



ISSUES IN INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS: THE GREAT POWER RIVALRY

Sharma Vishwas Sunilkumar

Research Scholar

Department of Political Science,

School of Social Science,

Gujarat University.

ABSTRACT

China has emerged as a contender to be a global superpower against United States of America (USA) and India on the other hand is aspiring to be Vishwa-Bandhu (Friend of World). This situation kind of creates a sense of competition among India and China. Apart from this, China is India's largest of all neighbours and India-China have engaged in many situations, in different global environments in war and peace etc. It has been time and again said that, the 21st century will be century of India, 21st century will be century of Asia, Indo-pacific will shape 21st century. So based on above statements study of India and China relations become s an important area of study.

Keywords: Indian Ocean Region, PoK, BRI, Galwan, Doklam, USA , Hegemony, Vishwa-Bandhu

Introduction:

There are a number of problems with India-China ties, most of which are related to border conflicts. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Himalayas, where both nations claim overlapping areas, is the most important flashpoint. Tensions have increased as a result of skirmishes and military standoffs, such the conflict in the Galwan Valley in 2020. Relations are further strained by economic rivalry and ambition for regional dominance. Mistrust is also exacerbated by China's expanding relations with Pakistan, India's main enemy, and India's membership in the Quad alliance with the US, Japan, and Australia. Asia's disparate geopolitical agendas and trade disparities make diplomatic efforts to settle these conflicts more difficult.

Issues in India-China relations:

1. BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE:

“The ancient Silk Road thrived in times of peace but lost vigour in times of war”

– President Xi Jinping

This statement of the Chinese president shows, aim of the Chinese to again become the trade ruler as it was before the colonial era and it can be seen from the level of connectivity it has around the globe. The BRI map shows Kolkata as also its part but India has not joined BRI rather India believes that BRI is a security threat for India.

It violates the sovereignty of India: The CPEC violates Indian territorial integrity as it, passes through Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) which is originally part of India and illegally occupied by state of Pakistan. India sees BRI as violation of its sovereignty as well as threat to security of India, because BRI is in Pakistan also in the name of CPEC (China-Pakistan economic corridor)

Challenge to India’s security: CPEC is protected by Chinese PLA troops, which encircles India by Chinese in 3rd front that is Kashmir, after Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh

Challenges to India’s shipping: As majority of trade of globe passes through Indian Ocean Region(IOR) , China have built in military bases to protect themselves so this can be challenge to India’s shipping in I.O.R. And these bases are military bases known as “String of Pearls” to encircle India.

2. BORDER ISSUES:

India and China border conflict used to be known as one the coolest border conflict before the Galwan clashes as after 1962 there was never a single bullet fired on the border.

The India-China border is divided into three sectors, viz. Western, Middle and Eastern, and all these sectors have disputed boundaries. The border stretch runs roughly 3500 kms and there is no mutually agreed border line between the two nations.

The issue in the western regions concerns Aksai-Chin, which China claims is illegally occupied (the Jackson Line Disputation).The conflict in the middle sector is not as serious as it is in other sectors. The dispute in the eastern sector is over the border between Arunachal and Tibet, which is connected to the 1914 Shimla Agreement, to which China objects and claims Arunachal as south Tibet.

With bilateral agreements made in 1993, 1996, 2005, 2012, and 2013, the two nations participated in Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), or as we can say, conflict settlement on the border. However, none of them produced results for a longer amount of time. In the last seven to eight years, Chinese forces entered Indian territory 10 kilometres in 2013, there was a protracted Doklam stalemate in the middle sector in 2017, and in 2020, there were skirmishes between the Galwan people that resulted in another standoff that continues even in July of 2024 despite after 29 rounds of discussions between the two sides. This incident also offers optimism that problems can be resolved via appropriate communication and discourse.

In addition India's EAM Shri S.Jaishankar also said "State of border will determine Sino-Indian relationship", this was a message that good relations depend upon resolution of border disputes

3. Competition in Indian Ocean Region:

The region south of Indian southern tip is known as Indian Ocean, which is a huge ocean bordering Africa, Asia and Australia. The Indian Ocean serves as the base for all marine commercial activity. The major countries include 21 members of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen, Brunei, Cambodia, the Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.

