultations. In December, India and China decided to set up a Joint Working Group (JWG) on the boundary issue headed by Foreign Secretary on the Indian side and a Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs on the Chinese side. The JWG was set up a step forward from that of official level in that it had joint mandate. The JWG had two important functions. First, the JWG was to make concrete recommendations for the overall solution of the boundary question. Secondly, the group would ensure the peace and tranquility was maintained in the Line of Actual Control. The two sides also agreed to develop relations in other fields and set up a joint group on economic relations and trade, as well as science and technology. The two countries signed three accords on cultural scientific and technological cooperation as well as civil aviation. (Mishra, 2004: 66-67).

Following Rajiv Gandhi's China visit, the Chinese Premier Li Peng paid a return visit to India in December 1991. The joint Communiqué issued at the end of the visit stressed that 'the boundary questions should not affect the development of bilateral relations. The JWG on the boundary question should step up its work and peace and tranquility should be maintained along the line of actual control pending the final settlement of the boundary question. (Hongwe, 17 December 1991).

In May 1992 Indian President Venkataraman visited China. Between December 1988 and June 1993, six rounds of JWC meetings on the border were held.

Progress was made in reducing border tension through Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), including mutual troop reductions, regular meetings of local military commanders and advance notification of military exercises. Border trade resumed in July 1992, after an interval of more than 30 years, and consulates reopened in Bombay and Sanghai in December 1992. Sharad Pawar visited China the same month—the first such visit of an Indian defense Minister—when the two defense establishments agreed to develop academic, military, scientific and technological exchanges to schedule and Indian port call by a Chinese naval vessel. In 1993, the two sides agreed to open an additional border trading post.

Prime Minister Narsima Rao's visit to China in September 1993 saw the conclusion of the Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility in Border Areas along the LAC. A senior level Chinese military delegation made six-day goodwill visit to India in the following December, aimed at 'fostering CBMs between the defense forces of two countries'. In 1994 the two countries signed agreement on avoiding double taxation, and an agreement for cooperation on health and medical science, MoUs on simplifying the procedure for visa application, and banking cooperation between the two countries was also signed. In the beginning of the year, Beijing announced that it not only favoured a negotiated settlement on Kashmir but also opposed any form of independence for the region. Bilateral talks held at New Delhi (February 1994) confirmed the 'established CBMs and the ongoing discussion on clarification of the LAC, reduction of armed forces along the LAC and prior information about forthcoming military exercise. (www.countrydata.com, 2005).

The outcome of President Jiang Zemin's visit to India in November-December 1996 was notable for the agreement on CBMs in military field in the border areas along the LAC, which covered troop reduction and weapons limitation along the borders. Both sides reaffirmed in the agreement that 'neither side shall use force against the other by any means or seek unilateral military support for them'. The visit saw the leaders of the two countries agree to establish Constrictive and Cooperative Partnership between China and India into 21<sup>st</sup> Century, on basis of Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence'. Four other accords reached during the visit were those relating to maritime transport, cooperation in combating narcotic drug trafficking, improving communication across the border, and maintenance of the Consulate-General of India in Hongkong special Administrative Region (Singh R., 2001).

### **Relations after India's Nuclear Bomb 1998**

The sunshine period in Sino-Indian relations once again

disappeared behind a dark cloud during 1998. In March 1998, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government came to power in India. The remarks made by the new Defense minister George Fernandez (May 1998) that China was India's main threat caused once again, after the Sumdorongchu incident, a setback to Sino-Indian relations. The atmosphere became tenser after the nuclear test. India conducted five nuclear tests and officially declared herself a new "nuclear weapon state" The Chinese saw the test as "causing serious damage to the bilateral relations. The PRC took stronger objection to PM Vajpayee's letter to US President Clinton, justifying India's decision to test nuclear weapon by pointing to the threat from China and asked for an Indian explanation for considering China as a threat. Beijing also joined the other US Security Council member in passing Resolution No.1172 which condemned the nuclear test by India and Pakistan. China cancelled its decision to participate in the pre-scheduled 1988 meeting of the joint working group alternately held in each country to discuss confidence-building measures. If analysed in pragmatic terms, this was an unwarranted and provocative act on India's part, resulting in unnecessary tension with China. (Hu, 1999: 40).

Despite the furor created in China by India's nuclear test, a thaw between the two sides eventually emerged. (Rajan, 2007: 152). The nuclear issue featured as an irritant in India-China relations for some time, which really put the bilateral relationship in a limbo. However, both countries were able to resume talks once again after a span of nine months. This was made possible by the visits to China made by the Minister of External Affairs Jaswant Singh in 1999, (Kumar, 2010). Both the sides reached a consensus that the prerequisite for restoring and developing Sino-Indian relations, and it was assured that neither side will regard the other as a threat. In May 2000, Indian President K.R Narayan visited China when his Chinese counterpart, Jiang Zemin, put forward a four-point proposal concerning the development of bilateral relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.—The two sides enhance the level of bilateral personnel visits to increase mutual understanding and trust; expand trade and economic cooperation; strengthen coordination and cooperation in international affairs; and properly handle issues left over from the past in the spirit of seeking common ground while reserving differences (Rajan, 2007: 152).

