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A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF INDO-CHINA RELATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

KEY WORDS: Dynamic, geopolitical, roadmap, non-aggression, mutual, practical measures.

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ABSTRACT

When the USSR disintegrated and the world witnessed the unipolar might of the USA, then no one ever expected that South Asian countries would eventually come to control the world in terms of social, military, and economic domains. In this way, the ancient customs and stunning civilizations of China and India have made them significant figures in defining world issues. Our first prime minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, instituted a number of projects for the prosperity and well-being of both countries because they attained independence about the same time. With the slogan "Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai," the Panchsheel Treaty, which was signed on April 29, 1954, served as a model for stability and respect for one another. Respect for one another's territorial integrity and sovereignty, equality, non-aggression, non-interference, and peaceful cohabitation are among the various religious measures that our Indian government has introduced. But the mistrust of the Chinese government towards the Tibet issue made things worse, and after one conventional conflict and several bilateral talks, we can today say that the situation remains unsatisfactory. If both countries are to flourish and contribute to the world's multipolar position, then the sense of insecurity and tension in the region must disappear in order to prevent the balance of power from shifting in favor of any one group. This essay aims to draw attention to the different points of dispute between two countries and offers some doable solutions that could help settle the geopolitical conflicts.

INTRODUCTION:

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States of America and its allies, particularly the European nations, were able to enjoy the exclusive status of being the only military and economic superpowers. However, during the past 20 years, the landscape has shifted, with China and India—two Asian countries—becoming the major actors in terms of politics, economy, and military might. Today, the world takes these two countries' influence over global affairs very seriously. These nations have long been rivals and are constantly at odds with one another as a result of their desire to attain dominance. Approximately simultaneously, both countries gained independence from colonial domination, and their bilateral relations remained amicable until 1950. However, things began to become worse once China invaded Tibet, and the Indo-China War in 1962 was the last culmination of this rivalry, with India having to deal with the consequences.

At that point, the issue of dominance was not resolved. The boundary dispute remains unresolved despite several bilateral discussions at different levels and nonviolent military conflicts such as the Galwan Valley battle. There are moments when the situation deteriorates to the point where the world begins to predict what would happen in a conventional war between these two powerful countries. Our country is committed to the principles of world peace and brotherhood, and China is aware that it cannot continue to wage a full-fledged war against India. Both countries are engaged on numerous economic fronts and projects, and they both know that a war would set back their development objectives by many decades. They have signed numerous treaties and agreements in this regard, such as the 1993 Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility on the Road of Actual Management on the China-India Border Areas and the 1996 Agreement on the Boldness Building Measures within the Military Field on the India-China Border Areas.

The main source of dispute that is significantly contributing to the deterioration of bilateral relations is the widespread distrust of China's expansionist policies in the majority of countries, particularly in those that border it, such as Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan, and India.



Fig 1: Map of South Asia
Source: Internet



Fig 2: Indo- China map showing String of Pearls
Source: Internet

India's concern that China is constructing infrastructure in the Ladakh region, which is viewed as a threat to Indian security, is confirmed. The problem is being exacerbated by China and Pakistan's cordial relationship. Now, a very serious question is raised: Is there any way for India to present China with a workable scenario that would persuade Beijing to settle the border dispute with China at a time when the world economy is suffering due to the coronavirus, the Russia-Ukraine War, and other factors?

The bilateral relations between India and the United States of America significantly improved in many areas following 2014, when our honorable Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi took

over as the country's powerful leader, particularly on the military and economic fronts. The closeness between the US and India is viewed as a danger by China. However, given our prior experiences with the USA, we are not very confident when making significant decisions like taking action against China. It is a truth that China is now a major worldwide manufacturer due to the extent to which it has expanded its infrastructure.

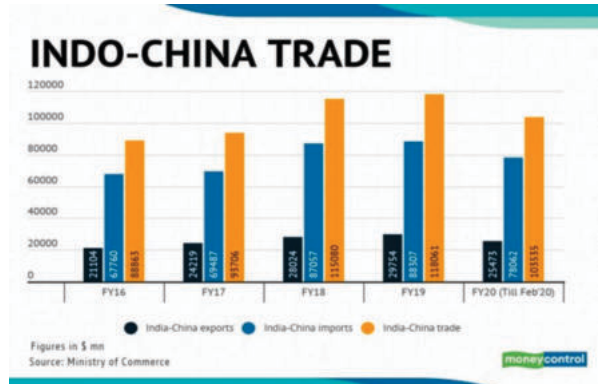


Fig 3: Indo-China bilateral trade (FY 2016-20)
Source: Internet

The bilateral commerce between China and India is estimated to be worth 7 lakh crores, of which we import 5.5 lakh crores and only export 1.5 lakhs, leaving a 56 billion dollar trade deficit. Therefore, it is clear that improving our relations with China alone will not help us; instead, we must reduce our imbalanced import and export.