The reason for China's interest in Indian Ocean Region, is seen due geographic location and economic attraction in the region .I.O.R hosts one of the most poorest economies on the globe. Due to prohibitive transportation costs, protectionist regulations, and unstable regional political environments, intraregional trade has been insufficient and subpar. So all this helps China to dump their production and increase their export. Eighty percent of China's oil consignment is shipped from the Gulf through the Strait of Malacca, hence, making the Indian Ocean a crucial junction for its energy supply lines.

India's presence near the Strait of Malacca in the form of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, poses a severe concern to Beijing, because India can use this to choke Chinese supplies in case of any contingency and that is why China has shifted focus from a land-centric strategy to an ocean centric strategy, of having permanent naval presence in the Indian Ocean to protect its vested maritime interests. China has built its maritime silk route here in the region and to secure their trade interests China has started building bases, which kind of encircles India in the Indian Ocean (SRTING OF PEARLS)

China has succeeded in building a patronage network of numerous South Asian coastal countries over time through significant investment spending, targeted port development initiatives, and cooperative naval equipment transfers. China has successfully lured India out of its strategic sphere of influence through the establishment of this "string of pearls" approach, which furthers China's greater military and commercial aspirations under the appearance of economic progress.

The table below shows the number of countries with whom China is engaged, and also the use of these countries as military bases.

SR NO	COUNTRY NAME	CHINESE BASE
1	Pakistan	Gwadar
2	Maldives	Ihavnddhippohlu Atoll
3	Sri Lanka	Hambantota
4	Bangladesh	Chittagong

The dual use of these ports for surveillance missions is a higher possible thing given China's primary aim to secure its sea lines of communication (SLOCs) in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), and we have recently seen this in Sri-Lanka when Chinese spy ship was docked despite India's strong opposition.

India too has responded to String of Pearls in name of Diamond Necklace Strategy.

Lalit Mansingh, the former foreign secretary of India, used the phrase "Necklace of Diamonds" for the first time when discussing "India's Regional Strategic Priorities" in August 2011. According to him, India is taking all the necessary precautions to safeguard its interests. India's doctrine, the Necklace of Diamonds, is similar to the doctrine of the String of Pearls. We are establishing naval cooperation with nearly all of the major powers in the Indian Ocean region at the same time that China is developing port infrastructure. Although the phrase "necklace of diamonds" is frequently used by observers to describe India's strategy for containing China's expanding influence in the IOR, it has not appeared in the official discourse of the Indian government.

It is important to note that Chinese analysts are also aware of India's expanding strategic engagement in IOR and India's potential to constrain Chinese outreach in the IOR, which is comparable to India's worries about China's growing influence in the IOR.

China's Academy of Social Sciences claimed in its 2016 publication of the Annual Report on the Development of the Indian Ocean Region that India's assertive diplomacy "has not only established its dominance in the region it considers to be its exclusive sphere of influence but has also constrained freedom of action of external powers including China.

4. Sino-Pak Alliance:

India is bordered by 2 main countries of Asia namely Pakistan and China and it is no brainer that India does not have good relations with any of these two countries.

The relationship between India-Pakistan or India-China is marked by trust deficit between states, border issues and endless conflicts, especially Pakistan has been involved in pulling India down at many international forums, and China on the other hand had hardly co-operated with India in any manner.

Apart from this Pakistan and China both enjoy very good economic and military relations and they call themselves strategic partners and thus it becomes natural for India to feel insecure when two of its enemies have joined together.

The spectrum of 453 conventional military sales, China's building of the Gwadar Port, mainly China's violation of the NSG regulations by providing Pakistan with civilian nuclear reactors continue to worry state of India.

Above all, China's presence and infrastructure-building efforts in the region of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir that it relinquished to China have caused grave worries in India. Chinese side project it as a way to secure their CPEC project, however India looks at the fact that China has gained footprints in yet another area and this time, the area is India territory (POK). In the last week of October-22 Member of Parliament of India from Rajya Sabha Mr. Subramanian Swamy said that China will attack India with Pakistan in bid to capture Ladakh and Kashmir.