### **Vajpayee's Visit to China in 2003**

When a head of government visits another country it is always an important event; not a routine matter. This is all the more so in the case of India and china, between which high-level visits were imitated only in the 1990s and Atal Behari Vajpayee was only the fourth Indian prime minister to make a state visit to China in 2003.

(Mansingh, 2004). The visit in June 2003 has further contributed to enhance mutual cooperation between the two countries in diverse fields. During this visit nine agreements were signed with China. Of these, the most important related to border trade through Sikkim, simplifying visa procedure to promote trade between the two countries, to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on legal matters, to opening the Centre for Indian Studies in Beijing University, to cultural exchange programmes, and to a MoU for cooperation in the field of ocean science and technology. With regard to boundary question, PM Vajpayee and his Chinese counterpart Wen Jiabo made references to alignment of the LAC. In addition both the leaders reaffirmed their commitments to the idea of multipolarity, and agreed on the need to channel "globalization in the right direction" (The Hindu, 2003).

The Declaration, the first such one between the two countries, committed Beijing and New Delhi to develop a 'Long-term Constructive and Cooperative Partnership on the basis of Five Principals of Peaceful Co-Existence, mutual respect, sensitivity for the concerns of each other and equality'. The term 'equality' was applied to India—China relations for the first time. Both the countries emphasized that the common interest of India and China outweighed their differences and the two countries were not a threat to each other. The Indian side recognized that the Tibet Autonomous Region is part of the territory of the PRC in contrast to the mention that 'Tibet is an Autonomous Region of China' in the joint Communiqué of December 1988 following Rajiv Gandhi's visit and reiterated its stand of disallowing anti-China political activities by Tibetans in India. "Seeking a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution to the boundary issues through consultations on an equal footing" found a special place in the Declaration (Gang 2003).

In over all sense, the visit was seen by analysts as a clear demonstration of the political will on both sides to seek solutions to the contentious issues. The official organ People's Daily of 24 June 2003 described the Declaration as marking a new era in India-China relations.

#### **Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visit to India in April 2005 and President Hu Jintao's visit in December 1 2006.**

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabo of China paid a visit to India from 9 – 12 April 2005 which proved to be the most substantive in its outcome. Premier Wen himself described it as 'historical'. He held talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, called on President A.P.J Abdul Kalam and Vice President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat. He also met Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson, UPA, then External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh, and

Leaders of the Opposition, L.K Advani. The joint Statement was issued on the occasion, which contains a vision of where India-China relations were headed and an Action Plan for cooperation, bilateral, regional and global domains. In the joint Statement, the two countries agreed to establish a 'Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity'. Eleven other agreements were signed and the report of India-China Ji's joint Study Group on comprehensive trade and economic cooperation was also released.

A major outcome of the visit was the Agreement on 'Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the settlement of India-China Boundary Question'. The Chinese Premier clarified that China regarded Sikkim as an inalienable part of India', and that Sikkim was no longer an issue in India-China relations. Premier Jiabao also handed over to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh the revised Chinese map showing Sikkim within the international boundaries of India.

In the field of trade and commerce, both countries envisaged that the trade volume would increase to US\$ 20 billion by 2008. They also agreed to establish an Indian-Chinese Joint Economic Group and a Task Force to examine the feasibility and benefits of Trading Arrangements. China stated that it attached great importance to the status of India in international affairs and understood and supported India's desire to play an active role in the UN and the world. (Rasgotra, 2007: 174)

The December 1 2006 visit of the Chinese President (the second ever visit of a Chinese President to India) marked a landmark in Sino-Indian relations and send a positive signal that China was committed to carrying forward the process of Sino-India relations. From the Chinese perspective, this visit was intended to facilitate a comprehensive partnership with India as agreed to in April 2005 during Prime Minister Wen Jiabo's visit to India. President Hu's visit was to reiterate Chinese's view that a 'dynamic India-China friendship would lead to peace, stability and prosperity not only in Asia but the whole world as whole'. A key objective for China was to step up economic cooperation with India to build on the momentum of bilateral trade between the two countries, which has grown steadily over the years and was estimated to have reached US\$ 18.7 billion in 2005. This is an almost 159 percent jump over the 2003 trade figures

From the Indian side the resolution of the border was the key to unlocking Sino-Indian relations. India wanted an early settlement of the border problems on the basis of the Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles signed between the two countries in April 2005. In nutshell the outcome of these visits resulted in the joint declaration in New Delhi on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2006, the declaration reflected the shared vision and mutual objectives of the two countries in a number of important

areas like: economic cooperation, international economic order and regional cooperation, civil nuclear cooperation, boundary questions and cultural exchanges (Jetly, 2006).

