



INDO-CHINA RELATIONSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT:

This paper is an attempt to highlight the indo-china relationship in the context of Arunachal Pradesh. The paper analyse the reason behind china claim over Tawang district in particular and Arunachal Pradesh in general. It also focuses on historical background or origin of conflict between the two nations. The main objective is to examine the legitimacy of Chinese claim on the state and its impact on the bilateral relationship between them. It also explains the possibility or options of how the bilateral relation should continue between the two powerful Asian nations. The illogical claim of china over Arunachal Pradesh territory is highlighted empirically and also explains about the contemporary situation. The paper is based on secondary sources of data, books, newspaper, reputed news portal, TV interview, Journals on related topic and personal experience.

KEYWORDS: China, Claim, Arunachal Pradesh, Historical Background, Bilateral Relation, legitimacy

INTRODUCTION:

Indo china relationship places a decisive role in international politics. The most significance reason may be considered as sharing their long international border, developing economy status and above all huge population size of the two countries which constitute nearly 1/3rd population of the globe. Indo-china relationship has a long history because of their ancient civilization and continues cultural exchange through their river valleys and passes. The fundamental difference between the two countries emerge during the twentieth century in which India established its international face in the form of largest democracy of the world whereas china appear as greatest communist power. Arunachal Pradesh, situated in the north eastern part of India having 83,748 sq km in area has share a long international border of 1,129 km with China' Tibet Autonomous Region. India and china had fought a war in 1962 along the Arunachal border and in following years had series of skirmishes or military conflicts – The border clashes in Nathu la and Cho la in 1967, 1987 Sumdorong Chu standoff, Doklam standoff of 2018, Galwan Valley conflicts of 2020 are few examples of border disputes. Since Arunachal Pradesh share a long border with China it is very important to know the historical background of how china and Arunachal border was demarcate and reason of claiming Arunachal as south Tibet by People's Republic of China. This paper is an attempt to highlight the relationship between two giant neighbours, India and China in Arunachal context at the backdrop of their historical background, point of conflicts and major causes of disputes or conflicts of interest and analyse the contemporary situation. . The paper is based on secondary sources of data, newspaper, reputed news portal, TV interview, Journals on related topic and personal experience

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND POINTS OF CONFLICT

The expansion policy of china is evident from the instances of claim over Tibet, military attacked on India in 1962 and capturing some part of the Indian Territory even today. Likewise, claim over Arunachal territory without any historical, geographical or cultural evidence is one of the brilliant examples of Chinese tendency to show political supremacy. The bone of contention over the border of India and china started way back in the early decade of twentieth century. The then British administration of India demarcates the border popularly known as Mac-Mohan Line in 1914 to restrict Chinese intrusion. The historic Mac- Mohan line is the outcome of Shimla conference, 1914 under the chairmanship of Henry Mac Mohan in which the representatives from India, Tibet and China participated. The political unrest between these two countries has a recorded history of more than hundred years. However, the bitterness attained its height during 1950s which culminated in the 1962 indo-China War. The decisive defeat of india in this war created the situation of fear, tension, conflict and betrayal between these two countries. Prior to this war there was a slogan of Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai. In facts Chinese betrayal in 1962 is considered

as a great ungrateful political behavior of China. Since, Arunachal Pradesh is a territory which witnesses all the sweet and sour experience of these two vast countries, naturally the state of Arunachal Pradesh bear very special significance between the political relationships of these two countries. Since 1962 Indo-China war there passed a long journey of 60 years we don't witness a full scale war like 1962 and during this periods we have witness cooperation and mutual understanding on several issues by both the countries but border conflicts occurred in regular interval which disturb the Indo China relationship. One of the important reasons for strain relation is Chinese claim over Arunachal Pradesh, Even today Chinese do not considered Mac Mohan Line as border line. Their illogical logic is that, the Chinese government does not recognize the Mac Mohan Line as it was imposed on them as they feel.