According to military strategists, there are three probable methods for a two-front war against India to begin.

First, Pakistan tries to take advantage from a confrontation between China and India. Second, China engages in strategic opportunism during a normal military conflict between India and Pakistan. Finally, China and Pakistan work together to launch a concerted surprise strike from both the east and west of India.

Indian military officials have long argued that their country's armed forces are equipped to handle a two-front conflict. Late CDS of India Gen. Bipin Rawat in his capacity as chief of army staff in 2017 said that India is ready to face 2.5 front wars.

It should be abundantly evident at this point that India and China are now much closer to a hot conflict than they have been in nearly fifty years, despite the current crisis with China being addressed. India will almost undoubtedly be engaged in combat on two fronts when that war breaks out, which will most likely occur within the next couple of years as predicted by the US report of their *[national intelligence council](#)*.

5. PRESENCE OF DALAI LAMA:

Apart from the border conflicts, the Dalai Lama, who is (Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader) was given asylum in India in 1959 along with tens of thousands of his followers, which caused China great annoyance. Tibetans run their government in exile from India's state of Himachal Pradesh. China considers Dalai Lama

as a major separatist, although Dalai Lama gave up his demand of independence from China way back in 1974, but has reasserted that China must stop aggression against his community.

China has time and again protested when Dalai Lama visits border areas like Ladakh or Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh, because Chinese believe that the areas visited by Dalai Lama are part of China only. Apart from this, China also intends to select their own Dalai Lama and they are confronted by the USA in that process, who intend to keep the position of Dalai Lama to Tibetan refugees.

6. China's anti-India global stance:

The poor state of relationship is seen in many areas including China's anti-India stance at global, be it they blocking India's attempt to declare Masood Azhar as a terrorist in UN or be it blocking India's bid to be part of NSG(nuclear suppliers group) or be it supporting Pakistan's stance of Kashmir at international forums including UN.

Abdul Rauf Asghar a terrorist based in Pakistan, was involved in the planning and execution of several terror attacks, including the hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC-814 in the year of 1999, attack on Parliament of India in 2001, and attack on the Indian Air Force base in Pathankot in the year of 2016. India with support of USA proposed in UNSC to list him as global terrorist, but China blocked this bid by using veto power, showing an act of loyalty towards Pakistan. China did same in 2019 when India wanted declare Masood Azhar, (who was involved in many terrorist attacks in Kashmir) as global terrorist.

China had also blocked India's membership bid for NSG(Nuclear Suppliers group) in 2015 when major players of the world like USA,UK,FRANCE,AUSTRALIA etc supported India. China insisted that India should sign the NPT for NSG membership. It wants a non-discriminatory criterion for the admission of countries who have not signed NPT. It is an open secret that China's resistance is to facilitate the entry of Pakistan a close ally of China. India in response cited case of France who was inducted in as NSG member without signing NPT.

This move by China kept India untouched from the benefits of being NSG members:

- India would have got large access to uranium, which currently is limited to India-USA
- India could start producing nuclear based technologies.
- This also would have made India independent in energy production.
- India could have stopped Pakistan from acquiring the same membership in the same manner as China did to India.

7. India's proximity to USA:

China has always viewed the US as an ideological rival, but due to the USA being powerful, China adjusted to it until the time they became sure that they were able to counter the USA. Even while India and America occasionally hold opposing views, their disagreements have never been motivated by the same ideologies, and India regards America as a vital ally in its own modernization.

It is important to consider the U.S. presence in the Indo-Pacific, particularly how likely it is to influence future India-China ties as China gears up to challenge U.S. hegemony in the Indo-Pacific and India restructures its maritime policy to satisfy domestic and strategic requirements.

It was the year of 2008, when the USA felt that China is starting to challenge USA's power and that is when the USA decided to balance the power in Asia by bringing India closer to itself. Chinese perception asserts that Indian activities threaten China's use of marine lines of communication in this region, even though many Chinese specialists have claimed that India seeks to preserve the northern Indian Ocean as its sphere of influence. They are worried about what they see as American attempts to limit China by transforming the hub-and-spokes alliance structure in the Asia-Pacific into a more linked security network that also includes India.

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