### **Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's Visit to China—2008**

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited China in 2008, this visit was the first by a foreign dignitary to the country in 2008, and in a land where symbolism counts for great deal, it may be seen as notable for just this reason. Earlier, the Indian ruling coalition chairperson Sonia Gandhi's trip to China in November 2007 was also considered significant for being the first visit by a foreign political leader, following the conclusion of the important 17<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of China. The Singh's visit saw the additional highlight of the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao hosting his Indian counterpart to a private dinner, testifying to both the significance of bilateral ties as well as to the excellent rapport between the two leaders. (Jacob, 2008).

During the visit India signed "Shared Vision on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," reached a broad consensus on the further pushing forward the Strategic Cooperative Partnership between the two countries in civil nuclear energy and observed that such cooperation was necessary to combat climate change and develop energy security, and the two countries agreed to jointly promote the building of a harmonious world featured by everlasting peace and common prosperity. Prime Minister Singh attended the Asia-Europe Meeting held in Beijing in October. Sonia Gandhi, President of the Indian National Congress, attended the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics. Yu Zhengsheng, member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and party secretary of Shanghai Municipality, visited India. India's Foreign Minister exchanged visits on economic and trade cooperation between the two countries maintained fast growth. In 2008, bilateral trade exceeded \$ 51 billion, with an increase of 34 per cent over 2007.

Security and defense exchanges became a highlight in Indian bilateral relations. The Chinese Navy Marshal visited India for the first time and the two countries held the second round of consultation on defense and security. In December 2008, China and India successfully conducted the "Join Hands-2008," a joint army training exercise on combating terrorism, in India.

Bilateral cooperation in international and regional affairs was further strengthened. China and India maintained close coordination on issues such as climate change, the Doha Round talks, energy and food security, and the international financial crisis. They worked together for positive results at the Financial Summit of the G20 held in Washington in November 2008.

China-India relations are generally on a steady

development path. The Strategic Cooperation Partnership is being further strengthened. As President Hu Jintao has pointed out, our bilateral relations are at present in one of the best periods in history and facing a rare opportunity for development. (Yan, 2009)

Pointing out the Prime Minister Singh's visit to China Chinese experts hold that the visit accomplished two key outcomes. Firstly the visit marks an increase in the pace of senior-level dialogue. The previous visit by an Indian prime minister to Beijing was five years ago (2004), and the visit before that was fifteen years ago. Singh's visit marks the start of more regular visits from Indian leaders, promoting a return visit by the Indian prime ministers and scheduled visits by the foreign ministers and president later this year. Secondly, the visit marks the setting of new trade objectives, with a new target increased from \$ 40 billion to \$ 60 billion by 2010. The initial \$ 40 billion benchmark was set during President Hu Jintao's visit to New Delhi in 2006 and is expected to attend in 2008. (Thompson, 2008)

### **CONCLUSION**

Despite gloomy predictions about the inevitability of competition between China and India, cooperation between Asia's two emerging powers is possible. It, will however, require a much more concerted effort to bridge the gap in socio-cultural understanding that existed between them, there remains a fundamental lack of appreciation on the part of each country of the underlying cultural and societal norms that define the other—norms that influence each country's perception of its own national interest. We argue that greater appreciation of these elements is critical if China and India are to successfully address issues such as the ongoing border dispute and the mounting trade imbalance. In present and future scenarios, strategic and diplomatic relations between China and India are fraught with complication, tensions and misgivings on both sides upon the historical legacies of relations between the two countries. Much of the mistrust and misgivings emanate from the legacy of the 1962 war between the two countries. The following five decades have seen generation of Indians growing up with an inherent wariness of China and anything Chinese. The public popular imagination in India was fuelled by the often repeated stories of the "great betrayal" by the supposed ally nation. In recent decades after India gained its independence from Britain in 1947, there was a lot of popular hope for a strong and mutually beneficial partnership between the two nations. This was reflected in the popular phrase that was chanted by Indian children in the 1950s: Hindi-Chinibhai-bhai," the general atmosphere of bonhomie and friendship was such that most Indians could not imagine the advent of Chinese military aggression on their relative unguarded northeast



frontier. Without going into the details of the 1962 misadventure, it suffices to say that they caused a dent in the national psyche of India, that lurks uncomfortably in the background even today.

There was a freezing of diplomatic relations after the 1962 conflagration, which only thawed in 1976 when relations were tentatively restored. From 1976 to the present, the salient features of bilateral diplomatic negotiations has been the cloak of confidentiality and secrecy maintained by the government and key negotiation on both sides. By far the most vexing issue has been the demarcation and resolution of the boundary line denoting the border between the two countries. To further complicate the issue, while there appears to be a tacit understanding of mutual respecting a notional Line of Actual Control (LAC) between the two countries, there has been precious little achieved in terms of actually defining this LAC on the ground.

Since the 1976 restoration of diplomatic ties, major high-level exchange visits between the two countries have taken place in 1988, 1993, 1996, 2003, 2005, 2008 and 2010. To the casual observer, this impressive succession of high-level diplomatic and strategic meetings and negotiations over the past few decades might suggest that serious headway has been made in resolving some of these core issues.

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