ARUNACHAL CONTEXT: CLAIM OVER TAWANG DISTRICT AND ITS IMPACT ON INDO-CHINA RELATIONSHIP

Some of the important reasons why China claims over Arunachal Pradesh as part of their territory are as follows:

1. Tawang : While China may lay claim to the entire state of Arunachal Pradesh as theirs, theirs main interest lies in the District of Tawang, which is in the north western most part of Arunachal and borders Bhutan and Tibet.



Source : TOI(times of india) Map data© OSM.

Fig. 1 shows the Tawang and Anjaw districts of Arunachal Pradesh. In 1962 war Indian troops fought off the Chinese army in Tawang and Anjaw district's walong region.

China's interest in Tawang could be for followings reasons:

- (A) It could be for a tactical reason as Tawang Provide a strategic entry into India's north eastern region. It is a critical point in the corridor between Tibet and Brahmaputra Valley.
 - (B) Tawang also hosts the Tawang Monastery which is the second largest monastery of Tibetan Buddhism in the world. The Monastery was founded by Merak lama lodre Gyatso in the year 1680 to honour the wishes of the fifth Dalai Lama, Nyawang Lobsang Gyatso. China claim that the Monastery is evidence that the Tawang district once belonged to Tibet. They cite historical ties between the Tawang monastery and the Lhasa Monastery in Tibet to support their claim over Arunachal.
 - (C) Tawang is an important center of Tibetan Buddhism. There are some tribes in the upper Arunachal region which have cultural connections to the peoples of Tibet. The Monpa tribal population practices Tibetan Bhuddism and is also found in some area of Tibet. This cultural connection might create anxieties for China as they fears the presence of these ethnic groups in Arunachal could at some stage give rise to a pro- democracy Tibetan movement against China.
 - (D) Tawang has a political significance for China as when the Dalai Lama escaped Tibet in 1959 amid China crackdown; he entered India through Tawang and stayed in the Tawang Monastery for some time.
 - (E) If China, were gain control of Tawang in particular and Arunachal in general it would mean that kingdom of Bhutan would have China as its neighbor on both the western and eastern borders.
2. The Shimla Convention, Officially the Convention between Great Britain, China and Tibet held in Shimla in 1913 and 1914. Mac Mohan line, the border line that run along the Arunachal Pradesh between India and China is one of the outcomes of Shimla agreement. However, China occupied Tibet and now they disputed the legitimacy of Mac Mohan line.

Fig. 2 Map of Mac Mohan Line which shows the border line between Arunachal Pradesh and China.



Source: The Times of India (TOI).

3. After the Communist took power in China, they pulled the country out of all international agreements and the so-called “unequal treaties” that had been imposed on it during its century of humiliation, and demanded a re-negotiation of all its borders. Because of such outlook by the communist power, they claims some 90,000km of Arunachal Pradesh-the entire state as its territory. It calls the area “Zangnan” in the Chinese language and makes repeated reference to South Tibet. Even, they include Arunachal in their map.
4. Another important reason of Chinese eyeing on Arunachal Pradesh may be because of its strategic location. Arunachal Pradesh is the closest location for India to target China with missiles. Also, Arunachal is the best location for India to deploy a multi-layered air defence system for possible attack from China. Thus, control over Arunachal will give China a strategic advantage.
5. Water power is another reason as China has control over India’s water supply to the North Eastern region. It has constructed several dams and can use water as geo-strategic weapon against India by causing flooding or drought in the region.

Because of Chinese claim on Tawang district in particular and Arunachal in general it has a negative impact on indo-china relationship. It create a distrust among the relation.

MAJOR IRRITANTS BETWEEN INDO-CHINA RELATIONSHIP

Despite its cooperation in several areas with India, China has time to time strain relation with India. Followings are some of the important irritants as follows:

1. Denial of normal visas to Arunachalee people on consideration that they may be treated as Chinese people on consideration on the basis of their racial similarity.
2. An Issue of staple visas to Arunachalee demonstrates their indifference attitude towards Arunachalee.
3. Huge infrastructure development of transport communication and power project activities over the borders of Arunachal Pradesh.
4. Chinese indifference attitude towards India’s claim on UN Security Council permanent membership.
5. Political and military support to Pakistan against India.
6. Both Indo- China have a different ideology where India follows Democracy with a mix of socialism while China is a staunch follower of Communism.
7. 21st century China has been trying to create a ‘String of Pearls’ around India through its Border & Road Initiative.