Historical Perspective of Indo-China relations:

The two Asian giants have a very long history because they have exchanged silk and cultures since the beginning of time. Chinese pilgrims visited India in large numbers in order to learn and to share the immense wealth of the Indian kingdoms. Prior to China's incursion into Tibet in 1950, ties between the two nations were extremely cordial. Tibet served as a geopolitical divider between India and China for thousands of years. However, China and India now share a border due to China's annexation of Tibet. Although our first prime minister, Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, supported Tibet's autonomy, he acknowledged China's hegemony over the region. The highest spiritual authority of Tibet, the Dalai Lama, escaped to India, where he was welcomed and granted sanctuary, which worsened the situation. China became suspicious of India as a result of this.

China does not care about the border between India and China, which is known as the McMohan Line and was established by the 1914 Shimla convention between the representatives of the British and the Tibetans. China views this as an act that was imposed by the imperial powers at the time. The Indian side attempted to normalize the situation by signing the historic Panchsheel Treaty with Zhou on April 29, 1954, which established stability and recognized Chinese rule over Tibet. The catchphrase Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai gained a lot of popularity and represented our optimistic outlook toward our long-standing, universal brotherhood, respect for one another's territorial integrity, equality, non-interference, mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

However, when China's People Liberation Army attacked India in Ladakh and crossed the McMohan Line in the North-East Frontier Agency, all Indian attempts at fostering mutual goodwill failed. The effects of war persist even if the fighting was done in a matter of days. The two countries' relations were frozen until 1988, when our Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, on a historic trip to China in an attempt to restore order. This journey was viewed as being extremely important to fostering better ties between China and India.

Present scenario of Indo-China relation:

We cannot declare that we are friendly neighbors because the situation is still unfavorable despite many attempts and bilateral discussions at different levels. On practically all forums, it is not uncommon for one country to criticize another. We can use China's rejection of India's application for permanent membership in the UN Security Council as an example. Two examples of situations that could potentially lead to confrontation between these two countries include the Doklam crisis and the ongoing disagreement over border concerns. Furthermore, India views China's Belt and Road program with skepticism. One of the main ways governments cause and improve their own security in such a situation is through external balancing, which is the forming of military cooperation with one state to deter or destroy a danger posed by the other. Following the 1962 conflict, India sought out and signed three agreements with other countries, mostly the USSR or modern-day Russia, to address the perceived danger posed by China.

We can sum up by saying that recent changes in the military, social, and economic spheres have left both nations with unfavorable perceptions of one another, which has finally led to the breakdown of geopolitical trust. India views China's rise to prominence in the political and economic spheres, particularly within the South Asian area, as a challenge to its dominance over the region. China's security has been seriously threatened by India's friendship and military involvement with the United States and Japan in response. Both countries now believe that forceful strategy is the only way to succeed, therefore during the past few years, they have been taking advantage of pressures and leverage, especially in relation to China's and India's respective tilts toward the US and Pakistan.

India's Policy towards China:

During his visit, our honorable prime minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, tried a course correction that was further referred to as a "reset." India's approach to dealing with China is dual. The first pillar calls for sustained participation in multilateral and bilateral fora, including the Russia-India-China trilateral, the BRICS, and the Shanghai collaboration Organization, in order to uphold global stability, strengthen economic connections, and promote diplomatic collaboration on local and global issues. Thus, despite China's state-controlled media's warnings of a repeat of the 1962 war and further problems, India refused to allow the Doklam crisis to derail planned bilateral visits and meetings and instead insisted on a diplomatic settlement based on a return to the status quo ante. As the second prong of policy, India has also made consistent attempts to strengthen its military and deterrent capabilities. A new external balancing effort is the emerging third prong in India's China strategy. A growing convergence of views regarding Indo-Pacific stability, particularly with regard to China's intentions to lay territorial claims to over 80% of the South China Sea and to the sovereign territories of India and Japan, can be observed in the evolution of not only India-US relations but also India's relationships with Japan and Australia, as well as the quadrilateral cooperation among them. The leaders of both countries talk about the promises of the Asian century, but tension or conflict between them detracts from those hopes. There has to be a more regular schedule of informal summits between the leaders of the two nations.

CONCLUSION:

While we cannot alter our neighbors, we can undoubtedly strengthen our bonds with them so that we can both travel down the path of wealth and advancement. India and China have emerged as significant economic and political players in regional and international affairs during the past few decades, drawing attention from all around the world. The two enduring and rising powers, which stand for two different civilizational philosophies, form a complicated and dynamic

interaction in global politics. As the two nations interact in the wake of the Doklam controversy, the Wuhan meeting (April 2018, "informal summit") between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping is being heralded as a "new chapter" in ties.

It is plausible for India and China to cooperate and show mutual respect, even in the face of pessimistic forecasts about their inevitable rivalry, if they let go of their mistrust of one another. In order to minimize mistrust and jointly write their people's futures in gold ink, both countries must commence and further implement certain concrete and practical steps during this phase of globalization, when it is impossible to govern the economy alone.

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