Chinese claim over Arunachal Pradesh has become a great political issue in 1958 when an official map of China shown NEFA (North Eastern Frontiers Agency) as a part of china. Indian parliament very seriously opposed this activity. Even the opposition becomes very serious outside the parliament also. Pandit Nehru the then Prime minister strongly wrote a letter to his Chinese counterpart Chou Enlai. Chou Enlai assured the situation of status-co, yet the military relationship over the borders become tense. Many Indian Arm force personal were killed over the borders in 1959. These entire situations created a sense of fear among the Arunachalee people as the inhabitant of border land. In the mean time, Chinese aggression over Tibet in 1959 itself created havoc over this territory. Dalai Lama came to India and Indian people paid great respect to him and opposed the Chinese behavior by way of procession, wall writing, etc. The situations become so tense that the govt. of India was compelled to issue white paper

over the Indo China relationship for a period of five years. In 1960 the Chinese Prime Minister invited to India to resolve the issue. After twenty long hours discussion between Nehru and Chou Enlai did not produced any positive outcome.

In the contrary, fear of war become imminent, development of transport network in Arunachal Pradesh was the need of the hour. The rugged and forested terrain of Arunachal Pradesh was serious problem behind the developmental activity in the state. The handicap Indian Army fought the war but the obvious result came in the form of historic defeat of India. This historic defeat has one positive outcome and that outcome may be seen in the patriotism of Arunachalee people in the sovereign republic of India. In 1962 when the Indian Army was retreating, the civilian people of Arunachal Pradesh line themselves to fight the battle with Chinese force. The advisor to governor Nari Rustumji quoted that when he reached Along now Aalo helipad, huge number of local people ask him the question that whether the govt. will help them or they will be left on their fate. The govt. representatives offer them to shift in the camp but the local people suggested that the women and children may be shifted to safe places and all the adult male wish to participate in the war in support of Indian army, this is the example of supreme sacrifice towards the nation offered by Arunachalee people. This one example is sufficient enough to reject Chinese claim over the people and territory of Arunachal Pradesh.

LEGITIMACY OF CHINESE CLAIM OVER ARUNACHAL TERRITORY

The claiming of Arunachal Pradesh territory as their own by the Chinese communist govt. has not based on any logic or legality because of the facts that the Mac Mohan line itself was the outcome of Shimla Agreement where Chinese representative has participated. Secondly there was no claim occurred during the British rule but all of a sudden when India got independence they started claiming. Thirdly During pre-British periods also there was no record of ruling Arunachal territory by any Chinese emperor.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT AND CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

The recent Chinese activities in the form of fast railways development on Nepal border in Lhasa border in Lhasa reason construction of world largest dam at Nyong Tri, more than ten hydel power project construction in the border area and according an unofficial information the attempt of China to divert Brahmaputra river course towards China are such activities which compel Indian mindset against the normal relationship with China. The fastly changing socio-economic scenario of the globe in general and the Asia continent in particular is bound to be affected by the Indo- China relationship. In the better interest of humanity the importance of cordial relationship between these two countries cannot be ignored. Arunachal Pradesh being the real platform of all important events between these two countries occupies great relevance in this context.

AS A CONCLUDING REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS

In the coming decades or times direct conventional war is unlikely because both are nuclear power and India of today is not India of 1960s and furthermore in this era of L.P.G (Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization) mutual economic cooperation is the hallmark between any two nations. Currently India and China stand at crossroads in the seventieth year of bilateral relations. They have four options to continue the bilateral relations viz, 1. Opted for military confrontation. 2. Armed coexistence, 3. Coexistence with cooperation and 4. Partnership/ friendship. Out of this, Partnership looks unlikely at present. Armed confrontation would be unwise move because both are arm with nuclear bomb. So, option two and three are seem to be considerable provided trust factor must build up first by both the country.

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